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**Decentralisation and Policy Implementation:
Thai Development Plans and
Subdistrict Administrative Organisation (SAO) in Chiang Rai.**

**A thesis submitted in fulfilment
of the requirements for the degree of**

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in

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By

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**THE UNIVERSITY OF
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Abstract

Moves to decentralise the government's administrative system has been one of the most important development issues in Thailand over the past two decades. These moves are seen most clearly in the establishment of the Subdistrict Administrative Organisation (SAO) across Thailand as the fundamental governing unit at the local administrative level.

Decentralisation was introduced as a means of increasing the effectiveness of local government, promoting the transmission of power to the local people and encouraging greater local participation in policy making. The Ninth National Economic and Social Development Plan (2002-2006) promoted the development of the SAO to strengthen local government. The main purposes of decentralisation have been to balance the development of human, social, economic and environmental resources so as to achieve sustainable people-centred development, and promote the role of officials at the local level to increase the power of local government.

The thesis examines implementation of this policy, drawing from theories on implementation in terms of 'top-down' and 'bottom-up' approaches, and policy implementation failure. Propositions are derived from these theories for testing in the research. The combination of the two approaches offers insights into key factors in policy implementation and what is needed to achieve better policy implementation.

This study focuses on 1) the capacity of an SAO to implement the policies set out by central government, 2) the capacity of staff to determine and implement the policy, 3) the adequacy of revenue available to the SAO for policy implementation, 4) the extent of autonomy from central government to the SAO in providing public services, and 5) the nature and extent of participation by the people in Chiang Rai province in issues of policy formulation and implementation. Staff drawn from 45 government agencies at three different levels (central, provincial and local levels) in Chiang Rai provide the sample group for this study.

This thesis found that the concept of decentralisation in Thailand was still new for both the Thai people and officials, and that the old bureaucratic systems continued to prevail. Local governance continues to be overseen partly by appointed personnel and the SAOs still rely heavily on central government for a wide range of matters. The lack of support from central government, insufficient revenue allocated to SAOs, inadequate autonomy, and various other deficiencies have limited the implementation of the policy.

This study concludes that the government must eliminate problems arising from adherence to the old bureaucratic systems at local, provincial and central government levels if the policy of decentralisation is to succeed. Further, central government must ensure that staff who implement its decentralisation policy have the capabilities and experiences to implement the policy. The government also needs to ensure that the support is provided to the SAOs for the policy implementation process if the intended goals are to be achieved.

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Table of Contents

Abstract	ii
Acknowledgement	iv
Table of Contents	vi
Chapter I : Introduction	
1.1 Introduction	1
1.2 Significance of the Study	5
1.3 Scope and Limitation	6
1.4 Objectives of the Study	7
1.5 Thesis Structure	9
Chapter II : Issue in Policy Implementation	
2.1 Introduction	15
2.2 The Policy Process	15
2.3 Evolution of Policy Implementation Theory	17
2.3.1 The Top-Down Approach	18
2.3.2 The Bottom-Up Approach	21
2.3.3 Debate between the 'Top-down' and 'Bottom-up' Approaches	23
2.3.4 Synthesis	23
2.4 Policy Implementation Failure	27
2.4.1 Policy failure from a 'top-down' perspective	28
2.4.1.1 Policy formulation	29
2.4.1.2 Lack of resources provided from central government	29
2.4.1.3 Policy inconsistencies	30
2.4.2 Insights into reasons for policy failure from a 'bottom up' perspective	31
2.4.2.1 Nature of problems affecting policy implementation	32
2.4.3 Policy failure - synthesising 'top-down' and 'bottom-up' perspectives	33
2.5 Summary	35
2.6 Propositions	35

2.7 A case study of policy implementation in Thailand	39
2.7.1 Justification of the case study approach	41
2.8 Choosing the SAOs	43
2.9 Data collection	44
2.9.1 Selection and Range of participations	45
2.9.2 Recruiting participants	45
2.9.3 Primary data	46
2.9.4 Secondary data	47
Chapter III : Thailand's Political Development	
3.1 Introduction	48
3.2 From Absolute Monarchy to Parliamentary Democracy	50
3.2.1 The emergence and derivation of rigid hierarchy	50
3.2.2 Modernisation under the reign of King Chulalongkorn	52
3.2.3 Thailand's Democracy: between Autocracy and Democracy	56
3.3 Thailand post 2006	60
3.3.1 The structure of the Thai government	61
3.3.2 Provincial government	62
3.3.2.1 Province	63
3.3.2.2 District	63
3.3.2.3 Subdistrict	63
3.3.2.4 Village	64
3.3.3 Local government	65
3.4 Problems with Thailand's national administration system	68
3.5 Conclusion	70
Chapter IV : Thailand's Decentralisation	
4.1 Introduction	71
4.2 Thailand's decentralisation	74
4.2.1 The evolution of Thailand's decentralisation	76
4.3 Decentralisation in the 21 st Century	79
4.4 Thailand's decentralisation plan	82
4.5 Limitations in Thailand's decentralisation	83
4.5.1 A tendency towards the centre	84
4.5.2 Local self government versus local government by officials	86

4.5.3 Autonomy	87
4.6 Conclusion	91
Chapter V : Thailand's Development Plan	
5.1 Introduction	93
5.2 The National Economic and Social Development Plans (1961 - present)	94
5.3 The Ninth National Economic and Social Development Plan: A turning point to a new era of decentralisation	101
5.4 The Tenth National Economic and Social Development Plan: An attempt for a sustainable national administration system and good governance	103
5.5 Decentralisation - the Ninth and the Tenth National Economic and Social Development Plans	107
5.6 Conclusion and analysis of the Ninth and Tenth Plans	110
Chapter VI : Outline of SAO - Chiang Rai	
6.1 Background	114
6.2 Subdistrict Administrative Organisation in general	115
6.2.1 Classes and Ranking of Subdistrict Administrative Organisation	115
6.2.2 Structure	117
6.2.3 Functions	123
6.2.4 Finance	124
6.2.5 Territory	125
6.3 Chiang Rai Province	126
6.3.1 History, Demography and Geography	126
6.3.2 Administration	126
6.4 Chiang Rai Subdistrict Administrative Organisation	129
6.4.1 Establishment of Chiang Rai Subdistrict Administrative Organisation	129
6.4.2 Problems in implementation	129
6.5 Conclusion	133
Chapter VII : Policy Implementation Under The Government's Decentralisation Policy	
7.1 Introduction	134
7.2 The respondents	135

7.2.1 Research questions	135
7.3.1 Decentralisation from a central government perspective	136
7.3.2 Decentralisation from a provincial government perspective	139
7.3.3 Local level perspectives	143
7.4 Inter-relationships between levels of government	147
7.4.1 Central government perspectives on the inter-relationships between levels of government	147
7.4.2 Provincial government perspectives on the inter-relationships between levels of government	149
7.4.3 Local government perspectives on the inter-relationships between levels of government	152
7.4.4 The perspectives of community leaders, SAO representatives and SAO staff	157
7.5 Autonomy	161
7.6 Revenue	163
7.7 Conclusion	166

Chapter VIII : Analysis of decentralisation at the Subdistrict Administrative Organisation

8.1 Introduction	168
8.2 Thailand's decentralisation policies	168
8.3 Analysis of decentralisation at the Subdistrict Administrative Organisation	174
8.4 Problems with the decentralisation programme	176
8.4.1 Lack of understanding in decentralisation	177
8.4.2 Inter-relationships between organisations	178
8.4.3 Different Interpretations	184
8.4.4 There are influences of the hierarchical system and bureaucratic polity in a national administration to a government at local level	188
8.4.5 Overlap and lack of clarity between provincial and local governments	190
8.4.6 Limited autonomy	193
8.4.7 SAOs and revenue	195
8.5 Conclusion	200

Chapter IX : Evaluating decentralisation Chiang Rai's Subdistrict Administrative Organisation

9.1 Introduction	203
9.2 Background to decentralisation policy implementation	204
9.3 Evaluating the decentralisation policy	207
9.4 Evaluating decentralisation in Chiang Rai's Subdistrict Administrative Organisation	210
9.4.1 The tendency towards the central administration	210
9.4.2 Different policy interpretations among staff at different government levels	212
9.4.3 Difficulties arising among different organisations and staff at the local level	212
9.4.4 Hierarchy and bureaucracy at the local level	213
9.4.5 Overlapping responsibilities between provincial and local government	215
9.4.6 Limited autonomy	215
9.4.7 Traditional forms of local leadership and SAOs	217
9.4.8 Limited and unstable revenue	218
9.4.9 Lack of participation in planning and decision-making processes	220
9.4.10 Administrative rules and regulations issued by central government	221
9.4.11 SAO staff capacities to implement policy	222
9.4.12 Unclear policy	223
9.5 Conclusion	225

Chapter X : Summary , Conclusions and Recommendations

10.1 Introduction	226
10.1.1 Aim	226
10.1.2 The Process	227
10.1.3 Early steps toward decentralisation	228
10.1.4 Solution	229
10.1.5 Discussion	230
10.2 The propositions	233
10.3 Conclusion	243
10.4 Recommendations	244

10.4.1 National Development Plans	244
10.4.2 Decentralisation	245
10.4.3 Subdistrict Administrative Organisation	247
10.5 Recommendations for further study	249

Appendices

Appendix A Map of Thailand	251
Appendix B Map of Chaing Rai Province	252
Appendix C Subdistrict Administrative Organisation in Chiang Rai to be transformed to Tambon Municipal 2008-2009	253
Appendix D Discussion guide for focus groups	254
Appendix E Discussion guide for in-depth interview	257
Appendix F Chiang Rai Subdistrict Administrative Organisation Basic Database 2006	260
Bibliography	264

List of Figures

Chapter 3

Figure 3.1 Thailand's coup d'état from after a political transition in 1932	58
Figure 3.2 Government Structure	67
Figure 3.3 Macro level structure	69

Chapter 4

Figure 4.1 Methods for distributing power away from the centre	85
Figure 4.2 The horizontal and vertical dimensions	88

Chapter 6

Figure 6.1 Class of Subdistrict Administrative Organisation	116
Figure 6.2 Revised Subdistrict Administrative Organisation Ranking	117
Figure 6.3 The Office of the Subdistrict Administrative Organisation	121
Figure 6.4 Subdistrict Administrative Organisation	122
Figure 6.5 Local Administrative Organisations in Chiang Rai Province	128

Glossary and Abbreviations

Amphoe	District
Changwat	Province
Kamnan	Headman, Community Leader
King Amphoe	Subdistrict
LAO	Local Administrative Organisation
Mubaan	Village
Nai Amphoe	District officer
PAO	Provincial Administrative Organisation
Phuyaibaan	Village Headmen
Phuwarachakan	Governor
SAO	Subdistrict Administrative Organisation
Sukhaphiban	Sanitation District
Tambon	Commune
Tambon Administrative Organisation	Former name used for a Subdistrict Administrative Organisation
Tesaban	Municipality

Thesaphiban System

Thailand's first form of local government found by Prince Damrong (1862- 1943) in the late 19th century. The function of the Sukhaphiban was to oversee the sanitary provisions for urban as well as rural districts. The Sukhabiban of Bangkok was the first urban sanitary district, while *Tha Chalom* was the first rural sanitary district.

Chapter I

Introduction

1.1 Introduction

Decentralisation is a term used globally as a key theme to promote public services, and political and economic development.¹ Hague and Harrop define the concept as “central government functions...executed by subnational authorities”.² According to Premdas and Steeves, under decentralisation, the administrative and decision-making tasks of the government are distributed to subordinate field agencies so that services and functions are dispensed to the local level.³ Starr defines decentralisation initiatives as activities that grant officials at provincial level more power to initiate “without turning functions over to public control” or what can be called a “self- government”.⁴

Decentralisation has been introduced to achieve outcomes that include enhanced popular participation and improved economic and social interactions. Broadly speaking, decentralisation calls for a reallocation of functions and responsibilities between different levels of government for greater efficiency.⁵ Implicit is the view that bureaucrats at local government can deliver better services to the people and that administrative functions and responsibilities can be performed more effectively.⁶

Even though decentralisation has been adopted in many countries, the development and the status of the process has varied between countries. As the United Cities and Local Governments review says:

¹ Andrew Heywood, *Politics*, 2nd edn. (New York: Palgrave, 2002), p.159.

² Rod Hague and Martin Harrop, *Comparative Government and Politics: An Introduction*, 7th edn. (New York: Palgrave, 2007), p. 294.

³ Ralph R. Premdas and Jeffrey S. Steeves, *The Solomon Islands: An Experiment in Decentralization* (Honolulu: Center for Asia and Pacific Studies, University of Hawaii at Manoa, 1985), p. 4.

⁴ S. Frederick Starr, *Decentralization and Self-Government in Russia 1830-1870* (New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 1972), pp. x-xi.

⁵ United Cities and Local Governments, The World Bank, *Decentralization and Local Democracy in the World: First Global Report by United Cities and Local Governments 2008*. <<http://site.ebrary.com/lib/waikato/Doc?id=10285629&ppg=58>> [accessed 18 February 2010].

⁶ Heywood, pp. 158-159.; Kenneth Janda, Jeffrey M. Berry and Jerry Goldman, *The Challenge of Democracy Government in America*, 2nd edn. (Boston: Houghton Mifflin Company, 1989), p. 446.

The scope of powers and functions assumed by local governments in the region varies from country to country, and even among local governments within the same country. These practices had been shaped by the respective country's historical traditions, and increasingly by political, economic and fiscal considerations as evidenced by the decentralization programs being implemented by countries in the region.⁷

The success of decentralisation initiatives is influenced by factors such as historical traditions, and political and economic experiences.⁸ In Europe, the promotion of decentralisation is based on historical backgrounds and national governments.⁹ Swianiewicz describes decentralisation in Central and Eastern European countries as being a response to “the historical experience of centralisation during the communist period”.¹⁰ In England and Wales, the modern system of local government was established as a consequence of the industrial revolution,¹¹ in France, local government structures were founded in 1799 by Napoleon Bonaparte,¹² while in Italy, local authority was in evidence from the 12th century.¹³ Even with historical traditions of local government, these countries have experienced further decentralisation over the years.¹⁴

The success of the decentralisation process in European countries contrasts with the experience in Asian states. In many Asian countries, the restrictive nature of the cultural, traditional and political background has negatively impacted on the successful implementation of the decentralisation process. With the citizenry living for prolonged periods under authoritarian dictatorships or monarchies, the move to devolve authority from the central to the local level has been more problematic.¹⁵ In these states, there has been “a wide range of drivers of decentralisation and obstacles to such changes”.¹⁶ For example, decentralisation in China and Vietnam has been related to their economic reforms

⁷ United Cities and Local Governments, p. 56.

⁸ Ibid., p. 56., Hague and Harrop, pp. 295-296.

⁹ Pawel Swianiewicz, ‘Cities in Transition from Statism to Democracy’, in *Urban Governance and Democracy Leadership and Community Involvement*, edited by Michael Haus, Hubert Heinelt and Murray Stewart (London:Routledge, 2005), p. 103.

¹⁰ Ibid., p. 103.

¹¹ John Kingdon, ‘England and Wales’, in *Local Government in Liberal Democracies and introductory survey*, edited by Chandler, J.A. (London:Routledge, 1993), p. 9.

¹² M.C Hunt and J.A. Chandler, ‘France’, in *Local Government in Liberal Democracies and introductory survey*, edited by Chandler, J.A. (London:Routledge, 1993), p. 53.

¹³ Hague and Harrop, p. 294.

¹⁴ Ibid., p. 294.

¹⁵ Toshio Kamo, *Political Economy of Decentralization: Japan, Asia and Europe*, [n.d.], <<http://unpan1.un.org/intradoc/groups/public/documents/APCITY/UNPAN028989.pdf>> [accessed 19 February 2011].

¹⁶ United Cities and Local Governments, p. 56.

and attempts to move towards a market-based economy. However, decentralisation in the Philippines and Indonesia has been based on a radical reform agenda, which has led these countries to pay more attention to the 'bottom-up' approach. In countries like Pakistan and Thailand, the concern was to reinforce strong central control to ensure the effectiveness of the national administrative system, while by contrast, in Bangladesh and Malaysia, decentralisation was a part of a method to strengthen the political role of local government.¹⁷

The scope of powers and functions assumed by local governments varies among countries and is influenced by the perspective of the government concerned. However, a common purpose of decentralisation is to promote social, political and economic development:

1. Decentralisation is viewed as a means of achieving more democratic political outcomes. For example, Japan promoted a democratic local government system through its national agenda during the post-World War II period.¹⁸
2. Decentralisation is viewed as a means of fostering economic development. For example, China and Vietnam have promoted a policy of decentralisation. Decentralisation has primarily been about economic reform in order to strengthen the economic potential of regions and localities as they have moved toward a market-based economy.¹⁹
3. Decentralisation is viewed as a means for social reform. For example, the Solomon Islands adopted decentralisation to reform its social structure after its decolonisation.²⁰ Korea promoted a decentralisation policy to strengthen its community ethics.²¹
4. Decentralisation is viewed as a response to a community's wish to have greater control over its affairs. For example, decentralisation in North European countries was implemented to provide greater welfare states with social assistance, unemployment benefits, childcare and education.²²

¹⁷ Ibid., pp. 58-59.

¹⁸ Kamo, p. 109

¹⁹ United Cities and Local Governments, p. 56.

²⁰ Premdas and Steeves, pp. 2-3.

²¹ United Cities and Local Governments, p. 56.

²² Hague and Harrop, p. 295.

Even though many countries have pursued policies of decentralisation, decentralisation is difficult to implement. A country's historical and political background in terms of the relationship between central and local government, resistance by a strong central bureaucracy and the historical experience of colonialism, authoritarian dictatorships, or monarchies all influence the capacity for decentralisation.²³

Decentralisation was first introduced in Thailand in 1897 in response to the colonisation of neighbouring countries and as a means of strengthening and maintaining control of central government, rather than risking any loss of the authority to the peripheral region. Despite this, the Thai national administrative system has been characterised by a 'top-down' approach and a strong central government.²⁴ More recently, Thailand has reinvigorated its commitment to decentralisation to support officials at the provincial and local levels to play a greater role within the national administrative system.

- The revision of the Thai Constitution in 1997 included decentralisation as a means to increase the effectiveness of local government and promote the transmission of power to the local people in encouraging greater local participation in policy making. The Ninth National Economic and Social Development Plan (2002-2006) promoted the development of the Subdistrict Administrative Organisation (SAO) with the purpose of strengthening the local dimension of government. The main purpose of the decentralisation policy was to balance the development of human, social, economic and environmental resources so as to achieve sustainable people-centred development.²⁵ The policy also attempted to promote the role of administrators at the local level to increase the power of local government.
- The implementation of the decentralisation policy, promulgated by the government, is at risk of failure. The development of local governance has been slow, due to the entrenched hierarchical system, inequality in social conditions, a lack of resourcing by central government, and local conditions affecting policy implementation. In addition, the overlap between Thailand's three layers of

²³ J.A. Chandler, *Local Government in Liberal Democracies and Introductory Survey* (London:Routledge,1993), p. 197.; Swianiewicz, p. 109.

²⁴ Kovit Phong-ngam, *Thailand's Local Governance: Principle and Dimension in the Future* (Bangkok: Winyuchon Publication House, 2000), p. 78.

²⁵ The Tenth National Economic and Social Development Plan.1.; Yaowalak Rachapaetayakom, 'A Development of Thailand in the Past Four Decades: Experience and the Next Step of Development' *Suddhiparitad Journal*, 16 (2002), 11-15 (pp.11-15).

administrative structure, especially between the provincial and the local administrations,²⁶ has exacerbated the inefficient inter-relationships between government organisations. While the government has attempted to promote decentralisation,²⁷ only a small number of officials and the Thai population have responded positively to the new challenges. The unique combination of the old and new systems has presented many challenges.²⁸ Consequently, the policy implementers at the local level faced difficulties in putting the policy into practice effectively.

□

This thesis extends the literature on decentralisation through its analysis of difficulties in implementing decentralisation effectively. It stems from an interest in understanding the role of central and local governments and of factors that hinder bureaucrats from performing their obligations in accordance with what the government initiates.

1.2 Significance of the study

For decentralisation to play an important role in Thailand's national administrative system, it is necessary to ensure the policy is put into practice effectively. This study of the implementation of the decentralisation policy seeks to examine the central government's promotion of decentralisation in 1997. It is an inquiry into the Thai government's support for decentralisation and its endeavours to implement the policy. The study will focus on the SAO unit of government because it is the foundational unit of Thailand's local government system.²⁹

This study is important because there have been many discussions about how the Thai government could bring progress to remote areas by encouraging decentralisation. The establishment of SAOs is one of the most important mechanisms for improving and developing remote areas. The 1997 Constitution reinforced the position of the SAOs, which were established in 1995. Despite this,

²⁶ Nakarin Mektrairat 'Research in Decentralization' [n.d.], <http://203.170.239.216/dlocT/images/upload_article/56_Chapter1_Thai.pdf > [accessed 15 July 2006].

²⁷ See more detail in chapter 6.

²⁸ Likhit Dhiravegin, *Demi Democracy The evolution of the Thai political system* (Singapore: Time Academic Press, 1992), p. 224.

²⁹ Orapin Sopchokchai, *Good Local Governance and Anti-corruption Through People's Participation: A Case of Thailand*, World Bank, updated 2001 <http://www.worldbank.org/wbi/governance/pdf/orapin_paper.pdf> [accessed 22 July 2006].

it is apparent that SAOs have limited autonomy to work on their own while they are required by central government to function as efficient local organisations providing public services.³⁰

In addition, as the SAOs are local organisations closest to the people, in order to implement central government policy, local government needs to be fully aware of what central government requires. There is the potential for policy implementation gaps due to the lengthy process involved in transmitting information.

Past studies of problems associated with decentralisation,³¹ both in urban and rural cases in Thailand, have revealed weaknesses in the Thai government's policy, but these have lacked detail. In the case of the SAOs, a number of studies have focused on providing knowledge and understanding about the significance of the SAO to a locality. They have pointed out the importance of participation, particularly in areas of education and health policy.

This thesis is designed to explore and analyse Thailand's implementation of decentralisation policy in order to understand the policy implementation process and factors that led to policy implementation failure. This thesis demonstrates the difficult reality of implementing this policy and provides a basis for drawing lessons for a better approach in the future.

1.3 Scope and Limitation

The study of Thailand's decentralisation policy is through the case study of Chiang Rai's SAOs. The aims of promoting decentralisation provided under the

³⁰ Ibid.; Sopchokchai., UNESCAP, Local Government in Asia and the Pacific: A Comparative Study, *Thailand*, United Nations Economics and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific, <<http://www.unescap.org/huset/lgstudy/country/thai/ind/thai.html>>. [accessed 2 June 2006].

³¹ Ibid.; UNESCAP., Chaiyan Rajchagool, *Tambon Administrative Organization: Are the People in the Dramatis Personae or in the Audience?*, UNESCAP, [n.d.], <http://www.unescap.org/ttdw/Publications/TPTS_pubs/TxBulletin_69/bulletin69_b.pdf> [2 June 2006].; Chamniern P Vorratnchaiphan and David P Villeneuve, *Thailand's Capacity Building for Strategy Management in Local Government Administration: A New Model for Natural Resource and Environmental Management*, The Thailand Environment Institute, [n.d.], <www.tei.or.th/gap/pdf/Capacity%20Building%20for%20SM_alexandria.pdf> [accessed 31 March 2006].; Likhit Dhiravegin, *Democracy and Thailand's Political Revolution* (Bangkok: Chaopraya Rabop Kranpim MAC, 2003), p. 97.; Sompong Patpui, *Decentralisation and Local Governance in Thailand*. Grassroots Development Institute, LIFE-UNDP Thailand, [n.d.], <<http://www.thailocal.net/gdi-english/2-decentralisation-local-governce-24aug2002.htm>> [accessed 9 November 2008].

1997 Constitution and the Ninth Plan are of particular interest because in promulgating the law, it was anticipated that the outcomes would bring a new and improved level of performance to Thailand's national administrative system.

By redistributing power from central government, sub-national units of government would be given the discretion and capacity to enable them to engage in effective (as opposed to illusory) decision making authority regarding policies affecting their area,³² an idea which had been discussed in Thailand for a long time. Yet, decentralisation in Thailand has not been smooth. Problems such as the strongly centralised nature of the administrative system and the lack of readiness of government officials to respond to this policy are evident. This study consequently, focuses on the capacity of SAOs to implement the policies set out by central government on the nature of Thailand's national administrative system and on the conditions inhibiting the government's decentralisation policy.

1.4 Objectives of study

Thailand has pursued economic development under the National Development Plans, as witnessed by the rapid expansion of the national economy³³ at an average rate of 7.8 percent per annum since 1967. The country's financial position has improved and this has been recognised internationally. The government is endeavouring to increase investment in infrastructure and public services to improve the quality of life of the Thai people.³⁴ Despite these improvements, economic development remains concentrated in the capital city (Bangkok) and its surrounding provinces. Consequently, there has been a widening gap between the rich who live in the city and the poor in the rural areas.³⁵

To balance the development of human, social, economic and environmental resources, and to achieve sustainable people-centred development, the Thai government outlined its plans for decentralisation in the 1997 Constitution and the Ninth Plan. The 1997 Constitution set out to promote Thai popular participation at both local and national levels, by emphasising the decentralisation

³² Robert J. Bennett, *Decentralization, Local Governments, and Markets* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1990), p. 29.

³³ Tin Prachayapruit, *Management Development: Definition Content Approach and Problems*. (Bangkok: Chulalongkorn University Press, 1994), p. 94.

³⁴ The Eight National Economic and Social Development Plan, p.1.

³⁵ *Ibid.*, p.1.

of power to local government, the need to restructure national and local governance, and for the reform of electoral and political processes.³⁶

The Ninth Plan set out several objectives for the development of Thai society such as to establish good governance in all parts of Thai society, to enhance efficiency of government service delivery based on people's participation and to promote a decentralisation process by allowing local administrations to play a greater role in local development in accordance with the intent of the Constitution of the Kingdom of Thailand B.E. 2540 (1997). The Ninth Plan also focused on the decentralisation of functions and responsibilities to local administrative organisations so that public services could be in line with the people's needs.

From this, the primary objective of this study is to outline and analyse decentralisation and policy implementation through the case study of the SAOs in Chiang Rai province, Thailand. The specific objectives in this study are:

- 1) To assess the SAO staff's understanding of the policy of decentralisation. The focus of this issue is to examine the degree of understanding of the SAO staff who are tasked with putting the decentralisation policy into practice effectively. Should staff lack in their understanding of the decentralisation process, the study then further seeks to determine the conditions influencing the lack of staff understanding of decentralisation;
- 2) To assess and examine the inter-relationships between government organisations vertically and horizontally. The focus of this issue is to determine the degree of cooperation, support and interaction among government organisations, which affect the SAOs' policy implementation;
- 3) To examine the SAO's capability in responding to the decentralisation policy. The focus of this issue is to identify the clarity of policy guidelines, the SAO's ability in interpreting the policy of decentralisation and what SAO staff seek as solutions. The study also identifies how

³⁶ Woothisarn Tanchai, *Decentralization in Thailand. Issues of Government Policy Formulation Towards Decentralization*, [n.d.], <http://www.decentralization.ws/icd2/papers/decent_thailand.htm> [accessed 15 May 2006]. (p. 4).

much SAO staff draw on their own localised knowledge and expertise in their policy implementation;

- 4) To identify the nature of problems affecting the SAOs' policy implementation. The focus of this issue is to examine the autonomy granted from central government to the SAOs in providing public services, the hierarchical system (constitution, political culture, historical background) in Thailand that affects the SAOs' implementation of the decentralisation policy, the adequacy of revenue available to SAOs for policy implementation, the extent of overlap or lack of clarity over constitutional responsibilities between provincial and local governments, and conflicts between traditional forms of local leadership and SAOs that influence positively or negatively the implementation of the decentralisation policy and participation by the people in Chiang Rai province in issues of policy formulation and implementation.

1.5 Thesis Structure

In investigating the practices associated with decentralisation and policy implementation, this thesis examines three different elements: 1) policy outcomes (whether the implementation process succeeds or fails), 2) limitations in policy implementation (conditions or obstacles leading the implementation process to fail), and 3) solutions (assistance, support, mentoring provided by the central government or responsible organisations assigned by the government). There are four parts to this thesis.

Part One - Issues in policy implementation and decentralisation

Chapter 2 outlines policy implementation theories in terms of 'top-down' and 'bottom-up' approaches, policy implementation failure, and derives propositions for testing through the research undertaken. This chapter explores issues of policy implementation, which is the stage in the policy process where the government gives effect to its policy decision. Most of the policy implementation literature being used in this chapter comes from North American sources, with others from Britain and other English-speaking countries. However, some useful policy implementation literature is from studies on developing countries.

Three main approaches to policy implementation are discussed: the 'top-down'; 'bottom-up'; and the synthesis of these two. The 'top-down' and 'bottom-up' perspectives are helpful in examining the policy implementation process and the role of government agencies in these processes. The combination of the two approaches offers insight into key factors in policy implementation and what is needed to achieve a better implementation process. The chapter concludes with a series of propositions for testing by reference to the case of Thailand. Additionally, information in accordance with the case study approach, research design and sources of data are presented.

Part Two - Thailand's political background and a new scheme of decentralisation

Chapter 3 provides an overview of Thai society and its political culture examining factors that influence and bring about change to Thailand's political system. It introduces Thailand's political development from the early time when the absolute monarchy was applied as a political system that contributed to the formation of a social cleavage between the elite and the rest of the citizenry, blocking the Thai people from involvement in the political system. The chapter also outlines Thailand's political system that emerged with the initial transition towards democracy in 1932. Problems with Thailand's national administration system and the search for solutions are also discussed.

Chapter 4 introduces the history of Thailand's decentralisation policy, beginning with the bureaucratic reforms of 1892 when Thailand strengthened its central government to ensure control of the national administration system to protect itself from colonialism. Initiatives towards decentralisation in Thailand are outlined according to four different periods:

1. The attempt to establish self-government at the local level in 1933 in the Municipality Act (1993) which set up three types of municipalities: the city municipality; the town municipality; and the tambon (districts) municipality;

2. The period from 1952 to 1956 when the government, realising that the municipalities had not developed as initially planned, attempted to resuscitate local government in a form of Sukhaphibans. During this period, the Provincial Administrative Organisation (PAO) was established. In addition, in 1956, the Tambon Act established tambons as local administrative agencies. Consequently, tambons had the potential to raise their own revenue and manage their expenditure as well as being granted autonomy to exercise their obligations.

3. The third period was between 1961 and 1991, during which time the government's attention was on developing the economic system rather than extending local government. As a result, the development of local government was not pursued. However, in 1978, the government passed the law that established the Pattaya city government.

4. During 1992 to 1996, there were issues over the election of governors and demands were made for local government reform. During this period, in 1995, the first 617 SAOs were established. Later in 1996, more SAOs were established bringing the total to 2,143. This has since then risen to the total of 6,157 SAOs.³⁷

Throughout each period, central government has continued to play an important role and has controlled the national administrative system at all levels. The development of a new form of local body authorities for rural communities, in 1992, is still limited. Against this background, in 1997 the government promulgated the new Constitution, which emphasised more decentralisation and attempted to promote a self-governing system at the local level. While the Constitution was designed to allow bureaucrats and government agencies at the local level to have more opportunities to participate in governing their areas, the local people were also encouraged to play an important role in decentralisation by participating in local government's activities.

Chapter 5 outlines the Thai government's Ninth and Tenth Economic and Social Development Plans, and the Constitution of the Kingdom of Thailand B.E. 2540, which includes new strategies to develop the country based on decentralisation. While the First Plan was focused on economic development and the promotion of economic growth, with social development mentioned as one of the primary objectives in raising the standard of living of the Thai people, the latter plans were gradually focused on social and people development. This is because the government realised that focusing only on economic development was not sufficient to develop the country to the next stage.

The Eighth Plan had emphasised the concept of people-centred development by encouraging Thai people from different backgrounds and regions to participate in planning the direction for the development of the country. This was a first step for the Thai people to have the opportunity to participate and express their views. The Constitution of the Kingdom of Thailand B.E. 2540, and the Ninth and Tenth Plans, are discussed especially in terms of their aspirations for good

³⁷ Department of Local Administration, Ministry of the Interior. Data at 15 August 2008.

governance and the attempt to link the national administrative system with local government. The Ninth Plan (2002-2006) introduced the concept of good governance and the Tenth Plan (2007-2011) sought to improve the quality of governance and strengthen the role and capabilities of local government, as well increase participation across the localities.

Chapter 6 presents details of the SAOs' functions, its structures and problems it has faced. The SAOs were established under the Tambon Council and Tambon Administration Organisation Act of 1994. The SAOs are a sublevel below a district and a province. The main purposes of establishing the SAOs were to decentralise administrative power to the local people and to revitalise the participation of the local people in community development affairs.

As a local organisation, subdistrict organisations are allocated within a district (Tambon) area administered at the provincial level. The governors in each province are delegated from central government to oversee the accountability of the SAOs. Under the Tambon Council and Tambon Administration Organisation Act of 1994, the structure of the SAOs has two different parts: 1) the Subdistrict Administrative Organisation Council, and 2) the Subdistrict Administrative Organisation Commission. Furthermore, the Office of the Subdistrict Administrative Organisation acts in response to the SAO obligations. Its responsibility is to work on the administrative responsibilities document regarding its district development plan.

This chapter also analyses SAOs' problems in policy implementation. It is noticeable that even though the government has acknowledged the value of localisation and has attempted to empower its local government, the national administrative system continues to be characterised by a 'top-down' approach to policy development and implementation. As a result, the SAOs have less opportunity to exercise their own obligations. This chapter also discusses problems in terms of the scope and responsibility of SAOs, problems associated with the overlap of regulations across different levels of government, and problems regarding insufficient revenue.

Part Three - Case study and Research Finding

Chapter 7 presents information obtained through in-depth interviews, focus group interviews, group discussions and private discussions with participants in local government in Thailand. The in-depth and focus group interviews were held in Chiang Rai and Bangkok provinces. They focussed on four main issues: 1) SAO staff understanding of the policy of decentralisation; 2) inter-relationships between organisations; 3) interpretations of the decentralisation policy; and 4) problems and impediments in implementing the decentralisation policy.

Chapter 8 is based on interviews with staff at central, provincial and local government levels and presents an analysis of decentralisation to the SAOs. It also includes insights from key official documents, and scholarly books and articles. This chapter reveals that to ensure the policy of decentralisation is being implemented effectively, central government needs to be more concerned with matters of staffing at local levels, there needs to be training to ensure a good understanding of decentralisation, conflicts and overlap among different organisations needs to be addressed, the hierarchical system of government bureaucracy needs to be modified for work with local government, and the limited autonomy and unstable flow of revenue to the local level, along with the rigid administrative rules and regulations issued by central government need to be reviewed and addressed.

Chapter 9 evaluates the decentralisation policy in Chiang Rai's SAOs based on the information provided from the in-depth interviews, focus group interviews, questionnaires, private interviews and secondary data. The problems regarding the decentralisation policy and the difficulties in policy achievement are also discussed in this chapter. In the case of Chiang Rai SAOs, it can be seen that on the one hand, the SAO staff face several problems caused by the government at the central level, such as problems regarding administrative structures, ambiguous regulations issued by central government, and limited revenue, resources and autonomy. On the other hand, the problems at the SAO level include limited staff capability and experience. In addition, SAO staff face problems stemming from traditional forms of leadership and adherence with the old style of administration. For as long as these issues remain unaddressed, it is difficult to anticipate that the SAOs can achieve the government's goals that underpin the decentralisation policy.

Part Four, Conclusion

Chapter 10 concludes this study, summarising its contribution to knowledge, noting the limitations of the research and indicating further work needed. Several suggestions and recommendations are made regarding the decentralisation policy and the steps needed for the successful implementation of the policy. Given the absence of a strong foundation for decentralisation, the government must consider seriously the issues which currently limit the success of the decentralisation process. The government must also address inefficiencies in the interactions between the three levels of government that stem from the perpetuation of a 'top-down' approach, so staff at the local level have more opportunity to participate in government and to exercise their own authority. As well as to genuinely transfer power and allow local government to perform its new responsibilities, central government must ensure staff at the local level gain sufficient knowledge, capabilities, and experiences in order to respond well to the decentralisation policy.

Studying developments after 2011 will benefit the government as it seeks to enhance its policy as well as to solve the problems occurring during the implementation of the plan. Furthermore, the moderate level of success in achieving the goals of the Ninth Plan demonstrates there were deficiencies regarding the new national administrative system. Studying bureaucrat administration and behaviour under the new scheme, especially those bureaucrats who work at the local government level, will assist the government solve the problems and enhance the decentralisation policy for a better outcome.

What follows in the next chapter is a review and analysis of the literature on policy implementation, together with the factors that cause policy implementation failure, and propositions derived from the literature for testing against research and the methodology.

Chapter II

Issues in Policy Implementation

2.1 Introduction

This chapter describes and outlines the theoretical and conceptual framework for this study of the Thai government's efforts to extend greater power to Subdistrict Administrative Organisations. The focus is on issues of policy. The chapter is divided into five main sections. The first section outlines the policy-making process under five headings: 1) issue emergence, 2) policy formulation, 3) policy implementation, 4) policy evaluation, and 5) feedback. The second section describes the evolution of policy implementation theory since the early 1970s and focuses on the 'top-down' approach, the 'bottom-up' approach, and a synthesis of the two. The third section outlines the insights from these perspectives in terms of the risk of policy implementation failure and derives a number of propositions from the policy implementation literature. The fourth section presents propositions for testing by reference to a case study. The final section introduces the case study method that will be employed as well as issues of sampling and data collection.

2.2 The Policy Process

One of the key reasons for studying public policy is to understand better the public policy process.³⁸ Many scholars present this as a series of stages, which are related to the activities through which a policy is made.³⁹ Birkland outlines the stages of the policy process, drawing on Easton's system model, and suggests that the main activities of the process consist of 1) issue emergence, 2) agenda setting, 3) policy implementation, 4) policy evaluation, and 5) feedback.⁴⁰

³⁸ Thomas A. Birkland, *An Introduction to the Policy Process theories, Concepts, and Models of Public Policy Making*, 2nd edn. (New York: M.E. Sharpe, 2005), p. 21.

³⁹ Andrew Heywood, *Politics*, 2nd edn. (New York: Palgrave, 2002), p. 400.

⁴⁰ Birkland, p. 224.

1. Issue Emergence

Anderson calls the first stage problem identification and agenda setting. The focus here is on the identification and specification of problems, and the way that they are drawn to the attention of the policy makers.⁴¹

2. Policy Formulation

Policy formulation refers to the process of decision-making used in addressing the specific problem that has been identified.⁴² Two contrasting models of the formulation process, the rational and incremental, offer different accounts of policy formulation.⁴³ As Hague and Harrop describe:

the rational model views policy formulation as emerging from a systematic search for the most efficient means of achieving defined goals. By contrast, the incremental model sees policy formulation as emerging from a compromise between actors who have goals which are ill-defined or even contradictory.⁴⁴

Birkland suggests the rational model reflects how most people believe decisions should be made⁴⁵ and this model is often presented as the universally ideal pattern for decision-making, one that should be approximated as closely as possible.⁴⁶ The rational model assumes decision-makers have at their disposal all the information in relation to a problem and its causes as well as information about possible solutions, with the most preferable option selected.⁴⁷ The incremental model developed by Lindblom notes that “people make a decision in relatively small increments rather than in big leaps”.⁴⁸ It views public policy formulation as a continuation of past government activities with only relatively minor modifications to existing decisions.⁴⁹

⁴¹ James E. Anderson, *Public Policymaking*, 5th edn. (Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 2003), p. 27.

⁴² Rod Hague and Martin Harrop, *Comparative Government and Politics: An Introduction*, 6th edn. (New York: Palgrave, 2004), p. 243.

⁴³ *Ibid.*, p. 311.

⁴⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 311.

⁴⁵ Birkland, pp. 214-215.

⁴⁶ Yehezkel Dror, *Public Policymaking Reexamined* (Bedfordshire, Leonard Hill Books, 1974), p.132.

⁴⁷ Birkland, p. 214.

⁴⁸ Lindblom, cited in Hague and Harrop, p. 312.

⁴⁹ James P. Lester and Joseph Stewart, Jr., *Public Policy: An Evolutionary Approach*, 2nd edn. (Belmont: Wardsworth/Thomson Learning, 2000), p. 92.

3. Policy Implementation

Once the decision makers have completed formulating a policy, the policy is prepared for delivery and implementation. In the conventional stages model, implementation is assumed to be the role of bureaucrats and government agencies. The primary focus of this thesis is on the policy implementation stage.

4. Policy Evaluation

Evaluation follows policy implementation, and consists of clarifying the extent to which a policy has achieved the goals set by the decision-makers.⁵⁰

5. Feedback

Once the policy has been implemented and evaluated, feedback of the outcome of the policy is taken into account as it informs another round in the policy making process.⁵¹

This conception of public policy making provides a basic framework and context for examining implementation issues.

2.3 Evolution of Policy Implementation Theory

Policy implementation consists of a series of decisions and activities directed towards putting policy into action.⁵² As Heywood notes, implementation is generally seen as “an aspect of administration, not as a feature of politics”.⁵³ As Pressman and Wildavsky state, “a verb like ‘implement’ must have an object like ‘policy’”.⁵⁴ Once a policy has been determined, the next process is the response of the various actors.⁵⁵ Policy implementation involves all the parties and the activities involved in carrying out the decision. Typically, government officials and administrators translate government decisions into operational rules and regulations.⁵⁶ Increasingly there is recognition, then, that administrators also make

⁵⁰ Ibid., p. 313.

⁵¹ Birkland, p. 224.

⁵² Michael Hill and Peter Hupe, *Implementing Public Policy*, 2nd edn. (London: SAGE, 2002), p. 140.

⁵³ Andrew Heywood, *Politics*, 2nd edn. (New York: Palgrave, 2002), pp. 408-409.

⁵⁴ Pressman and Wildavsky, cited in Hill and Hupe, p. 44.

⁵⁵ Birkland, p. 181.

⁵⁶ Thomas R. Dye, *Understanding Public Policy*, 9th edn. (New Jersey: Prentice Hall, 1998), pp. 329-334.

policies as they engage in the tasks of implementation including the making of regulations, adjudicating cases, and exercising their discretion.

Policy implementation is generally carried out by the bureaucracy but progressively, administrative agencies are expected to implement policy in a network of governance, which includes other groups.⁵⁷ Policy implementation therefore involves various actors, organisations, procedures, and techniques, coming together to put policy into effect to achieve the policy goals.⁵⁸

Recognising the importance of the policy implementation process has been one of the major advances in the study of policy. A key concern in the study of policy implementation is with the extent to which those who formulate policy pay attention to the content and shape of a policy to ensure its successful implementation.⁵⁹ This refers to the administrative agencies that have the discretion and powers to issue rules and directives regarding policy.⁶⁰ There have been three main stages in research into the evolution of the policy implementation process.

2.3.1 The Top-Down Approach

The first stage of research of the policy implementation process began in the late 1960s and early 1970s with the seminal case studies by Jeffrey Pressman, Aaron Wildavsky, and Erwin Hargrove, who wrote about a missing link in the study of policy process,⁶¹ and Martha Derthick, who studied implementation issues.⁶² These cases, later known as “misery research,”⁶³ examined failures in the policy implementation process. According to these pioneer studies, “the problem of implementation was rarely analysed”⁶⁴ and the work spawned a number of subsequent studies.

With little available knowledge about the policy implementation process, people were eager “to understand why implementation failed or succeeded”.⁶⁵

⁵⁷ Peter John, *Analysing Public Policy* (London and New York: Pinter, 1998), p. 204

⁵⁸ Lester and Stewart, pp. 104-105.

⁵⁹ Hill and Hupe, pp. 125.

⁶⁰ Anderson, p.194.

⁶¹ Hill and Hupe, p. 18.

⁶² Birkland, p. 182.

⁶³ Hill and Hupe, p. 119.

⁶⁴ Wayne Parsons, *Public Policy: An Introduction to the Theory and Practice of Policy Analysis* (Cheltenham, Lyme: Edward Elgar, 1995), p. 464.

⁶⁵ Lester and Stewart, p. 110.

From the individual case studies that were carried out, it was concluded that “government sponsored programmes seldom achieved their objectives”⁶⁶ because of the lack of attention given to the policy implementation process and the implementers.

In addition, the Pressman, Wildavsky and Derthick⁶⁷ study of policy implementation was highly informative, but their contributions were limited by the absence of a theoretical perspective.⁶⁸ Their individual case studies did not offer any guidance about how to develop a model of the policy implementation process⁶⁹ that could be tested with other cases.⁷⁰ In addition, according to Lester and Stewart:

little or no attempt was made to develop any dynamic model of the policy implementation process that could explain such failures, or to provide any real guidance about how to relieve the problems. Moreover, the case study approach, used almost exclusively by the early researchers, made it exceedingly difficult for investigators to generalize from their findings.⁷¹

This body of work contributed to the ‘top-down’ approach to understanding implementation issues. From this perspective, policy implementation was analysed from the view of higher-level bureaucrats and executives who made policy decisions. The focus was on the decision-making of top level officials and their behaviour in working to ensure that a policy’s goals were attained or reformulated.⁷²

The policy process was viewed as a series of chains of command where political leaders articulate a clear policy preference, later carried out through the administrative machinery.⁷³ The nature of the relationship between the policy makers and policy implementers was seen as determining whether a policy was successful or unsuccessful. The ‘top-down’ approach was based on several assumptions.

1. Policies contain clearly defined goals against which performance can be measured.

⁶⁶ Ibid., p. 110.

⁶⁷ Birkland, p.182.

⁶⁸ Birkland, p. 45.

⁶⁹ Lester and Stewart, p. 110.

⁷⁰ Birkland, p. 182.

⁷¹ Lester and Stewart, p. 110.

⁷² Anderson, p. 194.

⁷³ Michael Howlett and M. Ramesh, *Studying Public Policy, Policy Cycles and Policy Subsystem* (Ontario: Oxford University Press, 1995), pp.153-154.

2. Policies contain clearly defined policy tools for the accomplishment of goals.
3. The policy is characterized by the existence of a single statute or other authoritative statement.
4. There is an “implementation chain” that “start[s] with [the] policy message at the top and sees implementation as occurring in a chain”.⁷⁴
5. Policy designers have a good knowledge of the capability and commitment of the implementers. With the availability of resources for an implementing organization to carry out its tasks, including monetary and human resources, legal authority and autonomy, and the knowledge, policy designers share with the lower-level implementers, the need to implement policy effectively. Commitment includes the desire of the implementers to carry out the goals of the top-level policy designers; a high level of commitment means that the values and goals of the policy designer are shared by the lower-level implementers, particularly those at the ‘street-level’ such as teachers, police officers, and social workers.⁷⁵

As Mazmanian and Sabatier asserted, the ‘top-down’ approach drew attention to the question of the extent of political control of a public organisation.⁷⁶ Consequently, it has led to a number of questions.

1. To what extent were the actions of implementing officials and target groups consistent with the objectives and procedures outlined in the policy decision?
2. To what extent were the objectives attained over time and were the impacts consistent with the objectives?
3. What were the principal factors affecting policy outputs and impacts, and were they relevant to the official policy as well as other politically significant ones?
4. How was the policy reformulated over time on the basis of experience?⁷⁷

Implementation theory suggests that it is difficult to minimize ‘implementation gaps’ where ‘top-down’ control cannot be exerted over actors whose commitment to policy intentions is voluntary.⁷⁸ The theory also considers that while government may pay more attention to decision-making and planning, this does not guarantee the success of the policy implementation process.⁷⁹

⁷⁴ Caroline Dyer, cited in Birkland, p. 183.

⁷⁵ Birkland, p. 183.

⁷⁶ Mazmanian and Sabatier, cited in Hill and Hupe, p. 54.

⁷⁷ Paul A. Sabatier, cited in Lester and Stewart, p. 110.

⁷⁸ Chris Allen, ‘They just don’t live and breathe the policy like we do: Policy Intentions and Practice Dilemmas in Modern Social Policy and Implementation Networks,’ *Policy Studies*, 22 (2001) 149-156 (p.150).

⁷⁹ Bachrach and Baratz, cited in Jos C. N. Raadschelders, *Government: A Public Administration Perspective* (New York: M.E. Sharpe, 2003), p. 267.

2.3.2 The Bottom-Up Approach

The next phase in the development of implementation theory began in the mid-1970s when an alternative to the 'top-down' approach was developed and several scholarly discussions regarding this approach and the emergent 'bottom-up' approach followed. In this era, systematic theories were developed for general cases rather than focusing on specific case studies⁸⁰ as in the first era. According to Birkland:

A second era of implementation studies... sought to create systematic theories of the policy process that were generalizable to many cases, rather than focus on one or a few cases.... The first of these approaches emphasizes a 'top-down' perspective of policy implementation. Its proponents claim that one can understand policy implementation by looking at the goals and strategies adopted in the statute These studies focus on the gaps between the goals set by a policy's drafters and the actual implementation and outcomes of the policy. The second approach emphasizes a 'bottom-up' perspective, which suggests that implementation is best studied by starting at the lowest levels of the implementation system or 'chain' and moving upward to see where implementation is more successful or less so.⁸¹

The 'bottom-up' approach emphasises the role of administrators at the local level who dealt directly with the policy in accordance with their responsibility to accomplish the policy's aims and objectives. The 'bottom-up' approach focused on the involvement of lower-level bureaucrats carrying out public policy decisions. The actions of lower level, or street level, administrators were seen as critical to policy implementation because of the way they carried out the policy determined at a higher level by policy initiators.⁸²

The 'bottom-up' approach first emerged when Lipsky argued that it was not easy to control the behaviour and activities of the front-line staff who develop their own ideas about how best to carry out their responsibilities and what was more effective in policy implementation, even though it is not necessarily what is required by the government.⁸³ Front-line staff were seen as playing a very important role not only because they delivered government policy but because they were often the only 'government' staff most citizens encountered. Teachers, police, and financial staff, in their positions as public policy providers, attract

⁸⁰ Birkland, p. 182.

⁸¹ Ibid., p. 182.

⁸² Ibid., p. 185.

⁸³ Michael Lipsky, cited in Jay M Shafritz et al., *Classics of Public Administration*, 5th edn. (Belmont: Wadsworth, 2004), p. 414.

political controversy and are constantly barraged by the demands of the recipients of the service to improve effectiveness and responsiveness, and by the demands of citizen groups to improve the efficacy and efficiency of government services.⁸⁴

Street level administrators were seen to approach policy implementation on the basis of their own judgements, values, opinions, experiences, history and background.⁸⁵ In addition, scarce resources or having limited power⁸⁶ were also found to be factors which made it difficult for staff at lower levels to work effectively in the policy implementation process. In his study, Lipsky saw “front line staff in social policy implementation agencies as isolated people trying to provide service in the face of conflicting hierarchical requirements, great pressure from the public and inadequate resources”.⁸⁷ In these conditions, the front-line staff may modify or change the intention of a policy to suit how they have to carry out the implementation process. From this, it follows that the outcome of policies determined by central government may frequently be different to those expected.

The ‘bottom-up’ approach implied, therefore, that the ‘top-down’ approach paid too much attention to top level officials and either ignored or underestimated the role of lower level bureaucrats. John points out that the ideas and influences arising from the involvement of implementers provide feedback to the top level decision-makers and so further influence policy choices.⁸⁸ As John says, “policy decisions can move ‘backwards’ from implementing organisations, such as local authorities and government agencies, to the policy formulators”.⁸⁹ Instead of focusing on the policy as in the ‘top-down’ approach, the ‘bottom-up’ approach recognised the role of bureaucrats at lower levels because they have a significant input into decision-making.⁹⁰ Bogason adds that the ‘top-down’ people invariably find problems with the organisational setting. Later, those ‘top-down’ people can give advice to the decision-makers on making policy without challenging the perspective of that particular organisation. In contrast, the perspective of the ‘bottom-up’ people is to deal with the policy implementation process, which allows them to be able to address any interaction that is linked to the policy

⁸⁴ Ibid., p. 414.

⁸⁵ Michael Lipsky, *Street-Level Bureaucracy Dilemmas of the Individual in Public Service*. (New York: Russell Sage, 1980), p. 13.

⁸⁶ Lipsky, cited in Michael Hill and Glen Bramley, *Analysing Social Policy* (Oxford: Blackwell, 1986), p. 168.

⁸⁷ Ibid., p. 168.

⁸⁸ John, p. 203.

⁸⁹ Ibid., p. 29.

⁹⁰ Ibid., p. 30.

implementation problem instead of being tied to a particular definition by one organisation, which may only be part of the solution.⁹¹

2.3.3 Debate between the 'Top-Down' and 'Bottom-Up' Approaches

The 'top-down' and the 'bottom-up' debates centre on the separation of implementation from policy formation.⁹² This is only part of a wider issue of how to identify the features of a very complex process that writers respond to in a variety of ways.⁹³ The two concepts have some very different characteristics and foci.

Because the 'top-down' approach emphasises clear objectives and the creation of proper structures and controls to encourage compliance with the goals set at the top level, if there is no consensus as to what the programme goals are, then it will be very difficult to set a standard for programme success or failure.⁹⁴ Furthermore, the 'bottom-up' approach recognises that policy goals are often ambiguous and may conflict not only with other goals in the same policy area, but also with the norms and motivations of the street-level bureaucrats.⁹⁵ 'Top-down' models are most concerned with compliance, while 'bottom-up' approaches value an understanding of how conflict can be alleviated by bargaining and sometimes compromise. According to Birkland, the:

'top-down' approach is much more useful when there is a single, dominant program that is being studied. The 'bottom-up' approach, however, is best for there is no one dominant program and one is more interested in the local dynamic of implementation than on the broad sweep of design.⁹⁶

The arguments about the merits of 'top-down' and 'bottom-up' approaches have been protracted and ultimately unfruitful since both offer insights into the making and implementation of policy.

2.3.4 Synthesis

The 'bottom-up' approach depicts the policy implementation process as not only involving a relationship between policy makers and implementers, but also a

⁹¹ Peter Bogason, *Public Policy and Local Government: Institutions in Postmodern Society* (Cheltenham: Edward Elgar, 2000), p. 8.

⁹² Hill and Hupe, p. 43.

⁹³ *Ibid.*, p. 43.

⁹⁴ Birkland, p.183.

⁹⁵ Birkland, p.185.

⁹⁶ *Ibid.*, pp. 186-187.

range of factors that affect the process of policy implementation. Both the 'top-down' and the 'bottom-up' approaches offer insight into the key factors in policy implementation and, in practice, both approaches are needed to achieve better and effective policy implementation.

Under the third stage, the 'top-down' and 'bottom-up' approaches are integral to the policy implementation process. Following criticism of both approaches, proposals for a synthesis resulted in the incorporation of three different features of those approaches. First, Richard Elmore developed a combination of 'backward mapping' and 'forward mapping',⁹⁷ taking into account the significance of both the top level policy maker and the street level implementer in contributing to, and facilitating the policy implementation process.⁹⁸ He also noted that instead of paying attention to the policy instrument, the policymakers must consider other resources at their disposal - 'forward mapping'.

Elmore's 'backward mapping' was derived from the recognition that those implementing policy are forced to make choices between the programmes that conflict and interact with one another.⁹⁹ From this, Elmore sees 'forward mapping' as the 'top-down' approach that was difficult to maintain in the face of accumulating evidence on the nature of the implementation process.¹⁰⁰ From this, he pays more attention to the 'bottom-up' people in terms of the relationship of policy-makers to policy deliverers. The idea of 'backward mapping' offers a way of both analysing and organising policy from its end-point.¹⁰¹ Elmore focuses on the issues of policy implementation, rather than offering rules about how to control implementation.¹⁰² From this, he defines 'backward mapping' as:

backward reasoning from the individual and organizational choices that are the hub of the problem to which policy is addressed, to the rules, procedures and structures that have the closest proximity to those choices, to the policy instruments available to affect those things, and hence to feasible policy objectives.¹⁰³

⁹⁷ Lester and Stewart, pp. 113-114.

⁹⁸ Birkland, p. 187.

⁹⁹ Richard Elmore, cited in Hill and Hupe, p. 58.

¹⁰⁰ Parsons, p. 468.

¹⁰¹ Ibid., p. 469.

¹⁰² Richard Elmore, cited in Hill and Hupe, p. 58.

¹⁰³ Ibid., p. 58.

Sabatier's Advocacy Coalition Framework focuses on adopting the best of the 'top-down' and 'bottom-up' approaches as they both offer insight into the policy implementation process at different stages.¹⁰⁴ According to Sabatier:

adopting the bottom-uppers' unit of analysis [involves] a whole variety of public and private actors involved with a policy problem - as well as their concerns with understanding the perspectives and strategies of all major categories of actors (not simply program proponents). It then combined this starting point with the top-downers' concerns with the manner in which socio-economic conditions and legal instruments constrain behavior. It applies this synthesized perspective to the analysis of policy change over a decade or more.¹⁰⁵

Sabatier therefore sought to combine the best of both the 'top-down' and 'bottom-up' approaches in developing the conceptual framework.¹⁰⁶ As Sabatier notes:

The top-down approach appears to have a comparative advantage in situations in which (1) there is a dominant piece of legislation structuring the situation or in which, (2) research funds are very limited, or is primarily interested in mean responses, and the situation is structured at least moderately well. In contrast, the bottom-up approach is more appropriate in situations where (1) there is no dominant piece of legislation but a rather large number of actors without power dependency, or where (2) one is primarily interested in the dynamics of different local situations.¹⁰⁷

That is to say, the 'top-down' approach is better where there is a dominant programme, in instances where the law is well structured, where there are limited funds, and when there is a situation that someone requires a programme structure quickly.¹⁰⁸ However, the 'bottom-up' approach is better when there is no single dominant programme, or where interest is expressed in the dynamics of the policy implementation process at the local level.¹⁰⁹

According to Sabatier, the Advocacy Coalition Framework reflects the growing sense that implementation does not take place in a one-to-one relationship between the policy makers, implementers, and targets, but that policy subsystems¹¹⁰ are composed of actors who play a part in the generation,

¹⁰⁴ Birkland, p. 187.

¹⁰⁵ Paul Sabatier, cited in Hill and Hupe, p. 65.

¹⁰⁶ Paul Sabatier, cited in Birkland, p. 186.

¹⁰⁷ Paul Sabatier, 'Top-down and Bottom-up Approaches to Implementation Research: A Critical Analysis and Suggested Synthesis', *Journal of Public Policy*, 6 (1986), 21- 48 (p. 37). <<http://journals.cambridge.org>> [access 12 December 2007].

¹⁰⁸ Birkland, p. 187.

¹⁰⁹ Ibid., p. 187.

¹¹⁰ Birkland, p. 188.

dissemination and evaluation of policy.¹¹¹ Sabatier's framework synthesises 'top-down' and bottom-up' approaches when a policy problem or subsystem are studied, rather than focusing on law or the policy decision framework. It requires that attention be given to the strategies employed by relevant actors at different levels of government as they interact to clarify the policy's objectives. It also requires attention be given to the legal and socio-economic factors which structure behavioural options in the implementation process.¹¹²

The communication model developed by Malcolm Goggin et al also focuses on intergovernmental relationships between the top level and the administrators. Birkland refers to it as "the sending of messages between policy implementation and implementers".¹¹³ This model emphasises conditions that affect decisions of whether to accept or reject messages communicated between layers of organisations.¹¹⁴ Two propositions from Goggin et al are:

1. Clear messages sent by credible officials and received by receptive implementers who have or are given sufficient resources and who implement policies supported by affected groups lead to implementation success.
2. Strategic delay on the part of states, while delaying the implementation of policies, can actually lead to improved implementation of policies through innovation, policy learning, bargaining, and the like.¹¹⁵

Goggin et al explain the first proposition by pointing out that the messages are frequently ambiguous. The policy implementers are either very receptive, receive insufficient resources, or are opposed by the affected groups. In the second proposition Goggin et al argue the necessity of being concerned about the "strategically delayed implementation".¹¹⁶ This refers to the clarification of policy, more funds, and ensuring that there is the necessary support before a policy is implemented. By delaying the implementation of a policy, there is more time for the implementers to study, as well as prepare for and improve the service they offer.¹¹⁷

The third phase in the theorisation of policy implementation, therefore, draws attention to the way in which both 'top-down' and 'bottom up' perspectives

¹¹¹ Parsons, p. 196.

¹¹² Sabatier, pp. 38-39.

¹¹³ Birkland, p. 188.

¹¹⁴ Michael Howlett and M. Ramesh, *Studying Public Policy, Policy Cycles and Policy Subsystem*, 2nd edn. (Ontario: Oxford University Press, 2003), p. 152.

¹¹⁵ Birkland, p. 188.

¹¹⁶ Ibid., p. 188.

¹¹⁷ Ibid., pp. 188-189.

are significant in the understanding of policy implementation. Allen argues that the resulting model of policy implementation enables policy makers to achieve their goals by offering advice as to how they can exert greater control over the implementation process.¹¹⁸

2.4 Policy Implementation Failure

Ensuring the success of policy implementation is “one of the most difficult aspects of the policy process”.¹¹⁹ The often-noted reality is that it is difficult for a government to ensure policies will achieve the goals it is seeking. John and Kress et al refer to this as policy drift¹²⁰ - the way events gradually shift the policy aims and later make the objective of the policy go awry. Because this can occur at any time, and even though policy makers endeavour to ensure the policy they determine is appropriate, there is no guarantee that the policy implementation process will be successful. A government needs to understand that policy drift can occur as the result of many unforeseen variables beyond their control.¹²¹

Several scholars consider that policy implementation failure is relevant to the ‘top-down and ‘bottom-up’ approaches. Barrett and Fudge see policy implementation failure as the outcome of a process when the top level actor demands the lower level actor conform to what they, the top level actor, expects from the policy they have determined.¹²² Rather it is the negotiating process in which control over policy execution or objectives is a key factor that ensures the success or failure of policy implementation.¹²³ Barrett and Fudge note:

If implementation is defined as putting policy into effect, that is, action in conformance with policy, then compromise will be seen as a policy failure. But if implementation is regarded as ‘getting something done’, then performance rather than conformance is the central objective, and compromise a means of achieving performance albeit at the expense of some of the original intentions.¹²⁴

In addition, Goodrice suggests that rather than increasing control over programme resources, the government must pay attention to the policy process in

¹¹⁸ Allen, pp. 149-156.

¹¹⁹ Birkland, p. 197.

¹²⁰ John, p. 3.; Guenther Kress, J. Fred Springer and Gustev Koehler, cited in Mike Harder, ‘Implementing.’ *Policy Studies Journal Special*, 3 (1980), 1087-1089 (p.1088).

¹²¹ John, p. 30.

¹²² Susan Barrett and Colin Fudge, *Policy and Practice: Essay on the Implementation of Public Policy* (London and New York: Methuen, 1981), p. 210.

¹²³ *Ibid.*, p. 20.

¹²⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 21.

order to improve local staff performance.¹²⁵ John considers it important for a government to pay attention to both the 'top-down' and 'bottom-up' approaches.¹²⁶ Providing assistance and suggestions to people who work at the lower level will enhance the policy implementation process. This is because it is important to see the process holistically, from the beginning through to the end.

While several scholars mentioned that 'top-down' and 'bottom-up' approaches can explain causes of policy implementation failure, Edwards sees that the synthesis perspective can also explain the cause of policy implementation failure. He notes:

Policy implementers may know what to do and have sufficient desire and resources to do it, but they may still be hampered in implementation by the structures of the organizations in which they serve.¹²⁷

As he explains, differences in the origin of organisational characteristics can inhibit policy implementation¹²⁸ causing the frontline workers to implement the policy in different ways.¹²⁹ Because policy failure may occur at any stage of the process, it is necessary to pay attention to the relationship between the implementers implementing the policy rather than examining the behaviour of the top level actor in determining national policies, and the behaviour of the street level agencies in policy implementation.

The following three sections look at policy implementation failure from 'top-down', 'bottom-up' and synthesis perspectives.

2.4.1 Policy failure from a 'top-down' perspective

According to Bachrach and Baratz, the shaping of policy may continue to change during the process of implementation.¹³⁰ This may result in goal displacement, which normally occurs when the objectives actually implemented differ significantly from their initial intention. In relation to the 'top-down' approach, policy implementation failure can be the consequence of a variety of factors as described below.

¹²⁵ James Goodrice, cited in Mike Harder, p.1088.

¹²⁶ John, p. 30.

¹²⁷ George C. Edwards, *Implementing Public Policy* (Washington D.C: Congressional Quarterly Press, 1980), p. 125.

¹²⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 134.

¹²⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 134.

¹³⁰ Bachrach and Baratz, p. 267.

2.4.1.1 Policy formulation

Because policy formulation is primarily focused at the top level,¹³¹ decision-makers can provoke policy implementation failure if they initiate ambiguous policies¹³² which have unclear goals and vague priorities,¹³³ all of which make it difficult for frontline workers to put the policies into practice.

According to Sabatier, difficulties in the designing of policy reflects the reality that successful policy implementation can take more than ten to twenty years.¹³⁴ From this, John notes that policy decision-making is characterised through the linear sequence of learning, adaptation and reformulation.¹³⁵ Policy-makers learn from mistakes and produce policies that are more appropriate or effective, and administrators, too, learn from mistakes in implementation.

2.4.1.2 Lack of resources provided from central government

Another factor that may lead to policy implementation failure is a lack of essential resourcing from the central government. This occurs in three ways. First, there is inadequate information. Edwards notes that one of the critical resources in policy implementation is clear and concise information.¹³⁶ If policies are innovative and highly technical, the implementers need to have sufficient information, a clear context, direction, and structure,¹³⁷ to enable them to carry out the policies successfully.

Second, policy implementation must be supported by sufficient funding otherwise the task cannot be accomplished.¹³⁸ One classical example of a lack of funding which caused policy implementation failure is Pressman and Wildavsky's study of policy implementation using Oakland City, California, as a case study.

¹³¹ Edwards, p. 102.

¹³² Paul Sabatier and Daniel Mazmanian, cited in Susan Barrett and Colin Fudge, *Policy and Practice: Essay on the implementation of Public Policy* (London and New York: Methuen, 1981), p. 18.

¹³³ Bachrach and Baratz, cited in Raadschelders, p. 264.

¹³⁴ Sabatier, cited in John, p. 30.

¹³⁵ John, p. 30.

¹³⁶ Edwards, p. 10.

¹³⁷ Sabatier and Mazmanian, cited in Barrett and Fudge, p. 8.

¹³⁸ Steven Kelman, *Making Public Policy A Hopeful View of American Government* (New York: Basic Books, Inc., 1987), p. 161.

According to Pressman and Wildavsky, the project was delayed due to the “difficulties concerning interim financing”¹³⁹ when the Economic Development Administration, which had the funds, had no policy to “advance grant funds for interim development and construction financing”.¹⁴⁰ Edwards also notes that the problem of insufficient funds can cause embarrassment to those involved in the implementation process and antagonize those whose active support is necessary for effective implementation.¹⁴¹

Third, high level bureaucrats are often not aware of the lower level’s capacity to follow and complete a mission. This lack of awareness can lead to inadequate preparations and resource allocations to those expected to implement a policy.¹⁴² Resources can be taken to refer to a “staff of sufficient size with the proper skills to carry out their assignments”,¹⁴³ along with the authority and facilities.¹⁴⁴ Parsons notes that the implementation process requires a top level to provide the resources to a lower level to do a job.¹⁴⁵ In addition, Edwards explains that even though the implementation process may be accurately transmitted and consistently, if the frontline workers lack the resources necessary to carry out the policies, implementation is unlikely to be effective.

2.4.1.3 Policy inconsistencies

Problems regarding policy implementation may occur when those actors who implement policies are confused by inconsistency at a higher level and thus are unable to interpret as well as to carry out a policy’s goal.¹⁴⁶ According to Edwards:

Implementation orders must be consistent as well as clear if policy implementation is to be effective. Transmitting clear but contradictory instructions will hardly make

¹³⁹ Jeffrey L. Pressman and Aaron Wildavsky, *Implementation: How Great Expectations in Washington Are Dashed in Oakland; or Why It’s Amazing that Federal Programs Work at All, This Being a Saga of the Economic Development Administration as Told by Two Sympathetic Observers Who Seek to Build Morale on a Foundation of Ruined Hopes. The Oakland Project*, 3rd edn. (Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1984), p. 36.

¹⁴⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 36.

¹⁴¹ Edwards, p. 67.

¹⁴² Charles E. Lindblom, *The Policy Making Process*, 2nd edn. (New Jersey: Prentice Hall, 1980), p. 67.

¹⁴³ *Ibid.*, p. 53.

¹⁴⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 56.

¹⁴⁵ Parsons, pp. 461-468.

¹⁴⁶ Edwards, p. 41.

it easier for operational personnel to expedite implementation. Nevertheless, implementors are at times burdened with inconsistent directives.¹⁴⁷

Edwards notes several factors that produce policy inconsistency. These include the complexity of public policies, the difficulties in starting up new programmes, and the multiple objectives of many policies.¹⁴⁸ According to Edwards:

Inconsistency, like ambiguity, also result from a desire not to alienate interests, and the greater the number of competing interests that seek to influence a policy's implementation, the greater the chance of inconsistent implementation instructions. Finally, the more concerned decisionmakers are with overturning precedent, the higher the probability of their decision appearing to be inconsistent as they attempt to change policy without seeming to do so.¹⁴⁹

From this, central government must be aware and make certain there are no problems regarding policy inconsistencies, otherwise, frontline workers may be confused and unable to fulfil the policy implementation process.¹⁵⁰

2.4.2 Insights into reasons for policy failure from a 'bottom up' perspective

Because the top level people and the agencies have different responsibilities in the policy implementation process, it is necessary to make certain that those frontline people who put the policy into practice respond to the policy correctly. Problems regarding policy failure from the 'bottom-up' can be explained in terms of the limited capabilities of bureaucrats. One set of problems can be due to difficulties in policy interpretation. Rawson agrees with Hill and Hupe that a prime cause of implementation failure¹⁵¹ arises because the policy contents or policy characteristics¹⁵² are ambiguous for government agencies to implement. While those who are policy-makers require implementers to be competent¹⁵³ and to respond the policies correctly, ambiguous policies may lead the frontline workers to interpret the policies in different ways.

Another set of problems can be due to the background and experience of bureaucrats. In addition to the decision-makers at the top level, the frontline

¹⁴⁷ Ibid., pp. 40-41.

¹⁴⁸ Ibid., pp. 45-46.

¹⁴⁹ Ibid., p. 46.

¹⁵⁰ Ibid., p. 41.

¹⁵¹ George E. Rawson, cited in Harder, p.1088.

¹⁵² Hill and Hupe, p. 124.

¹⁵³ Ibid., p. 124.

workers also play an important role in policy implementation. Anderson observes that because the administrative agencies are the primary implementers of public policy, their performance affects citizens more regularly than other government organisations.¹⁵⁴ Hill and Hupe identify those agency responses in policy implementation¹⁵⁵ which may later cause policy failure. First, there are overall conditions regarding organisational control, inter-organisation relationships, and formal and informal linkages in policy-making.¹⁵⁶ The disposition of agencies which implement the policy¹⁵⁷ concentrates on three different elements: a) the agencies' cognition of the policy (comprehension or understanding); b) the direction of the agencies' responsibilities to policy (acceptance, neutrality, or rejection); and c) the intensity of the response. Second, there are the issues about the behaviour of street level staff¹⁵⁸ as they bring their individual background and experiences to the implementation process: their individual judgement; values; opinions; experience; history and background.¹⁵⁹

2.4.2.1 Nature of problems affecting policy implementation

Several factors can determine policy implementation success or failure, which can vary according to region, the local context, cultural practice, mixing of ethnicities, assumptions around gender,¹⁶⁰ and economic forces.¹⁶¹ The nature of the problem being addressed is also influenced by changes in social and economic conditions,¹⁶² the availability of new technology,¹⁶³ and variation in political circumstances of the target group.¹⁶⁴ As a consequence, the ultimate outcomes may differ from those expected by central government.¹⁶⁵

Anderson draws attention to the different structures, operating styles, political support, expertise, and policy orientation of administrative organisations. John points out that organisations differ from one another in the way they operate

¹⁵⁴ Anderson, p. 196.

¹⁵⁵ Hill and Hupe, p. 128.

¹⁵⁶ Ibid., p. 129.

¹⁵⁷ Ibid., p. 128.

¹⁵⁸ Ibid., p. 131.

¹⁵⁹ John, p. 134.

¹⁶⁰ Matthew O. Jackson, 'A Crash in Implementation Theory', *Journal of Social Choice Welfare*, 18 (2001), 656 - 660 (p.660).

¹⁶¹ Hill and Hupe, p. 136.

¹⁶² Howlett and Ramesh, 1995, pp. 153-156.

¹⁶³ Jackson, pp. 656 - 660.

¹⁶⁴ Ibid., pp. 153-156.

¹⁶⁵ Ibid., pp. 656 - 660.

and in the way they respond to the policy implementation. Anderson¹⁶⁶ observes that “conflict over questions of administrative organisation can be every bit as sharp as conflict over substantive policies. Forming an administrative organisation is a political as well as a technical task”.¹⁶⁷ According to Seidman:

Organizational arrangements are not neutral. We do not organize in a vacuum. Organization is one way of expressing national commitments, influencing program direction, and ordering priorities. Organizational arrangements tend to give some interests and perspectives more effective access to those with decision-making authority, whether they be in the Congress or in the executive branch.¹⁶⁸

From this, as Anderson and Nagel note, “the content and impact of policy is affected by how it is implemented”.¹⁶⁹ Since there are different administrative organisations involved in policy implementation, it is difficult to control the policy implementation process. As Edwards notes, “the more actors and agencies involved with a particular policy and the more interdependent their decision, the less the probability of successful implementation”.¹⁷⁰

2.4.3 Policy failure - synthesising ‘top-down’ and ‘bottom-up’ perspectives

A synthesis of the two perspectives suggests policy implementation failure can occur in different ways. It is quite clear that top level officials alone cannot make the implementation of policy successful. That means, “different bureaucratic agencies at different levels of government (national, state or provincial, and local) are involved in implementing policy”,¹⁷¹ especially administrators at the lower level who are essential parts of policy implementation; indeed, policy implementation relies on their efficiency.¹⁷² Therefore, poor relationships within government

¹⁶⁶ Anderson classifies four different kinds of agencies: executive department, independent regulatory commission, government cooperation, and independent agencies. See more in Anderson, pp. 202-204.

¹⁶⁷ Ibid., p. 202.

¹⁶⁸ Harold Seidman, cited in Anderson, p. 202.

¹⁶⁹ Anderson, p. 202., Stuart S. Nagel, *The Policy Studies Handbook* (Massachusetts: D.C. Heath and Company, 1980), pp. 30-31.

¹⁷⁰ Edwards, p. 134.

¹⁷¹ Howlett and Ramesh, 2003, p. 187.

¹⁷² David Beetham, *Bureaucracy*, 2nd edn. (Minneapolis: Open University Press 1996), pp. 42-43.

organisations and problematic inter-organisational relationships are important reasons for policy implementation failure.¹⁷³

Colebatch observes that a shared understanding of the policy is significant for successful policy implementation. It is often the case, however, that those who participate in the implementing process come from different perspectives and what they know is often in conflict with what others in the implementation process know.¹⁷⁴

Focussing on the inter-relationships between organisations draws attention to links between different levels and layers of government. As Hill and Hupe note, paying attention to the specific level and organisation will normally enhance policy implementation.¹⁷⁵ Inadequate coordination or collaboration between organisations at the vertical level is likely to impede the policy implementation.¹⁷⁶ Problems of coordination and collaboration between organisations at the horizontal level, where there is no hierarchical accountability, are also likely to cause problems, for example through overlaps between organisations.¹⁷⁷ Hierarchy also means that those at upper levels have a larger voice in agency decisions because of their higher status, even though lower level officials may have more substantive qualifications and information.¹⁷⁸

Hill and Hupe note that the quality of collaborative relationships in policy implementation is shaped by the type of network between organisations.¹⁷⁹ If there is a well functioning network and effective relationships between policy-makers and implementers, and among government agencies, then implementation will be more successful. It is less likely that there will be miscommunication between different levels and layers of the organisations involved.

A vertical perspective of policy implementation draws attention to the possibility of difficulties in communication between agencies at different levels - upper and lower - where the administrators at the lower level may have problems

¹⁷³ Shannon Frattaroli and Stephen P Teret, 'Understanding and Informing Policy Implementation: A Case Study of the Domestic Violence Provisions of the Maryland Gun Violence Act.' *Evaluation Review*, 30 (2006), 347-360 (pp. 357-358).

¹⁷⁴ H.K. Colebatch, *Policy* (Buckingham: Open University Press, 1998), p. 107.

¹⁷⁵ Hill and Hupe, pp. 149-150.

¹⁷⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 127.

¹⁷⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 133.

¹⁷⁸ Anderson, p. 212.

¹⁷⁹ Hill and Hupe, pp. 133, 149-150.

regarding “how to get the message right”,¹⁸⁰ or as Dunsire calls this “a failure of communication”.¹⁸¹ The horizontal approach draws attention to possible problems in terms of the quality of coordination and collaboration between organisations. The nature of the networks between organisations, then, and the quality of the relationships between officials within the organisations, their attitudes, trust and individual behaviour, are important factors.¹⁸²

2.5 Summary

The discussion of policy implementation draws attention to the significance of the way national policies emerge not only from the intentions of top level bureaucrats, but also from lower level agencies with input into policy decision-making. Important concerns for central government are, first, how central government itself determines appropriate policies, and, second, how government policies are carried out at the street level. The previous discussion shows that once a policy is determined there is no guarantee that what is produced - the policy outputs - will meet the desired goals or requirements. The discussion also leads to the conclusion that success in policy implementation depends on sound policy ideas and appropriate processes to carry out the policy.

2.6 Propositions

Drawing from the previous review, a number of propositions for testing by reference to a case study have been derived.

1. Policy implementation is best understood by “looking at the goals and strategies adopted in the statute” (derived from Birkland);¹⁸³
2. Policy implementation is best understood from the lowest level of the implementation system (derived from Birkland);¹⁸⁴
3. The policy implementation process is best understood by analysing and organising policy from its end points (derived from Elmore’s proposition regarding ‘backward mapping’ and the need to take account of all policy

¹⁸⁰ K.D. Cline, cited in Hill and Hupe, p. 150.

¹⁸¹ Andrew Dunsire, *Control in a bureaucracy* (Oxford: Martin Robertson 1978), p. 17.

¹⁸² *Ibid.*, p. 151.

¹⁸³ Birkland, p. 182.

¹⁸⁴ Birkland, p. 182.

actors who influence the policy implementation process.¹⁸⁵ Rather than paying attention only to the policy makers at the top level, Elmore focuses on the relationship between the policy makers and policy deliverers at the end points in the process);¹⁸⁶

4. The 'top-down' approach is better where there is a dominant programme such as where the law is well structured, where there are limited funds, and when there is a situation that someone requires a programme structure quickly. Nevertheless, the 'bottom-up' approach is better when there is no single dominant programme, or where interest is expressed in the dynamics of the policy implementation process at the local level (derived from Sabatier's proposition that sought to combine the best of both 'top-down' and 'bottom-up' approaches. As Sabatier sees it, both 'top-down' and 'bottom-up' approaches actually offer insight into the policy implementation process.¹⁸⁷ Policy implementation does not take place in a one-to-one relationship between the policy makers, implementers, and targets (of policy), but among all policy implementers who are involved with the policy process);¹⁸⁸

5. Clear messages sent by credible officials and received by receptive implementers who have or are given sufficient resources and who implement policies supported by affected groups lead to implementation success (derived from Goggin's proposition that policy implementers frequently receive ambiguous messages and inadequate resources from those at the top);¹⁸⁹

6. Even though policy makers aspire to develop appropriate policies, there is no guarantee the implementation process will be successful because policy drift can shift policy aims and later make the objective of the policy go awry (derived from John's proposition that once a policy is launched, there is a possibility that the outcome will be different from what was expected given unforeseen conditions beyond the government's control);¹⁹⁰

¹⁸⁵ Elmore, cited in Hill and Hupe, p. 58.

¹⁸⁶ Parsons, p. 468.

¹⁸⁷ Birkland, p. 187.

¹⁸⁸ Parsons, p. 196., Sabatier, p. 37., Birkland, p. 187.

¹⁸⁹ Birkland, p. 188.

¹⁹⁰ John, p. 3.

7. If implementation is defined as putting policy into effect, that is, action in conformance with policy, then compromise will be seen as a policy failure. But if implementation is regarded as 'getting something done', then performance rather than conformance is the central objective, and compromise a means of achieving performance albeit at the expense of some of the original intentions (derived from Barrett and Fudge's proposition that implementation failure can occur when the top level demands the lower level to conform to clearly defined prescribed steps, without regard to the outcome of following those);¹⁹¹

8. Policy implementers may know what to do and have sufficient desire and resources to do it, but they may still be hampered in implementation by the structures of the organisations in which they serve (derived from Edwards's proposition that organisational characteristics at different levels can influence and inhibit the policy implementation process);¹⁹²

9. One of the critical resources in policy implementation is clear and concise information. If policies are innovative and highly technical, the implementers need to have sufficient information, a clear context, direction, and structure (derived from the Edwards', and Sabatier and Mazmanian's propositions that if the policy makers initiate ambiguous policies, the implementers who deliver the policy will have difficulty in putting the policy into practice effectively);¹⁹³

10. Policy implementation must be supported by sufficient funding otherwise the task cannot be accomplished (derived from Kelman);¹⁹⁴

11. Implementation orders must be consistent as well as clear if policy implementation is to be effective. Transmitting clear but contradictory instructions will hardly make it easier for operational personnel to expedite implementation. Nevertheless, implementers are at times burdened with inconsistent directives (derived from Edwards's proposition that problems

¹⁹¹ Barrett and Fudge, p. 210.

¹⁹² Edwards, p. 125.

¹⁹³ Sabatier and Mazmanian, cited in Barrett and Fudge, p. 8., Edwards, p. 10.

¹⁹⁴ Kelman, p. 161.

occur when frontline workers are confused by inconsistent instructions by the higher level);¹⁹⁵

12. A prime cause of implementation failure arises because the policy contents or policy characteristics are ambiguous for government agencies to implement. While those who are policy-makers require implementers to be competent and to respond to the policies correctly, ambiguous policies may lead the frontline workers to interpret the policies in different ways (derived from Rawson and Hill and Hupe's proposition that frontline workers have limited capabilities in interpreting policy. If the policy contents or policy characteristics are ambiguous, frontline workers will face difficulty interpreting the policy leading to implementation failure);¹⁹⁶

13. Street-level staff bring their individual background and experiences to the implementation process, that is their individual judgements, values, opinions, experience, history and background, and these influence how they interpret and apply policy directions (derived from John's and Hill and Hupe's proposition that that the frontline workers bring their background and experiences to the implementation process);¹⁹⁷

14. Factors according to region, the local context, cultural practice, mixing of ethnicities, assumptions around gender, and economic forces, which are influenced by changes in social and economic conditions, the availability of new technology, variation in political circumstances of the target group can determine policy implementation success or failure (derived from Jackson, Hill and Hupe, and Howlett and Ramesh);¹⁹⁸

15. Coordination and collaboration problems between organisations at the vertical level may impede the policy implementation process because of gaps or breakdowns between the multi-layers of governments (derived from Hill and Hupe's proposition that complex layers in the administrative system can undermine the policy implementation process).¹⁹⁹

¹⁹⁵ Edwards, p. 41.

¹⁹⁶ Rawson, cited in Harder, p. 1087-1089 (p. 1088); Hill and Hupe, p. 124.

¹⁹⁷ Hill and Hupe, p. 131.; John, p. 134.

¹⁹⁸ Jackson, pp. 656 - 660.; Hill and Hupe, p. 36.; Howlett and Ramesh, 1995, pp. 153-156.

¹⁹⁹ Hill and Hupe, p. 127.

2.7 A case study of policy implementation in Thailand

These propositions about policy implementation will be examined through a case study of the policy to decentralise key aspects of government in Thailand. Since the 1990s, through its national planning process, the Thai government has initiated greater decentralisation and the devolution²⁰⁰ of more power to local government. The Plan for Decentralisation of Power to the Locality launched in 1997; later passed by the Cabinet on 3 October 2000, contained three substantial principles: 1) autonomy, 2) clear delineation, and 3) efficiency.²⁰¹ As well as the Ninth National Economic and Social Development Plan's perspective, the Constitution of the Kingdom of Thailand B.E. 2540 (1997) proposed a greater opportunity in national participation to the people at both local and national levels. An amendment to this 1997 Constitution specifically required the transmission of power to communities to enable greater participation in policy making at a regional and local level,²⁰² allowing governments to improve the delivery of services to people in the local area. The changes involved a restructuring of the balance of power between national and local government.²⁰³

These changes are significant, but there is the potential for the policy not to be implemented as intended. Implementation gaps are likely to be caused by deficiencies in the capacity of SAOs, in their degree of resourcing, in the capabilities and expectations of key personnel, and in the ongoing relationship between local and central government. There are real challenges in achieving the goal of decentralisation because now the SAO is an organisation that has seen

²⁰⁰ Devolution refers to the process whereby the central government grants decision - making autonomy including some legislative powers, to local government. In a devolved system, local governments have clear and legally recognised geographical boundaries over which they exercise authority and within which they perform public functions.

The World bank Group, *Administrative Decentralization*, [n.d.], <<http://www1.worldbank.org/publicsector/decentralisation/admin.htm>> [accessed 11 November 2011].

²⁰¹ Woothisarn Tanchai, *Decentralization in Thailand. Issues of Government Policy Formulation Towards Decentralization*, [n.d.], <http://www.decentralization.ws/icd2/papers/decent_thailand.htm> [accessed 15 May 2006]. (p. 2).

²⁰² Ibid.

²⁰³ UNESCAP, Local government in Asia and the Pacific: A Comparative Study, *Thailand*, (United Nations Economics and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific), [n.d.], <<http://www.unescap.org/huset/lgstudy/country/thai/ind/thai.html>> [accessed 2 June 2006].

power transferred from central government to the SAO in order that foundation unit has the autonomy to work out and implement its own policies.

There are two aspects of these reforms to be examined in this thesis. The first is to examine the practices following Thailand's promotion of the decentralisation policy stated in the Constitution of the Kingdom of Thailand B.E. 2540 (1997) and in Thailand's National Economic and Social Development Plan (Ninth Plan 2002-2006).

The second area to be examined is the role of the SAOs in Chiang Rai province as part of the decentralisation policy, and the capacity of the SAOs' role in implementing decentralisation and carrying out the intentions of central government. Four areas provide the main focus of this study:

- 1) SAO staff understanding of decentralisation policy;
- 2) Inter-relationships between organisations, in both vertical and horizontal dimensions;
- 3) The impact the different interpretations of the policy makers and the government officials have on decentralisation policy;
- 4) The effects of other conditions on the efforts to implement the decentralisation, including the capacity of SAOs to implement the policy of decentralisation, the extent of SAO autonomy from central government in providing public services, and the adequacy of revenue available to the SAOs for policy implementation.

The case study will thus involve an examination of Subdistrict Administrative Organisations within Chiang Rai. Subdistrict Administrative Organisations are the lowest level of local government and the foundation units of local administrative organisation and they have been one of the key organisational means in the attempt to promote government decentralisation. Since 1995, they have been given greater autonomy to make and implement decisions, and they are expected by those who initiated this change to reflect, in policy and services, the distinctiveness of their own communities.²⁰⁴ The expectation is that by working with

²⁰⁴ Office of the Decentralization to Local Government Organization Committee, *Decentralization*, [n.d.], <http://203.170.239.216/dlocT/images/upload_article/28_1.%20การกระจายอำนาจคืออะไร.doc> [accessed 15 July 2006].

people in a local area to determine and establish policy, communities will become more independent and vigorous.²⁰⁵

2.7.1 Justification of the case study approach

Case studies allow for the close examination of the complexities of phenomena within specific real-life contexts.²⁰⁶ They allow for questions of ‘how’ and ‘why’ to be considered.²⁰⁷ Typically, they draw on multiple sources of evidence such as surveys, histories, and interviews. They provide context-dependent knowledge that is useful for solving particular problems. Moreover, the knowledge obtained through case studies allows for generalisations of theoretical insight.

Several scholars such as Hakim, Bouma and Atkinson state that case studies offer “the strength of experimental research within a natural setting”.²⁰⁸ This is because the study can focus only on “a particular group”²⁰⁹ or one specific group which there is “no comparison with another group...made”.²¹⁰ In this instance, the case study will examine the small-scale research²¹¹ and provide intensive information.²¹²

Blaxter et al describes advantages and disadvantages of the case study method:

Advantages

1. Case study data are drawn from people’s experiences and practices and so are seen to be strong in reality.
2. Case studies allow for generalizations from a specific instance to a more general issue.

²⁰⁵ Orapin Sopchokchai, *Good Local Governance and Anti-corruption Through People’s Participation: A Case of Thailand*, World Bank, updated 2001 <http://www.worldbank.org/wbi/governance/pdf/orapin_paper.pdf> [accessed 22 July 2006].

²⁰⁶ Robert K Yin, *Case Study Research Design and Methods*, 3rd edn. (Thousand Oaks, SAGE Publications, Inc., 2003), p. 1.

²⁰⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 1.

²⁰⁸ Catherine Hakim, *Research Design: Strategies and Choices in the Design of Social Research* (London: Routledge, 1992), p. 61.

²⁰⁹ Gary Bouma and, G.B.J. Atkinson, *A Handbook of Social Research*, 2nd edn. (New York: Oxford University Press, 1995.), p. 112.

²¹⁰ Gary D. Bouma, *The Research Process*, 3rd edn. (South Melbourne: Oxford University Press, 1996), p. 89.

²¹¹ Loraine Blaxter et al. *How to Research*, 2nd edn. (Buckingham: Open University Press, 2001), p. 71.

²¹² Yin, p. 1.

3. Case studies allow the researcher to show the complexity of social life. Good case studies build on this to explore alternative meanings and interpretations.
4. Case studies can provide a data source from which further analysis can be made. They can, therefore, be archived for further research work.
5. Because case studies build on actual practices and experiences, they can be linked to action and their insights contribute to changing practice. Indeed, case study maybe a subset of a broader action research project.
6. Because the data contained in case studies are close to people's experiences, they can be more persuasive and more accessible.

Disadvantages

1. The very complexity of case studies can make analysis difficult. This is particularly so because the holistic nature of case study means that the researcher is often very aware of the connections between various events, variables and outcomes...
2. While the contextualization of aspects of the case strengthen this form of research, it is difficult to know where 'context' begins and ends.²¹³

Case studies provide in-depth knowledge about experiences and practices.²¹⁴ The data gained from a case study investigation allows for the comprehension of complex phenomena, and for interpretation and analysis. The data can be taken to represent the specific group being chosen but not represent an entire population.²¹⁵ The case study method is appropriate for this investigation of the implementation of Thailand's policy to decentralise government. It will allow for the in-depth analysis of the practice of government agencies at the local level and provide an understanding of the real-life of the organisational and managerial processes.²¹⁶

The researcher has worked in the Chiang Rai province for six years and has carried out previous research with local government staff on the question of participation by local people in the political process. The researcher is therefore familiar with Chiang Rai local government and its organisation, and has developed good relationships with those working in local government. Furthermore, Chiang Rai is particularly appropriate as a case study:

²¹³ Blaxter, p. 73.

²¹⁴ Hakim, p. 61.

²¹⁵ Sin Punpinit, *Research Technique in Social Science* (Bangkok: Witthayaphat Co.,Ltd., 2006), p. 44.

²¹⁶ Robert K. Yin, *Case Study Research Design and Methods*, 2nd edn. (Thousand Oaks: SAGE Publications, Inc., 1994), p. 2.

1. Chiang Rai is located in the far north of Thailand, and deemed as the upper northern gateway and region's economic centre²¹⁷ for conducting cross-border trading with Myanmar, Lao PDR, and southern China.²¹⁸

2. Various ethnic groups live in Chiang Rai province. Their different beliefs, cultures, traditions, and ways of life create challenges for SAOs in implementing government policy.

3. As it is located in the most northern part of Thailand, Chiang Rai experiences some difficulties in accessing central government. Its isolation also makes for a lack of infrastructure in the province.

2.8 Choosing the SAOs

Six SAOs were selected from the 116 SAOs in Chiang Rai province. Purposive sampling and simple random sampling techniques were used. In order to allow for a comparison of older and newer SAOs, three SAOs established in 1994-1995 were selected and three SAOs established between 2002-2006 were selected. Three older and three newer SAOs were subsequently selected. Further, in order to allow for the consideration of the impact of the size and scale of the organisation on the implementation of the plan to decentralise government functions, a selection of small and medium SAOs were selected.

Five small, and one medium SAO, Tambon Rimkok, were established in the 1994-1995 period. A simple random sampling was still considered for use in selecting two of the five small SAOs, but with only one medium SAO no sampling was required.

The two small SAOs were identified, first, according to their revenue, then ranked and numbered from 1 to 5 respectively.

- 1.1 Tambon Sansai (29.69 millions baht)
- 1.2 Tambon Wiang, Chiang Saen (25.14 millions baht)
- 1.3 Tambon Mae Kowtom (39.60 millions baht)
- 1.4 Tambon Huaysor (27.98 millions baht)

²¹⁷ Bank of Thailand, *Economic Structure of the Northern Region, Economic Structure*, updated December 2007, <http://www.bot.or.th/BOTHomepage/databank/RegionEcon/Northern/Public/econ_e/ch7_e/EconStructure_e.htm> [accessed 25 December 2008].

²¹⁸ Ibid.

1.5 Tambon Yonok (13.78 millions baht)²¹⁹

Using a simple ballot, the two SAOs were selected: number (2) Tambon Wiang and (5) Tambon Yonok. There were only three SAOs established after 2002, so all were selected. The two small SAOs were Tambon Mae Chan and Tambon Nong Rad, while the one medium SAO was Tambon Pa Or Donchai. Including two small SAOs in each group provided additional information about the range of responsibilities of SAOs, providing the researcher with a broader perspective.

2.9 Data collection

The principal source of primary data was interviews with key informants within SAOs with responsibility for and experience in the implementation of the programme of decentralisation. Specifically, these participants were drawn from those in the following roles: elected community leaders (the equivalent of local government councillors in New Zealand), administrative heads, and planning officials. In-depth interviews explored their accounts of having to assume greater responsibility for decision-making and service delivery at a local level, where there had been success, where there had been failures, and their explanations for these. These responses were analysed with a view to obtaining insights about the theoretical propositions derived from the review of literature on policy implementation.

The process of obtaining data from these participants began with three focus group interviews with up to five individuals drawn from each group. Participants in these focus groups were identified through the office of provincial statistics and the office of local administration, Chiang Rai, which has the official information about each SAO. Participants were sent an information sheet and invited to take part. The focus group meetings were held in the SAO premises. The focus group meetings themselves were free ranging discussions about the issues associated with the effective implementation of the programme of governmental decentralisation. There were six different focus groups from the six SAOs. Focus group participants consisted of those who held positions as 1) community leaders, 2) administrative leaders, and 3) staff in policy and planning roles in SAOs. The

²¹⁹ Data provided from the office of local administration, Chiang Rai province.

discussions were recorded and used to highlight themes that were explored further in individual in-depth interviews.

A schedule of questions was developed on the basis of the focus group discussions and these were used for in-depth interviews with informants from the three groups mentioned above. These interviews were conducted at their SAO offices and were recorded. The questions were adjusted to correspond to job descriptions, levels, and positions of the interviewees. Transcripts of the interviews were returned to the participants for checking and clarification.

2.9.1 Selection and Range of participations

Participants at provincial and local levels were invited to attend at least one interview session, either a focus group or in-depth interview.²²⁰ Some participants were invited to attend both a focus group and an in-depth interview, according to their experiences of working with the decentralisation policy. In addition, a private interview session was also arranged for those who requested it, at their preference and convenience.

Participants who worked at the central level responded by completing the questionnaires. The questionnaires followed the same pattern of questions used in the interviews (see appendices D and E). Using questionnaires for participants at the central level allowed respondents to freely express their understanding of decentralisation as well as their opinions and problems regarding working in the policy-making, policy implementation process, and their thoughts about accomplishing the decentralisation policy.

2.9.2 Recruiting participants

Interviews were conducted with two different groups - focus group participants and in-depth participants. There were six different focus groups from the six SAOs. Focus group participants consisted of those who held positions as 1) community leaders, 2) administrative leaders, and 3) staff in policy and planning roles in SAOs. Participants for in-depth interviews were identified and drawn from

²²⁰ Providing a profile of the participants, such as age, gender, education at all levels, was not included in this thesis because it could lead to their identification.

those who held positions of 1) higher authorities and government agencies,²²¹ 2) community leaders, 3) administrative leaders, and 4) staff in policy and planning roles in SAOs for in-depth interviews.

Because the SAOs' function was to coordinate and to carry out plans and projects supervised by higher authorities and government agencies in five obligatory functions, the following were groups identified for collecting research data:

1. Chiang Rai's Governor or Executive
2. The former Governor or Executive of Chiang Rai
3. Nai Amphor (District head) or assigned government officer
4. Representatives of the Tambon Council
5. Members of the Tambon Executive Committee

The discussions undertaken in SAO offices of the focus groups were audio recorded, and took about an hour. The in-depth interviews were carried out with individuals and were also recorded. They took approximately 1-1.5 hours. The primary risk for participants related to the possible consequences for participants if they were critical of aspects of their particular SAO. They were protected from any negative consequences by having their privacy and confidentiality protected. Procedures for conducting and completing the community survey ensured that the names of participants, their position and department remain confidential.

2.9.3 Primary data

The key source of primary data was the interviews, specifically with SAO staff with responsibility for and experience in the implementation of decentralisation. The 45 participants were interviewed in two different groups: 18 in-depth interviews, and 27 focus group interviews. Participants were drawn from three different government levels, six respondents at central government level, four respondents at provincial levels and 35 at local level.

There were six focus group interviews with up to five participants in each group and the meetings were held in the SAO premises. The focus group meetings themselves were free-ranging discussions about the issues associated with the effective implementation of the programme of governmental decentralisation. The

²²¹ Participants in this group sometimes are government officials who respond in specific areas and are assigned by the higher authorities as to participate in the interview.

in-depth interviews explored the views of the senior staff who had the greater responsibility for decision-making and service delivery at the local level, where there had been successes, where there had been failures, and their explanations for these. The in-depth interviews were conducted at a venue that was convenient for the participants. The recordings and transcripts of the interviews were returned to the participants for checking and clarification.

The questions being used to obtain the primary data with key staff were focused on the following topics (see more in appendices B and C):

- The goals of policy implementation
- The effectiveness of this policy in solving problems
- The consequences of implementing the policy
- Potential difficulties with policy implementation at the grass roots level
- Assessment of policy implementation by SAOs

2.9.4 Secondary data

Secondary data was obtained from both English and Thai published material, including books, articles and government documents. Additional data was also drawn from published articles of previous research.

English published materials, including books and articles, were used heavily in a review of literature in outlining and discussing the basic concepts of policy implementation, the significance of policy implementation and the reasons for policy implementation failure. Several English language materials were used in examining Thailand's administrative and political system.

Thai published materials, especially books and articles, were good sources for a better understanding of Thailand's national administrative system, political culture, and hierarchical system, which affect the national administration. Several sources were useful in providing information regarding decentralisation and the SAO: the government reports and handbooks, especially from the Department of Local Administration, Ministry of the Interior, and the Office for Local Administrative (Chiang Rai Province), were used in examining the government's decentralisation policy and the National Economic and Social Development Plans.

Chapter III

Thailand's Political Development

3.1 Introduction

This chapter presents Thailand's political development from the early time when the absolute monarchy was applied as a political system since the Sukhothai Kingdom (1257-1378) until the political system was transformed to democracy in 2477 BC (1934).

Located in Southeast Asia, a unified Thai Kingdom was established in the mid-14th century.²²² This country was known as Siam until 1939²²³ when the name changed to Thailand. As well as its long history, Thailand's political system was ruled by both a paternalistic and absolute monarchy for centuries,²²⁴ until the introduction of a constitutional monarchy following the change to democracy in 1932. The country's democratic regime has had kings as heads of state²²⁵ and they have been able to exercise some powers through the National Assembly, the Council of Ministers and the Courts in accordance with the provisions of the Constitution.²²⁶

Thailand's long experience of monarchy has left its legacy in its social and political systems. Thai society has had three main influences: a) the Sakdina and Prai system; b) order in precedence; and c) hierarchy. Thai society was divided into different classes with political powers in the hands of the elites, while the commoners had few opportunities to participate in politics, and less chance to study at a higher level, like those in higher positions. Consequently, a social gap between two groups, the elite and the great majority, opened.

²²² The Central Intelligence Agency, *The World Factbook*, [n.d.], <<https://www.cia.gov/library/publications/the-world-factbook/geos/th.html>> [accessed 12 January 2008].

²²³ Ibid.

²²⁴ Thailand has had either a paternalistic or an absolute monarchy from the time of The Sukhothai Kingdom (1257-1378).

²²⁵ The Office of the Council of State
<http://www.parliament.go.th/parcy/sapa_db/sapa25-upload/25-20070221160217_con40.pdf> [accessed 9 October 2008].

²²⁶ The Central Intelligence Agency. *The World Factbook*, [n.d.], <<https://www.cia.gov/library/publications/the-world-factbook/geos/th.html>> [accessed 18 August 2009].

Under the political reforms following the end of absolute monarchy in 1932, the structure of Thailand's political administration was divided into three levels: central government, provincial government, and local government. However, the government continued to be driven from the centre. Despite the new political system introduced in 1932, Thailand has yet to introduce a fully democratic system. There are, therefore, only a few people who are interested and involved in the political system: the elite, bureaucrats, and students of political science.²²⁷ Most people pay little attention to politics and do not participate in politics as they perceive that such matters are only for bureaucrats and that they should not be involved.²²⁸

Dhiravegin notes that during 1892, the Thai government realised it was necessary to pay attention to and strengthen central government to control the country and withstand pressures of colonialism.²²⁹ The Thai nation state developed²³⁰ in a way that was dominated by central government. Local government in this context was not encouraged. Today, however, the Constitution of the Kingdom of Thailand B.E. 2540 aims to promote the participation of all citizens at both local and national levels, and a new emphasis on the decentralisation of power to the local government²³¹ is emerging to promote better political processes. Thailand's democratic system is still in a state of development, this being reflected in the lack of political participation by the people, and is partly due to the political culture of Thailand's political system. Dhiravegin notes:

The modern era of Thai politics is no less painful and its experiences no less turbulent than those of the previous periods. The implantation of the democratic system on the Thai soil after the revolution of June 24, 1932 only led to the resurgence of the traditional forces who were repulsed by the introduction of things alien to the Thai culture. Yet change was introduced; this led to a struggle between bureaucracy and democracy, and to political turbulence for two and a half decades between 1932 and 1957. However, in 1958, the traditional element in the form of military regime stages a comeback with the use of force.²³²

²²⁷ Thanet Charoenmuang, *100 years of Thai Local Government 1887 - 1997* (Bangkok: Kobfai Publisher, 1997), p. 23.

²²⁸ *Ibid.*, pp. 25-26.

²²⁹ Likhit Dhiravegin, *The Evolution of the Thai Political System* (Bangkok: Thammasat University, 1996), p. 266.

²³⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 266.

²³¹ Woothisarn Tanchai, *Decentralization in Thailand. Issues of Government Policy Formulation Towards Decentralization*, [n.d.], <http://www.decentralization.ws/icd2/papers/decent_thailand.htm> [accessd 15 May 2006]

²³² Dhiravegin, p. xi.

3.2 From Absolute Monarchy to Parliamentary Democracy

A unified Thai Kingdom was established in the mid-14th century,²³³ located in a heart of mainland Southeast Asia.²³⁴ The modern Thai Kingdom began with the Sukhothai Kingdom,²³⁵ the Ayutthaya Kingdom, and the Rattanakosin period respectively.

3.2.1 The Emergence and Derivation of Rigid Hierarchy

While paternalism was successfully applied throughout the Sukhothai Kingdom (1257-1378),²³⁶ and later in the Ayutthaya Kingdom (1350-1767), the idea of the absolute monarchy developed and was continually applied as the political system until 2477 BC (1934) when Thailand's political system became a democracy.

The Sukhothai Kingdom, the main kingdom of the modern Thai nation,²³⁷ applied a 'Father-Son', or 'paternalistic', system to its administration, in which the status of the King was respected as the father to all the people. Under this Father-Son administration, kings possessed absolute power. In addition, because the relationship between a king and his people was very close, the kings were able to exercise their absolute power. As the Department of Provincial Administration, Ministry of the Interior notes:

²³³ The Central Intelligence Agency, *The World Factbook*, [n.d.], <<https://www.cia.gov/library/publications/the-world-factbook/geos/th.html> > [accessed 15 May 2007].

²³⁴ Peter Church, *Focus on Southeast Asia* (Hong Kong: Asian Focus Group, 1995), p. 125.

²³⁵ Even though the Sukhothai Kingdom has been identified as the primary modern Thai nation, there are controversies that the Sukhothai Kingdom was not the only kingdom in early Thai history. See Dhiravegin, 1992. 1.

²³⁶ The Sukhothai kingdom was an early kingdom in the area around the city Sukhothai in north central Thailand. It existed from 1238 until 1438. Por Khun Si Indrathit (1249-1257) was the primary king in this kingdom. See http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Sukhothai_kingdom. During the Sukhothai Kingdom the 'father-son' administration system was used. It was highly significant and had great influence on the Thai people as the kings called themselves as Father King while their people were just their children. However, later with the Cambodian influence, the relationship between the King and his people changed and became one of master and slave. See <http://www.dopa.go.th/English/history/suk.htm>

²³⁷ Department of Provincial Administration, Ministry of Interior, *The Evolution of Thai Administration: The Sukhothai Administrative Regime*, [n.d.], <<http://www.dopa.go.th/English/history/suk.htm>> [accessed 28 March 2007].

During the Sukhothai Era, the paternal relationship between the King and his people was set up. Anytime a person had a complaint, he or she could ring a bell and the King would come and listen to that person and try to solve the problem.²³⁸

A paternalistic form of government was adopted, but Sukhothai's political system was deficient to the extent that it was a fragmented city-state with no centralised government.²³⁹ As a result of problems caused by this, the Ayutthaya Kingdom (1350-1767) introduced an absolute monarchy. While under the influence of the Khmer Empire,²⁴⁰ the Thais borrowed 'The Divine Rights System',²⁴¹ which meant that during the time of King Ayutthaya,²⁴² the rulers and the people were separated. The changed status of the Kings left the people completely under the control of rulers and the relationship became one of master-servant within the context of an absolute monarchy.²⁴³ Thailand's administrative regime remained an absolute monarchy until the Rattanakosin era.

During the Ayutthaya Kingdom, the first provincial administration in Thailand was introduced.²⁴⁴ The Jatusadom system,²⁴⁵ the Sakdina system,²⁴⁶ and the Prai system²⁴⁷ were initiated and continued for 400 years, through the Ayutthaya Kingdom until the beginning period of Rattanakosin era. These enabled

²³⁸ Department of Provincial Administration, Ministry of Interior, Historical background, [n.d.], <<http://www.dopa.go.th/English/layout/chapter1.htm>> [accessed 29 May 2007].

²³⁹ Royal Thai Embassy Washington DC. *An Overview of Government and Politics in Thailand*, [n.d.], <<http://www.thaiembdc.org/politics/govtment/govpol.htm>> [accessed 24 April 2007]

²⁴⁰ John L.S. Girling, *Thailand Society and Politics* (Ithaca and London: Cornell University Press, 1981), p. 17.

²⁴¹ Department of Provincial Administration, Ministry of Interior defines the Divine Rights system as having three distinguishing characteristics: 1) states come into existence by God's will; 2) God chooses the rulers of the states; and 3) the rulers are responsible only to God.

Department of Provincial Administration, *The Evolution of Thai Administration The Ayutthaya Administration* (Ministry of Interior), [n.d.], <<http://www.dopa.go.th/English/history/ayud.htm>> [accessed 28 March 2007].

²⁴² King Utong Or King Ramathibodi I (1314 - 1369) was the primary king of the Ayutthaya Kingdom.

²⁴³ Department of Provincial Administration, Ministry of Interior, *The Evolution of Thai Administration, The Ayutthaya Administration*.

²⁴⁴ Ibid.

²⁴⁵ The Jutasadom or Chatusadom system literally means 'Four Pillars' or 'Four Principles'. It was elaborated by King U Thong, the Ayutthaya Kingdom's primary king. See Dhiravegin, 1992, pp. 26-28. ,The Department of Provincial Administration, Ministry of Interior, *Historical background* , [n.d.], <<http://www.dopa.go.th/English/layout/chapter1.htm>> [accessed 29 May 2007].

²⁴⁶ The Sakdina system was developed by Boromtrailokanart (Trailok). See Church, p.127; Dhiravegin, pp. 26-28, and Robert J. Muscat, *The Fifth Tiger: A Study of Thai development policy* (United State of America: The United Nations University Press 1994), p. 20.

²⁴⁷ Dhiravegin, pp. 28-30.

a hierarchical system to exist and play an important role. According to the UNESCAP:

The traditional government system and social structure in Siam during this period was known as the *Sakdina* system, one that is similar to that of a feudal society. All land was owned by the ruler who granted land to members of the royal family and the nobility according to their ranks in the traditional bureaucratic hierarchy. Bureaucrats ran the affairs of the state. Peasants aged between 18 and 60 were subjected to register as corvee labour for the crown or individual noblemen. The former was known as *Prai*, the latter as *Nai*. A poor peasant who sold himself to a rich *Nai* became a slave. These relations constituted the *Sakdina* society that survived well into the nineteenth century.²⁴⁸

Dhiravegin states that one of the major national administration reforms during the Ayutthaya Kingdom²⁴⁹ was launched for several decisive reasons, including the social class reform called the Sakdina and Prai system.²⁵⁰ He further states the political and administrative reforms during the Ayutthaya Kingdom can be divided into two levels. First, there was the national administration and the central administration level which was a transformation of the existing Jutusadom system,²⁵¹ a more complex system which separated, both in theory and in structure, the military (Kalahom) from civil affairs (Mahattai).²⁵² Second, there was the provincial administrative level which was a transformation designed to strengthen the Ayutthaya Kingdom and its capital.²⁵³ The paternalism of the absolute monarchy served to strengthen the power of the elites, which still features in Thailand's national administrative system.

3.2.2 Modernisation under the reign of King Chulalongkorn

Although the Ayutthaya Kingdom disintegrated, its approach to national administration did not end. The main idea of the Jutusadom system and other Ayutthaya administrative systems remained during the first four reigns of the Bangkok Empire or Rattanakosin, with some modifications developed to make it

²⁴⁸ UNESCAP, *Local government in Asia and the Pacific: A Comparative Study, Thailand*, (United Nations Economics and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific), [n.d.], <<http://www.unescap.org/huset/lgstudy/country/thai/ind/thai.html>> [accessed 2 June 2006].

²⁴⁹ Dhiravegin, p. 22.

²⁵⁰ *Ibid.*, pp. 26-30.

²⁵¹ It is the four departments which consisted of Wieng (Metropolitan Affairs), Wang (Palace Affairs), Klang (Treasury), and Na (Land). See Dhiravegin, pp. 26-28.

²⁵² *Ibid.*, p. 23.

²⁵³ *Ibid.*, pp. 23-26.

more appropriate to the time.²⁵⁴ It was not until 1868 that the national administrative reform began during the rule of the great monarch of King Chulalongkorn (Rama V 1853-1910).

The move to reform the national administration was originally influenced by modernisation during King Mongkut's reign (Rama IV 1851-1868). Many countries in Southeast Asia were colonised, but Thailand resisted this and moved to make its own modernisation reforms.²⁵⁵ The reforms were not completely successful because there was a lack of resistance to the growth of European power, and several Western countries extended their empires over mainland Southeast Asia in the 19th century.²⁵⁶ King Mongkut had to sign treaties²⁵⁷ with Britain giving it an extra-territorial legal right over the Thai Kingdom.²⁵⁸ Even though modernisation affected Thailand's political administration, it was not until the reign of King Chulalongkorn (Rama V 1853-1910) that democracy and decentralisation were first mentioned and considered, and the political system and national administration reformed. Church notes that while King Mongkut avoided fundamental reforms, his son who succeeded him, King Chulalongkorn, brought new ideas of modernisation during his reign.²⁵⁹ The modernisation brought by the Europeans was one of a number of significant factors²⁶⁰ that influenced Thailand and led to the adoption of the European model in its reforms.²⁶¹

²⁵⁴ Ibid., pp.28-30.

²⁵⁵ This reform is known as 'Chakkri Reformation' or 'Revolution on the Throne' of King Chulalongkorn. The reformation programme was between 1868-1910. See more in Dhiravegin, *Demi Democracy :The Evolution of the Thai Political System*, p. 90, Damien Kingsbury, *South East Asia: A Political Profile* (South Melbourne: Oxford University Press, 2001), p. 148.

²⁵⁶ Church, p. 130.

²⁵⁷ Ibid., p. 130.

²⁵⁸ Ibid., p. 130.

²⁵⁹ Ibid., p. 131.

²⁶⁰ See Department of Provincial Administration *The Motives for Administrative Reform*, (Ministry of the Interior), <<http://www.dopa.go.th/English/history/polit1.htm>> [accessed 28 March 2007].

²⁶¹ Kingsbury, p. 148.

The administrative reforms were significant and necessary for Thailand in preventing colonial rule,²⁶² and the power of indigenous elites and institutions needed to be maintained and transformed into modern institutions.²⁶³ Known as the Chakkri Reformation or 'Revolution on the Throne' of King Chulalongkorn, the reform programme began in 1868 and ended in 1910 during the rule of his great monarchy. As Dhiravegin notes, throughout his reign, King Chulalongkorn attempted the difficult task of bringing the Thai kingdom, based on the Hindu mythological concept of godly kingdom, into that of a modern nation-state in line with the civilised nations of the West. Before King Chulalongkorn's reforms, Thailand had a traditional political system based on the Indian and Chinese civilisations, capable of dealing with political, economic, social, and philosophical problems.²⁶⁴

As part of his reforms, King Chulalongkorn sent high-level government officials abroad on a tour of inspection to learn and observe the administrative systems of Thailand's neighbours. The Thai government and its functions were carefully reconsidered and afterwards bureaucratic reform was introduced and promoted. Bureaucrats attempted to reorganise Thailand's political system and the national administrative system was strengthened. King Chulalongkorn stated:

The administration regime we have been using is not sufficiently flexible. Especially now that our country has become much more developed than in the past. The existing administration cannot serve the greater demands of the country. As a result, we have the massive undertaking of adjusting the administration to keep abreast with the country's progress.²⁶⁵

²⁶² According to Wikipedia, in 1893, French gunboats appeared in Bangkok, and demanded the cession of Laos territories east of the Mekong river. As a result, the King of Thailand, King Chulalongkorn, appealed to Britain. However, the British minister advised him to settle on whatever he could get. Britain's only gesture was an agreement with France guaranteeing the integrity of the rest of Siam. However, under the exchange, Siam had to give up its claim to the Tai-speaking Shan of north-eastern Burma (Myanmar) to Britain. However, the French continued to pressure and finally made Siam concede to the French control of territory on the west bank of the Mekong river, opposite Luang Prabang and around Champasak in Southern Laos, as well as Cambodia. In 1909, the British interceded to prevent more French bullying of Siam, but their price was the acceptance of British sovereignty over Kedah, Kelantan, Perlis, and Terengganu under the Anglo-Siamese Treaty of 1909. See more in Wikipedia, *History of Thailand (1768-1932)*, <http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/History_of_Thailand_%281768-1932%29> [accessed 3 August 2009].

²⁶³ UNESCAP, *Thailand*.

²⁶⁴ Dhiravegin, *Demi Democracy: The evolution of the Thai Political System*, p. 92.

²⁶⁵ Department of Provincial Administration, *The Motives for Administrative Reform*, Ministry of the Interior, <<http://www.dopa.go.th/English/history/polit1.htm>> [accessed 28 March 2007].

In the transformation from a traditional kingdom into a modern nation-state, King Chulalongkorn began by setting up the State Council and the Privy Council, a development viewed with distaste by the old elements as, symbolically, their political power was threatened.²⁶⁶ Under the national administration reforms, central and provincial administrations were introduced, with the central administrative system divided into 12 different ministries,²⁶⁷ this can be compared with six different sections²⁶⁸ during the previous Ayutthaya Kingdom.²⁶⁹ Provincial administration was also organised in a number of precincts.²⁷⁰ The first form of local government, which will be discussed later in chapter 4, called "sukhaphiban" or "sanitary committee", was experimented with in 1898.²⁷¹

The administrative reforms were not completely successful, and this is seen as having been due to several factors. These included the ineffectiveness and backwardness of the country's administration system, the overlapping of administration functions, confusion about which level had control, and the fact that Thailand had paid too much attention to achieving a strong central government, which put the national security at risk and which had opened the opportunity for the intervention of Western colonialism²⁷² as mentioned above.

²⁶⁶ Ibid., p. 93.

²⁶⁷ 1) The Ministry of the Interior, 2) The Ministry of Defense, 3) The Ministry of Foreign Affairs, 4) The Ministry of the Royal Household, 5) The Metropolitan Ministry, 6) The Ministry of Agriculture, 7) The Ministry of Finance, 8) The Ministry of Justice, 9) The Ministry of War, 10) The Ministry of Public Work, 11) The Ministry of Public Construction, 12) The Ministry of Privy Seal. See Department of Provincial Administration, *Central Administration Reform*, Ministry of Interior, [n.d.],

<<http://www.dopa.go.th/English/history/polit2.htm>> [accessed 28 March 2007].

²⁶⁸ The primary king of Ayutthaya Kingdom, King U Thong, established a new government system based on the Khmer model by divided the civil service administration into four departments called as 'Chatusadom' or 'Jatusadom'. See Dhiravegin, *Demi Democracy The evolution of the Thai political system*, pp. 26-28, The Royal Thai Consulate General, Hong Kong, *History*, (The Royal Thai Consulate), [n.d.],

<<http://www.thai-consulate.org.hk/ENG/Thailand/History1.htm>>, [accessed 24 April 2007].

²⁶⁹ Department of Provincial Administration, *Central Administration Reform*, Ministry of the Interior, < <http://www.dopa.go.th/English/history/polit2.htm>> [accessed 28 March 2007].

²⁷⁰ UNESCAP, *Thailand*.

²⁷¹ Ibid.

²⁷² Voradesh Chantason. cited in Department of Provincial Administration, *The Motives for Administrative Reform*, (Ministry of the Interior), [n.d.],

<<http://www.dopa.go.th/English/history/polit1.htm>> [accessed 28 March 2007]., Also see other factors regarding the lack of motivation to reform the administration system from the same source.

3.2.3 Thailand's Democracy: between Autocracy and Democracy

Even though Thailand became a democracy in 1932, the democratic reforms were completely unsuccessful. After this date, the political system was unstable²⁷³ and subject to military intervention and coup d'états. As a result, Thailand was described as a 'Demi-Democracy'.²⁷⁴ There are four views on this.

First, the revolution in 1932 was carried out in a short period of time and did not lead to deeper systemic change.²⁷⁵ As stated by Dhiravegin, the accepted purpose of the revolution in 1932 was to transform the political system from a monarchy to a democracy. However, a hidden aim was a snatching of power from the King by a group of bureaucrats. Busch concludes that Thailand's national revolution did not occur against foreigners, as in many other countries, because the revolution in 1932²⁷⁶ was against the king.²⁷⁷ However, even though Thailand adopted democracy as its political system and the king was retained as the head of state, the monarch's authority and kingship had been changed. The king no longer held absolute power but his status was ensured by the constitution.²⁷⁸ The monarchy was reduced to a symbolic role, but it continued to serve in a legitimising function.²⁷⁹

Following the political transition in 1932, it was notable that even though the political system became a democracy, with the 'Khana Ratsadon' or the People's Party holding the power, the ordinary people did not actually participate. The introduction of the new scheme of democracy for the Thai people at that time was therefore very weak because of the divide between the political and bureaucratic elites and the common people.²⁸⁰ While the elite understood the significance of the political system changes, most Thai people did not and were not

²⁷³ Tin Prachayapruit, *Management Development: Definition Content Approach and Problems*. (Bangkok: Chulalongkorn University Press, 1994), p. 93.

²⁷⁴ Dhiravegin gives a definition of Demi-Democracy as a halfway democracy that blends two elements of old and new. In the case of Thailand, Dhiravegin discusses that a halfway of democracy can be seen as the attempt to bring about a fusion of the old element, the bureaucrats, while the new element is known as a newly emerged middle class.

Dhiravegin, *Demi Democracy: The Evolution of the Thai Political System*, p. xii.

²⁷⁵ Danai Chaiyayotha, *Politics and Governance of Thailand* (Bangkok: Indian Store, 2005), p. 245.

²⁷⁶ A Revolution was held on 24 June 1932.

²⁷⁷ Noel F Busch, *Thailand An Introduction to Modern Siam*. (Princeton, New Jersey: D. Van Nostrand Company, 1995), p. 95.

²⁷⁸ Chaiyayotha, p. 245.

²⁷⁹ Ferrel Heady, *Public Administration A comparative Perspective*, 6th edn. (New York: Marcel Dekker, 2001), p. 337.

²⁸⁰ Chaiyayotha, p. 240.

ready for the new political system.²⁸¹ King and LoGerfo write that even though the group of junior army and navy officers and the civil servants who overthrew the absolute monarchy in June 1932 proclaimed the establishment of the first democratic regime in Thai political history, what they created was democratic more in form rather than in content. As a result, the political system soon gave way to military-based rule.²⁸²

Thailand's national administrative system had evolved to become highly centralised.²⁸³ It was characterised by autocracy from the beginning of the modern state when the King, as a head of state, had the highest authority and was dominant. Nobles and ordinary people complied with these arrangements.²⁸⁴ After the revolution, the government became a bureaucratic polity with the elites taking effective control of the new political system.²⁸⁵ This reinforced the hierarchical character of the system with bureaucrats being left in place. They were familiar with the system and adhered to the long-standing traditions of bureaucratic control.²⁸⁶

Second, there was the role of the military leadership. The Thai military leadership has intervened many times in the Thai political system. Samutvanich notes, therefore, that Thailand's political system has not evolved as a strong democracy due to military intervention in government.²⁸⁷ Since the political reforms of 1932, Thailand has experienced 10 coup d'états detailed below.

²⁸¹ Ibid., 240.

²⁸² Daniel King and Jim LoGerfo, 'Thailand: Toward Democratic Stability' *Journal of Democracy*, 7 (1996), 102-117. p. 103.

²⁸³ Likhit Dhiravegin, *The evolution of the Thai political system* (Bangkok : Faculty of Political Science Thammasart University, 1996), p. 255.

²⁸⁴ Charoenmuang, Thanet, *100 years of Thai Local Government 1887-1997* (Bangkok: Kobfai Publisher, 1997), p. 73.

²⁸⁵ Dhiravegin, *The evolution of the Thai political system*, pp. 28-30.

²⁸⁶ King Prajadhipok's Institute, *Decentralization and Local Government in Thailand: The KPI Congress III* (Bangkok: Tammada Place Ltd., 2002), p. 91.

²⁸⁷ Chai-Anan Samudavanija, cited in Charoenmuang, 1997. p. 108.

Figure 3.1 - Thailand's coup d'état from after a political transition in 1932

Year	Coup d'état leaders
20 June 20 1933	General Phya Phahon Phonpayuhasena
8 November 1947	General Phin Choonhavan
29 November 1951	Field Marshal Plaek Pibulsongkram (Plaek Kitasanga)
16 September 1957	General Sarit Dhanarajata
20 October 1958	General Sarit Dhanarajata
17 November 1971	General Thanom Kittikachorn
6 October 1976	Admiral Sangad Chalawyo
20 October 1977	Admiral Sangad Chalawyo
23 February 1991	General Sundara Kongsompong
19 September 2006	General Sonthi Boonyaratglin

Source: Adapted from Danai Chaiyayotha, *Politics and Governance of Thailand* (Bangkok: Indian store, 2005), pp. 248-269.

After 1932, several of Thailand's prime ministers had had backgrounds in the military. In addition, between 1957-1963, Thailand was completely under a military government led by Field Marshal Thanom Kittikachorn and Field Marshal Sarit Thanarat.²⁸⁸ It was noticeable that, even though Thailand had had long experience with dictatorships,²⁸⁹ several national development plans had been launched after Field Marshal Sarit Thanarat's coup d'état, including a National

²⁸⁸ Dhiravegin, *The evolution of the Thai political system*, p. 323.

²⁸⁹ Tin Prachayapruit, *Management Development: Definition Content Approach and Problems* (Bangkok: Chulalongkorn University Press, 1994), p. 94.

Economic and Social Development Plan in encompassing economic development, infrastructure, and industry.²⁹⁰

From 1991 to 2001, the absence of military control in Thailand allowed the political system to become more stable. As Charoenmuang noted, during 1992-2001, democracy in Thailand was continuous and vigorous. As well as the elections, several political institutions were established, including the constitutional court, the administrative court, and the office of ombudsman. The Thai people became more aware of their role within democracy.²⁹¹ In 2006, democracy was discontinued with the coup d'état led by General Sonthi Boonyaratglin on the grounds of evidence of corruption²⁹² under Thaksin Shinawatra's government.²⁹³

Third, there is the view of Thailand as a plutocracy after the period of bureaucratic polity. According to this view, Thailand's move to a plutocracy was a consequence of the coup d'états in 1971 and 1977. After 14 October 1973,²⁹⁴ there was an increase in the awareness of democracy among the Thai people.²⁹⁵ In addition, from 1973 onwards, there were economic and social changes in Thailand as the country became more industrialised allowing capitalism to play a greater role in Thai society. It was noticeable that during this period, the Thai political system become a business polity. Money became a most important variable, and many politicians were found to lack ethics and morality, leading to a system that was increasingly controlled by the wealthy descendents of the aristocracy.²⁹⁶ This did imply a greater level of corruption.²⁹⁷

The fourth issue is democracy, which was intended to be the ideal system for Thailand from the time of the political transformation in 1932. However,

²⁹⁰ Ibid., 324.

²⁹¹ Thanet Charoenmuang, *Ten years of Decentralization in Thai Society (2534-2544) Decentralization and Local Government in Thailand* (The KPI Congress III, King Prajadhipok's Institute) (Bangkok: Tammada place Ltd., 2002), p. 86.

²⁹² The Council for National Security (CNS), formerly known as the Council for Democratic Reform or the Council for Democratic Reform under the Constitutional Monarchy was the name of the military regime that governed Thailand from the 2006 pronunciamiento ousting Thaksin Shinawatra, as the Prime Minister.

²⁹³ Directorate of Operations, *Pronunciamiento of the Council for Democratic Reform under the Constitutional Monarchy*, (Royal Thai Air Force), <<http://www.do.raf.mi.th/news/detail.asp?id=165>> [accessed 19 July 2010].

²⁹⁴ The 1973 democracy movement occurred due to the Thai young generations, especially the students at university level who objected to Field Marshal Thanom Kittikachorn and his regime-successive military government, which had ruled Thailand from 1974.

²⁹⁵ Dhiravegin, *The Evolution of the Thai Political System*, p. 244.

²⁹⁶ Chamnan Chanruang, *From what is Politics to Aristocracy and New Role of Administrative Court*, (The Midnight University) Article 1615, [n.d.], <<http://www.midnightuniv.org/midnighttext/000964.doc>> [accessed 15 July 2008].

²⁹⁷ Dhiravegin, *The Evolution of the Thai Political System*, pp. 326- 330.

democracy has never been genuinely or successfully applied. As mentioned earlier, after 24 July 1932, the People's Party and some particular elites held the power, which later led to the period of dominance by the bureaucratic polity. Soon after, there were several coup d'états, allowing the junta government to rule the country. As the military dictatorships were discredited and the Thai people's political awareness increased, the political system became a plutocracy, instead of a democracy.

3.3 Thailand post 2006

After the coup d'état in 2006, Thailand returned to democratic government when the Council for Democratic Reform made an official statement to end its contractual obligation. By February 2008, the Thai people were in power and the situation was more stable and secure with a new government in place. However, there were a number of protests, riots and campaigns driven by two opposing groups: The People's Alliance for Democracy (PAD)²⁹⁸ and The National United Front of Democracy Against Dictatorship (UDD).²⁹⁹ Pongsudhirak has stated:

Now that Thaksin is off the scene, the way forward appears clear. His economic and bureaucratic reforms, income-redistribution programs, and policy innovations to boost Thailand's competitiveness in global markets merit being retained just as much as the corruption, cronyism, and abuses of power that flourished under his government merit being rejected.

The establishment coalition that engineered Thaksin's political decapitation needs to accept that not all of what he stood for was wrong. Until his opponents can come to terms with what is positive about his legacy, Thailand's crisis will remain intractable.³⁰⁰

According to the 2007 Constitution, the government will continue to pursue good governance practices.³⁰¹ However, this would be only an ideal if it continues to be ineffective in the face of difficulties and obstacles.³⁰²

²⁹⁸ The People's Alliance for Democracy (PAD) was originally a coalition of protesters against Thaksin Shinawatra.

²⁹⁹ The National United Front of Democracy Against Dictatorship (UDD) is the anti-People's Alliance for Democracy (PAD) political pressure group in Thailand.

³⁰⁰ Thitinan Pongsudhirak, 'Thailand Since the Coup' *Journal of Democracy*, 19 (2008), 140-153 (pp. 151-152).

³⁰¹ The Constitution of the Kingdom of Thailand 2007, section 74, Chapter IV.

³⁰² Komchadluek Newspaper, *Will rectification a constitution make Thai society tranquil?* [n.d.],

<<http://www.komchadluek.net/detail/20090420/9999/แก้รัฐธรรมนูญสังคมไทยจะสงบ.html>> [accessed 20 April 2009].

3.3.1 The structure of the Thai government

In relation to Thailand's National Administrative Structure, the Thai government introduced the National Public Administration Act in order to provide three different levels of public administration: central, provincial and local in 1991.³⁰³ Thailand's central administration consists of 19 ministries, including the Office of the Prime Minister. Within each ministry, different organisations, departments, offices, bureaus, divisions and subdivisions are established to carry out government tasks and operations.³⁰⁴ At the central level, the primary obligation of government is not only to govern the country's affairs but also to initiate national policies to be implemented by the administration.³⁰⁵

There are four different areas of the central administrative system:

1. Office of Prime Minister

The Office of Prime Minister is concerned with the affairs of the Prime Minister and the cabinet. In addition, this office is responsible for overseeing the national revenue and for ensuring the obligations set out in laws and regulations are observed;³⁰⁶

2. Ministries

There are 20 ministries in the Thai government:

- Office of the Prime Minister
- Ministry of Defence
- Ministry of Finance
- Ministry of Foreign Affairs
- Ministry of Tourism and Sports
- Ministry of Social Development and Human Security
- Ministry of Agriculture and Cooperatives
- Ministry of Transport
- Ministry of Natural Resources and Environment

³⁰³ UNESCAP, *Thailand*.

³⁰⁴ Aree Wattana Tummakird, *Local Government Structure in Thailand Local Government Structure and Decentralization of Autonomy* (Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific (ESCAP)), [n.d.], <http://www.unescap.org/DRPAD/VC/orientation/M4_anx_3.htm> [accessed 11 March 2007]

³⁰⁵ Kovit Phong-ngam, *Local Government in Thailand Principles and a New Dimension in the Future* (Bangkok:Vinyuchon, 2000), p. 83.

³⁰⁶ Ibid.

- Ministry of Information and Communication Technology
 - Ministry of Energy
 - Ministry of Commerce
 - Ministry of Interior
 - Ministry of Justice
 - Ministry of Labour
 - Ministry of Culture
 - Ministry of Science and Technology
 - Ministry of Education
 - Ministry of Public Health
 - Ministry of Industry;
3. Governmental departments under the Office of Prime Minister or Ministries. For example, Department of Provincial Administration, Ministry of Interior;
 4. Department or other government agencies that are equivalent to governmental department, that maybe under the Office of Prime Minister or Ministries.

3.3.2 Provincial government

Thailand is divided into 76 provinces, including the metropolitan area of Bangkok, the capital city. Each province has its own governor who is appointed directly by the Ministry of the Interior to be a representative of the government and coordinator of other government agencies working at the provincial level.

Provincial administrators are assigned by the central government under the concept of deconcentration.³⁰⁷ Central government delegates its authority to staff from different departments of the 20 ministries. These staff can work in different provinces and districts throughout the country. They are acknowledged as officials from central government who have the responsibility of implementing and accomplishing any assigned work according to laws and regulations. Each

³⁰⁷ Deconcentration refers to an approach in which central government functions are executed by government officials in the field who work away from central government. This normally occurs in federal and unitary states., See Rod Hague and Martin Harrop, *Comparative Government and Politics: An Introduction*, 7th edn. (New York: Palgrave, 2007), pp. 292-293.

province (called Changwat in Thai) is divided into districts (Amphoe), subdistricts (Tambon), and villages (Muban).³⁰⁸

3.3.2.1 Province

A province is comprised of several districts. Within each province, the governor ensures that central government policies are carried out. This is done by staff working for the different ministries under the governor's control. As well as the governor, who is the head of the province, there are a number of other officers including the vice governor, the deputy governor, and the heads of the different government organisations under ministries who assist the governor, supervise and organise staff at lower level and oversee their obligations.³⁰⁹

3.3.2.2 District

At the district level, a district chief officer, appointed by the Ministry of the Interior is the head of staff working at the district level. Apart from the district chief officer, the deputy district chief and heads of government organisations from different ministries are appointed to assist, supervise, and organise government affairs at the district level.

3.3.2.3 Subdistrict

A subdistrict is the third administrative subdivision level after the province and district. Phong-ngam notes three officers at the subdistrict level that are accountable:

1. The subdistrict headman or Kamnan³¹⁰ is elected by the community members. He is not a government official but his status is acknowledged by this community.³¹¹ The Kamnan is responsible for maintaining peace in his subdistrict.

³⁰⁸ The Federal Research Division of the Library of Congress under the Country Studies/Area Handbook Programme sponsored by the U.S. Department of Army. *Country Study: Thailand Local Government* (U.S. Department of Army), [n.d.], <<http://www.country-studies.com/thailand/local-government.html>> [accessed 2 October 2007].

³⁰⁹ Phong-ngam, p. 84.

³¹⁰ The subdistrict headman also supervises the village headman.

³¹¹ Unlike the government officials who are being paid from the government budget, the subdistrict headman can only get paid as a compensation according to his positions.

2. The subdistrict medical practitioner is appointed by the governor to work in the subdistrict area. Together with the subdistrict headman, the subdistrict medical practitioner is expected to oversee and maintain peace as well as care for public health and hygiene.
3. The assistant subdistrict headman assists the subdistrict headman to provide the community services quick and effectively. Generally, there are two assistant subdistrict headmen in each subdistrict, elected by the subdistrict headman and approved by the governor in each province.³¹²

Under the Tambon Council and Tambon Administration Organisation Act of BE 2537 (1994) and the Constitution of 1997, the subdistricts were decentralised into local government units, as will be discussed in Chapter 6.

3.3.2.4 Village

The Thai village, or Muban, is the lowest subdivision of the administration at provincial level. Generally, there will be approximately a population of 200 living in one village,³¹³ with three different people involved in its administration:

1. The village headman, who is elected from the population in the village, has the responsibility to maintain the peace of the community.
2. There are two assistant village headmen in each village. Where a village requires more than two such assistants then a request has to be made for approval by the Ministry of the Interior. These assistant village headmen support the village headman.
3. The village committees are to assist, advise, and consult the village headman. They are also expected to work on other tasks according to laws or procedures and tasks assigned by the district chief officer, or requested by the village headman. In village committees, there are:
 1. The village headman;
 2. The assistant village headmen for governance;

³¹² Phong-ngam, p. 86.

³¹³ Ibid.

3. At least 2, but no more than 10, senior experts who are elected by the village members, and approved by the district chief officer.³¹⁴

3.3.3 Local government

Thailand's local government, which will be discussed more in chapter 4, operates with two different bodies - regular territorial administrative units and self-government.³¹⁵ Thai local government has limited autonomy given the high degree of centralisation of power.³¹⁶ Dhiravegin notes that even though local administration is very important and it involves many people not only within a provincial level but also in local areas, it is largely disregarded by government and some people at central level.³¹⁷ Generally, the Ministry of Interior controls the policy, personnel, and finances of the local units at the provincial and district levels. Field officials from the ministry as well as other central ministries constitute the majority of administrators at local levels.

In Thailand, there are six different local organisations. These organisations are divided into urban and rural bases:

From the Figure 3.2, below, the urban bases are:

- the Bangkok Metropolitan Administration (BMA), a strong-executive form of local government specific to Bangkok;
- the municipality, governing urban centres in the provinces; and
- the City of Pattaya, a local government form of a city-manager specific to Pattaya.

The rural-bases are:

- the Provincial Administrative Organisation (PAO) constituting local government at the provincial level;

³¹⁴ Ibid., Department of Provincial Administration. *Local Administration Act B.E. 2457 (1914) (Reform No. 11) B.E.2551 (2008)* (Ministry of the Interior), [n.d.], <http://www.dopa.go.th/web_pages/m03100000/main/law/act02.pdf> [accessed 29 January 2010].

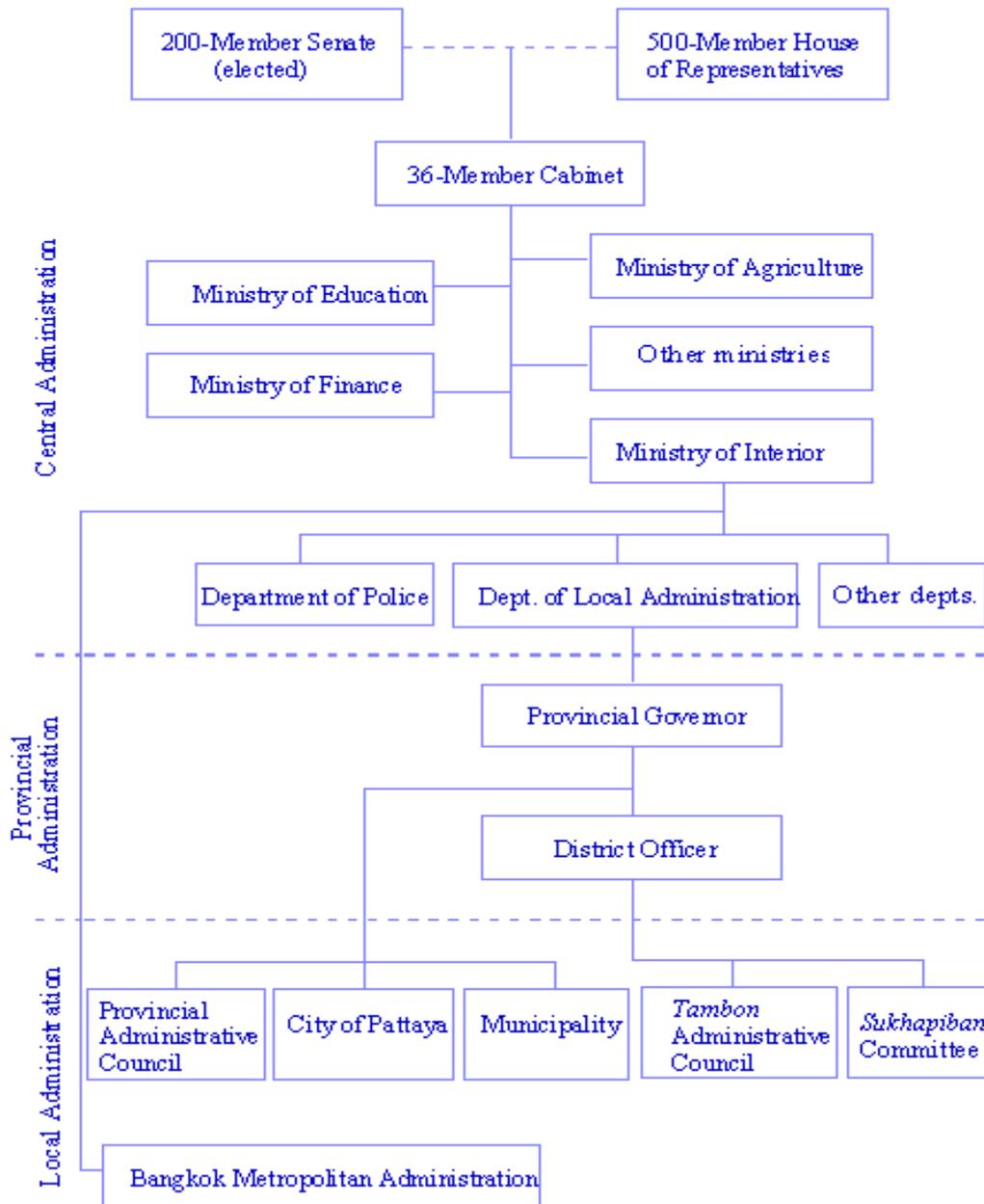
³¹⁵ The Library of Congress Country Studies, *CIA World Factbook*, [n.d.], <http://www.photius.com/countries/thailand/government/thailand_government_local_government.html> [accessed 15 May 2010].

³¹⁶ Ibid.

³¹⁷ Dhiravegin, 1996. p. 256.

- the Tambon Administrative Organisation (TAO) constituting local government at the subdistrict level, also known as the Subdistrict Administrative organisation (SAO); and
- the Sukhapiban or Sanitary Committee, a local government in a rural centre, often referred to as a sanitary district.

Figure 3.2 Government Structure



Source: <http://www.unescap.org/huset/lgstudy/country/thailand/thai.html>

There were 150 members of the Senate in 2007, and 480 members of the House of Representatives. This is in accordance with the Constitution of the Kingdom of Thailand B.E. 2550 (2007).

3.4 Problems with Thailand's national administration system

Thailand continues to have difficulties in becoming a full democracy. Since the country went from being a monarchical state to a bureaucratic polity, to plutocracy, and then democracy, the political system has not developed as hoped.³¹⁸ It has not always been stable, with several interventions by the military over the years. In addition, under the plutocratic arrangements, there is considerable reliance on wealth, which brings corruption.³¹⁹

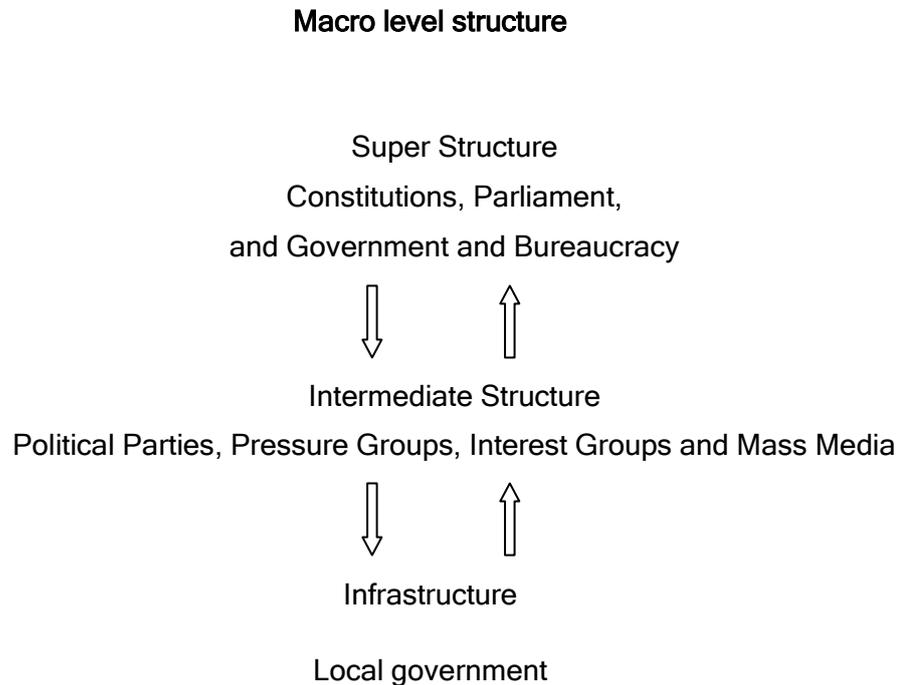
The national administrative system has not developed with the social and economic changes over time.³²⁰ Dhiravegin notes that to develop and promote democracy in Thailand effectively, it is necessary to develop it as a whole system. As the political system is reformed, then the administrative system should also be reformed. From this, development can become dependent on the institutions of government. Below, in Figure 3.3, Dhiravegin shows the connections between the three different levels of the macro level structure that are the main concern.

³¹⁸ Dhiravegin, *The Evolution of the Thai Political System*, p. 328.

³¹⁹ *Ibid.*, 326.

³²⁰ *Ibid.*, 384.

Figure 3.3 Macro level structure



Source: Likhit Dhiravegin, *The evolution of the Thai political system* (Bangkok : Thammasat University, 1996), p. 248.; Likhit Dhiravegin, *Thailand's politics and government* (Bangkok : Thammasat University, 2010), pp. 293-294.

For Dhiravegin, it is essential in a democracy that all three levels are connected as a network. The diagram in Figure 3.3 shows that all three levels link to one another. To explain this, at the lowest level, local government is significant to the degree that, under decentralisation, people at this level have more knowledge and are more aware of the local situation and are, therefore, able to come up with more locally appropriate responses. This stage is very important - knowledge and understanding are very significant because they are part of the foundation of democracy.

For the intermediate structure, Dhiravegin sees it as a connection between the super structure and infrastructure. This means, on one hand, the intermediate structure is a stage for recruiting political leaders - the political parties allow the people at infrastructure level to elect their representatives to work for them. On the other hand, the pressure groups, interest groups and mass media will work as a mirror in order to reflect the work of the government whether it achieves or fails. In

addition, the intermediate structure level can be seen as an intermediary stimulating the government to work better and to fulfil the needs of the people.³²¹

Lastly, at the super structure level, while the government's responsibility is to set out the state's righteous constitution, a well-structured parliament, government and bureaucratic system are required to provide the people with the best service. From this, when the system at all levels is well-structured, operating well, and the people get involved, a democratic system can develop.

3.5 Conclusion

Thailand's national administrative system has developed within an absolute monarchy and centralised government for a very long time. Even though the political transformation in 1932 changed Thailand into a new face of political system, an adherence to the old bureaucratic systems still existed. The national administrative system remained focused on centralisation and government officials still continued to work according to the style they were familiar with. In addition, the military leadership also intervened in Thailand's national administrative system. Thus, Thailand has had a long experience of military of dictatorships. Because of this, Thailand's political system has not always been stable and democracy has been largely unsuccessful.

The next chapter presents an historical review of Thailand's decentralisation. It introduces the decentralisation plan and discusses its limitation and provides an evaluation of Thailand's decentralisation process and problems and the conditions inhibiting the implementation of the government's decentralisation policy.

³²¹ Montri Chenvidyarn, cited in Dhiravegin, *The Evolution of the Thai Political System*, p. 262.

Chapter IV

Thailand's Decentralisation

4.1 Introduction

Since Thailand changed from an absolute monarchy to a democracy in 1932, intergovernmental relations in Thailand's political system have been dominated by central government.³²²

Under the supervision and direction of the cabinet, the central ministries and departments have long played major roles in policy formulation, determination and implementation. Local government has been seen as a subordinate unit,³²³ since the implementation and administration of policy at the provincial level has remained in the hands of the regional offices of ministries and departments. These local officers and departments are overseen by a governor in order to facilitate and coordinate public programmes of various government agencies.³²⁴ The governor, a permanent civil servant, is appointed by the Ministry of the Interior. As a result, local government has had little opportunity to respond to local problems and has had only limited functions.³²⁵

Local administration has consisted of people who have been elected directly by the people. The local bodies consist of municipalities, including the Bangkok Municipality. With the administrative patterns which have developed through its long history as a unitary kingdom, Thailand's centralised administration and strong national government has continued until the present time.³²⁶ Central government determined everything with the result that there was a large array of works and functions across the different areas that it was required to deal with. Central government has not succeeded in doing all that was required of it, leaving

³²² Orapin Sopchokchai, *Good Local Governance and Anti-corruption Through People's Participation: A Case of Thailand* (World Bank), updated 2001 <http://www.worldbank.org/wbi/governance/pdf/orapin_paper.pdf> [accessed 22 July 2006].

³²³ Nakarin Mektrairat, *Research in Decentralisation* (Office of the Decentralisation to Local Government Organization Committee), [n.d.], <http://203.170.239.216/dlocT/images/upload_article/56_Chapter1_Thai.pdf> [accessed 15 July 2006].

³²⁴ Sopchokchai, pp. 1-2.

³²⁵ Nakarin Mektrairat, *Research in Decentralisation*, (Office of the Decentralisation to Local Government Organization Committee), [n.d.], <http://203.170.239.216/dlocT/images/upload_article/56_Chapter2_Thai.pdf> [accessed 15 July 2006].

³²⁶ Sopchokchai, pp. 1-2.

some areas unattended. In a centralised system, government may address problems in some areas but will face challenges in covering all.³²⁷

The concept of 'decentralisation' in Thailand is novel for many Thai people. Only a small number know and understand the evolving structure and potential role of local government.³²⁸ In 1995, the Provincial Councils and the Tambon Councils were created to promote and prepare local communities for a self-governing system. However, the development of local government has been slow because members of these organisations were partly appointed and partly elected to oversee activities at the local level, while the organisations themselves continued to rely directly on central government.³²⁹

The Thai government's policy of decentralisation of decision-making powers to the local level and supporting increased participation in community development has become one of the most important development issues over the past two decades. There is a political demand for self-governing bodies at the Tambon and sub-district levels because Tambons are the fundamental governing units at the provincial administrative level.³³⁰ However, there is an overlap across Thailand's three layers of administrative structure, especially, between the provincial administration and the local administration.³³¹ Programmes and projects are managed and implemented mainly by central government, and the staff who work in the community are appointed by, and responsible to, central government rather than to their local community.

The idea of sustainable development was initiated to promote rural development in the fifth National Economic and Social Development Plan in 1982.³³² For sustainable development to take place and people in the local area to participate in steering and implementing development activities, efforts to establish a 'bottom-up' approach to the development of the community needed to be

³²⁷ Nakarin Mektrairat, *Research in Decentralisation*, (Office of the Decentralisation to Local Government Organization Committee), [n.d.], <http://203.170.239.216/dlocT/images/upload_article/28_1.%20การกระจายอำนาจคืออะไร.doc> [accessed 15 July 2006].

³²⁸ UNESCAP, *Local Government in Asia and the Pacific: A Comparative Study, Thailand*, (United Nations Economics and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific), [n.d.], <<http://www.unescap.org/huset/lgstudy/country/thai/ind/thai.html>> [accessed 2 June 2006].

³²⁹ Sopchokchai, p. 2.

³³⁰ Ibid.

³³¹ Nakarin Mektrairat, *Research in Decentralization* (Office of the Decentralization to Local Government Organization Committee), [n.d.], <http://203.170.239.216/dlocT/images/upload_article/56_Chapter1_Thai.pdf> [accessed 15 July 2006].

³³² Sopchokchai, p. 2.

strengthened.³³³ It was recognised that people would not participate in planning their future and the development processes as long as administrative power and resources were in the control of the central offices. The 1982 fifth National Economic and Social Development Plan had a number of objectives:

1. Restoring the country's economic and financial position by determining the maximum levels of trade and budget deficits as well as mobilising more saving and building greater national economic and financial discipline of both public and private sectors, and increasing economic efficiency and productivity to expand export capability by improving the economic structure and national resource utilisation;
2. Adjusting economic structure and raising economic efficiency by restructuring productive sectors and increasing economic efficiency in several areas, especially in agriculture and the use of natural resources;
3. Developing the social structure and distributing social services in order to alleviate the effects of economic changes on the social conditions;
4. Developing the rural areas in order to eliminate poverty in backward area;
5. Coordinating economic development activity with national security management;
6. Reforming the national development administration system both at national and local levels to operationalise plans more effectively;
7. Reforming public development management at the national level, which is concerned with national planning, budgeting, and personal processes, while the review of development administration at the local level requires the devolution of the development administration authority to the local level, and promotion of greater participation by the local population in governing themselves.³³⁴

Thailand has long followed a 'top-down' approach in its government administration but, through its national planning process, the government has initiated decentralisation and sought to pass more power to local government.

³³³ Ibid.

³³⁴ Office of the National Economic and Social Development Board, *The Fifth National Economic and Social Development Plan (1982-1986)* (Office of Prime Minister), pp. 9-13.

There was an awareness that an effort to establish a 'bottom-up' approach would take time, not only for staff at the local level, but also for people who constitute part of society.

4.2 Thailand's decentralisation

Decentralisation refers to the responsibilities transferred from national or central government to the local or community level.³³⁵ Decentralisation is a key part of democracy and allows people to understand and practice their role in government, and local government is central to this.³³⁶ Tanchai notes that local government is a significant and necessary part of the democratic system. Local government helps people to understand the political system, and as they gain their political consciousness, they are likely to participate more.³³⁷

Simon et al. define centralisation and decentralisation:

Centralization is a word of many meanings. With reference to management problems, an administrative organization is centralized to the extent that decisions are made at relatively high levels in the organization, and persons at lower levels have relatively little discretion. Conversely, an administrative organization is decentralized to the extent that important delegations of discretionary and decision making authority are made from higher to lower levels of the organization.³³⁸

Heywood states that all modern states are divided on a territorial basis between central and its peripheral such as regional, provincial, or local institutions. While central government has its authority and powers to control the national administration, in unitary systems, local government is appointed and recruited by the central government in order to distribute national administrative functions and obligations.³³⁹ Heywood points out that the centre and local rely on one another. The responsibilities of central government include:

³³⁵ Andrew Heywood, *Politics*, 2nd edn. (New York: Palgrave, 2002.), p. 100.

³³⁶ Woothisarn Tanchai, *Decentralisation and Local Government: A Progress after the Constitution 1997 (2540)*. (Bangkok: King Prajadhipok's Institute, 2004), p. 2.

³³⁷ Ibid.

³³⁸ Herbert A. Simon et al., *Centralization VS. Decentralization in Organizing the Controller's Department* (Texas: Scholars Book Co. 1978.), p. 13.

³³⁹ Heywood, p. 158.

National Unity: Central government alone articulates the interests of the whole rather than the various parts: that is, the interests of the nation rather than those of sectional, ethnic or regional groups. A strong centre ensures that the government addresses the common interests of the entire community; a weak centre leads to rivalry and disharmony.

Uniformity: Central government alone can establish uniform laws and public services that help people to move more easily from one part of the country to another. Geographical mobility is likely to be restricted when there are differing tax regimes and differing legal, educational and social-security systems throughout a country.

Equality: Decentralization has the disadvantage that it forces peripheral institutions to rely on the resources available in their locality or region. Only central government can rectify inequalities that arise from the fact that the areas with the greatest social needs are invariably those with the least potential for raising revenue.

Prosperity: Economic development and centralization invariably go hand in hand. Only central government, for instance, can manage a single currency, control tax, and spending politics with a view to ensuring sustainable growth, and, if necessary, provide an infrastructure in the form of roads, railways, airports, and so on.³⁴⁰

Central government has power over national affairs and, Brook states, “centralization is supposed to help in allocating resources and in setting goals for a whole organization”.³⁴¹ There remain several areas where central government is less effective.³⁴² Decentralised arrangements are recognised as appropriate for meeting the following tasks:³⁴³

Participation: Local or regional government is certainly more effective than central government in providing opportunities for citizens to participate in the political life of their community. The benefits of widening the scope of political participation include the fact that it helps to create a better educated and more informed citizenry.

Responsiveness: Peripheral institutions are usually ‘close’ to the people and more sensitive to their needs. This both strengthens democratic accountability and ensures that government responds not merely to the overall interests of society, but also to the specific needs of particular communities.

Legitimacy: Physical distance from government affects the acceptability or rightness of its decisions. Decisions made at a ‘local’ level are more likely to be seen as intelligible and therefore legitimate. In contrast, central government may appear remote, both geographically and politically.

Liberty: As power tends to corrupt, centralization threatens to turn government into a tyranny against the individual. Decentralization protects liberty by dispersing government power, thereby creating a network of checks and balances. Peripheral bodies check central government as well as each other.³⁴⁴

³⁴⁰ Ibid., pp. 158-159.

³⁴¹ Michael Z. Brooke, *Centralization and Autonomy: A study in Organization Behaviour* (New York: Praeger Publishers, 1984), p. 4.

³⁴² Heywood, p. 158.

³⁴³ Woraphot. Wisarutpit, cited in Trakoon Meechai, *Decentralisation* (Bangkok: Sukom and Son limited, 1995), p. 4.

³⁴⁴ Heywood, p. 159.

4.2.1 The evolution of Thailand's decentralisation

Under King Chulalongkorn's bureaucratic reforms of 1892, decentralisation was not introduced because, at that stage, Thailand needed to strengthen central government to ensure control of the national administration system rather than risking decentralisation. The administrative reforms of 1892 were to strengthen the national administration system so that policy would be implemented more effectively. However, the main purpose was to make certain the Thai central government was empowered, and had sufficient strength, to remain an independent nation state,³⁴⁵ and so protect itself from colonialism.

The national administrative reforms during King Chulalongkorn's regime were not only a foundation, but also a turning point towards the present administrative system.³⁴⁶ Soon after the reform agenda was announced,³⁴⁷ Thailand sent higher-level government officials abroad on a tour of inspection to gain ideas for reform.

Government at the provincial level was also subject to change to make the administrative system more effective.³⁴⁸ One development at the provincial administration level was the establishment of the sanitary district administration and the provincial sanitary district administration.³⁴⁹

The function of the sanitary district³⁵⁰ or 'Sukhaphiban', was to oversee the sanitary provisions for both urban and rural districts. While the 'Sukhaphiban' of Bangkok' was the first urban sanitary district, 'Tha Chalom' was the first rural sanitary district that was established eight years later in 1905.³⁵¹ After the 'Tha Chalom' sanitary district was initiated, the Sanitary Management Act was launched

³⁴⁵ Likhit Dhiravegin, *The Evolution of the Thai Political System*, 9th edn. (Bangkok: Thammasat University, 2005), p. 257.

³⁴⁶ Kovit Phong-ngam, *Thailand's Local Governance: Principles and a New Dimension in the Future* (Bangkok: Winyuchon Publication House, 2000), p. 78.

³⁴⁷ Wikipedia, *History of Thailand (1768-1932)*, [n.d.], <http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/History_of_Thailand_%281768-1932%29> [accessed 3 August 2009].

³⁴⁸ Department of Provincial Administration, *Central Administration Reform* (Ministry of the Interior) [n.d.], <<http://www.dopa.go.th/English/history/polit2.htm>> [accessed 28 March 2007]

³⁴⁹ Department of Provincial Administration, *Local Administration Reform* (Ministry of the Interior), [n.d.], <<http://www.dopa.go.th/English/history/polit4.htm>> [accessed 28 March 2007].

³⁵⁰ UNESCAP uses the term Sukhaphiban in referring to the sanitary committees. UNESCAP. *Thailand*.

³⁵¹ Ibid.

in 1908. Under this Act, the 'Sukhapiban,' was divided into 2 types:³⁵² 'Sukhaphiban Muang' at the town level and 'Sukhaphiban Tambon' at the Subdistrict level.³⁵³

After Thailand's political transformation in 1932, Charoenmuang divides Thailand's decentralisation into four different periods.³⁵⁴

1. The first period was the attempt to establish self-government at the local level in 1933. During this period, the government passed the Municipality Act (1933) so that there were three types of municipalities: city municipality, town municipality, and Tambon municipality. The government aimed to establish all 4,800 Tambons at that time to be municipalities. As a result, the first target was to upgrade the status of all 35 existing Sukhapibans, established during King Chulalongkorn's reign, to be municipalities. This time the municipalities' status became that of a juristic person³⁵⁵ that had its own revenue, bureaucrats, as well as autonomy according to the law. Nineteen years later in 1952, only 117 municipalities had been successfully established and developed. The problems appearing to inhibit the government's objective were the limited revenue and autonomy;³⁵⁶

2. The second period saw the establishment of local government by government officials from 1952 to 1956. During this period, the municipalities were not paid as much attention as the Sukhapibans as government realised that there were a small number of local government agencies with most of them established in the community of the town area. To develop the local area, resuscitating the Sukhapibans was considered in 1952. However, there were no further developments regarding local government because the government still decided that the Sukhapibans must be directed by the appointed and delegated government officials;

3. During this period, the Provincial Administrative Organisation (PAO) was also established, and it was noticeable that while the government plan was for the Sukhapibans to provide services within a town area, the PAOs were expected

³⁵² The primary functions of both types of Sukhaphibans were 1) Provision of sanitary services, 2) Provision of public health services, and 3) Provision of public transport, and 4) Provision of primary education.

³⁵³ Thanet Charoenmuang, *100 years of Thai Local Government 1887-1997* (Bangkok: Kobfai Publisher, 1997), p. 90.

³⁵⁴ Ibid. pp. 92-98.

³⁵⁵ A juristic person refers to an entity such as a firm other than a human being. This term is created by law and is recognised as a legal entity having distinct identity, legal personality, and duties. <<http://www.businessdictionary.com/definition/juridical-person.html>>

³⁵⁶ Charoenmuang, pp. 92-93.

to provide and serve the people living outside the town area where it was beyond the Sukhapibans' responsibilities. Under the PAO management, government officials who worked at the provincial level directed the PAOs;

During 1956, the government passed the Tambon Act which established Tambons as local administrative agencies. With this status, Tambons had the potential to raise their own revenue and manage their expenditure. Furthermore, they were granted autonomy to exercise their obligations. However, even though the local administrative agencies were established during this period, their functions did not change much.³⁵⁷ While the government officials at the provincial level directed the PAO, the Tambon Administrative Organisations (TAOs) were also directed by appointed staff supervised by central and provincial government, known as Kamnan³⁵⁸ and Phuyaibaa,³⁵⁹

4. In the period 1961 to 1991, the government paid attention to developing economic systems rather than continuing with extending local government. However, in 1978, the government passed the law which established the Pattaya city government,³⁶⁰

5. During the period 1992 to 1996, there were issues over the election of governors and demands were made for local government reform. There was an argument regarding the status once the governors were elected. If they were to be the CEO-governor then this would affect national security. To pass the bill regarding the CEO-governor election, the government decided to postpone and later initiated five different acts.³⁶¹ Of course, one of them related to SAOs as the act resulted in the establishment of first 617 SAOs in 1995. Later in 1996, more SAOs were established bringing the total to 2,143.³⁶² At present, there is a total of 6,157 SAOs.³⁶³

³⁵⁷ Ibid. pp. 93-95.

³⁵⁸ Kamnan stands for a subdistrict headman.

³⁵⁹ Phuyaibaa stands for village elders within the Tambon.

³⁶⁰ The Government of the city of Pattaya takes the form of a council-manager. Pattaya is the only city with this form of local government.

³⁶¹ Charoenmuang, pp. 96-98.

³⁶² Faction of local government inspectors, Chiang Mai City Hall, cited in Charoenmuang, p. 98.

³⁶³ Department of Local Administration, Ministry of the Interior, Data on 15 August 2008.

4.3 Decentralisation in the 21st Century

Since being first introduced to Thailand in 1897, decentralisation has been the subject of discussion. The 1994 TAO Act was required because the structure of the Tambon council and SAO did not genuinely decentralise nor provide or result in the desired level of opportunities for the local people to participate. There had been ongoing problems caused by the appointment of officials from central and provincial government to key positions of control at local government.³⁶⁴

Raksasat has stated that decentralisation initiatives were far from what we might call genuine decentralisation. This is because the bureaucrats who worked at the higher level and who were meant to implement the decentralisation programme did not comprehend the essence of the policy. It might be concluded, then, that decentralisation has been pursued in theory, but not in practice.³⁶⁵

After little progress in promoting decentralisation to the local level, more emphasis was given to it in the Constitution of the Kingdom of Thailand, of 1997. Chapter V, Section 78 of the Constitution states:

The State shall decentralise power to localities for the purpose of independence and self-determination of local affairs, develop local economics, public utilities and facilities systems and information infrastructure in the locality thoroughly and equally throughout the country as well as develop into a large-sized local government organisation a province ready for such purpose, having regard to the will of people in that province.³⁶⁶

Tanchai notes that the Plan for Decentralisation of Power to the Locality, passed by the Cabinet on 3 October 2000, has three substantial principles: 1) autonomy, 2) clear delineation, and 3) efficiency. These three principles are basic ideas of decentralisation, as a central government needs to transfer powers and responsibilities to provide social services to the local government organisation so it can directly and freely serve the needs of the people in the local area. As a result, local government has needed greater autonomy in planning and implementing its own public services. Central government can then ensure quality and standardised

³⁶⁴ Trakoon Meechai, *Decentralisation* (Bangkok: Sukom and Son limited, 1995), p. 93.

³⁶⁵ Amorn Raksasat, cited in Meechai, p. 54.

³⁶⁶ The Constitution of the Kingdom of Thailand B.E. 2540 (1997).

public services are provided to the people in the locality.³⁶⁷

Phong-ngam highlights that there are several points where the 1997 Constitution differed from the previous ones over the matter of local government, particularly over the local government agencies before the 1997 constitution, and the local government agencies after the 1997 Constitution. Before the 1997 constitution:

1. Bureaucrats at provincial and district levels were appointed to be in charge of and hold some position within local government agencies;
2. A local government's responsibilities and role were limited and had to be assigned by the central government. In addition, some responsibilities that the local government was assigned by the central government overlapped with the government at a national and provincial level;
3. Local government had limited resources as well as revenue in order to implement national policies;
4. The policy of decentralisation was ambiguous influencing the working plans and leaving steps undecided;
5. Local government agencies had limited capabilities in order to fulfil the national policy implementation;
6. Local government lacked the capability to provide sufficient goods and services resulting in the local people being unsatisfied and refusing to participate or cooperate with local government;
7. There were several types of autonomous local government organisations giving rise to problems of working cooperatively;
8. Finance for local government was very limited;
9. Local government administrative systems did not allow the local government agencies to work effectively. Most of the local government administrative system was under the central government's authority;
10. Local government organisations were supposed to be under the central government supervision: however, instead of supervising local government organisations, central government commanded them;

³⁶⁷ Woothisarn Tanchai, *Decentralization in Thailand. Issues of Government Policy Formulation Towards Decentralization*, [n.d.], <http://www.decentralization.ws/icd2/papers/decent_thailand.htm> [accessed 15 May 2006]. (p. 2).

11. Apart from local elections, the local people had less opportunity to participate.³⁶⁸

Local government organisation after the 1997 Constitution had the following features:

1. While local government was empowered in administration and finance, there was also a reform of the working system among the central, provincial, and local governments. Job descriptions as well as authorities and obligations of each government level were more distinct;
2. Local government organisation and structures were reformed. Aside from the adjustments made to the SAO councils and executives, the most significant change was that Kamnan and Phuyaibaan no longer sat on the board of the SAOs,³⁶⁹
3. Personnel administration in local government organisations was adjusted and reorganised to make them more integrated. At the local level, the office of the commission on local government personnel standards³⁷⁰ was assigned to set the standard for the personnel administration at the local level;
4. People's rights, liberty and political participation were increased. Before the 1997 Constitution, Thai people had less opportunity to participate in politics. However, under the 1997 Constitution, people were allowed to remove the local government organisation's executive and committees of the council.³⁷¹

From the above, it can be seen that after the 1997 Constitution, the government paid more attention to the local government by reorganising the local

³⁶⁸ Phong-ngam, pp. 230-231.

³⁶⁹ Chaiyan Rajchagool, *Tambon Administrative Organization: Are the people in the Dramatis Personae or in the Audience?* UNESCAP, [n.d.], <http://www.unescap.org/ttdw/Publications/TPTS_pubs/TxBulletin_69/bulletin69_b.pdf> [accessed 2 June 2006].

³⁷⁰ The office of the commission on local government personnel standards was first temporarily established in 1999: precedence of personnel administration at local government and later the office became permanent in 2000, The responsibility of the office of the commission on local government personnel standards is to develop a system of personnel administration at local government toward to a merit system and good governance.

Office of the Commission on Local Government Personnel Standards, *Visions and Aims*, [n.d.], <<http://local.moi.go.th/13.11.51.pdf>> [accessed 19 October 2010].

³⁷¹ Phong-ngam, pp. 231-234.

government organisations' structure, providing more revenue and promoting participation, so the local government could work more effectively.

4.4 Thailand's decentralisation plan

In the 1997 Constitution and the Determining Plans and Process of Decentralisation to Local Government Organisation Act, B.E. 2542 (1999), the government set out a decentralisation plan for local government. The 1999 Act sets out how local government organisation should proceed:

The transferred missions relating to the public services managed by the State on the date of enforcement of this Act to local government organisation with the period of time as follows:

- (a) The overlap missions between the State and local government organization or the mission provided by the State in the area of local government organization, the proceeding shall be complete within four years.
- (b) The missions provided by the State in the area of local government organization which impacted to other local government organizations, the proceeding shall be complete within four years.
- (c) The missions proceeded under the government policy, the proceeding shall be complete within four years.³⁷²

The decentralisation plan was divided into three different periods. In the first period, 2001-2004, there were two steps to carry out - a restructuring of internal administrative system at local government level, including central and provincial administrative systems, developing strategy for decentralisation and, secondly, to have the staff, the revenue, and the relevant law ready before carrying out the transfer of responsibilities.

In the second period, 2005 to 2010, the transfer of authority took place. While the administrative roles of each of the central, provincial and local government levels were transformed, the issues of the relationship between the three government levels, as well as the relevant law and procedures were reviewed to allow the local government organisation work more effectively.

³⁷² The Determining Plans and Process of Decentralisation to Local Government Organisation, Act B.E. (2542) 1999. Chapter 4, Decentralisation Plans to Local Government Organisation, Section 30.

In the third period, after 2011, decentralisation is expected to happen across all localities.³⁷³ The government expects local people will have a better standard of living due to the public services being provided at the local level. It is also expected that they will participate and cooperate more in local government activities. Another expectation is that the local government organisation will have more capabilities in order to implement policy more effectively. After ten years of power transformation, the local government organisations will have more autonomy as well as more revenue to implement policies. In addition, with their experience gained from the second period, local government organisations must be able to work more effectively.³⁷⁴

4.5 Limitations in Thailand's decentralisation

The moves to centralisation and strengthening central government during King Chulalongkorn's reign were later to cause problems. Government at lower levels, especially at the local level had to participate more and, from this, more development from the bottom began to take place. As outlined in chapter 3, the government has been working to promote decentralisation but still has difficulty with it and Thailand continues to deal with the long-standing tradition of over-centralisation.³⁷⁵

In the 1997 Constitution, the government paid a lot of attention to local government - reorganising the structure of local government organisation, providing more revenue and promoting political participation by the people - so local government could work more effectively. In practice, several conditions have resulted in the failure of the development of government at the local level. Samutvanich mentions two important points: 1) the degree of Thai people and government participation in decentralisation and, 2) the characteristics of decentralisation and activities undertaken under decentralisation.³⁷⁶ The following have been identified as problems Thailand is facing with decentralisation.

³⁷³ Office of Committee of Decentralisation to Local Government Organization, The Prime Minister's Office. *Handbook of Decentralisation to Local Government Organization* (n.p., n.pub., 2002), pp. 20-21.

³⁷⁴ Ibid. pp. 20-21.

³⁷⁵ Dhiravegin, *The Evolution of the Thai Political System*, p. 255.

³⁷⁶ Chai-Anan Samudavanija, cited in Meechai, p. 12.

4.5.1 A tendency towards the centre

Centralisation is viewed as an important system that is more effective in the short run in mobilising resources and rapidly implementing coherent policies.³⁷⁷

Howlett and Ramesh state:

All government operates at multiple levels, spatially. In unitary system, the existence of a clear chain of command or hierarchy linking the different levels of government together in a super-ordinate/subordinate relationship reduces the complexity of multi-level governance and policy-making.... The national government retains, in principle, all decision-making power. It can choose to delegate these powers to lower levels of government or dictate to them, as the case may be, but the role of the central, national government is essentially unchallenged at the top of the country's government hierarchy.³⁷⁸

According to Simon, a key defining difference between centralisation and decentralisation is the extent of decision-making. He explains that while decisions are made at relatively high levels under a centralised administration, decentralisation is to do with the extent that discretion and authority in making important decisions are delegated by the top management to other levels having executive authority.³⁷⁹

In outlining the relationship between central and local government, Hague and Harrop describe two forms:

- 1) A dual system, which maintains a formal separation between the central and local government. It is noticeable that the relationship between both levels is separated instead of being integrated. While central government's responsibilities are involved with the national overview, local government also has its authority to work on its own.
- 2) A fused system, where there is a linkage between the central and other government levels; and their works are combined as one single sphere.³⁸⁰

³⁷⁷ J. Rogers Hollingsworth and Robert Hanneman, *Centralization and Power in Social Service Delivery Systems: The cases of England, Wales, and the United States* (Boston:Kluwer Nijhoff, 1983), p. 2.

³⁷⁸ Michael Howlett and M. Ramesh, *Studying Public Policy, Policy Cycles and Policy Subsystem*, 2nd edn. (Ontario: Oxford University Press, 2003), p. 62.

³⁷⁹ H. Simon, cited in Michael Z Brooke, *Centralization and Autonomy* (New York: Praeger, 1984), p. 145.

³⁸⁰ Rod Hague and Martin Harrop, *Comparative Government and Politics: An Introduction*, 6th edn. (New York: Palgrave, 2004), p. 243.

Hague and Harrop note the methods for distributing power away from the centre as below:

Figure 4.1 Methods for distributing power away from the centre

Method	Definition
Deconcentration	Central government functions are executed by staff in the field
Decentralization	Central government functions are executed by subnational authorities
Devolution	Central government grants some decision-making autonomy to new lower levels

Note: Deconcentration and decentralisation occur in federal as well as unitary states.
Source: Rod Hague and Martin Harrop, *Comparative Government and Politics: An Introduction*, 6th edn. (New York: Palgrave, 2004), p. 236.

Scholars are agreed that it is not possible to reject centralisation because all states require it in governing the country. The question is about the degree to which decentralisation should exist. To what extent will central government allow local government to participate? Regarding this, Wilson states that:

Centralization (also known as hierarchy of authority) referred to the degree to which power was concentrated in an organization. When all power within an organization is concentrated or exercised by a single individual, there is a maximum degree of centralization. Conversely, a maximum degree of decentralization (and a minimum degree of centralization) is witnessed in organizations where all members in an organization have equal decision-making power.³⁸¹

³⁸¹ Patricia A. Wilson, 'A Theory of Power and Politics and their Effects on Organizational Commitment of Senior Executive Service Members', *Administration & Society*, 31(1999), 120-141.

According to Wilson, to make decentralisation a success, the central government (centralisation) must generate an adequate opportunity and role for its local government whereby staff can make decisions and participate well.

In the case of Thailand, the bureaucratic polity appears to be one of the important factors that undermine the decentralisation policy. This is because it is concentrated at the national level.³⁸² The power of central government is recognised as undermining the move towards decentralisation. Local government continues to rely on central government,³⁸³ even though it has theoretically been empowered by central government to play a much greater role. This has meant that central government continues to play an important role in local government, which makes it very difficult for local government to exercise its obligations.

4.5.2 Local self-government versus local government by officials

As mentioned above, decentralisation in Thailand was first introduced and directed by the top level.³⁸⁴ Charoenmuang points to a possible contrast between decentralisation in some Western countries and decentralisation in Thailand that in some Western countries, the servants of the manor have their freedoms and have the opportunity to be free from their masters.³⁸⁵

In contrast, under Thailand's Sakdina and Prai systems³⁸⁶ (see chapter 3), social class within a Thai society is distinguished between the elites and the ordinary people, with the privileged generally living in a metropolis and ordinary, lower class people living in the countryside. Thai social hierarchy distinguishes between superior and subordinate.³⁸⁷ Thai values are strong regarding tolerance of individual variations, but power and respect for authority³⁸⁸ mean that the relationships between the elites and commoners are completely unequal.

³⁸² Phong-ngam, pp. 240-241., Pathan Suvanamongkul and Isara Suwanbon, cited in Meechai, p. 60.

³⁸³ Phong-ngam, p. 242.

³⁸⁴ See more in Charoenmuang on Thailand's decentralisation evolution under four periods in 4.2.1., Thanet Charoenmuang, *100 years of Thai Local Government 1887-1997*, p. 88.

³⁸⁵ Charoenmuang, *100 years of Thai Local Government 1887-1997*, p. 83.

³⁸⁶ See Likhit Dhiravegin, *Demi Democracy: The Evolution of the Thai Political System* (Singapore: Time Academic Press, 1992), pp. 26-28.

³⁸⁷ John L.S. Girling, *Thailand Society and Politics* (Ithaca and London: Cornell University Press, 1981), p. 17.

³⁸⁸ *Ibid.*, 17.

With these circumstances, Charoenmuang described the character of Thailand's decentralisation as a 'colonial local government' with relationships between the two main groups characterised as masters and servants. Moreover, since the servants had less opportunity to be free, the only way to acknowledge those masters was as their rulers.³⁸⁹

Even though the decentralisation programme was first promulgated in 1897, it was not until 1997 that the Constitution provided a greater degree of self-government at the local level. Under the 1997 Constitution, "a local administrative committee or local administrators were to be elected by the people or from the approval of a local assembly".³⁹⁰ In accordance with the Constitution, this meant that the appointed bureaucrats from the central government would no longer be in charge of the SAO administration. Local government bureaucrats and agencies were now meant to be able to exercise their own power.³⁹¹

A core problem with the policy is that local government has no experience of self-government. Given the country's system of social class, local people are ruled by bureaucrats at the national level.³⁹² Therefore, when central government empowers local government, those local government organisations face real difficulties.

4.5.3 Autonomy

Autonomy refers to the situation where units and sub-units possess the ability to take decisions for themselves on issues that are normally reserved for a higher level.³⁹³ Autonomy also refers to the right of a group of people to govern themselves and to organise their own activities. In addition, according to Howlett and Ramesh, autonomy can affect the ability of the state to make and implement policies³⁹⁴

For there to be decentralisation, central government must allow the government at local level to have its own autonomy. The degree of functional autonomy that is decentralised by the state plays a significant role in administrative

³⁸⁹ Charoenmuang, *100 years of Thai Local Government 1887-1997*, p. 83.

³⁹⁰ The Constitution of the Kingdom of Thailand B.E. 2540 (1997). Chapter IX, Local Government, Section 285.

³⁹¹ Phong-ngam, pp. 230-231.

³⁹² Charoenmuang, p. 83.

³⁹³ Brook, p. 9.

³⁹⁴ Howlett and Ramesh, 1995, p. 60.

decentralisation.³⁹⁵ If the local government is not provided with the autonomy it needs, it cannot fulfil its allocated responsibilities.

Before discussing how much autonomy is needed under decentralisation, Brooke explains two distinct and contradictory notions of decentralisation and centralisation by referring to horizontal and vertical views, summarised in Figure 4.2.

Figure 4.2 - The horizontal and vertical dimensions

Horizontal	Decentralization	Centralization
	Wide participation at all levels, group decision-making, consultation.	Autonomy of decision-taking, individual decision-taking, direction.
Vertical	Decentralization	Centralization
	Decisions taken at all levels in the group, coordination.	Decisions taken at a high level, control.

Source: Michael Z. Brooke, *Centralization and Autonomy: A study in Organization Behaviour* (New York: Praeger, 1984), p.147.

According to Brooke, one of the most common ways to examine the degree of centralisation is to determine the locus of the decision-making.³⁹⁶ With reference to figure 4.1, Brooke further mentions that there are two points that can be seen: 1) a distinction between making (through consultation) a decision and taking it. This shows a degree of autonomy between one who has power and another who is a subordinate and, 2) the power and its centralisation that is not equivalent either to vertical or horizontal centralisation, but runs diagonally across both. Brooke explains that according to a locus of decision analysis, the concept of decentralisation is not about decentralisation in terms of power, authority or participation. An organisation is decentralised because subsidiary managers are autonomous. Therefore, decentralisation to a particular level may imply the centralisation from that level downwards. Brooke further mentions that even though it is true that to some extent decentralisation in a vertical sense is related

³⁹⁵ Daniel Bourgeois, 'Administrative Nationalism', *Administration & Society*, 39 (2007), 631-655. (p. 647).

³⁹⁶ Brook, p. 45.

to a greater participation, he says: “the lower down the hierarchy the authority to make decisions goes, the more jealously that authority may be guarded”.³⁹⁷

Since a degree of autonomy is very important to decentralisation, then the question arises as to the degree of autonomy central government should provide to the local level. Rassameepath notes that in order to function as government at the local level, central government has to decentralise. In this case, Simon further recommends that we should be concerned about the degree of decentralisation the central government can provide to its local government. This means that it relates to how far the government shall centralise because what we really need to find is a proper level in the organisational hierarchy that is neither too high nor too low for each class of decision-making.³⁹⁸ The challenge lies, however, in determining the degree to which government at the national level allows government at the local level the opportunity to exercise the autonomy. It is vital that central government carefully considers providing enough autonomy so local government can execute policies smoothly.³⁹⁹

Furthermore, Rassameepath mentions, that because local government is established under decentralisation, it has only limited autonomy to make decisions by law. With autonomy, local government must still be under the overall control of central government. He explains that central government must fulfil four essential different conditions:

1. The local government organisations must have their own officials. These officials must come from election by the local people and must not be appointed by the central government;
2. The local government organisations must have their own revenue as well as the authority to exercise control over their budgets. Revenue should come from various sources: the government’s subsidy, local taxes, fees as directed ways, and loans;
3. The local government organisation must be maintain as a juristic person so that it is a guarantee that their status is autonomous and their functions are distinct from the central government. Additionally, being a

³⁹⁷ Ibid., p. 147.

³⁹⁸ H. Simon, cited in Brook, p. 147.

³⁹⁹ Bhorchai Rassameepath, *Principles of Thai Local Government Law*, 2nd edn. (Bangkok, Sukhothai Thammathirat Open University, 1994), p. 36.

juristic person also means that the obligations and policies they process and implement are for public services;

4. The local government organisation is still under the control and supervision of the central government because being autonomous is not the same as being independent and having the power to do whatever a local government organisation wants to do: the status of local government organisations remains as subnational government⁴⁰⁰ and has to be under the central government's dominance.⁴⁰¹

Under the Thai 1997 Constitution, the main purpose of decentralisation was to:

1. Give autonomy to the locality with the principle of self-government according to the will of the people in the locality.⁴⁰²
2. Give any locality which meets the conditions of self-government shall have the right to be formed as a local government organisation as provided by law.⁴⁰³
3. Ensure that all local government organizations shall enjoy autonomy in laying down policies for their governance, administration, personnel administration, finance and shall have powers and duties particularly on their own part.⁴⁰⁴
4. Ensure that the delineation of powers and duties between the State and local government organisation and among local government organizations themselves shall be in accordance with the provisions of the law, having particular regarding to the promotion of decentralisation.⁴⁰⁵

However, Samutvanich points out how difficult it is for Thailand to operate successfully under decentralisation since government officials, in particular, are always concerned about patronage and are eager to maintain their hold on power.

⁴⁰⁰ Hague and Harrop, p. 244.

⁴⁰¹ Rassameepath, cited in Meechai, pp. 7-9.

⁴⁰² The Constitution of the Kingdom of Thailand B.E. 2540 (1997). Chapter IX, Local Government, Section 282.

⁴⁰³ The Constitution of the Kingdom of Thailand B.E. 2540 (1997). Chapter IX, Local Government, Section 283, first paragraph.

⁴⁰⁴ The Constitution of the Kingdom of Thailand B.E. 2540 (1997). Chapter IX, Local Government, Section 284, first paragraph.

⁴⁰⁵ The Constitution of the Kingdom of Thailand B.E. 2540 (1997). Chapter IX, Local Government, Section 284, second paragraph.

To decentralise and provide full autonomy to local government is not considered by this group to be proper because Thailand is a unitary state. He further discusses that in launching a decentralisation programme, the existing ideas of what makes for a suitable administrative structure for the nation, together with the entrenched hierarchical behaviour associated with this, remain. This makes for difficulties in attempting to maintain the stability of government while introducing decentralisation. Further, while a decentralisation programme may be launched, this does not mean that government organisations change their behaviours, attitudes and visions. Since decentralisation has important implications for the old centralised and hierarchical systems practised by the traditional administration, it is subsequently amended and becomes harmonised with the old system.⁴⁰⁶

As long as central government continues to play an important role in initiating policies and retaining the authority to make important decisions, while local government lacks the real independence it needs for it to make its own decisions and the power to carry them out, this major problem remains. The empowering process from the central to the local government level has not yet genuinely taken place. Even though the structure of the national administration system has three layers and several local government agencies have been established, power continues with the central government and with that, the control.

4.6 Conclusion

Although Thailand launched a decentralisation policy since 1897,⁴⁰⁷ local government has not been genuinely successful due to the fact that the central government always played an important role and controlled a national administrative system at all levels. Consequently, working under the supervision and direction of central government undermines the ability of bureaucrats and the government agencies at the local level to perform their decentralised responsibilities. Although the Thai government in 1992 created a new form of local body for rural communities, the Tambon Councils, to promote and prepare local communities for a self-governing system, the development of local government is still limited.

⁴⁰⁶ Samutvanich, cited in Meechai, p. 12.

⁴⁰⁷ Charoenmuang, p. 88.

In 1997, the government promulgated the new Constitution, which emphasised more decentralisation. Attempting to promote a self-governing system at a local level, the Constitution was designed to allow the bureaucrats and government agencies at the local level to have more opportunities to participate in governing their areas. Of course, this also included the local people who played an important role in decentralisation.

Even though the 1997 Constitution endeavoured to promote decentralisation, it was obvious that local government has had difficulty in fulfilling these opportunities. The next chapter discusses factors that undermine these decentralisation aspirations.

Chapter V

Thailand's development plans and decentralisation

5.1 Introduction

Thailand announced its first National Economic and Social Development Plan in 1961. The focus of the first plan (1961-1966) was on economic development and the promotion of economic growth,⁴⁰⁸ with social development mentioned as one of the primary objectives in raising the standard of living of the Thai people.⁴⁰⁹ By 2009, there had been a total of ten National Economic and Social Development Plans.

The National Economic and Social Development Plans were developed by central government, and it was not until the Eighth Plan (1997-2001) that government encouraged the Thai people to participate in making proposals for the national plan. This development made the Thai people more conscious of their roles as members of the society. The Ninth Plan promoted the idea of developing a sufficient economy⁴¹⁰ through encouraging the participation and development at the grass-roots level thereby demonstrating the government's new vision of working by promoting the 'bottom-up' approach.

This chapter reviews the National Economic and Social Development Plans from 1961 to the present. The Ninth and Tenth Plans will be discussed especially in terms of good governance and the attempt to link directly the national administrative system with local government. The Ninth Plan introduced the

⁴⁰⁸ The First National Economic and Social Development Plan (1961-1966) was first announced as the National Economic and Development Plan.

⁴⁰⁹ The First National Economic and Social Development Plan (1964-1966) p. 9.

⁴¹⁰ 'Sufficiency Economy' is a concept of moderation and contentment. It originally derived from the economic crisis in 1997 in Thailand, when His Majesty the King Bhumibhon mentioned the approach to handling the economic adversity at the time so that Thailand could withstand future economic insecurity.* This philosophy is set out to shield the people and the country from adverse shocks as well as to acknowledge interdependency among people at all different levels as an approach in order to live against the backdrop of interdependence and globalisation. Consistent with the philosophy's definition, it emphasized the use of knowledge wisely with due consideration. As a result, its values include integrity, diligence, harmlessness and sharing which can seek to achieve balance and sustainability.**

* Medhi Krongkaew, *The Philosophy of a Sufficient Economy*, National Economic and Social Development Board, updated 2003, <http://kyotoreview.cseas.kyoto-u.ac.jp/issue/issue3/article_292.html> [accessed 15 October 2010].

** National Economic and Social Development Board, *Sufficient Economy*, [n.d.], <<http://www.sufficiencyeconomy.org>>[accessed 15 October 2010].

concept of good governance which is very relevant to decentralisation, and the Tenth Plan of 2006-2011 seeks to solve the problems regarding the development of good governance, and to strengthen the role and capabilities of local government. The Tenth Plan emphasises the promotion of mechanisms and processes to increase participation across the localities.⁴¹¹ The Ninth and Tenth Plans will be assessed as to whether the government's objective of good governance is on the path to success or failure.

5.2. The National Economic and Social Development Plans (1961 - present)

Thailand's first National Economic and Social Development Plan, announced in 1961, was focused on developing agriculture in order to meet world market demands. Import substitution was also promoted. During this period, while the government assisted and provided the necessary infrastructure as well as technical skills, the private sector was urged to participate in production under the close guidance of the government.

The second National Economic and Social Development Plan (1967-1971) left the basic roles of government and the private sector unchanged. The government continued to focus on the construction of physical infrastructure and this resulted in roads, railways, and irrigation dams. Providing health services to the rural community was another area of focus. The private sector was urged to put more effort into the production of industrial goods on a continuing basis. Technology was purchased during this period, although there was little control over the selection of the technology imported.⁴¹²

While the outcome of the first two plans succeeded,⁴¹³ the conditions at the time that the Third Plan (1972-1976) was launched were not much help to the Plan's efforts to achieve its goals as Thailand faced difficulties from both internal and external conditions. Externally, there was the influence of the superpower

⁴¹¹ The Tenth National Economic and Social Development Plan (2006-2011), p. 10.

⁴¹² Saneh Chamarik and Susantha Goonatilake, *The United Nations University, Technological independence - The Asian Experience* (Hong Kong: United Nations University Press), updated 1994, <<http://www.unu.edu/unupress/unupbooks/uu04te/uu04te0h.htm>> [accessed 13 March 2010].

⁴¹³ Office of the National Economic and Social Development Board, *The Third National Economic and Social Development Plan (1972-1976)* (Office of Prime Minister), [n.d.], <<http://www.nesdb.go.th/Default.aspx?tabid=85>> [accessed 2 November 2009].

nations regarding economic issues.⁴¹⁴ Internally, Thailand also faced difficulties of increased unemployment, increased migration, and water pollution resulting from the drainage into waterways of chemical residues and waste materials from manufacturing.⁴¹⁵ Confronted by these problems, the government responded by imposing regulations and codes.⁴¹⁶ The Third Plan emphasised maintaining economic stability, and also promoted social development, quality of life, income distribution,⁴¹⁷ and local physical structures, such as roads and local health care and rural development projects.⁴¹⁸

In the Fourth Plan (1977-1981), the Thai government remained focused on socio-politico-economic transitions. With the uncertain political and economic conditions, the Fourth Plan continued to emphasise economic growth, but also concentrated on promoting social justice, proposing that the government reduce the socio-economic disparities, and also promote a programme of mass welfare.⁴¹⁹ In addition, the Fourth Plan proposed that industry produce enough to meet domestic consumption needs. Investment in the construction of the basic physical infrastructure for future industrialisation was promoted as well as a policy of exporting industrial products, which implied a shift of emphasis from agricultural exports to manufacturing and industrial exports.⁴²⁰

For over two decades from 1962, the Thai government launched four consecutive National Economic and Social Development Plans which concentrated on the mobilisation and allocation of economic, financial and manpower resources, and on reforming the public administration system.⁴²¹ Economic conditions changed rapidly and affected the social and environmental conditions, with the result that in the Fifth Plan (1982-1986), the government had to

⁴¹⁴ Ibid., Arkhom Termittayapaisith and Thanin Paem, Office of the National Economic and Social Development Board. *National Economic and Social Development Plans 1-11* (Office of Prime Minister), [n.d.], <<http://www.nesdb.go.th>> [accessed 2 November 2009].

⁴¹⁵ See Saneh Chamarik and Susantha Goonatilak.

⁴¹⁶ Ibid.

⁴¹⁷ Office of the National Economic and Social Development Board, *The Third National Economic and Social Development Plan (1972-1976)*, (p. vi).

⁴¹⁸ See Saneh Chamarik and Susantha Goonatilak.

⁴¹⁹ Office of the National Economic and Social Development Board, *The Fourth National Economic and Social Development Plan (1977-1981)* (Office of Prime Minister), [n.d.], <<http://www.nesdb.go.th>> [accessed 2 November 2009]. (p. 3).

⁴²⁰ See Saneh Chamarik and Susantha Goonatilak.

⁴²¹ The National Identity Board, *Thailand 1982 Plan, Problems, and Prospects* (Bangkok: Graphic Art Publishing, 1982), p. 93.

concentrate on, and give greater emphasis to, economic stability rather than to promoting the economic growth as in the previous four plans.⁴²²

The Fifth Plan differed from the first four plans with its emphasis on developing and adopting new approaches to national development, setting out a policy to ensure that clear policy directions were translated into operational plans.⁴²³ One of the most important aims of the Fifth Plan was the proposed reform of the national development administration system by decentralisation of more government functions to the local level.⁴²⁴ The plan stated the intention:

to decentralize authority in the development administration to the local authorities and promote the participation of the local population to govern themselves. At the same time, confusion and complexity concerning the administration of rural development activities will be eradicated by stream lining the rural development process into two bodies, namely, an urban and specific areas development committee and a rural development committee.

- 1) Urban and specific area development committees will be responsible for the coordination of all development activities in urban areas including the Bangkok Metropolitan Area and in specific area development programmes.
- 2) The rural development committee is responsible for the coordination of all rural development activities.⁴²⁵

During the Fifth Plan, the world's economic recession remained severe. Consequently, the Sixth Plan (1987-1991) emphasised economic growth, job creation, and income distribution, to help solve problems of poverty and strengthen the economic stability of the system. As well as these measures, the Plan sought ways of developing the means to maintain peace and justice within a society, and promoted the maintenance of a national identity, culture and system of values as well as developed the quality of life of the people who lived in both rural and urban areas.⁴²⁶ The Fifth Plan's proposals to reform the national development administration system and decentralise government were continued in later plans. The Sixth Plan's objective was to improve and stabilise the economic system.⁴²⁷

⁴²² Ibid., pp. 97-99.

⁴²³ Office of the National Economic and Social Development Board, *The Fifth National Economic and Social Development Plan (1982-1986)* (Office of Prime Minister), [n.d.], <<http://www.nesdb.go.th>> [accessed 2 November 2009]. (p. 3).

⁴²⁴ Ibid., p. 12.

⁴²⁵ Ibid., p. 13.

⁴²⁶ Office of the National Economic and Social Development Board, *The Sixth National Economic and Social Development Plan (1987-1991)* (Office of Prime Minister), [n.d.], <<http://www.nesdb.go.th>> [accessed 2 November 2009]. (p. 5).

⁴²⁷ Ibid., p. 5.

Following the Sixth Plan, the economy developed further and grew, becoming increasingly international, although problems continued with the imbalance of income distribution. The need for basic infrastructure remained. As a result, the objectives of the Seventh Plan (1992-1996) were to maintain the economic growth rates to make certain that the economic system was sustainable and stable. This also included redistributing income and decentralising development to both the regions and the rural areas more widely, accelerating the development of human resources, and promoting and upgrading the quality of life. The Seventh Plan also emphasised the development of the environment and management of natural resources management.⁴²⁸ Again, decentralisation featured in the Seventh Plan as a means of developing the regional centres and upgrading the quality of life of the rural people. The Seventh Plan proposed:

emphasizing decentralization of government authority to the regions and local levels. Special budgets be given to the provinces to enable provincial authorities to spend on activities which will increase incomes, and upgrade well-being and the quality of life of the poor in rural areas.⁴²⁹

In 1997, the Eighth Plan (1997-2001) was launched. Under the National Economic and Social Development Plans of the previous three decades, economic development had been achieved and the national economy had expanded rapidly. Income distribution increased and the number of poor people declined.⁴³⁰ However, there continued to be a gap between the income for those who lived in Bangkok and surrounding provinces, and those who lived in the remote areas.⁴³¹ The Eighth Plan emphasised a long-term pattern of development.⁴³² The financial system had grown and developed over time and while it appeared the economic position became more internationally recognised, sustained public investment in the economy and also in social infrastructures had contributed to a significant overall rise in incomes, living conditions and quality of life.⁴³³ According to the Eighth National Economic and Social Development Plan:

⁴²⁸ Office of the National Economic and Social Development Board, *The Seventh National Economic and Social Development Plan (1992-1996)* (Office of Prime Minister), [n.d.], <<http://www.nesdb.go.th>> [accessed 2 November 2009]. (pp. 4-5).

⁴²⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 15.

⁴³⁰ Office of the National Economic and Social Development Board, *The Eighth National Economic and Social Development Plan (1997-2001)* (Office of Prime Minister) [n.d.], <<http://www.nesdb.go.th>> [accessed 2 November 2009]. (p. 1).

⁴³¹ *Ibid.*

⁴³² *Ibid.*, p. 2.

⁴³³ The Eighth National Economic and Social Development Plan (1997-2001), p.1.

The Eight Economic and Social Development Plan is the first step towards adopting a new approach to national development aimed at achieving the long term vision of an ideal Thai society. Thai people from all walks of life and from various regions of the country have taken the opportunity to participate in drafting this plan from its inception. This was a deliberate change in plan formulation in order to move away from the top-down approach practised by the public sector in the past. This can be considered the beginning of a new era in planning which emphasizes collaborative efforts of the whole population.⁴³⁴

As well as maintaining economic stability, the Eighth Plan sought to solve the lack of development of social conditions by promoting a stable society and so improve the quality of life⁴³⁵ and human potential.⁴³⁶ The economic crisis in 1997, just one year after the plan was launched, meant that the objectives of the Eighth Plan could not succeed. Following the economic turmoil, the government reviewed proposed policies and, as a result, the Ninth Plan (2002-2006) reconsidered policies and emphasised four different objectives:

1. Promotion of economic stability and sustainability.
2. Establishment of a strong national development foundation to better enable Thai people to meet the challenges arising from globalization and other changes.
3. Establishment of good governance at all levels of the Thai society.
4. Reduction of poverty and empowerment of Thai people.⁴³⁷

The previous eight plans mainly focused on the development of economic growth, as well as improving the social condition and human potential. Only some of these outcomes were achieved. There was no genuinely sustainable development and problems remained with the economy, adjustment to current changes and to future global trends, and to improving the population's quality of life. All of these influenced the imbalance in the country's development.⁴³⁸ The Ninth Plan was based on the philosophy of a sufficient economy, as outlined by His Majesty the King as the guiding principle of national development and management.

⁴³⁴ Ibid., p. iii.

⁴³⁵ Ibid., p. 2.

⁴³⁶ Ibid., p. 4.

⁴³⁷ Office of the National Economic and Social Development Board, *The Ninth National Economic and Social Development Plan (2002-2006)* (Office of Prime Minister), [n.d.], <<http://www.nesdb.go.th>> [accessed 2 November 2009]. (p. V).

⁴³⁸ Ibid.

It has been noticeable that on one hand, the philosophy of sufficient economy is based on adherence to the middle path⁴³⁹ as to overcome the current economic crisis brought about by unexpected changes under conditions of rapid globalisation. On the other hand, the people who formulated the Ninth Plan responded and adopted the King's philosophy of a 'sufficient economy' in order to achieve sustainable development over the country.⁴⁴⁰ As noted in the Ninth Plan:

'sufficient economy' is a philosophy that stresses the middle path as an overriding principle for appropriate conduct and way of life of the entire populace. It applies to conduct and way of life at individual, family, and community levels. At the national level, the philosophy is consistent with a balanced development strategy that would reduce the vulnerability of the nation to shocks and excesses that may arise as a result of globalization. 'Sufficiency' means moderation and due consideration in all modes of conduct, and incorporates the need for sufficient protection from internal and external shocks. To achieve this, the prudent application of knowledge is essential. In particular, great care is needed in the application of theories and technical know-how and in planning and implementation. At the same time, it is essential to strengthen the moral fiber of the nation so that everyone, particularly public officials, academics, business people, and financiers adhere first and foremost to the principles of honesty and integrity. A balanced approach combining patience, perseverance, diligence, wisdom, and prudence is indispensable to extensive and rapid socio-economic, environmental and cultural change occurring as a result of globalization.⁴⁴¹

After previous policies for economic and social development proved unsuccessful, there was the necessity for more attention from government. The notion of the 'Sufficiency Economy' implied that not only the economy, but other aspects of Thai society, especially the way of life and the principles of honesty and integrity, were necessary to create a principled and moral national administration.⁴⁴² The Ninth Plan was formulated on the basis of a shared vision of Thai society, which reflected the views of all Thai people in all social sectors, whether at provincial, sub-regional, regional, and national levels.⁴⁴³ Building on the Eight Plan's concept of people-centred development,⁴⁴⁴ the Ninth Plan was prepared and set regarding the basis of a broad people-participation processes and emphasised the balance of human, social, economic and environmental

⁴³⁹ The middle path refers to the approach when people live moderately and reasonably without being extravagant.

⁴⁴⁰ The Ninth National Economic and Social Development Plan (2002-2006), p. i.

⁴⁴¹ Ibid.

⁴⁴² Ibid., pp. 1-3.

⁴⁴³ Ibid. p. ii.

⁴⁴⁴ Yaowalak Rachapaetayakom, A development of Thailand in the Past Four Decades: Experience and the Next Step of Development, *Suddhiparitat Journal*, 16. 48 (2002), 11-15.

resources. This was a significant step in the organisation of government and the behaviour of people because, aside from the Ninth Plan that was set to promote the local context and economic development,⁴⁴⁵ all government organisations and the bureaucrats within them were to pursue transparency and accountability.⁴⁴⁶ This also affected the people as they were expected to take part in the decision-making process⁴⁴⁷ as well as monitor the bureaucrats' operations.⁴⁴⁸ As a result, one the most important aspects of the Ninth Plan was the promotion of sustainable development and the laying of a foundation for good governance at all levels of society.⁴⁴⁹

The Tenth National Economic and Social Development Plan was implemented in 2007 with the primary goal of advancing the Eighth Plan's concept of people-centred development, as well as the philosophy of a Sufficient Economy from the Ninth Plan. From these, it was anticipated that the Ninth Plan would pursue the Eighth Plan's concept of creating a balance in the development of the economy, society, and environment, while the philosophy of the sufficient economy concept in the Ninth Plan would create a balanced development with respect to the people, society, and the environment, so that a sustainable development could occur in the long run.⁴⁵⁰

The Tenth Plan's emphasis on pursuing the sufficient economy philosophy, in order to create a green and happy society, involved four missions. First, that people develop their quality of life, have integrity, knowledge of world standards, good living and security within a balanced diversity of culture, natural resources and environment. Second was to promote an economy which is efficient, stable and equitable by reforming the structure of the economy to be competitive and assured in facing the risks and fluctuations arising from globalisation. Third, to conserve biodiversity, build a secure natural resource base, and conserve the quality of the environment. Lastly, to develop and promote a national

⁴⁴⁵ The Ninth National Economic and Social Development Plan, p. 25.

⁴⁴⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 18.

⁴⁴⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 26

⁴⁴⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 31.

⁴⁴⁹ *Ibid.*, p. i.

⁴⁵⁰ Office of the National Economic and Social Development Board, *Tenth National Economic and Social Development Plan (2007-2011)* (Office of Prime Minister), [n.d.], <<http://www.nesdb.go.th>> [accessed 2 November 2009]. (p.1).

administration system in order to achieve good governance under democracy with the King as head of state.⁴⁵¹

5.3 The Ninth National Economic and Social Development Plan: A turning point to a new era of decentralisation

A 'bottom-up' approach was evident in the Eight Plan with the government allowing Thai people from all walks of life and from all different regions at all levels,⁴⁵² from the bottom level to the national level, to participate in brainstorming and proposing their ideas in order to set the framework of the plan and a direction for the development of the country.⁴⁵³ However, it was not until the Ninth Plan that the government genuinely focused on good governance, which was a turning point in the new scheme of the national administration system. Previous plans, until the Seventh Plan, were formulated under to the 'top-down' approach. The country had to face several problems and conditions arising from globalisation - the global economic system, corruption, and a national administrative system that was highly centralised and dominated by the public sector.⁴⁵⁴ Promoting good governance required initiating a new working approach "to create a more efficient bureaucracy".⁴⁵⁵

As noted above, Thailand's National Economic and Social Development Plans were not consistently successful due to several unexpected and uncontrolled conditions external to the country, creating difficulties for the government in its efforts to achieve the country's holistic development. From the First Plan, the primary aim was to boost economic development. This caused an imbalance of economic and social development. As a result, government had to reconsider and reconstruct the plan to close the wide gap between a high level of economic development and a low level of social development.

Under the proposal for good governance, the government encouraged the decentralisation of work and responsibility to local administrative organisations. The capabilities of local administrative organisations were to be enhanced, along with opportunities for greater participation by civil society,⁴⁵⁶ and the staff in local

⁴⁵¹ Ibid., p. 9.

⁴⁵² The Eighth National Economic and Social Development Plan (1997-2001), p. iii.

⁴⁵³ The Ninth National Economic and Social Development Plan(2002-2006), p. iii.

⁴⁵⁴ Ibid., p. 9.

⁴⁵⁵ Ibid., p. 17.

⁴⁵⁶ Ibid., p. vii.

administrative organisations, such as the SAO, would play important roles. The 'top-down' approach to government policy is seen in the Ninth Plan with the declared intention that SAOs should function with greater autonomy in providing public services. In effect, the 'bottom-up' approach was introduced as the more important approach and the Plan set out several objectives for the development of good governance⁴⁵⁷ in Thai society. These objectives were:

- 1.1 To establish good governance in all parts of Thai society - the political sector, the government, the private sector, communities and families. Good governance is considered necessary to provide the basis for balanced and sustainable development in the long run.
- 1.2 To enhance efficiency of government service delivery, based on people's participation as well as resource optimization, transparency, and open access to information in order to allow a monitoring to the general public.
- 1.3 To promote a decentralization process by allowing local administrations to play a greater role in local development in accordance with the intent of the Constitution of the Kingdom of Thailand B.E. 2540 (1997).
- 1.4 To set up checks and balances on the basis of rights and duties of all sections in the Thai society to make the national administration system more effective and transparent.⁴⁵⁸

The Ninth Plan also concentrated on working with the target group, local government, and set out several of the development targets in the following terms:

1. To appropriately size and structure the public sector, and increase administration efficiency.
2. To increase the capability and opportunities of local organizations for developing independent sources of income.
3. To have more transparent, honest, and socially responsible government service, private business operations, and political sector.
4. To have an internationally competitive Thai business sector both in the short-and long term.
5. To provide the people with timely and complete access to government information.⁴⁵⁹

⁴⁵⁷ The word 'good governance' was used by the World Bank in 1989 in the report *Sub-Saharan Africa: From Crisis to Sustainable Growth*, in order to refer to good management of government mechanisms in administering social and economic resources for development. As mentioned by Phongpaichit, the report defined the word 'governance' as to be used to cover three broad areas: (1) the political structure; (2) the processes to be used by those with political power in administering and managing the social and economic resources of the country; and (3) the capability of those in power to plan and implement policy and to improve administration.

See more in Pasuk Phongpaichit, 'Good governance: Thailand's Experience', *Paper for Asia Pacific Finance Association (APFA) annual conference, Bangkok*, updated July 2001,

<<http://pioneer.netserv.chula.ac.th/~ppasuk/goodgovernancethailandsexperience.doc>> [accessed 25 September 2007].

⁴⁵⁸ The Ninth National Economic and Social Development Plan (2002-2000), p. 28.

⁴⁵⁹ *Ibid.*, pp. 28-29.

The Ninth Plan also focused on the decentralisation of functions and responsibilities to local administrative organisations so that public services were in line with the people's needs and that resources were equitably distributed. Participation in local administration decision-making processes and in the monitoring of their operations were encouraged in terms of the Thai government's plan:

1. To restructure the oversight system so the decentralized administrative authority can be more flexible to operate in a more expeditious and efficient manner.
2. To improve the capacity and upgrade the efficiency of local administrative bodies to cope with newly decentralized functions.
3. To establish supportive systems for the decentralization of power.
4. To establish a system for tax and intergovernmental transfer to a local administration.⁴⁶⁰

5.4 The Tenth National Economic and Social Development Plan: An attempt for a sustainable national administration system and good governance

The Tenth Plan, implemented in 2007, brought several changes in Thailand's approach to its goal of development. The Plan sets out five major changes. First, there are the economic grouping and changes in the global financial market. The transactions in global trade and finance have increased inter-country flows of capital, goods, services, and people. As a consequence, Thailand has to be more concerned with facing the realities of the world economic system, and to take an aggressive approach to trade policy both in expanding markets and in encouraging domestic producers to improve and develop their competitiveness.

Second, there are leapfrog advances in technology. With globalisation, there have been many advances in communications technology, biotechnology, materials technology and nanotechnology. Their rapid advance presents Thailand with both opportunities and threats to its economy and society. The existing body of knowledge needs to be preserved, new bodies of knowledge need to be created and developed, and new and existing technologies need to be applied so they will strengthen Thai society.

Third, there are social changes. An ageing society presents both opportunities and threats to Thailand. On the one hand, Thailand has great

⁴⁶⁰ Ibid., pp. 29-31.

opportunities to expand the market for health goods and services, health food, local wisdom and traditional medical practitioners, tourist destinations and long-stay residence for the aged people. Thailand has a good opportunity to create and develop the intellectual capital of Thai local wisdom. This also influences the movement of skilled and trained labour to countries offering higher payments. In addition, the borderless dissemination of information presents a risk to children and youth because the government has difficulty protecting and screening young people from undesirable influences.

Fourth is the free movement of people. More people are travelling for business and tourism and are more knowledgeable about, and responsive to, the competitive capacity in different countries. Bilateral and multilateral pacts mean that labour and entrepreneurs can now move more freely to work and invest overseas, and the Thai government has to pay more attention to the foreigners it needs for work in the country.

Fifth are the changes in the environment and natural resources. It is noticeable that the increase in the world's population causes deterioration to the environment and depletes natural resources, which later affects the climate and the incidence of natural disasters, as well as the spread of new communicable diseases. As a result, Thailand has to upgrade its standards of environmental management in order to protect its resource base and maintain a sustainable balance in the natural environment.⁴⁶¹

As well as the development of people, an economy that is efficient, stable and equitable which has a secure biodiversity strategy and a secure natural resource base, a quality environment, and, importantly for Thailand, the development of a national administration to achieve good governance is a desired objective.⁴⁶²

The Tenth Plan continues from the Ninth Plan:

Develop national administration to achieve good governance under democracy with the king as head of state, by building mechanisms and regulations which promoted distribution of benefits of development to all parties, ensuring transparency, honesty, justice and public responsibility, decentralization of

⁴⁶¹ The Tenth National Economic and Social Development Plan (2007-2011), pp. 2-3.

⁴⁶² *Ibid.*, p. 9.

power, and providing systems for all parties to participate in decision-making, to achieve fairness in economy, society, and the use of resources.⁴⁶³

Consistent with the objectives of the Tenth Plan, the government aims to promote a concept of good governance within government administration, the private business sector, and the people's sector by expanding the role and capacity of local government bodies, to promote mechanisms and processes of participation in development, and to nurture a culture of democracy for peaceful coexistence.⁴⁶⁴ In order to fulfil the plan's objectives, the government set out several strategies on different issues. However, in the case of good governance, seven major strategies are outlined in order to create social justice and sustainability:

1. To promote and develop a democratic culture and good governance as part of the way of life. In order to scrutinise the use of power and politics to be freer, stronger, and more efficient, to create learning processes, and to instill a consciousness of the core values of democratic culture for the youth and people consistently at all levels. From this, the people realise their roles and participate more in politics;

2. To strengthen the people's participation in national administration. Under democracy, the system is ruled by the people⁴⁶⁵ who need to be encouraged to create strong cooperative networks. This will result not only through equal access to the judicial process, but also by participating in the national administration, which will strengthen the system of monitoring and scrutinising the government's use of power;

3. To create a public administration that works with efficiency and good governance, emphasising service rather than control and working in cooperation with developing partners. For public administration to work more effectively, it is essential that the government's roles, structures, and mechanisms are modernised. Besides, while the government has to be concerned that its staff can work well in serving the needs of the people, the 'top-down' approach is too limited. State enterprises and development partners need to be able to move more freely and effectively than under the 'top-down' approach;

⁴⁶³ Ibid.

⁴⁶⁴ Ibid., p.10.

⁴⁶⁵ Andrew Heywood, *Politics*, 2nd edn. (New York: Palgrave, 2002), p. 68.

4. To continue the decentralisation of administration to the regions, localities, and communities. Decentralisation is very important to democracy and local capabilities need to be developed and decision-making power devolved to local levels where local government is able to take responsibility for public administration and public service, solve problems in response of the needs of the people, while also assisting government at the national level to work faster and more effectively. With decentralisation to the regions, localities and communities, the government also expects that this will provide the local people with the opportunity to participate in the development of their own localities as they realise their important role as a part of their communities;

5. To promote strength, honesty and good governance in the private sector. The government aims to foster a consciousness regarding the importance of honesty, equity for the consumers, fair competition, social responsibility, and sharing benefits with the public;

6. To reform laws, regulations, procedures, and processes relating to economic and social development for balanced distribution of benefits in development. Laws, regulations, procedures and process are very significant to all people, to those who are employed by government at any level, and also for the whole population. In considering laws and regulations, the government aims to encourage and provide opportunities to various groups and interests so that they propose and draft laws which accommodate the interests of various parties with balance and equity. Furthermore, while the government aims to promote economic equity, the use of discretion by government officials needs to be reduced to strengthen the mechanisms of law enforcement;

7. To promote national security in administration aiming at balance and sustainability of the country. Maintaining the nation's security through national defence is a key issue for government. However, this is difficult to achieve if there is not much awareness of it and its importance. As a result, the government aims to promote and develop not only the government agencies, but also to have cooperation with other sectors, so that they will be more efficient and ready to defend the country and respond to threats in whatever form they take. In upholding good governance, all people are expected to protect national sovereignty, the monarchy, national interests, and a government under the system of democracy

with the king as head of state, and the safety and security of the people and society.⁴⁶⁶

The Tenth Plan set to create and maintain sustainable governance arrangements. However, there remain a number of obstacles. These will be discussed below.

5.5 Decentralisation - the Ninth and the Tenth National Economic and Social Development Plans

The concept of good governance is very significant for Thailand's national administration system and decentralisation policy. However, a number of problems arise with its implementation. First, during the Ninth Plan, the concept of good governance was new to many of the government employees at all levels. The Fifth Plan was the first to mention the concept of decentralisation⁴⁶⁷ when such a policy was considered as a way to reform the administration system at the local level. Both the approach of decentralisation and participation of the local population in governing themselves was promoted.⁴⁶⁸ During the Sixth Plan, the concept of decentralisation continued and extended the notion of decentralisation and participation by the local people. The Sixth Plan was concerned with developing local organisation at the village and subdistrict levels.⁴⁶⁹ Both the Seventh and Eighth Plans continued these proposals with the Eighth Plan also promoting and developing the national administration system so that it would be more effective. However, the main objective of the Eighth Plan gave more emphasis to managing the government organisations at the central level rather than those organisations at the local level.⁴⁷⁰ Moreover, with the consequence of the economic crisis in Southeast Asia during 1997, the development of the national administration system indicated in the Eight Plan was not a success. From this, the Ninth Plan was concerned with promoting the genuine development of administrative and management systems by introducing a concept of good governance and allowing government officials at a local level to have more opportunity to participate in the national administration system. Moreover, the Tenth Plan has emphasised the

⁴⁶⁶ Ibid., pp. 15-16.

⁴⁶⁷ Bruce Missingham, 'A Study of Two Villages Schools in the Northeast', in *Political Change in Thailand democracy and participation*, ed. by Kevin Hewison (Great Britain: Routledge, 1997), pp.149-162 (p. 150).

⁴⁶⁸ The Fifth National Economic and Social Development Plan (1982-1986), p. 13.

⁴⁶⁹ J. Rigg, cited in Missingham, p. 150.

⁴⁷⁰ The Eight National Economic and Social Development Plan (1997-2001), pp. 2-6.

maintenance of the sustainable development of the national administration system by expanding the capacity of government officials at the local level.⁴⁷¹

Even though the Thai government focused on the development of administrative and management systems at both the national and local level from the time of the Fifth Plan, the main emphasis of those plans was on the economic situation. It was not until the Ninth Plan that the government concentrated more on administration at the local level by promoting the concept of good governance, which became a key point in order to achieve an effective national administrative system. However, even though good governance was advocated in the Ninth Plan, it did not set out any plans for a further step as to guide the bureaucrats in working under good governance effectively.

The Ninth Plan set out to provide solutions to the problems of economic turmoil and the quality of life for the Thai population. Previously, the way of life was able to create a strong and balanced society,⁴⁷² and the performance under the Ninth Plan was summarised in the Tenth Plan as having been adequately successful:

The national economy grew steadily at an average of 5.7 per cent a year. The stability of the economy improved. Poverty fell, while the quality of life of people improved greatly as a result of the expansion of health services, better health insurance in both quality and quantity covering a majority of the population, and a decline in drug problems. But the Thai economy remains vulnerable to external instabilities, while problems persist over poverty, income distribution, quality of education, security of life and property, and transparency in government administration. These remain priorities for solution.⁴⁷³

Second, there was a lack of experience in the practice of good governance. The Ninth Plan and the 1997 Constitution, with their promotion of decentralisation and good governance, did not result in government officials demonstrating good practice as they performed their obligations under good governance. In theory, the government wanted to achieve effective decentralisation and good governance. In practice, however, the staff who were directly affected by the Plan had never been trained to work under such arrangements. For example, the Plan for Decentralisation of Power to the Locality approved by the Cabinet on 3 October 2000 had three substantial principles of autonomy, clear delineation, and efficiency. These three principles are basic ideas of decentralisation as central

⁴⁷¹ The Tenth National Economic and Social Development Plan (2007-2011), p. 10.

⁴⁷² The Ninth National Economic and Social Development Plan (2002-2006), p. iv.

⁴⁷³ The Tenth National Economic and Social Development Plan (2007-2011), p. 1.

government seeks to transfer the powers and responsibilities for providing social services to the local government organisation. Local government needs to have the autonomy for planning and implementing its own public services as set out in law. Central government can then ensure that quality and standardised public services are provided to the people in the locality.⁴⁷⁴

The 1997 Constitution set out to promote Thai popular participation at both local and national levels.⁴⁷⁵ As the supreme law, it emphasised the decentralisation of power to local government in the following terms:

The State shall decentralize powers to localities for the purpose of independence and self-determination of local affairs, development of local economics, public utilities and facility systems and information infrastructure in the locality thoroughly and equally throughout the country as well as develop a province ready for such purpose, having regard to the will of the people in that province.⁴⁷⁶

To carry out this intention of the government, good practice was required of staff at all levels, especially those at the local level. It takes time for staff to get accustomed to working in accordance with good practice.

Third, the 'top-down' approach continued to operate throughout the national administrative system. The national administrative system remained centralised and did not change as expected. Therefore, government at the local level had never been genuinely encouraged and promoted to become self-governing so the strengthening of the local administration could not work effectively. The Tenth Plan noted:

Government administration still lacks good governance because it remains centralized, and denies opportunities for popular participation in decision making. Although there has been greater progress in decentralization, local government bodies are not yet strong and lack freedom to collect adequate revenue for self-reliance. In addition, judicial and legal systems have not adjusted in step with change and are unable to provide justice for all parties. Mechanisms for monitoring the use of state power remain inefficient. Private-sector checks-and-balances still have a limited role, and lack ability to build a network that collectively could monitor effectively. Though transparency in government administration shows a tendency to improve, and the rating by Transparency International rose to 3.8 out of 10 in 2005, this level remains

⁴⁷⁴ Woothisarn Tanchai, *Decentralization in Thailand. Issues of Government Policy Formulation Towards Decentralization*, [n.d], <http://www.decentralization.ws/icd2/papers/decent_thailand.htm> [accessed 15 May 2006]. (p. 6).

⁴⁷⁵ Ibid.

⁴⁷⁶ Ibid.

rather low. The deep-seated patronage system remains an obstacle to the spread of good governance in Thailand. Coupled with a lack of quality and public consciousness, it results in an inability to separate individual benefit from public benefit, leading to more complex problems of injustice and corrupt practice.⁴⁷⁷

Fourth, staff have various levels of ability. While the Tenth Plan thought the outcome of good governance was quite successful, this could be interpreted as saying that the staff performed quite differently in fulfilling the goal. Staff have different experiences and capabilities and for staff to respond fully to the government's objectives and fulfil their responsibilities effectively requires that they be trained in how to do that.

The Tenth Plan set out to provide the means of developing and solving the problems that occurred during the period of the Ninth Plan, recommending the promotion of good governance:

Under the promotion of good governance, emphasis will be placed on installing consciousness of good governance and the cultures of democracy and peace, in people at all levels, sectors, and institutions. Opportunities will be created for the people's sector to cooperate in thinking, decision making, implementation, responsibility and evolution of national administration. Bodies of knowledge will be compiled on the development of democratic culture and good governance⁴⁷⁸

By creating a consciousness of good governance and the culture of democracy, the Tenth Plan saw a means that will allow the Thai people, the public officials, both private and public sections of the government agencies, to be aware of, and get used to, the culture of democracy. Furthermore, the people's cooperation will help to enhance the government officials' working methods because it will be regarded as a check and balance system by the people. Government officials need to be enthusiastic but work cautiously on their responsibilities. Of course, to do this, they will have to improve and practise their skills automatically.

5.6 Conclusion and analysis of the Ninth and Tenth Plans

Thailand is now implementing the Tenth Plan (2007-2011), but continues to experience difficulties both internally and externally. On the one hand, the government deliberately initiated a new national administrative system so that the

⁴⁷⁷ The Tenth National Economic and Social Development Plan (2007-2011), p. 7.

⁴⁷⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 15.

system would be more vigorous as a whole. On the other hand, there remains a lack of awareness by government officials and the Thai people who need more time to become familiar with it.

The Ninth Plan was the turning point for a new scheme of decentralisation to be introduced allowing the government at the local level to have a greater power. Nevertheless, there are several gaps requiring further consideration. For instance, the Ninth Plan paid too much attention to the anticipated outcomes as local government became more autonomous, rather than laying a foundation of how and what the officials at all levels must focus on in order to achieve the goal.

First, the Ninth Plan identified the problems of imbalanced development, as seen in the weaknesses in the economic, political and administrative management systems that were centralised and inadequate. In addition, the legal system also required an urgent review removing outdated and obsolete legislation that inhibited and obstructed reform.⁴⁷⁹ However, the Plan did not allow much discussion about the source of these problems or provide clear solutions. Government officials must understand the core concept of the perspective of the Plan so that they can implement the aims in the way the objective was set.

Second, rather than discussing how well officials at all levels could fulfil the Plan, the emphasis went to the development of systems and functions to create a new working system under good governance. These included restructuring the public administrative system based on the good governance approach, restructuring the management system and adjusting the roles of public administration, establishing a system for tax and intergovernmental transfer to the local government, and decentralisation of function and responsibilities to local administrative organisations.

The government anticipated the creation of a new role for local government and increased political participation among local people, as a way of achieving the economic, political and social improvements once there was a movement initiated within the community. It was expected that while the officials at the local level fulfilled their responsibilities under decentralisation, the local people would be “monitoring and protecting the public interest”.⁴⁸⁰ However, to put the Plan into practice effectively, more is needed than developing administrative systems. The

⁴⁷⁹ The Ninth National Economic and Social Development Plan (2002-2006), p. ii.

⁴⁸⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 31.

staff who deliver the Plan are key people that must comprehend fully what is needed. Otherwise, the Plan is doomed to failure.

In the case of Thailand, one of the major issues with which the government had to contend was the limited numbers of officials who fully grasped the objectives of decentralisation - those who could actually respond to the calls for good governance and decentralization were in the upper level of government. With the Thai national administration focused on centralisation for centuries, the majority of officials who were tasked with implementing the Plan had not receive sufficient training to act on their own, but were rather expected to respond to the commands of their superiors. While the Plan provided the guidelines to achieve an efficient governance system, it did not provide a clear step-by-step outline of what should be done to enhance the capabilities of the staff. The government's objectives were not clear to most officials.

In the Tenth Plan, the themes of good governance and decentralisation continued, with the focus on setting guidelines for major development strategies. The Tenth Plan recommended:

- 1) accelerating the development of laws to support efficient and effective implementation of the plan's strategies to support a better administrative system;
- 2) studying and researching bodies of knowledge and learning processes to support implementation of the strategies both at the operational level and at the policy level to strengthen the implementation process;
- 3) developing systems of monitoring and evolution, and devising indicators of development outcome at all levels to upgrade and extend the implementation so that a clear standard and measurement approach can be used to monitor and compare the result of government agencies;
- 4) developing databases and networks at all levels linking central policy, regional, and local administrative bodies. The data network will be easily and speedily accessible.⁴⁸¹

The government envisages the additional strategies will facilitate a more effective national policy implementation process.

⁴⁸¹ The Tenth National Economic and Social Development Plan (2007-2011), p.15.

The next chapter describes the significance of establishing of the Subdistrict Administrative Organisations (SAOs), as well as the roles, responsibilities, and obstacles faced by the staff of the SAOs.

Chapter VI

Subdistrict Administrative Organisation - Chiang Rai

6.1 Background

The Subdistrict Administrative Organisation (SAO) was established under the Tambon Council and Tambon Administration Organisation Act of 1994. The SAO is a sublevel below a district (amphoe) and a province (changwat).⁴⁸² The 2008 census (15 August 2008) lists 6,157 SAOs within the country, 108 of them established in Chiang Rai province.⁴⁸³

The main purposes of SAOs are to decentralise administrative power to the local people and to revitalize the participation of the local people in community development affairs. It has been the government's intention that decision-making power be decentralised to people at the Tambon and village levels. As a local organisation subdistrict organisations are allocated within a Tambon area and administered at the provincial level. The governors in each province are delegated from central government and are appointed to oversee the accountability of the SAOs.

Rajchagool identifies four milestones in the development of SAOs. First was the process which began at the early stage of state formation around the turn of the century; second, was the process in 1932 when the absolute monarchy was transformed into a constitutional monarchy; third was the intense struggle for democracy during the period 1973-1976; and, fourth, the significant turning point in popular democratisation during the reform period between 1992 and 1997, together with the context of constitution B.E. 2540 which affected the TAO Act (2537).⁴⁸⁴

⁴⁸² There are three forms of the administrative subdivision level: a province (Changwat), district (Amphoe) and a subdistrict (Tambon).

⁴⁸³ Department of Local Administration, Ministry of Interior, [n.d.], <<http://www.thailocaladmin.go.th/work/apt/apt150851.pdf>> [accessed 19 November 2008].

⁴⁸⁴ Chaiyan Rajchagool, 'Tambon Administrative Organization: Are the People in the Dramatis Personae or in the Audience?' (UNESCAP), [n.d.], <http://www.unescap.org/ttdw/Publications/TPTS_pubs/TxBulletin_69/bulletin69_b.pdf> [accessed 2 June 2006]. (pp. 32 -33).

6.2 Subdistrict Administrative Organisation in general

6.2.1 Classes and Ranking of Subdistrict Administrative Organisation

In accordance with the Tambon Council and Tambon Administrative Authority Act BE 2537 (1994) as well as the Constitution of the Kingdom of Thailand B.E. 2540 (1997), the subdistricts were decentralised into local government units by an elected Tambon Council. The establishment of the SAOs depended on five different criteria: tax incomes they gained,⁴⁸⁵ amounts of the SAO's expenses on personnel, economic and sociality status,⁴⁸⁶ effectiveness of the SAO capability⁴⁸⁷ on their working. Generally, there were three different sizes: large, medium, and small.

To qualify as the TAO (SAO), the organisation must have a minimum annual average income, excluding the government support budget, of 150,000 baht, calculated from the last three consecutive fiscal years. At the beginning, there were five classes of SAO:

⁴⁸⁵ The criterion categorizing the SAO based on tax income has been set to divide three different sizes of SAO. They are: 1) Large size SAO must earn more than 20 million Baht, medium size SAO must earn between 6-20 million Baht, and small size SAO must earn below 6 millions Baht.

King Prajadhipok's Institute, Classes and Criteria of the SAOs ranking, [n.d.], <<http://www.thaipoliticsgovernment.org/wiki/2ระดับชั้นและเกณฑ์การแบ่งระดับองค์การบริหารส่วนตำบล>> [accessed 29 January 2010].

⁴⁸⁶ A criterion categorizing the SAO based on economic and sociality status are (1) Area, (2) Population, (3) Number of basic Infrastructure, (4) Number of slaughtered animals, (5) Number of fresh markets, (6) Number of factory Industrial Estates, (7) Number of schools, (8) Number of Child Development Centres, (9) Number of hotels (10) Number of religious places, (11) Number of hospitals or health centre, (12) Number of shopping centres, (13) Announcement to the SAO for being the building control area, (14) Announcement to the SAO to declare the law on cleanliness and tidiness, (15) Number of materials and tools of prevention and disaster relief, (16) Number of materials, equipment and disposal of garbage and filth, (17) Number of government structure, and (18) Number of commercial business units. See King Prajadhipok's Institute, Classes and Criteria of the SAOs ranking. Ibid.

⁴⁸⁷ A criterion categorizing the SAO based on effectiveness of its capability are measured from levels of good governance. The indexes of good governance to be measured are: (1) Rule of law, (2) Integrity (3) Principle of transparency (4) The participation of the people (5) Primary responsibility and (6) Value. See King Prajadhipok's Institute, Classes and Criteria of the SAOs ranking.

Figure 6.1

Class of Subdistrict Administrative Organisation

Class of SAO	Income	Number of officers
SAO class 1	More than 20 millions Baht	21
SAO class 2	Between 12-20 millions Baht	12
SAO class 3	Between 6-12 millions Baht	6
SAO class 4	No larger than 6 millions Baht	4
SAO class 5	No larger than 3 millions Baht	3

Sources: Adapted from the Office of Committee of Decentralization to Local Government Organization, The Prime Minister Office, *Handbook of Decentralization to Local Government Organization*, 2002), p. 5., King Prajadhipok's Institute, Classes and Criteria of the SAOs ranking, [n.d.], <<http://www.thaipoliticsgovernment.org/wiki/2ระดับชั้นและเกณฑ์การแบ่งระดับองค์การบริหารส่วนตำบล>> [accessed 29 January 2010]

In July 2004, the SAOs ranks were revised into three different levels as large, medium, and small.

Figure 6.2
Revised Subdistrict Administrative Organisation Ranking

Class of SAO (Old)	Class (New)	Criteria
SAO class 1	Large	More than 20 million Baht
SAO class 2		
SAO class 3	Medium*	Between 6-20 millions Baht
SAO class 4		
SAO class 5	Small**	Below 6 million Baht

*Majority of the medium sized SAO are former classes 2 and 3.

** Majority of the medium sized SAO are former classes 4 and 5.

Sources: Adapted from King Prajadhipok's Institute, Classes and Criteria of the SAOs ranking, [n.d.], <<http://www.thaipoliticsgovernment.org/wiki/2ระดับชั้นและเกณฑ์การแบ่งระดับองค์การบริหารส่วนตำบล>> [accessed 29 January 2010]

6.2.2 Structure

The structure of the SAO organisation is comprised of the council-representative, in which the members of a Tambon council and the representatives are elected by voters and appointed by the provincial governor. Under the Tambon Council and Tambon Administration Organisation Act of 1994, the structure of the SAO has two different parts:

1. the Subdistrict Administrative Organisation Council;
2. the Subdistrict Administrative Organisation Commission.

The term of members of the Subdistrict Administrative Organisation Council is 4 years, while the term of the Chairman of the Council is 2 years. The SAO Council is comprised of 1) Chairman of the SAO Council, 2) 1 Deputy of Chairman of the Council, 1 secretary, and from 3-7 council members. The functions of the SAO Council are:

- 1) to approve SAO development plans;
- 2) to consider and approve the draft SAO rules of procedure, draft of annual expenditure rule of procedure, and draft of extra expenditure;
- 3) to oversee the administrative committee's operation in following the Tambon development plan.

For the Subdistrict Administrative Organisation Commission, the term of the members is 4 years. The SAO commission is comprised of: 1) Chief Executive, 2) 2 Deputies, and 3) 1 secretary. The functions of the Commission are:

- 1) to administer the SAO in accordance with the rules of procedure and the Tambon development plan;
- 2) to oversee the Tambon development plan, annual expenditure rules of procedure, and extra expenditure proposals for the SAO Council;
- 3) to report on the SAO's performance and expenditure to the SAO Council at least twice a year;
- 4) to perform other obligations as specified by the government.

The Office of the Subdistrict Administrative Organisation is another part of the administration that acts in response to the SAO obligations. In the case of the office of the SAO, its responsibility is to work on the administrative responsibilities document regarding its district development plan. Moreover, while the staff of this office have to prepare the drafting of regulations, they are expected to respond in the SAO's general administration, including the Council meeting, organising and respond to the government policy, for example.

According to the law, the SAO administration is divided into at least three different divisions: 1) Office of the SAO, 2) Division of Finance, 3) Division of Civil Works, and 4) other divisions if required such as Health Care or Education.

While the members of the SAO Council and Commission are elected, most of the staff in the Office of the SAO are government officials. According to Phong-ngam, and Chotechuang, The Chief Administrator and the Deputy Chief Administrator are accountable in many areas of responsibility for the Office of the SAO.⁴⁸⁸

⁴⁸⁸ Kovit Phong-ngam and Preedee Chotechuang, *What? Why? How? Subdistrict Administrative Organization Democracy for Local Populations* (Bangkok:Winyuchon Publication House, 2001), pp. 42-44.

Duties/roles of Office of the SAO

- To respond in terms of general administration, general affairs, and typing;
- Personnel and welfare;
- Meetings and rules of Tambon procedures;
- Legal and commercial affairs;
- Public ceremony and public relations;
- To prepare the Tambon Development plan;
- To prepare rules of procedure for the fiscal year;
- To respond in proposing for ratification according to rules of procedure;
- To respond in any specified responsibility

Duties/roles of Division of Finance

- To respond in financial and transfer services;
- To respond in tax services;
- To respond in salaries/monthly expenses;
- To respond in balance statement;
- To respond in payments;
- To respond in financial services;
- To respond in debit-credit controls

Duties/roles of Division of Civil works

- To respond in survey, plan design and drawing, road works, buildings, bridges, and reservoirs, water sources;
- To respond in expenses balance;
- To respond in building control;
- To respond in construction, maintenance, control;
- To respond in any specified responsibility

More significant responsibilities that the Office of the SAO responds to further can be defined as follows:

Promotion of Agriculture

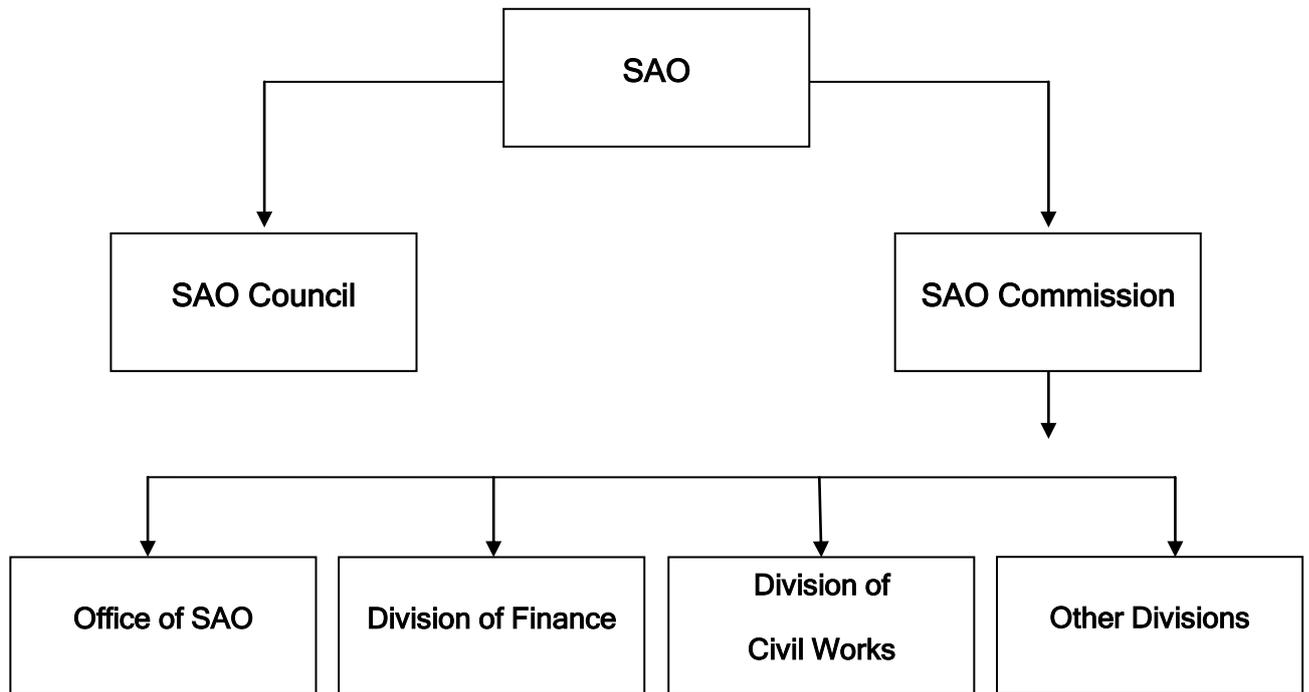
- Technology relating to agriculture and livestock
- Prevent and control animal diseases

Promoting in Social Welfare

- Community Development and Social Welfare;
- Organising community events;
- Organising cremation welfare associations;
- Protecting the rights of women and children;
- Promoting and developing community social welfare centres;
- Promoting community social order;
- Job Support Fund villages and urban affairs;
- Promoting community's cooperative enterprises;
- Promoting and developing district and community enterprises;
- Promote and support the One Tambon One Product project.

The organisational structure of the Office of the Subdistrict Administrative Organisation is set out in Figure 6.3.

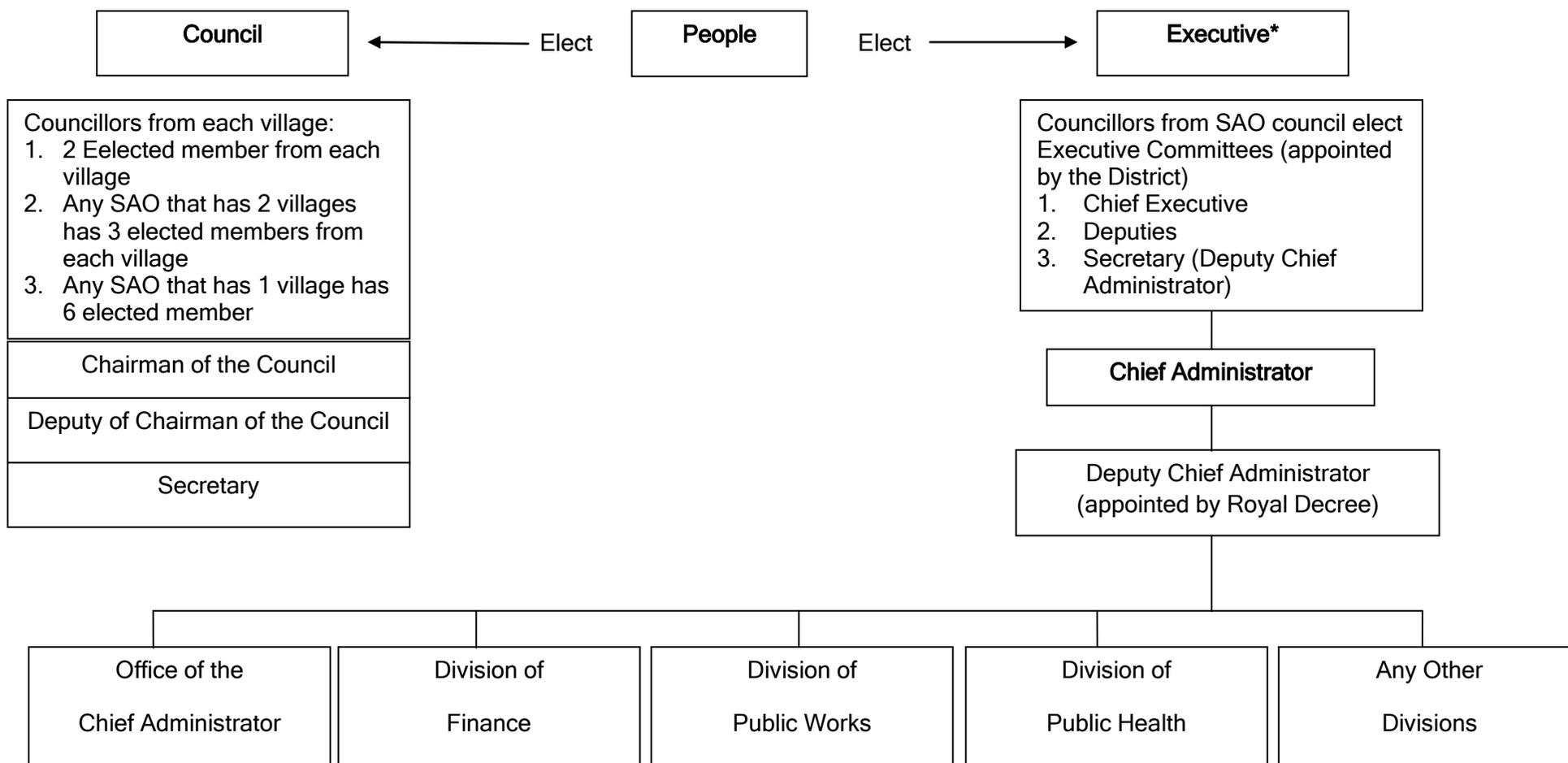
Figure 6.3 The Office of the Subdistrict Administrative Organisation



Source: Kovit Phong-ngam and Preedee Chotechuang, *What? Why? How? Subdistrict Administrative Organization Democracy for Local Populations* (Bangkok:Winyuchon Publication House, 2001), p. 41.

With regards the SAO, its whole structure can be seen as below:

Figure 6.4 Subdistrict Administrative Organisation



Sources: Adapted from Office of Committee of Decentralization to Local Government Organization, The Prime Minister Office. *Handbook of Decentralization to Local Government Organization* (2002) p.14.

* Elected representative

6.2.3 Functions

In relation to the Tambon Council and Tambon Administration Organisation Act of 1994 (No. 3, 1999), section 66, part 3, the SAOs statutory functions are to provide service, as well as to develop their subdistrict in the economy, society, and culture. In addition, under section 67, part 3, the following are the SAOs' obligatory functions:

- Provision and maintenance of public transport infrastructure both of water and land transportation;
- Provision and maintenance of public sanitary services (roads, waterways, walkways and public spaces and the disposal of waste;
- Provision of prevention and eradication of epidemic diseases;
- Provision of surveillance of public safety;
- Provision of promotion of education, religion and culture;
- Provision of promotion of the development of women, children, youth, elderly people and people with disabilities;
- Provision of protection and preservation of natural resources and the environment;
- Provision of preservation and maintenance of arts, traditions, local wisdom, and local cultures;
- Performance of assignments from government agencies by allocation and distribution of appropriate revenues.

In addition, the SAOs may work in the following obligations:

- provision of water for consumption, utilities and agriculture;
- provision and maintenance of electricity, or of light by other means;
- procurement and maintenance of sewage systems;
- The procurement and maintenance of meeting places, sports, public recreation spaces and facilities and parks;
- Provision of agricultural groups and cooperatives;
- Provision of promotion of family industry;
- Provision of preservation and promotion of citizen's occupations;
- Preservation and maintenance of public properties;
- Gaining advantages and profits from SAOs' properties;
- Provision of market places, ports and ferry services;
- Maintaining government enterprises;
- Tourism;

- City Planning.⁴⁸⁹

6.2.4 Finance

Revenue

Because the SAO must have adequate amounts of revenue in order to put the policy into practice effectively, according to the law, the SAOs' revenues are derived from different sources:

Section 29, the SAO receive revenue allocated from the Provincial Administrative Organisation:

- Taxes such as municipality, land, building, sign boards;
- Tax of Duties (charges, surcharges, fees, fines, licenses, permits;
- Gambling licenses;
- Value added tax (VAT), special business taxes;
- Taxes of liquor;
- taxes, excise taxes, automobile/vehicle registration⁴⁹⁰

Section 30, every fiscal year, the national government allocates:

- Grant-in-aids

Section 31, the SAO may also gain from several of the following revenues:

- Income from the SAOs' own property;
- Income from the provision of infrastructure facilities and services;
- Donation from any kind of sources;
- Supplements/contributions from government agencies or other allocated arrangements;
- Miscellaneous revenue⁴⁹¹

⁴⁸⁹ Office of the Council of State of Thailand, Office of the Prime Minister, *The Tambon Council and Tambon Administration Organisation Act of 1994 (No. 3, 1999)*, section 66 and 67, part 3.

⁴⁹⁰ Office of the Council of State of Thailand, Office of the Prime Minister, *Tambon Council and Tambon Administration Organisation Act of 1994 (No. 3, 1999)*

⁴⁹¹ Office of the Council of State of Thailand, Office of the Prime Minister, *Tambon Council and Tambon Administration Organisation Act of 1994*.

Expenditure

In relation to the SAO's expenditure, they may be defined as follows:

- Salary;
- Wages;
- Remuneration;
- Allowance;
- Office supplies;
- Office equipment;
- Land, building, and other properties;
- Other organisation support;
- Any tied expenditure according to laws or regulations of the Ministry of Interior⁴⁹²

6.2.5 Territory

To develop SAO autonomy Patpui identifies four key principles:

- 1) The transfer of some operations of the central administration organization to the local administration governments.
- 2) An increase of the earmarked budget to be allocated by at least 20% for 1997 and not less than 35% for 2006 (Before decentralisation, local administration units received only 9% of the total earmarked budget).
- 3) The transfer of personnel from the central administration organization to the relevant local government units.
- 4) Amend the relevant laws and acts to facilitate decentralisation.⁴⁹³

However, even though the SAO has autonomy to operate its own obligations, it is indeed not designed to run vital affairs in its area of jurisdiction.⁴⁹⁴

As mentioned by Rajchagool,

The provincial governor and the nai amphoe⁴⁹⁵ are to direct and oversee the operation of TAO⁴⁹⁶ to ensure that it functions within the framework of law and follows the rules laid by the officialdom. The duty of the governor and nai amphoe are specified in the TAO Act (2537) as follows: the nai amphoe is (a) to organize

⁴⁹² Ibid.

⁴⁹³ Sompong Patpui, *Decentralisation and Local Governance in Thailand* (Grassroots Development Institute, LIFE-UNDP Thailand), [n.d.], <<http://www.thailocal.net/gdi-english/2-decentralisation-local-governance-24aug2002.htm>> [accessed 9 November 2008].

⁴⁹⁴ Rajchagool, pp. 32 -33.

⁴⁹⁵ Nai amphoe refers to District Chief Officer.

⁴⁹⁶ The Tambon Administrative Organisation (TAO) is also known as the Subdistrict Administrative Organisation (SAO).

and run the TAO election;(b) to receive resignations of TAO members; (c) to ratify/validate the appointment of the president, the deputy president and the secretary; and (d) to approve the annual budget; the governor is (e) to approve TAO activities outside the Tambon geographical jurisdiction; and (f) other duties are to be specified and assigned to the nai amphoe and the governor by the Ministry of Interior and other ministries. Moreover, the governor and the nai amphoe can remove a TAO member on behavioral or moral grounds, or if a member fails to perform his or her duty or if he or she has a conflict of interest.⁴⁹⁷

To explain this, the SAO's place is principally under the supervision of the Ministry of Interior; a District Chief Officer is a representative according to the regulation.⁴⁹⁸

6.3 Chiang Rai Province

6.3.1 History, Demography and Geography

Founded by King Mengrai in 1262, the city of Chiang Rai became the capital of the Mengrai Dynasty, Kingdom of Lanna, for over three decades. However, after King Mengrai built a new city named Chaing Mai, the city of Chiang Rai lost its status to Chiang Mai in 1296 and later only became Chiang Mai's vassal city in 1786.

In the case of its geography, the city of Chiang Rai is located in the northernmost part of Thailand. With its area of some 11,678 square kilometres, it shares its boundary with four countries and one province: North to the Union of Myanmar and Lao People's Democratic Republic, South to Lampang province, East to the Lao People's Democratic Republic and Phayao province and West to Chiang Mai province. In accordance with Statistics for 2008, the Chiang Rai Provincial Governor's Office estimated the population of Chiang Rai to be 1,227,317.

6.3.2 Administration

Chiang Rai is administratively divided into 18 districts⁴⁹⁹ as well as further subdivided into 124 communes and 1751 villages.⁵⁰⁰ This makes Chiang Rai the

⁴⁹⁷ Rajchagool, pp. 32 -33.

⁴⁹⁸ The SAO is subject to the Department of Local Administration, the Ministry of Interior.

⁴⁹⁹ Data provided in November 2009. Chiang Rai Provincial Governor's Office.

twelfth largest province of the country. Public administrations of Chiang Rai province are divided into 34 government organisations under the provincial level, 84 government organisations under the central level, and 120 government organisations under the local level. With consisting of 1 City Municipality, 26 Subdistrict Municipalities, 1 Provincial Administrative Organisation, and 116 Subdistrict Administrative Organisations.⁵⁰¹

⁵⁰⁰ Chiang Rai's 18 districts are: 1. Muang Chiang Rai, 2. Wing Chai, 3. Chiang Khong, 4. Thoeng, 5. Phan, 6. Pa Daet, 7. Mae Chan, 8. Chiang Saen, 9. Mae Sai, 10. Mae Sui, 11. Wiang Pa Pao, 12. Phaya Mengrai, 13. Wing Kaen, 14. Khun Tan, 15. Mae Lao, 16. Mae Fah Luang, 17. Wiang Chiang Rung, and 18. Doi Luang.

⁵⁰¹ In 2008 and 2009, 24 Subdistrict Administrative Organisations were transformed to Subdistrict Municipalities. Also see appendix A. for more detail.

Figure 6.5 Local Administrative Organizations in Chiang Rai Province

	District	Subdistrict	Village	City Municipality	Subdistrict Municipality	Subdistrict Administrative
1. Muang Chiang Rai		16	228	1	1	14
2. Chiang Khong		7	101	-	2	6
3. Wiang Pa Pao		7	93	-	2	7
4. Thoeng		10	156	-	2	10
5. Pa Daet		5	58	-	2	3
6. Phan		15	234	-	1	15
7. Wing Chai		5	75	-	1	5
8. Mae Chan		11	138	-	4	9
9. Chiang Saen		6	70	-	1	6
10. Mae Sai		8	87	-	3	7
11. Mae Sui		7	128	-	2	7
12. Phaya Mengrai		5	71	-	1	5
13. Wing Kaen		4	41	-	-	4
14. Khun Tan		3	55	-	1	3
15. Mae Fah Luang		4	76	-	-	4
16. Mae Lao		5	64	-	2	5
17. Wiang Chiang Rung		3	43	-	1	3
18. Doi Luang		3	33	-	-	3
Total		124	1,751	1	26	116

Source: Adapted from Chiang Rai Provincial Governor's Office in November 2009

6.4 Chiang Rai Subdistrict Administrative Organisation

Under the ideal of decentralisation, as spelt out in the Royal Thai Constitution, the Subdistrict Administrative Organisation was established to improve the quality of life and public services and to meet community needs.⁵⁰²

6.4.1 Establishment of Chiang Rai Subdistrict Administrative Organisation

In the case of Chiang Rai, 92 Subdistrict Administrative Organisations⁵⁰³ were established to work under the supervision of the Chiang Rai provincial government. They were established at different times, the first six in 1995, 33 were established in 1996, 49 in 1997, and 4 in 1999.⁵⁰⁴ (See appendix C)

6.4.2 Problems in implementation

Even though the government has acknowledged the value and therefore the importance of localisation, and has attempted to shift power to its local government, Thailand's administrative system continues to be characterised by a "top-down" approach to policy development and implementation.

Like other Subdistrict Administrative Organisations across the county, most of Chiang Rai's SAOs face difficulties carrying out their obligations under the government's decentralisation policy. These include:

1. Problems relating to their establishment

As noted by Phong-ngam, conditions inhibiting SAO operations are:

- Territorial considerations

The establishment of the SAOs by reference to geographical criteria has led to a great difference in size and population. Such criteria has resulted in some SAOs with large populations and many resources, and others without these. Those SAOs with small populations will always face difficulty in gaining sufficient revenue to develop their localities.

⁵⁰² Tanchai, p. 2.

⁵⁰³ Data updated in December 2009. Department of Local Administration.
< <http://www.thailocaladmin.go.th/work/apt/apt.jsp> > [accessed 15 December 2009].

⁵⁰⁴ 24 Subdistrict Administrative Organisations including Pa Or Donchai SAO and San Sai Ngam SAO were transformed to Tambon Municipality during 2008 - 2010.

- The size and number of villages
The size and number of villages within a SAO will influence the capacity to develop policy and implement it effectively. This can be explained in two ways: 1) where there is a small number of villages within a local area, the size of the SAO will also be small, meaning it will be less likely to have the staff capacity to carry out its role in cases where that local area requires a lot of staff to fulfil the SAO's work; 2) where there is a large number of villages, the SAO may not have a problem regarding the availability of staff, but it will require more expenditure in order to pay the staff's wages.⁵⁰⁵

The Chiang Rai geography does present difficulties for SAO operation. Several SAOs in Chiang Rai face problems regarding their location. Where the landscape is full of forest and mountain ranges or far from the city, there are real difficulties in operating effectively. For example, the Nong Rad Subdistrict Administrative Organisation situated in Thoeng district is a small sized SAO, where its location is far away from any city in the Thoeng District, will face more difficulty in operating its responsibilities than the Wiang Chiang Saen Subdistrict Administrative Organisation, which is a small sized of SAO and situated in a city of the Chiang Saen district.

2. Problems regarding the scope and responsibilities of SAOs

According to Sopchokchai, in theory, Article 69 of the Act of 1994 attempted to establish a coordination mechanism between government agencies and local authorities by requiring all government agencies to operate development activities at the Tambon level. In practice, however, there are still conflicts in central agencies and civil servants' minds not to accept a SAO's status as an equal working partner. This is because those government agencies feel unsure whether the staff at the SAO, particularly elected representatives will work effectively as there are many of them who lack of experience, information and knowledge on how to design the projects⁵⁰⁶ outlined in chapter 9.

⁵⁰⁵ Kovit Phong-ngam, *Thailand's Local Governance: Principle and Administration in the Future* (Bangkok: Winyuchon Publication House, 2000), pp.185-186.

⁵⁰⁶ Orapin Sopchokchai, *Good Local Governance and Anti-corruption Through People's Participation: A Case of Thailand* (World Bank), updated 2001 <http://www.worldbank.org/wbi/governance/pdf/orapin_paper.pdf> [accessed 22 July 2006]. (p.9).

In the case of problems regarding scope and responsibilities, Phong-ngam describes six different conditions SAO face⁵⁰⁷:

- The SAO authority and functions stipulated in regulations are not clear enough to the SAO staff to follow correctly. As a result, the SAO staff who have limited capabilities will always have difficulty performing their roles.
- The SAO concentrates too much in fulfilling and initiating public activities that involve physical areas and basic structures, instead of promoting a good living standard and environment, health care, and education.
- The SAO cannot complete all of the responsibilities according to its authority and function, due to the responsibilities not being transferred from the former central government and/or there are problems stemming from the overlap of regulations at different levels of government.
- There is only a small number of SAOs that collaborate with other government organisations. This happens because the SAO staff either ignore or do not really understand how to cooperate well with other organisations.
- The SAO staff, especially those who are elected representatives, do not understand their role, authority, and responsibilities in order to work effectively.

As with other SAOs in other provinces, Chiang Rai SAOs also face difficulties in terms of scope and responsibilities. It was noticeable that even though the government promoted a decentralisation policy both in the 1997 Constitution and in the Ninth Plan, the SAOs still lack capability to fulfil the policy.

However, as outlined in chapter 7, while a decentralisation policy was promulgated, the SAO staff who put the policy into practice were not prepared.

3. Problems regarding insufficient revenue

It has been noted that all SAOs have limited and unstable revenue due to the nature of the taxes they collect.⁵⁰⁸ Besides the grants-in-aid and

⁵⁰⁷ Phong-ngam, pp. 268-272.

⁵⁰⁸ Sopchokchai, p. 9.

support from the government at national level, the SAOs have limited capabilities to create activities to earn income.

Phong-ngam describes the two main problems regarding finance as:

- SAOs only have limited capability to earn their own revenue. Consequently, they continue to rely on state funds for support.
- The SAO staff who have responsibility for finance have limited capability in finance. There are few staff members with relevant experience.⁵⁰⁹

In the case of Chiang Rai province, most of SAOs have limited revenue and rely heavily on the central government's grants-in-aid. According to the revenue information shown in appendix F, it can be seen that on the one hand, there are only three SAOs, namely Tantan SAO, Paan district, Rim Kong SAO, Chiang Kong district, and San Makha SAO, Paded district, that receive the grants-in-aid from the government that are less than their incomes earned within their local area. On the other hand, 115 SAOs out of 118 SAOs in the years of 2005 and 2006 gained most of their revenue from central government. This becomes a more severe problem for those SAOs with small populations, as they face more difficulty in gaining income to meet their obligations and provide goods and services to their local area. Further, given the different degrees of need within the different SAO areas, some SAOs face greater demands for financial support.

4. Problems regarding conflict (input and output) between traditional forms of local leadership and SAOs

In theory, although the SAO plays a role as an autonomous organisation which can operate by itself under terms set by the central government, conflict (input and output) between traditional forms of local leadership and SAOs can undermine the ability to function effectively. In the case of Chiang Rai province, such problems stem from the significant influence that traditional leaders continue to have in SAO areas, by comparison with SAO staff; and the influence of politicians from both at national and local levels, but especially those

⁵⁰⁹ Jaras Suwanmala, cited in Phong-ngam, p.187.

politicians at the national level, can undermine SAO staff and introduce the risk of corruption.⁵¹⁰

6.5 Conclusion

Although the SAOs have been established since 1995, their development has not been successful due to several obstacles. According to Charoenmuang, on one hand, Thailand's local administrative organisations had long been under a combination of democracy and aristocracy; the local organisations are more influenced by aristocracy than democracy undermining the foundation of local self-governance.⁵¹¹

The next chapter presents findings according to an understanding of decentralisation of the government's agencies at central, provincial, and local levels, as well as problems and conditions inhibiting the implementation of the government's decentralisation policy.

⁵¹⁰ Respondent 13, In-depth interview. Nong Rad Subdistrict Administrative Organisation. 4 June 2008., Respondent 14 and 17, In-depth interview. San Sai Gnam Subdistrict Administrative Organisation 4 April 2008.

⁵¹¹ Charoenmuang, *100 years of Thai Local Government 1887 - 1997* (Bangkok: Kobfai Publisher, 1997), pp. 161-162.

Chapter VII

Policy Implementation Under The Government's Decentralisation Policy

7.1 Introduction

As mentioned in the previous chapter, SAOs were developed to play an important role at the local government level. In addition, because the SAOs were expected to provide services and fulfil the needs of the people at the local level, the people, especially those who would directly benefit, began to look to their SAOs to solve local problems and to develop their local areas.

Even though they had already been established for 14 years at the time of writing, SAOs continue to have difficulties in implementing the decentralisation policy. The very organisations established to accomplish the government's decentralisation policy have been inhibited in carrying out their functions by both internal and external factors. Central government and its staff have been concerned that the SAOs have failed to bring about the successful implementation of the decentralisation programme. This chapter presents data on the understanding and attitudes of staff at various levels involved with the policy of decentralisation and the difficulties in implementing the policy.

The information in this chapter was obtained through in-depth interviews, focus group interviews, group discussions and private discussions. All participants attended one of the interviews. Some participants who had worked for the government for many years or who otherwise had a good understanding of decentralisation were invited to participate in more than one interview, normally both a focus group discussion and an in-depth interview.

In-depth and focus group interviews took place at provincial and local levels, while individual discussions took place mainly at the central level. Some respondents, particularly those at the central level and given their positions and responsibilities, were cautious in saying much about the government's decentralisation policy. It was evident that they were concerned that something they said during an interview might later affect their work. However, when the interview was replaced by a questionnaire (See Appendices A and B) they were able to respond more fully. Questionnaires were therefore used to help the central level staff feel more comfortable in responding to the research questions.

Staff at the local level who had some difficulty in being part of a conversation during a focus group interview were invited to have a private session where there was a more relaxed environment. Having one or two participants at a private session made them feel more comfortable and confident in expressing their opinions, rather than participating in a focus group interview with 3-4 participants from different positions within the organisation, where some of the participants were their supervisors.

7.2 The respondents

The interviews in this research were held in Chiang Rai province. In total, 45 interviews were conducted: 17 were in-depth interviews with key individuals and 28 were focus group interviews. There were six respondents from central government, four respondents from provincial governments and 35 respondents from the local level.⁵¹²

Respondents from both the central and provincial levels were government officials responsible to the Ministry of the Interior. Respondents from the local level were SAO staff from six different Tambons (Subdistricts): Tambon Paa Or Don Chai, Tambon Rimkok, Tambon Mae Chan, Tambon Nong Rad, Tambon Yo Nok, and Tambon Chaing Saen. The SAO staff held different positions and job descriptions, including members of an SAO council, SAO representatives, an SAO Chief Administrator, and heads of division, such as public works, agricultural affairs, education, and policy and planning.

7.2.1 Research questions

Questions focused on four main issues: 1) SAO staff understanding of the policy of decentralisation; 2) inter-relationships between organisations; 3) interpreting the decentralisation policy; and 4) problems and impediments in implementing the decentralisation policy. Difficulties in implementing the decentralisation policy include the capacity of SAOs, and the autonomy and revenue provided by the central government.

⁵¹² All 35 respondents at local level were also divided into two different groups: Seven respondents were chosen to participate in the in-depth interview and 28 respondents were chosen to participate in focus group interviews.

Questions were open to allow staff to express their understating of decentralisation as well as their opinions about the policy and the problems they faced in policy making and implementing, and about the capacities of staff to carry out the decentralisation policy. Staff were also asked about the problems they experienced during and after the policy was delivered, and their suggestions about what government needed to do to solve the problems.

Staff at the local level who requested a private session were asked the same questions as those used in the focus group interviews. Participants were more forthcoming in their responses during the individual sessions and they not only answered the interview questions, but also commented on problems and conflicts in other organisations which sometimes affected their organisation. This was unexpected and additional information.

7.3.1 Decentralisation from a central government perspective

When asked what specific changes had occurred since the policy of decentralisation was announced in 1997, central government respondents asserted that local government had become more important in the development of the country and they showed enthusiasm for decentralisation. Interestingly, two of the six central government respondents noted that central government must keep in mind the lack of understanding about decentralisation among local government staff and, more broadly, among the Thai people. They commented that caution was therefore necessary in pursuing the decentralisation of government. They also considered that central government needed to empower local staff and focus more on the implementation of the policy. They commented that it took time for local staff and the Thai people to understand the purpose of decentralisation and how to participate more fully in local government. This lack of understanding was seen to inhibit the decentralisation process, but there was evidence that this was improving and that the system appeared to be working better than when decentralisation was first introduced. The remaining four thought that the national administrative system was only slightly improved, and that there were still several problems inhibiting the implementation of decentralisation.

When asked how decentralisation had worked, all six central government respondents thought the implementation of the policy had been rushed and this had made it less successful than it could have been. They saw a gap between

central government staff and staff at the local level with responsibility for implementing the policy. They thought the policy would have been better if it had been implemented when everything had been well organised. Two of the six considered that the decentralisation policy had been pushed too hard by central government in its wish to announce the policy, and that only the central government staff were ready for decentralisation. They noted that the capability of staff at the local level was a concern and that the government had needed to ensure enough revenue to support local government when launching the policy. One respondent commented that the decentralisation programme had not been well prepared in terms of the allocation of authority, the provision of revenue streams, and the preparation of staff who understood the policy and what was required of them by central government.⁵¹³ Another respondent pointed out that while the decentralisation was forced upon them by central government, it had not been promoted and encouraged at the local level to ensure staff had the necessary knowledge, experience and capacities.⁵¹⁴ Two respondents stated that there was no guarantee that the people would benefit from the decentralisation programme. They asserted that the central government had failed to inform of the broader population of the significance of the policy and how it could benefit the country.

When asked what was required to ensure that the SAOs could effectively carry out their new responsibilities, four of the six central government respondents said that SAO staff were poorly prepared and did not understand the purpose and potential of the policy. They said central government needed to ensure SAO staff had a good understanding of the policy and the changes it meant for their roles. SAO staff needed to have a comprehensive understanding of the bureaucratic system, law and regulations, roles and duties, and also a very good understanding of what they were doing. It was not only about having knowledge of decentralisation, but also gaining experience in working with the policy.

Interestingly, the central government respondents commented that it was undue attention to public needs by SAO representatives that was problematic. The respondents noted that as SAO executive positions were determined by public election, these representatives would pursue activities that would enhance their chance for re-election. While this was local democracy in action, there was

⁵¹³ Respondent 1, Questionnaire. Ministry of Interior. 28 June 2008.

⁵¹⁴ Respondent 2, Questionnaire. Ministry of Interior. 28 June 2008.

a view from central government respondents that this was not a good thing. They suggested that SAO representatives were promising the local people that they would fulfil their needs without knowing whether this would be in line with central government policy and that these representatives were too concerned about future votes instead of working for the public and providing public services. These central government respondents did consider the revenue for the SAOs to be inadequate for the responsibilities and policies they had to carry out. Four respondents pointed out that it was essential for central government to encourage and provide all useful information and support to SAOs to assist them in achieving the government's goals in the decentralisation policy.

When asked to identify the main problems with the policy, two of the six central government respondents stated that, in its concern to announce the decentralisation policy, central government had failed to take into account that the local government, especially the SAO staff, needed to have a much better understanding of the policy if decentralisation was to be effective. They saw the main problem arising from the lack of readiness and limited capabilities of SAO staff. These respondents stated that central government had transferred many more responsibilities to the SAOs than they could actually complete and that the SAOs' revenue was quite inadequate for the responsibilities under decentralisation. Four respondents drew attention to the role of politicians who represented the provinces at the national level. They noted that these national level politicians had on several occasions attempted to interfere with local development plans, influencing the implementation of decentralisation.

In summary, the central government respondents thought that SAO staff capability was the most important issue. They suggested that both the SAOs and central government needed to be aware of the problems inhibiting decentralisation and that central government needed to do more to support and assist SAOs to solve any problems. As SAO staff came to understand their roles better, and as they gained more experience, they would be able to contribute to the success of the decentralisation policy.

7.3.2 Decentralisation from a provincial government perspective

When asked what specific changes had occurred since the policy of decentralisation was announced in 1997, the provincial level respondents reported that the local areas appeared to be developing faster. One of the four considered that local problems were being solved more rapidly and appropriately under the decentralisation policy. Two out of the four provincial level respondents pointed out that there were several factors that inhibited their performance, also referring to the lack of preparedness of local staff. The result, they suggested, was an ongoing reliance on central government. They saw this as a matter of education and that staff at the local level were gaining more experience with their new responsibilities and they had more opportunity to participate in the national administration.⁵¹⁵ As staff and local people understood decentralisation better, the system improved. The following quote captures this:

The decentralisation policy - it encouraged the SAOs and local people: 1) to acknowledge and understand their own problems, which would be different depending on their areas. Consequently, they could seek solutions to the problems. 2) To allow the staff and local people to genuinely practice working under decentralisation and democracy, and 3) after they were well practiced, not only the staff, but also the local people would realize how important decentralisation was. They would also have greater political consciousness and local people's participation would encourage transparency and open access to information about government organizations. This would dispose of corruption.⁵¹⁶

When asked how decentralisation had worked, it was apparent that provincial government respondents held different views. Three of the four considered that "after the decentralisation policy was introduced, there were several improvements".⁵¹⁷ but that the decentralisation policy was only of limited success. One respondent did not see decentralisation as a success due to several problems inhibiting its implementation.

The two provincial government respondents who thought the policy had worked stated that after it was launched the local administrative system improved. "The system was faster than previously because the SAOs could

⁵¹⁵ Respondent 9, In-depth interview. Office of Local Administrative Organisation, Chiang Rai Province. 4 July 2008

⁵¹⁶ Respondent 10, In-depth interview. Office of Local Administrative Organisation, Chiang Rai Province. 4 July 2008.

⁵¹⁷ Respondents 9 and 10, Respondent 7, In-depth interview. Ministry of Interior. 28 June 2008.

exercise their autonomy to work”.⁵¹⁸ In addition, “there was more participation at the local level, which was a good beginning for national development, especially when SAOs could work better with the local people”.⁵¹⁹ These two respondents also noted several matters that needed to be improved, especially the capabilities of SAO staff. One respondent thought that the system had gradually improved after the policy was introduced. Even though central government attempted to encourage and promote decentralisation, “the scheme developed slowly, due to adherence to the old fashioned national administrative system”.⁵²⁰ While these respondents considered that the decentralisation policy was somewhat successful, one stated that there was nothing much that had changed. He said:

The policy was not genuinely successful because there were several obstacles making difficulties for the SAOs in implementing the policy. Moreover, because of the SAOs’ limited understanding of decentralisation and limited staff capabilities, staff at the local level could not work properly but continued to depend on central government.⁵²¹

When asked what was required to ensure the SAOs could effectively carry out their new responsibilities, provincial level respondents referred to the limited capabilities of staff and had suggestions about solving these problems. One respondent thought it necessary for central government to ensure that central and provincial level staff were good role models for SAO staff. Reference was also made to the need for good relationships between staff at different levels of government and of the need to supervise and assist SAO staff to work more effectively. It may seem ironic when the purpose of the policy was the promotion of local autonomy, but the supervision was meant to empower local level staff. This tension was also evident in suggestions that SAOs be cautious and always consult with central and provincial levels to ensure that they were on the right track. Related ministries, organisations, departments, and divisions were recommended as mentors and providers of assistance when required.

Another respondent pointed out that the central government must always be aware of what SAOs were doing in order to ensure that the decentralisation policy was carried out without obstacles. This respondent stated that every plan and step must be towards the objectives set by central government. In addition, government must ensure that local staff can respond to the demands of the

⁵¹⁸ Respondents 9 and 10.

⁵¹⁹ Respondent 7.

⁵²⁰ Respondent 9.

⁵²¹ Respondent 10.

decentralisation policy. “The government must know how well staff at the local level can respond to the decentralisation policy, as well as how well they are ready for the change”.⁵²² From this, central government was seen as having a large degree of responsibility for solving problems confronting SAOs.

When asked what the main problems were, all four provincial level respondents were of the view that the limited understanding and experience of SAO staff was important. The difficulty arises, they said, from there being two sources of SAO staff: by appointment or by election.⁵²³ Given the lack of understanding of decentralisation, one respondent mentioned that SAOs have less opportunity to practice and gain the required experience. So “when central government transfers an SAO’s obligations, they face the added difficulty of exercising their autonomy as well as carrying out their responsibilities”.⁵²⁴ Another respondent noted that ensuring “staff at the local level, especially SAO staff, were well prepared for decentralisation was a fundamental step”.⁵²⁵

If the government ignores this matter, the decentralisation policy will not be successful. Consequently, SAOs that fail to meet the policy’s ultimate goal affect not only the decentralisation policy but also the government’s policy making. This occurs because the government can’t set the policy at a further step with a higher expectation, but has to set the scope of the policy to a level which allows for the limited capabilities of SAOs to make the policy a success.⁵²⁶

One respondent stated that the consequence of a lack of understanding and experience in decentralisation made working relationships between local level staff and staff at other levels difficult. New staff have only limited experience and they may carry out the policy in a way that is rather different from what was expected. At times they did not realise that what they were doing was against the procedure, and neither did they realise and understand their roles and responsibilities.

Another problem facing SAOs is the number of responsibilities transferred from other levels and the lack of resources to carry them out. The government does not provide sufficient revenue or grants-in-aid for the tasks. SAOs cannot earn much and what they do earn is quite inadequate for them to perform their

⁵²² Respondent 10.

⁵²³ Respondent 8, Office of Local Administrative Organisation, Chiang Rai Province. 4 July 2008.

⁵²⁴ Respondent 7.

⁵²⁵ Respondent 10.

⁵²⁶ Respondent 9.

obligations effectively. All they could do was to implement their policy to the best of their abilities in the limited conditions.⁵²⁷

Yet another problem for SAOs in implementing the decentralisation policy was noted by one provincial government respondent who mentioned that “even though the transferred obligations and the SAOs administration are very distinct, those obligations did not always serve the local needs, due to the different degrees of development”.⁵²⁸ In addition, while the problem regarding the continuation and clarity of the decentralisation is of concern, the failure to correct the limited understanding of the superintendents of the SAOs rapidly creates more difficulties. The superintendents are also variables that influence the success of the decentralisation policy.⁵²⁹

When asked the main points to which the SAOs should pay more attention, all provincial government respondents were in agreement that SAO staff should pay more attention to self-development, gaining more knowledge and experience, and developing a greater capacity to implement the decentralisation policy. The more they can develop, the more they can enhance their performance. One respondent indicated that as well as self-development, SAO staff should realise how important their work is. The development of the policy at the foundation level was significant to the national administration. In addition, SAOs should be aware of the dangers of corruption when opportunists seek to gain advantages. Another respondent considered that SAOs must realise their roles and obligations as well as be aware that their work is very important. “To request mentoring and assistance are very necessary at the beginning and should continue occasionally afterwards. If SAOs demand assistance from the government all the time, they would never be able to govern themselves”.⁵³⁰ One respondent noted that SAO staff have to keep in mind that they work for the government, not for a business company, observing that “several SAO staff do not devote themselves to work as a good team with others”.⁵³¹ Lastly, another provincial government respondent stated that SAO staff should enhance their capabilities to serve their local area, and as their potential increases, they will work more effectively on the implementation policy.

⁵²⁷ Respondent 8.

⁵²⁸ Respondent 9.

⁵²⁹ Ibid.

⁵³⁰ Respondent 10.

⁵³¹ Respondent 8.

7.3.3 Local level perspectives

When local level respondents were asked what specific changes had occurred since the policy of decentralisation was announced in 1997, all seven considered it significant for the local area. Three observed that with decentralisation, the local area appeared to be developing faster.⁵³² One of these respondents went on to mention that local problems were also solved more rapidly.⁵³³ The other four respondents stated that even though the government empowered and promoted local government decentralisation, it had not been successful for several reasons. As one respondent stated,

Even though the government attempted to promote the decentralisation policy, it somehow seems very difficult to make the policy benefit the local area a lot. We could see there were several problems that the government needed to solve before launching the programme.⁵³⁴

This is supported by two other respondents. One said,

I agree that the government aimed to do the best thing by launching the decentralisation policy: however, to say that the policy was successful would be an exaggeration. In fact, the policy itself was a very good policy, but the staff and organizations that were expected to work under the policy were not ready.⁵³⁵

Two of the seven respondents indicated that there were few, if any, changes after the policy was launched, because the local staff lacked the capabilities to make the decentralisation policy succeed. One respondent said:

The decentralisation policy initiated by central government could only be of benefit to the locals and the SAOs if they are ready to work under decentralisation. Among the SAOs established all over the country, there were only a limited number of SAOs that could actually accomplish the decentralisation policy. Of course, those SAOs who have limited capabilities could not do anything much but attempt to work as best as they could.⁵³⁶

⁵³² Respondent 13, In-depth interview. Nong Rad Subdistrict Administrative Organisation. 4 June 2008.

⁵³³ Respondent 16, In-depth interview. Yonok Subdistrict Administrative Organisation. 19 June 2008.

⁵³⁴ Respondent 11, In-depth interview. Rimkok Subdistrict Administrative Organisation. 18 June 2008.

⁵³⁵ Respondent 14, In-depth interview. San Sai Gnam Subdistrict Administrative Organisation. 4 April 2008.

⁵³⁶ Respondent 17, In-depth interview. San Sai Gnam Subdistrict Administrative Organisation. 4 April 2008.

One respondent observed,

The purpose of the decentralisation policy was to allow and provide local government with self-governance. However, with different understandings and points of view, many SAO staff have the wrong idea about the autonomy and obligations they have to work with.⁵³⁷

When asked how decentralisation had worked, there were a number of views put forward by these respondents. Two believed that the policy had worked. As one stated:

After the decentralisation policy was promulgated, development at the local level improved. The problems were solved more rapidly and the local people also had more opportunity to participate more in politics.⁵³⁸

Two considered that the decentralisation policy had been only somewhat successful:

Decentralisation was not actually a success due to several problems inhibiting its implementation.⁵³⁹

One respondent also mentioned that “even though the system was faster than previously because the SAOs could exercise the autonomy to work, in fact, the SAO staff still had difficulty in implementing the policy”.⁵⁴⁰

Lastly, two respondents said that the decentralisation policy had developed only slowly because of several factors. One was the limited capabilities, knowledge and experience of SAO staff in working under decentralisation. One of these respondents stated:

Even though the central government attempted to promote decentralisation at the local level, the scheme developed only very slowly. There was a big gap between the staff who work at higher government levels (central and provincial levels) and those who work at the local level. ... while the working system was flowing and well organized between the government at central and provincial level, the working system at local government was different. With different conditions for each SAO, there needed to be the staff who could enhance the work of the SAO while gaining more experience of working more effectively, and also a better

⁵³⁷ Respondent 16.

⁵³⁸ Respondent 15, Focus group interview. Paa Or Don Chai Subdistrict Administrative Organisation. 16 June 2008.

⁵³⁹ Respondent 11.

⁵⁴⁰ Respondent 12, In-depth interview. Yonok Subdistrict Administrative Organisation. 19 June 2008.

understanding among the community, local people and community leaders, about decentralisation.⁵⁴¹

The other stated:

The adherence to the monarchy and the hierarchical bureaucratic system saw central government paying too much attention to centralization, which later affected decentralisation at the local level to make it unsuccessful. ... it was not possible that the local level government could practice their autonomy. ... local government had never learned and practiced before, it had no clue to work following the policy.⁵⁴²

When asked what was required to ensure the SAOs could effectively carry out their new responsibilities, all seven local level respondents agreed that training and educating SAO staff about decentralisation was the most important thing to be done. One stated that it was necessary that central government mentor SAO staff. He stated: "To make certain that the local level staff, especially SAO staff, were on the right track was a very important issue that the government could not ignore".⁵⁴³ Another respondent said that SAO staff should always consult with the staff at central, provincial and local levels.⁵⁴⁴ The following comment acknowledges the haste with which the policy was implemented, the problems that emerged from this and the need to look forward:

At this point, we should not talk about the mistake that the government launched the programme too soon. It was in the past and we could not change anything about that. However, what we could do now is to encourage SAO staff to be more enthusiastic and to understand what their roles are under decentralisation. With this, they will build their consciousness and realize that their work is very significant. They will be aware that central government, and also the local people, expected them to develop the local area.⁵⁴⁵

When asked what the main problems were, three local level respondents stated that the limited understanding and experience of SAO staff affected the policy's implementation the most, while two of them considered that the decentralisation policy was promoted before SAO staff had prepared themselves for the change. Two respondents indicated that the origin of the problem arose from the national administrative system. For those who considered the limited capabilities of SAO staff to be the main problem, one respondent said:

⁵⁴¹ Respondent 17.

⁵⁴² Respondent 14.

⁵⁴³ Respondent 13.

⁵⁴⁴ Respondent 12.

⁵⁴⁵ Respondent 15.

While the staff who work at central, provincial and some organisations at the local level had to pass administration procedures before working being employed in government, those who were politicians working as the SAO elected representative team gained their places through election. The government officials had more capabilities for their work than those who were elected. Therefore when working together, those SAO staff with less experience could not follow the staff at the higher levels.⁵⁴⁶

Two respondents further indicated that with a lack of understanding of decentralisation SAO staff had less opportunity to practice and gain experience of working under decentralisation.⁵⁴⁷ One respondent noted: “Their limited understanding of decentralisation led them to interpret and implement the policy differently from what they were expected to do”.⁵⁴⁸ If SAOs continued to work like that, then the decentralisation policy would never succeed.⁵⁴⁹ The combination of limited staff capabilities, together with the many different factors and conditions faced by SAOs during the policy implementation process, resulted in different degrees of success in implementing the decentralisation policy.⁵⁵⁰

The respondents who suggested the main problem with the implementation of the decentralisation policy was the national administrative system stated:

Even though the government promoted the decentralisation policy, it appeared that centralization continued to play an important role in the nation’s administrative system. Of course, if the government continued to pay too much attention to centralization and ignored decentralisation at the local level, then decentralisation would never happen at the local level.⁵⁵¹

The complicated national administrative system brought many difficulties for SAOs. One respondent stated:

The SAOs already had a problem regarding the high numbers of transferred responsibilities, which came on top of the hierarchical system the SAOs had to deal with. It meant the SAOs could not work properly and the hierarchical system took time, making the SAOs take longer than was needed. If the SAOs had reasonable levels of responsibilities, even though they had to deal with the

⁵⁴⁶ Respondent 16.

⁵⁴⁷ Respondent 13.

⁵⁴⁸ Respondent 11.

⁵⁴⁹ Ibid.

⁵⁵⁰ Respondent 16.

⁵⁵¹ Respondent 14.

hierarchy, then this would be much better and more efficient than the chaos of many responsibilities and a strong hierarchy.⁵⁵²

When asked what SAOs should be paying more attention to, all of the local level respondents suggested they should pay more attention to gaining more knowledge, experience and capacity to perform the new roles expected of them. They could do so by attending different training programmes offered by central government,⁵⁵³ by sharing their experiences with the senior staff or staff at provincial and local levels,⁵⁵⁴ and by consulting the staff at higher levels for useful information.⁵⁵⁵ The respondents considered that SAOs must understand their roles and obligations, and be aware that their work was significant.⁵⁵⁶ One respondent observed: “The more SAO staff realise their role, the more they can work properly and effectively”.⁵⁵⁷

7.4 Inter-relationships between levels of government

The SAOs worked with other local organisations, provincial level government and central government. These inter-relationships are captured in the following quote:

The SAOs sometimes contact some of us for advice regarding the regulations and procedures when they are not sure, and we try our best to assist them. Sometimes, we recommend that they contact other organisations that can give them the information they need, particularly where they have to work with staff at other Ministries.⁵⁵⁸

7.4.1 Central government perspectives on the inter-relationships between levels of government

Central government respondents were asked to describe how the process of policy implementation had worked in terms of cooperation between the SAO and other organisations at the provincial levels and local levels. When asked about the challenges in these inter-organisational relationships, the central government respondents identified a number of factors. One respondent

⁵⁵² Respondent 17.

⁵⁵³ Ibid., Respondents 12, and 15.

⁵⁵⁴ Respondent 12.

⁵⁵⁵ Respondent 15.

⁵⁵⁶ Respondent 11.

⁵⁵⁷ Respondent 13.

⁵⁵⁸ Respondent 3, Questionnaire. Ministry of Interior. 28 June 2008.

considered that the different background of staff at different levels of government was an issue: “We can see that there are several working approaches and techniques of staff at the three levels”.⁵⁵⁹ He added:

Those staff from the central and provincial levels are not the problem but, at the local level, because staff join under different terms, it is sometimes very difficult for them to work together very well. In addition, while some staff at central and provincial level understood the procedures and system very well, staff at the local level appeared to have no background to work from and therefore faced difficulties.⁵⁶⁰

When asked about the character of the hierarchical nature of the inter-relationships between provincial and local government, all central government respondents considered that a complicated working process existed. The degree of hierarchy between provincial and local government was less than that between central and local government. One respondent stated:

Staff at the provincial and local levels are actually more intimately acquainted, compared to the central level because they have to work together or even have to attend the same meetings occasionally.⁵⁶¹

These respondents considered hierarchy as a natural part of the working relationship between provincial and local levels, but one stated that:

Personal conflicts among staff appear to be more of a problem than the hierarchy which only applies during the working process as a way of making the whole system run properly. If the working line operates in the same way, then the problem should not occur.⁵⁶²

The complexity of the hierarchical system was seen by several respondents as requiring attention, to reduce it and make it less complex so it can work faster. One respondent had a different opinion:

Even though we realize that the hierarchical system inhibits the smooth implementation of policy, it is very difficult for the government to change a whole system while it is still being used.⁵⁶³

Two respondents suggested that problems could be solved by transferring some staff from the provincial level and other relevant organisations

⁵⁵⁹ Respondent 5, Questionnaire. Ministry of Interior. 28 June 2008.

⁵⁶⁰ Ibid.

⁵⁶¹ Respondent 2.

⁵⁶² Respondent 3.

⁵⁶³ Respondent 4, Questionnaire. Ministry of Interior. 28 June 2008.

to work at the local level.⁵⁶⁴ Such staff transfers were seen as having potential to bring relevant experience to the local level.

One respondent noted:

Because several staff, especially those at the local level, are not familiar with the bureaucratic system, with all its rules and processes, it can be difficult for staff to work effectively. This wastes their time and makes the process slower.⁵⁶⁵

7.4.2 Provincial government perspectives on the inter-relationships between levels of government

Provincial government respondents stated that there was cooperation between the SAO and other organisations at the provincial levels and local levels. Staff at the provincial level were expected to provide information to SAOs as well as assist them as necessary. As one provincial government respondent said: “Local government must assist and support SAOs, providing mentoring and making suggestions for better performance”.⁵⁶⁶ Two other respondents mentioned that the provincial level always supports the SAOs when they had problems. He said:

We make suggestions to SAO staff on different issues from time to time. Of course, with different conditions and limited SAO staff capabilities, there are different issues depending on their local area. However, most of the advice that we provide is about the regulations, procedures, and issues about the working system.⁵⁶⁷

Provincial government respondents saw the lack of experience and skill in working with other organisations under decentralisation as the cause of difficulties for the SAOs. While there was no big problem in working with SAO staff, somehow, “it can take longer to work together properly, according to the different degree of staff experience”.⁵⁶⁸ Another respondent commented:

Sometimes it is very difficult to work with SAO staff because of the gap of experience in working under a bureaucracy. The different degrees of understanding SAO staff have of the national administration, as well as

⁵⁶⁴ Respondent 1, Respondent 5, Questionnaire. Ministry of Interior. 28 June 2008.

⁵⁶⁵ Respondent 6, Questionnaire. Ministry of Interior. 28 June 2008.

⁵⁶⁶ Respondent 7.

⁵⁶⁷ Respondent 9.

⁵⁶⁸ Respondent 7.

decentralisation, means that SAO staff sometimes work against a regulation or do things differently from what had been stated in the framework.⁵⁶⁹

Another provincial government observed:

Because the SAO working system is slightly different from other organizations at the provincial level, for example, in having the autonomy to implement their development plans, we sometimes have difficulty in dealing with SAO staff because their understanding of the working approach is different from what we do. However, after we explain and make suggestions, SAO staff can actually continue their performance.⁵⁷⁰

Because we are government officials, there is barely any problem for us to work in the bureaucratic system. However, with some SAO staff, especially those staff who are politicians, it will be difficult for them to gain more understanding and experience in a limited time during their terms. From this, we can see that there are several times when SAOs are unaware of what is required and work against the procedures. Since we have to advise them to work in the correct way, sometimes it makes them feel uncomfortable and embarrassed. They sometimes may feel like we are annoying and demanding, even though, in fact, we do not mean to be that way. We just want to do our job.⁵⁷¹

One respondent further explained: “There were several times that SAOs called staff at the provincial level to ask and make sure that what they were working on in their policy implementation was correct. Generally, they were unsure of the regulations and rules”.⁵⁷²

One provincial government respondent pointed out that one of the challenges in the working relationship between the provincial and local level arose because “staff prefer to work at the provincial level, instead of being transferred to work at the local level. This is probably because they feel that their duties and positions are degraded, which is not true”.⁵⁷³ This comment suggests there is a lower status in working at the local level by comparison with the provincial or central level.

All provincial government respondents considered that the hierarchical nature of their relationships with SAOs influenced their work by the making relationships more formal. “It is not possible to avoid the hierarchy, since the national administration somehow requires it to make the whole system work

⁵⁶⁹ Respondent 10.

⁵⁷⁰ Respondent 9.

⁵⁷¹ Respondent 8.

⁵⁷² Ibid.

⁵⁷³ Ibid., Respondents 7 and 10.

effectively and systematically”.⁵⁷⁴ That means even though the elected representatives are elected as to bring concerns on the agenda within their local areas, they have to work in relevant or under the provision of the law. As a result, these respondents pointed out that experience in working under the provisions of the law and established procedures were very important. Two respondents saw problems with staff at the local level in following the formal rules and regulations required for their work. One stated:

Generally, government officials have to work under the formal procedures, rule and disciplines laid down. From this, if the staff do something against a regimen, he will be automatically punished with different penalties according to the provisions established.⁵⁷⁵

However, because some SAO personnel were elected politicians, they may not have formal education or training in the rules of the bureaucracy. One respondent said

Having a limited knowledge of the bureaucratic discipline, as well as the regulations, formal rules, and procedures made them have a hard time and the most important thing was that they tried to do their best, but it turned out to be against the procedure.⁵⁷⁶

One respondent stated: “We appreciate that the government decided to devolve power to the local level and allow bureaucrats at the local level, as well as the local people, to participate in decentralisation. However, with different degrees of readiness among SAOs in working under decentralisation, it appeared that the decentralisation policy was launched too soon”.⁵⁷⁷

Another provincial government respondent mentioned that central government had pushed the decentralisation policy too hard. He said:

While staff and the local people required more time to be well prepared, the government appeared to be in a hurry to promote the policy. From this, a problem occurred when only the staff at central and provincial levels were ready for decentralisation and staff at the local level had difficulties in working under decentralisation.⁵⁷⁸

⁵⁷⁴ Respondent 7.

⁵⁷⁵ Ibid.

⁵⁷⁶ Respondent 8.

⁵⁷⁷ Respondent 7.

⁵⁷⁸ Respondent 9.

Yet another respondent said:

The decentralisation policy was appropriate because the policy could actually develop, solve and fulfil the people's needs. Moreover, most of all, the decentralisation policy is depicted as one of the government's tools to promote decentralisation to local levels. Nevertheless, there were several issues the government must take into account in reconsidering whenever the government planned to make a new policy afterwards. SAOs required more practice in working under decentralisation. They also needed to understand their staff in order to work more effectively. Of course, this also referred to the local people that needed to gain more knowledge in decentralisation. If SAOs and the local people can work on that the decentralisation policy could achieve more.⁵⁷⁹

Again, provincial government respondents suggested the importance of SAO staff enhancing their knowledge and experience through training. They tended to see problems in individuals rather than within the system of government.

7.4.3 Local government perspectives on the inter-relationships between levels of government

All seven local level respondents agreed that it is sometimes difficult for SAO and provincial staff to work together because SAO staff are not always sure that they are on the right track. As one respondent stated:

Even though central government encouraged decentralisation and prepared the staff to work under it, in fact, it appeared that those staff expected to carry out the policy did not do very well in their work. Along with the difficulty of understanding the requirements under decentralisation, which already gave them a hard time, there was the added difficulty of working with the bureaucratic system. Since they had to interpret and work on the policy, there was no wonder that they could not complete the goal.⁵⁸⁰

Another local level respondent stated:

We understood that the government worked very hard to develop the country. However, the decentralisation policy which was intended to make things better turned out to be a problem. It seemed that only the staff at central and provincial levels were ready for the decentralisation policy but not the staff and people at the local level.⁵⁸¹

⁵⁷⁹ Respondent 8.

⁵⁸⁰ Respondent 11.

⁵⁸¹ Respondent 16.

These difficulties were expanded upon:

We tried the best we could but, sometimes, it was very difficult for us. We already faced difficulties regarding the limited numbers of staff, staff capabilities, limited revenue, and limited autonomy. Of course, we also had difficulty with policy interpretation because of the different conditions outside that are unexpected, and which influenced policy implementation. It even made SAOs a harder case to deal with.⁵⁸²

One local level respondent stated: “SAO staff must contact and request assistance from different organisations at the provincial level when they require it, depending on the particular policy”.⁵⁸³ Cooperation between the SAO and other organisations at the local level was easier than working in cooperation with organisations at the provincial level.⁵⁸⁴ As one respondent stated:

Sometimes, we did not understand the content of the policy. Generally, when we were confused and uncertain about the policy or what we had to do, we asked other SAOs to check whether we understood the same thing. If our understanding coincided then we continued with our work. But if not, we called staff at the provincial level, depending on the area of the job.⁵⁸⁵

Another respondent stated: “With different and complicated layers of governments and departments, it means SAOs have difficulty in working with staff at the provincial and, sometimes, central level.” He added:

We feel more comfortable working with staff at the local level rather than contact those staff at the higher level, especially those at the central level. This is probably because we work at the same level, so when we talk we feel we speak the same language.⁵⁸⁶

Importantly, one respondent referred to inconsistency in the regulations they were required to work within.

Because the regulations in force are not consistent, SAOs have difficulty in continuing our performance. We have to contact them more often and so it appears that we do not have sufficient capability to do anything.⁵⁸⁷

⁵⁸² Respondent 12.

⁵⁸³ Respondent 12.

⁵⁸⁴ Respondent 16.

⁵⁸⁵ Respondent 13.

⁵⁸⁶ Respondent 13.

⁵⁸⁷ Respondents 12 and 14.

Another local level respondent explained:

Because SAOs are small organizations at the foundation level, several staff neglect and underestimate our potential. We do not argue that all SAO staff have a good understanding and have plenty of capabilities. We know that we need more practice, but personal attitudes appear to affect a lot.⁵⁸⁸

It was noted that staff at the higher level, especially the provincial level, often interfered with SAO work:

The staff at the higher level may see that we cannot work well, so it may be easier if they give us a hand. However, they forget that if they do that all the time, SAO staff will never learn. And then we can see that the bureaucracy and hierarchy, as well as the influence of centralization, are never away from us.⁵⁸⁹

Two of the local level respondents considered the inter-relationships between the provincial and local government were challenging. This was due to the overlap between these levels of government due to shared responsibilities and similar job descriptions for staff. Three out of the seven respondents mentioned staff overlap in areas of responsibility, and that “policy is also the responsibility of other organisations at a higher level”.⁵⁹⁰ In this situation staff may have to wait for approval from the higher level. One respondent gave an example:

For SAOs to operate any public services located within their local area, they may sometimes have to get the programme approved by the district before they can move on because there is an overlap of responsibility within organizations at central and provincial levels.⁵⁹¹

Another respondent said:

If SAOs want to develop a swamp or landscape any public area, they have to propose the plan as well as hold a public hearing and get consent from the community members before submitting it in writing to the district to acknowledge before they can move on.⁵⁹²

⁵⁸⁸ Ibid., Respondent 12.

⁵⁸⁹ Respondent 11.

⁵⁹⁰ Respondent 13.

⁵⁹¹ Respondent 11.

⁵⁹² Respondent 12.

One respondent referred to the limited capabilities of SAO staff:

In the past several years, we have had a very big gap in understanding that affects the way staff at different levels are able to work effortlessly. The different experiences of staff, their educational backgrounds, and working techniques, inhibit good inter-relationships between the provincial and local levels.⁵⁹³

All local level respondents accepted the hierarchical nature of the relationship between provincial and local government. These relationships were very formal and contact was usually in the form of paper work, because everything had to be completed in an official way. This process not only inhibited the relationships between provincial and local governments but also delayed the work of SAOs. One respondent stated:

There are too many steps that SAOs have to deal with. This makes the working process very slow. Sometimes, the urgent issue that we propose takes too long and the problem is almost too late to be solved when the request is approved.⁵⁹⁴

Two respondents portrayed the hierarchical system as firmly entrenched and very difficult to change. One of the two respondents said: "The bureaucratic and national administrative system stays very close to the hierarchy."⁵⁹⁵ Another respondent stated that the government must consider revising the rules and regulations that are out of date, as well as those rules that cause the policy implementation process to slow down.⁵⁹⁶

The local level respondents reported no major problems in cooperation with provincial government. Individual disagreements did arise from time to time, and the interactions based on hierarchy were seen as annoying to staff at both levels. Even though staff know each other personally, and even though they informed each other of issues, they were required to operate through formally established channels and the necessary documentation. Where SAO plans had been worked through in cooperation with other organisations from different levels then approval came more quickly. Under the hierarchical system, staff generally worked within their areas of responsibility, but SAO staff were constrained by the need to get the right person within provincial government for advice.

⁵⁹³ Respondent 11.

⁵⁹⁴ Respondents 14 and 17.

⁵⁹⁵ Ibid., Respondent 17.

⁵⁹⁶ Respondent 16.

Again, local level respondents recommended ensuring SAOs were equipped to carry out their new roles. One respondent said: “If the government considers expanding SAO responsibilities to the SAOs that are genuinely ready for change, it will help make the decentralisation policy more successful”.⁵⁹⁷ He said:

The government should transfer the responsibilities only to SAOs that are ready for that. For those SAOs that are not quite ready, the government must allow them to enhance their capabilities first. Once they are ready, then the responsibilities can be transferred.⁵⁹⁸

Another respondent said: “The government is concerned too much with increasing the areas of responsibility for SAOs, but ignores that only a limited number of SAOs can actually work under decentralisation. If the government pays more attention to encouraging SAO staff, as well as to enhancing SAO staff capability, it will also strengthen greater cooperation between different levels, and assist the decentralisation policy as a whole”.⁵⁹⁹

Five of the seven local level respondents thought that the significant issue for consideration was the conflict between the community leaders and SAO staff. The difficulties between the community leaders (Kamnan and Phuyaibaan) and the SAOs they referred to involved a lack of cooperation as well as to the negative attitudes between them. To tackle this difficulty, SAO staff had attempted to encourage the community leaders to participate in SAO activities. One mentioned: “After the SAOs were established, the community leaders’ role in the local area decreased. This made several of the community leaders unhappy as they felt they had lost some of their power”.⁶⁰⁰ Two others mentioned that they sometimes faced some difficulty in working with those community leaders, and one indicated that on several occasions the community leaders had interfered with the SAOs’ policy implementation process. With the influence the community leaders have among the local people, they could create difficulties for SAO staff in performing their tasks. One stated: “On the one hand those community leaders had their powers but they had no money to work. On the other hand, the SAOs had the money, but we had no power to work. In addition, the SAOs could not

⁵⁹⁷ Respondent 14.

⁵⁹⁸ Ibid.

⁵⁹⁹ Respondent 17.

⁶⁰⁰ Respondent 12.

work very closely with the people. We always had to get them to inform us, or we had to ask the local people to participate in what we needed them to”.⁶⁰¹

Two of the local level respondents stated that personal conflicts between staff were also a major cause of poor inter-relationships among staff. One respondent stated: “No matter whether the personal conflicts occurred among staff at the same level or at different levels, it could later cause the policy process to go awry. With the lines of duty and the different areas of responsibility, sometimes they had to work together and this could cause them to avoid contacting or interacting with each other. Instead of working at 100 percent, they might only work for 50 percent which made the gap between them”.⁶⁰²

7.4.4 The perspectives of community leaders, SAO representatives and SAO staff

Many of the themes raised by respondents at the central, provincial and local level were reiterated in the interviews with community leaders, SAO representatives and SAO staff, although this group of respondents did tend to emphasise different reasons for the problems. Two community leaders, 13 SAO representatives and 20 SAO staff were interviewed.

All 20 SAO staff who were interviewed revealed that there were challenges in implementing the policy of decentralisation. One of these was the simple fact that the policy was new to the staff at the local level, especially those staff who had gained their position by being elected, as one respondent said:

Sometimes we really had a problem with the SAO Representatives who were unsure about their role and responsibility...They sometimes even change the policy content or process, which was not the thing to do.⁶⁰³

Other comments confirmed that this was a view that was shared. Another SAO staff member said: “It was very often that those representatives’ job assignments were not clear”.⁶⁰⁴ and another saw difficulties because “those

⁶⁰¹ Respondent 11.

⁶⁰² Respondent 13.

⁶⁰³ Respondent 25, Focus group. Rimkok Subdistrict Administrative Organisation. 26 June 2008.

⁶⁰⁴ Respondent 21, Focus group. Rimkok Subdistrict Administrative Organisation. 26 June 2008.

Executive staff had never worked in the government system before”.⁶⁰⁵ A part of the problem, according to these staff, was the lack of knowledge of what was permissible:

Because the people who live in the local area elected the SAO representatives, then those representative who held their position as the SAO representatives had to rely on the vote. As a result, they already made promises to do or provide goods and services so as to please them, but what they had promised was beyond the responsibility for the SAO to do.⁶⁰⁶

The SAO representatives saw things differently. Two of the SAO representatives stated that difficulties arose from the limited number of staff who could carry out the policy. As one said:

There were so many duties and responsibilities that were transferred to the SAO to oversee. In fact, we did not mean to complain about this, but with the capability that we had, we did not actually work very well.⁶⁰⁷

Another SAO executive stated: “The lack of SAO staff who could understand and carry out the policy inhibited the performance”.⁶⁰⁸

SAO staff reported difficulties in working cooperatively with community leaders because they tended to have different attitudes and points of view. One respondent said: “The community leaders always gave us a hard time when we had any project or plan to do in the area, because we always had different points of view”.⁶⁰⁹ One of these commented:

Because the community leaders worked within the community for a long time, this gave them some prestige and power over the community, which allowed them to be privileged. From this, when the SAO was established and had its responsibilities to the community, the community members did not actually give credit to the SAO but still relied on the former community leaders.⁶¹⁰

Another SAO staff member commented: “The people who live in the community did not actually give the SAO credit as they still adhered to the former

⁶⁰⁵ Respondent 22, Focus group. Rimkok Subdistrict Administrative Organisation. 26 June 2008.

⁶⁰⁶ Respondent 21.

⁶⁰⁷ Respondent 19, Focus group interview. Paa Or Don Chai Subdistrict Administrative Organisation. 16 June 2008.

⁶⁰⁸ Respondent 26, Focus group, Mae Chan Subdistrict Administrative Organisation. 10 July 2008.

⁶⁰⁹ Respondent 20, Focus group interview. Paa Or Don Chai Subdistrict Administrative Organisation. 16 June 2008.

⁶¹⁰ Respondent 21.

system that the community leader, such as Kamnan, was in charge of within the local area”.⁶¹¹ And another argued: “In fact, the SAO was new to those community members and they did not genuinely understand the role and responsibility of the organisation in serving the community”.⁶¹²

Community leaders also tended to blame SAO staff. One of the community leaders stated:

The problem that the government at lower levels were not well prepared for the decentralisation policy was because the staff at the higher level were not aware about this. As a result, the decentralisation policy was not carried out effectively because the staff who were to implement the policy had a limited capacity. That was why we ended up with the policy failure.⁶¹³

Community leaders therefore referred to the need for further training:

Because the government could not recruit the officials and staff who fully comprehended a certain job description, it was necessary the government provide its government officials to attend the training. This was not only to develop the officials and staff, but also so the government could make certain that all those officials and staff developed their capabilities to the same level or the same base.⁶¹⁴

The hierarchical nature of government administration was also seen as problematic by the community leaders, SAO representatives and staff. One SAO executive said: “We face difficulties in dealing with the numerous steps that we have to deal with before the task was actually finished”.⁶¹⁵ A community leader commented on this:

Sometimes, the assistance provided from the government to the SAOs or other organizations is delayed because there were so many steps to work through.⁶¹⁶

The SAO representatives also stated that there were problems associated with the hierarchical nature of government:

⁶¹¹ Respondent 20.

⁶¹² Respondents 40, Focus group interviews. Wiang Chiang Saen Subdistrict Administrative Organisation. 25 June 2008.

⁶¹³ Respondent 44, Focus group interviews. San Sai Gnam Subdistrict Administrative Organisation. 4 April 2008.

⁶¹⁴ Ibid.

⁶¹⁵ Respondent 26.

⁶¹⁶ Respondent 41, Focus group interviews. San Sai Gnam Subdistrict Administrative Organisation. 4 April 2008.

The SAO could not avoid problems caused by the hierarchical system of government with cooperation between provincial and local levels of government already fixed.⁶¹⁷

SAO representatives and staff commented that they were dependent on getting advice from other organisations, SAOs or from higher up the chain of government. One respondent said:

We always tried our best to interpret the policy correctly, but sometimes the context of the rules of procedure and law were very complicated. As we all know, a legal term can have a very wide meaning and sometimes we needed to know the scope and specific definition to make certain that we did not do anything wrong with it.⁶¹⁸

Respondents mentioned several processes used by the SAO in interpreting policy.

1. Referring to SAO guidelines, rules of procedure and regulations to make certain that what they interpret is in terms of the law.
2. Forwarding their interpretation of the policy to their supervisors to check whether it is correct and meets the policy requirements.
3. Checking their interpretation with staff from other organisations.
4. Asking other SAOs with more experience on the issue to check their understanding.
5. By referring to previous policy or policies with similar content and following what was done before.

One respondent said that,

Generally, the key people who could advise on the policy in detail could vary. For example, they were, first, the officials who work at a higher level; second, the officials who work at the local level; third, the staff who work in related organizations or with related policy; fourth, SAO supervisors or senior staff who can make the information available; and fifth, other SAO staff who can provide and explain the information to others who have the problems.⁶¹⁹

⁶¹⁷ Respondent 42, Focus group interviews. San Sai Gnam Subdistrict Administrative Organisation. 4 April 2008.

⁶¹⁸ Respondent 26.

⁶¹⁹ Respondent 20.

Another respondent noted,

We need the key person or organization that can provide us with advice because, frequently, we have to ask the staff who were not actually in charge of that task because we sometimes had no idea where or whom to ask.⁶²⁰

Another SAO staff member added that what was needed was:

A centre that could actually provide all of us with information. Of course, SAOs can use the working guidelines, regulations, and mandates they have as information references. But to check with the key people who really know about the policy would guarantee that what we understand was correct.⁶²¹

SAO staff did report that political interference was problematic:

The politicians always take part and interfere in the SAO's performance, which is very hard for us to ignore because as they have a lot of power to force us to things.⁶²²

7.5 Autonomy

Community leaders, SAO representatives and SAO staff were asked to describe their degree of autonomy. SAO staff participated in decision making and policy implementation by submitting to the three-year development plan, the five-year development plan and an annual revenue plan, also known as the one year plan. Community leaders noted, however, that the government ignored the SAOs in making decisions. One of these commented:

SAOs only received policy from the government to implement, except the development plans which the SAO prepare according to the national plan.⁶²³

The SAO staff reported that apart from the three year plan, the five-year development plan and the annual revenue plan, SAOs hardly participated in any decision making, and mainly followed the policy set and approved by central government.

⁶²⁰ Respondents 30 and 28, Focus group. Mae Chan Subdistrict Administrative Organisation. 10 July 2008.

⁶²¹ Respondent 22, Focus group. Rimkok Subdistrict Administrative Organisation. 26 June 2008.

⁶²² Anonymous respondent.

⁶²³ Respondent 41.

The policies to be implemented by SAOs, therefore, emerge partly from the development plans they had earlier proposed to the central government. SAOs are also required to implement other policies. SAOs usually know of policy to be implemented as they have already set the policy. They were responsible for providing goods and services, for example, for the local community infrastructure, public services and utilities, and public facilities.⁶²⁴ However, for the new policies assigned by central government, the SAOs have to interpret and implement those policies. In doing this, SAO staff follow the guidelines and laws. To make certain that they are following the right track, SAO staff check with government officials at higher levels.

The SAO representatives mentioned challenges arising from the decentralisation policy in terms of regulations and procedures. Three of these respondents explained:

The SAO staff always have difficulty in interpreting and carrying out policy because the policies sometimes overlap and are not consistent with other rules of procedure.⁶²⁵

In addition, because “the SAOs’ position was the lowest level of government organisation. When there was an overlap, we, as the SAO staff, could not actually continue our work but had to wait and contact the government or related organisations before moving on”.⁶²⁶

While the SAO Representatives mentioned bureaucratic system and unclear policies made difficulties for SAOs in implementing policy, fourteen stated that the SAO staff also had other factors which affected their performance.

- 1) The influence of politicians at the national level interfered with the SAOs’ policy implementation and created difficulties for SAO staff in completing their performance.⁶²⁷

⁶²⁴ See the Subdistrict Administrative Organisations’ functions in chapter 6.

⁶²⁵ Respondent 26.

⁶²⁶ Respondents 29 and 35, Focus group. Mae Chan Subdistrict Administrative Organisation. 10 July 2008.

⁶²⁷ Respondent 28, Focus group. Mae Chan Subdistrict Administrative Organisation. 10 July 2008.

- 2) There were few SAO staff who had the necessary experience and understood what was necessary to implement the policies and work within the organisation.⁶²⁸
- 3) SAO staff had limited experience and backgrounds in understanding and solving problems arising in the policy implementation process.⁶²⁹
- 4) The SAOs had limited autonomy compared to the responsibilities transferred to them by the government.⁶³⁰

7.6 Revenue

The issue of revenue was raised with SAO representatives and staff. SAO staff mentioned the imbalance between the responsibilities of the SAO and the limited revenue, giving rise to difficulties in carrying out their obligations. One said:

This problem appears when there are too many duties transferred to the SAOs to accomplish, but there is only limited revenue for undertaking all the duties.⁶³¹

This was seen by these SAO staff as being linked with the speed with which the policy was implemented: “Because the government launched the policy too soon, there was nothing well prepared”.⁶³²

SAO staff generally knew in advance the revenue they require to implement policies. SAOs have to work on the three-year development plan, the five-year development plan and the annual plan, before submitting proposals to the government. In preparing their proposals to the government, SAO staff generally start work on their plan by carrying out a survey, holding a public hearing, and collecting information based on public needs.

One respondent said: “We actually know what we have to do as we must submit the plan to the government for approval. Of course, the plans have to be within the scope set by the government”.⁶³³ Another respondent added: “After the

⁶²⁸ Respondent 24 .

⁶²⁹ Respondent 22.

⁶³⁰ Respondent 36, Focus group interviews. Wiang Chiang Saen Subdistrict Administrative Organisation. 25 June 2008.

⁶³¹ Respondent 22.

⁶³² Respondent 21.

⁶³³ Respondent 19.

development plan had been approved, we had to consider and distribute the revenue to make certain that all projects would be implemented. However, with the limited revenue, we could not do well as we wished but only as good as it could be”.⁶³⁴

According to SAO staff, after the SAO has finished preparing the plan, as well as the estimated expenditure needed for its implementation, the plan is submitted to the government. Later, once the government approves the proposal, the three-year plan will be announced and become effective. As mentioned by one respondent: “Normally the amount of revenue the government approved to the SAOs was less than the amount stated in the proposal”.⁶³⁵ Another commented: “With the limited revenue, the SAO is required to continue implementing the policy”.⁶³⁶

Ten SAO staff respondents argued that even though the SAO receives only limited revenue, the SAO plan is significant for the local people, and SAO staff can request assistance from the other local organisations, such as the Provincial Administrative Organisation. Therefore, the program can continue once it is approved.⁶³⁷

Community leaders recognised that the SAOs faced difficulty as a consequence of limited revenue. While one community leader said that the government provided too little revenue,⁶³⁸ the other argued that even though revenue from government was limited, it was SAO staff capabilities that were the real problem. He said:

If one SAO could complete their work without any problem, then it must be the problem with the staff themselves that is not able to manage their work within the limited amount of the revenue provided. So, we could not blame the government but had to look back to consider their abilities.⁶³⁹

⁶³⁴ Respondent 42.

⁶³⁵ Respondent 21.

⁶³⁶ Respondent 20.

⁶³⁷ Respondent 28.

⁶³⁸ Respondent 41.

⁶³⁹ Respondent 44.

The eighteen SAO staff agreed that revenue affected the success of their work. One said: “the problem was the revenue that we actually received was too little for what was needed for the projects we had to complete”.⁶⁴⁰

SAO representatives agreed that their organisations always faced the problem of insufficient revenue. With limited revenue, SAO staff could not carry out SAO obligations effectively. One executive said: “It was very difficult for us to manage and distribute the revenues to all the projects and policies we had to carry out”.⁶⁴¹

Another added that it was not possible to complete all policy with the limited revenue available. As he said: “what we usually did was we had to work on the most important or urgent projects and policy first”.⁶⁴² Later, if there was still some money left, then we could come back and consider the rest of the policies.⁶⁴³

When considering alternative approaches to solving the revenue problems, three of the seven representatives noted that SAOs could propose plans. Four of the seven representatives said they could find ways of earning more income.⁶⁴⁴ Two of these commented: the policy implementation was indeed inhibited because there was very limited revenue we received and we could not do anything much with this.⁶⁴⁵

Another added: “It was very difficult for us to always rely on other organisations for help”.⁶⁴⁶ Two other respondents added:

According to the law, we could earn more income besides the revenue, however, it was very difficult for us to earn much because we faced several factors. The amount of income the SAO could earn depends on the size of the population, the type of property the SAO owned, the amount of infrastructure facilities and services, and the sources of donation in each local area. From this, several SAOs would earn different amounts of money.⁶⁴⁷

⁶⁴⁰ Respondent 23, Focus group. Rimkok Subdistrict Administrative Organisation. 26 June 2008

⁶⁴¹ Respondent 26.

⁶⁴² Respondent 19.

⁶⁴³ Respondent 42.

⁶⁴⁴ See the SAO's revenue and income in chapter 6 for more information.

⁶⁴⁵ Respondent 26.

⁶⁴⁶ Respondent 19.

⁶⁴⁷ Respondent 32, Focus group. Mae Chan Subdistrict Administrative Organisation. 10 July 2008.

The SAO staff commented on several key issues.⁶⁴⁸ One noted: “For us, the problem regarding sources of extra income did not cause as many problems as the capability to collect the income effectively. Those staff who worked on this did not comprehend what was involved. With a lack of experience, there was a possibility that they could make a mistake”.⁶⁴⁹

7.7 Conclusion

In summary, the comments made by those interviewed pointed to a variety of issues that help explain problems in the implementation of the programme of government decentralisation. These included:

1. SAO staff not having an educational background which is relevant, with the consequence that they had difficulty in interpreting the policies correctly;
2. Few SAO staff having the experience and understanding, especially in technical aspects of a policy, some of them with insufficient academic backgrounds for working on decentralisation;⁶⁵⁰
3. The limited time for staff to adjust and gain the necessary experience to work effectively;⁶⁵¹
4. The discontinuous nature of many policies initiated by central government, with changes made by government from time to time to the policies’ aspects, context, and aims;⁶⁵²
5. The lack of clarity in the policies set by central government, and policies that are too complicated to be interpreted correctly;
6. The limitation of autonomy provided from the central government that allows the SAO staff to participate in decision making and policy implementation;
7. The imbalance between the SAO’ responsibilities and limitation of revenue that the SAO gain.

⁶⁴⁸ Respondent 25.

⁶⁴⁹ Respondent 21.

⁶⁵⁰ Respondent 8.

⁶⁵¹ Respondent 7.

⁶⁵² Respondent 9.

With several problems as mentioned above, even though the SAO staff try their best to achieve the government's policy implementation process, the outcome comes out at different degrees of success.

The next chapter will present an analysis of the government's decentralisation policy, how the decentralisation policy works, the difficulties of the policy's implementation, what causes the decentralisation policy implementation to be a failure or a success, and how the government must fix the problems as necessary.

Chapter VIII

Analysis of decentralisation at the Subdistrict Administrative Organisation

8.1 Introduction

The decentralisation policy is a part of the National Economic and Social Development plan⁶⁵³ to develop Thailand's society, economy and bureaucracy over the long term. For Thailand to succeed with its decentralised national administration, the government has to pay careful attention not only to the national policies launched from time to time, but also to make certain that the different levels of government can carry out the policies through to the end. With well-organised implementation, the policy outcomes are likely to be of considerable benefit to the country as a whole.

The decentralisation policy is one of the most significant policies for the Thai government in recent times and with the policy fully implemented the country can develop more quickly as people in the local areas participate more fully in politics. The decentralisation of national administration to the local level will result in more appropriate policies locally, these being delivered more quickly. An effective local government will greatly assist the national administration solve the problems at the local level.

Even though decentralisation is a part of the national plan, central government has an important role to play in putting the decentralisation policy into practice. The previous chapter has shown that central government needs to be more concerned with matters of staffing at local levels. This chapter brings together the information derived from the interviews with staff at three government levels, central, provincial, and local government levels, as well as insights from key official documents, and scholarly books and articles.

8.2 Thailand's decentralisation policies

The policies of decentralisation and popular participation were introduced in the Fifth National Development Plan (1981-1986). The next several plans

⁶⁵³ See more in Chapter 6.

extended the notion of decentralisation and participation.⁶⁵⁴ It is timely to consider a number of questions about whether the decentralisation policy in Thailand has been successful. From the interview data in chapter 7, it is apparent that those in key positions consider decentralisation to have been inhibited, this being due to different problems at both the local and central levels of government.

In his discussion of decentralisation, Charoenmuang sees problems occurring as a consequence of the neglect of local government by political elites and a failure to promote the development of local governance.⁶⁵⁵ Charoenmuang explained the problems which weaken Thailand's policy for local administration in terms of political, economic and social conditions.

1. Thailand's national administration is accustomed to centralisation and has ignored government at the local level. In failing to promote self-rule local people have only limited opportunities for local administration, with the result that staff at the local level have less opportunity to carry out their work under a decentralised government structure.
2. Thailand's bureaucracy had developed as part of the economic system in terms of the Sakdina system⁶⁵⁶ under which local government was carried out by government officials.⁶⁵⁷ This meant that staff at the local level have lacked the understanding and experience of local self government and have therefore been less able to implement a policy of decentralisation.⁶⁵⁸

⁶⁵⁴ Bruce Missingham, 'A Study of Two Villages Schools in the Northeast', in *Political Change in Thailand democracy and participation*, ed. by Kevin Hewison (Great Britain: Routledge, 1997), pp.149-162 (p.150).

⁶⁵⁵ Thanet Charoenmuang, *100 years of Thai Local Government 1887-1997* (Bangkok: Kobfai Publisher, 1997), pp. 208-209.

⁶⁵⁶ See more in Likhit Dhiravegin, *Demi Democracy: The Evolution of the Thai Political System* (Singapore : Time Academic Press, 1992), pp. 26-30.

⁶⁵⁷ Charoenmuang, pp. 208-209.

⁶⁵⁸ Charoenmuang explained that the Thai bureaucracy is formed as part of the economic system, regarding the Sakdina system. When the economic system was developed and expanded to the local community, so did the bureaucracy. However, with the national administrative approach being initiated by the central government, the number of the policies and staff at provincial and local levels as delegated by the central level was a much larger number. Even though decentralisation was later promoted, the number of staff working under the autonomous organisation at the local level remained very small compared to those staff appointed from the central level to work at provincial and local levels.

3. The impact of WWII and the subsequent ideological tensions regarding communism and liberalism⁶⁵⁹ in Indochina influenced Thailand's political system. It was liberalism which later came to have an influence in Thailand as liberal countries attempted to persuade and support the Thai government to strengthen its national administration. This was important to the way Thailand went on to focus on ensuring that government was well founded and vigorous, and secure from communism.⁶⁶⁰

In his discussion, Dhiravegin notes that although local administration is significant because it involves the majority of the people in provincial and rural areas, in recent years the Thai central government has in fact ignored government at the local level, despite the National Plan, by paying more attention to the national administration. The obstacle inhibiting the operation of the decentralisation policy has been central government's delegated administration in the provincial administration.⁶⁶¹ Power and authority continue to be held by provincial staff who are directly appointed by the central government.⁶⁶² As stated by Patpui:

[...] the pressure from the majority of the people became minimized and less people took part in the local administration governments' tasks in developing capacities needed for the smooth transfer of the authorities from the central administration agencies. Besides, some key middle-class figures, for lack of information flows, held and still maintained a negative attitude towards some of the local administration governments.

The development of the needed capacities of the local administration units was slow and did not keep pace with the modern changes. Two reasons for this were that the central administration units did not care enough for the requirements and the existing body of the knowledge possessed by the present bureaucracy was

⁶⁵⁹ As mentioned by Charoenmuang, instead of promoting a decentralisation programme within Thailand, like other Southeast Asian countries such as Japan and the Philippines, Thailand was only persuaded to pay attention to central government where the bureaucratic administration was the most important. This happened because of Thailand's physical location in the centre of South East Asia. Hence, it made Thailand a gateway between two different ideologies, whereas Japan and the Philippines are islands. To expand communism to those two islands would be more difficult than to Thailand. Since Thailand's location was close to countries that were communist, the only way the liberal countries had to make certain that Thailand did not become communist was to promote centralisation.

⁶⁶⁰ Charoenmuang, p. 209.

⁶⁶¹ Likhit Dhiravegin, *Democracy and Thailand's Political Revolution* (Bangkok: Chaopraya Rabop Kranpim MAC, 2003), p. 97.

⁶⁶² Trakoon Meechai, *Decentralisation* (Bangkok: Sukom and Son Limited, 1995), p. 93.

insufficient to create a new form of images for the local administration governments.⁶⁶³

As Patpui notes, for the decentralisation policy to be effective, government has to fulfil several conditions: the transfer of operations, which is one of the most significant conditions, ensuring adequate revenue, the policy implementation process itself and removing the obstacles inhibiting the decentralisation process.

There are two different aspects which need to be considered with the transfer of operations: 1) how well the government organises the plan, and 2) the operational capacity of the government at the local level after the plan is launched.

According to Patpui, even though central government has planned for the transfer of operations, it has not planned for the enforcement of this. Central government has continued to face difficulties in transferring national operations to the local level.⁶⁶⁴ Dhiravegin notes that, instead of paying attention to the government at every level before launching the decentralisation policy, central government has tended to be distracted by questions about the constitution, political parties, elections and government itself.⁶⁶⁵

It was not until 1995 that the SAOs were finally established. With little experience of government at the local level, preparing local staff for decentralisation was always going to be difficult. With only a limited number of people in local administration, these having only limited capacities, a lack of information and negative attitudes of staff at central and provincial levels towards some of the staff at local governments,⁶⁶⁶ there have been many problems in implementing the decentralisation policy.

The slow transfer of power from the central level is another problem affecting public participation at the local level. To work effectively, the decentralisation policy needs to have many people participating in government at the local level. There needs to be an adequate transfer of personnel and there

⁶⁶³ Sompong Patpui, *Decentralisation and Local Governance in Thailand* (Grassroots Development Institute, LIFE-UNDP Thailand), [n.d.], < <http://www.thailocal.net/gdi-english/2-decentralisation-local-governance-24aug2002.htm> > [accessed 9 November 2008].

⁶⁶⁴ Ibid.

⁶⁶⁵ Dhiravegin, p. 97.

⁶⁶⁶ Patpui, *Decentralisation and Local Governance in Thailand*.

needs to be clear job descriptions for the decentralisation policy to work.⁶⁶⁷ Patpui considers the development of the capacity of local administration units to respond to the new demands to be very limited, and identifies two reasons for this lack of development. These were:

1. The central administration units did not care enough about the requirements of decentralisation for local government.
2. The existing knowledge of the present bureaucracy was not adequate to create new forms for local government.⁶⁶⁸

Suwanno has analysed the structures that have restrained government's decentralisation policy, focusing on the issues of resource management. For the decentralisation policy to be successful, government must deliberately amend the old paradigm of seeing central government control as the most important issue, to one of generating a new scheme of decentralisation. With this, a local community can genuinely play an important role in the national administration through, for example, voting and participating in the decision-making process at the local level.⁶⁶⁹ Suwanno identifies three main obstacles to the decentralisation process.

1. Central government has always played an important role. National authority was conceived at the national level as a state. Central government was the provider, with local communities and people the recipients.
2. Decentralisation was classified as a state authority structure, which was automatically linked to politics rather than paying attention to people and social and economic factors within local communities.
3. There was no distinction in terms of social and economic conditions between urban and rural communities, yet urban and rural communities have different social and economic structures.⁶⁷⁰

⁶⁶⁷ Ibid.

⁶⁶⁸ Ibid.

⁶⁶⁹ Bawornsak Suwanno, cited in Meechai, pp. 24-26.

⁶⁷⁰ Ibid., pp. 24-26.

To Suwanno, any attempt to implement decentralisation under the old paradigm would not be change for the better. Government must seek new paths for staff under the decentralisation policy, and find solutions to problems quickly. A programme which is appropriate and suits local conditions will enable the improvements to take place, and the local community and organisation will become more important as basic knowledge of decentralisation is generated and local participation promoted.⁶⁷¹ Central government and staff have to accept the local as a part of the decentralisation plan and government has to recognise and give credit to local communities as an important institution.⁶⁷² Staff who work at central and provincial governments have to be concerned with and accept local government and local communities as the way they are, not as state and community.⁶⁷³ Decentralisation cannot take place at the local level when the government at central and provincial levels continues to intervene in local government operations.⁶⁷⁴

These observations allude to the point made by Brooke that although the government is the most all-embracing of organisations, it also shares with other organisations the difficulty of identifying a suitable locus of decentralisation.⁶⁷⁵ In addition, because the administrative structure at the rural level has been adopted from Western models,⁶⁷⁶ the same structure for use at the local level cannot be used. Different environments of local government require different systems. The result may not be a good quality outcome. For this reason, central government should ensure that the structures of central government administration and management are different from those in force at the local level.⁶⁷⁷ Central government can encourage what is required of local government before decentralisation is launched to prevent failure.

⁶⁷¹ Respondent 11, In-depth interview. Rimkok Subdistrict Administrative Organisation 18 June 2008.

⁶⁷² Bawornsak Suwanno, cited in Trakoon Meechai, *Decentralisation* (Bangkok: Sukom and Son limited, 1995), pp. 24-26.

⁶⁷³ *Ibid.*, pp. 24-26.

⁶⁷⁴ Respondent 14, In-depth interview. San Sai Gnam Subdistrict Administrative Organisation 4 April 2008.

⁶⁷⁵ Michael Z. Brooke, *Centralization and Autonomy: A study in Organization Behaviour* (New York: Praeger Publishers, 1984), p. 148.

⁶⁷⁶ Bawornsak Suwanno cited in Trakoon Meechai, pp. 24-26.

⁶⁷⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 26.

8.3 Analysis of decentralisation at the Subdistrict Administrative Organisation

In analysing Thailand's decentralisation programme, it is important therefore to understand the characteristics of the national administration. As noted in chapter 7, staff who work at the local level understand decentralisation differently from staff who work at central and provincial levels. Staff at each level have different qualifications and work in quite different environments.

Sorensen states that the administrative characteristics at both the national and local levels are important for understanding the operation of multilevel government. He identifies a number of administrative characteristics that inhibit government effectiveness:

At a national level, institutional and administrative structures are weak and ineffective. They are controlled by state elites who do not primarily seek to provide public or collective good. The state apparatus is rather a source of income for those clever enough to control it. The spoils of office are shared by a group of followers making up a network of patron-client relationships.

At the local level, some groups attempt to get access to state resources and international aid. They do this by securing a place on the lower rungs of the state elite's patron-client network, but the great majority of the population attempts to cut itself loose from any state influence whatsoever. People know very well that the state is a source of pillage, threat and exploitation. It is by no means a provider of welfare, security and order. Instead, ethnic communities attempt to build their own self-help systems in order to compensate for the absence of state services.⁶⁷⁸

In the case of Thailand, the central government has historically played an important role and controlled almost every issue, with government at other levels dependent on the central level. Factors inhibiting decentralisation include, at the national level, the legal provisions and organisational structures for decentralisation have to be enacted by central government, indicating a top-down approach. This approach seems to be the only way of functioning that central government can recognise. Vorratchaiphan and Villeneuve point out that, in fact, there have been a number of efforts to recentralise power and they cite the example of the office of the CEO-governor (provincial governor). This could be viewed as an attempt to re-establish a strong central presence in territorial administration over local government administration and control over access to resources and decision-making. (Recognising the fundamental role of the centre

⁶⁷⁸ W. Kymlicka, cited in George Sorensen, *The Transformation of the State: Beyond the Myth of Retreat* (Great Britain: Palgrave Macmillan, 2004), p. 79.

does not detract from the recognition that the forces of decentralisation are also being driven from the localities themselves either directly or through their representative agencies such as the municipal league that has recently taken steps to be more independent to assume some of the tasks and responsibilities previously under central government control).⁶⁷⁹

According to Vorratnchaiphan and Villeneuve, instead of recentralisation of power to the governors, power must be directly transferred to the local level. The staff who work at the local level must be from the local level, not delegated from central government. If this is not the case and if central government re-establishes a strong central territorial administration over the local government, decentralisation at the local level will be an implicit centralisation controlled by government at the provincial level resulting in reduced local powers.

As noted in chapter 7, SAO staff and staff at different government levels referred to problems arising from the fact that many aspects of the decentralisation policy were not clear. Nagel outlines the stages in policy formation and implementation and outlines how they are always related to one another and refers to how and why statutes are adopted in different branches of government, such as legislatures, precedent in courts, and administrative decisions among government executives and administrators. As each government agency knows the specific area of each policy adoption method, they raise their awareness of how to implement those policy adoption procedures effectively,⁶⁸⁰ making it easier for staff to carry out the policy.

Successful policy implementation means ensuring the whole policy implementation process is carried out to the end. Once a policy is initiated, the government continues to the next step, until it is fully implemented. The implementation process can affect the results, particularly where there are different behaviours representing different degrees of commitment and coordination.⁶⁸¹ In addition, since a well-designed policy is not simple, it is important that the government and policy makers pay attention to the whole

⁶⁷⁹ Chamniern P. Vorratnchaiphan and David P Villeneuve, *Thailand's Capacity Building for Strategy Management in Local Government Administration: A New Model for Natural Resource and Environmental Management* (The Thailand Environment Institute), [n.d], <www.tei.or.th/gap/pdf/Capacity%20Building%20for%20SM_alexandria.pdf> [accessed 31 March 2006].

⁶⁸⁰ Stuart S. Nagel, *The Policy Studies Handbook* (Massachusetts: D.C. Heath and Company, 1980), pp. 31-32.

⁶⁸¹ B Guy Peters and Jon Pierce, *Handbook of Public Administration* (London: Sage, 2003), pp. 207 - 209.

policy process. Every decision on the policy's implementation is important and the policy making process has to be well set from the beginning.⁶⁸²

The interviews showed that staff were concerned that the policy initiated from the central government should be interpreted consistently, from the time the policy was launched to its implementation at the local level. If staff interpret, understand and deliver the same policy using different approaches, the goal is unlikely to be achieved. The outcome can be a waste of time and resources and can actually damage the country's development.

Even though the staff at the provincial level have less opportunity to affect the staff at the local level, compared with those at the national level, the hierarchical, bureaucratic system is a key cause of problems in implementing the decentralisation policy. Under delegation from central government, provincial government is in charge of the performance of SAOs as they carry out their obligations. Development plans and local registrations are overseen by district officers and by the governor. The decentralisation policy, therefore, does not give the SAOs the necessary autonomy because all issues involving the budget have to be approved at the provincial level.

8.4 Problems with the decentralisation programme

Establishing SAOs was not simply a matter of passing a law. Many problems have been identified, especially by those who used to have control and hold power, and who are now sceptical of the policy.⁶⁸³ Most people in Thailand have heard of decentralisation over the decades, but the depth of understanding among the Thai people is limited. Several circumstances now threaten the decentralisation programme, as revealed in the interviews in six SAOs in Chiang Rai province. Generally, the problems are based on the readiness of local organisations for decentralisation. Some eight different problem areas were identified:

⁶⁸² Respondent 43, Focus group interview. Sri Don Moon Subdistrict Administrative Organisation 24 January 2007.

⁶⁸³ Orapin Sopchokchai, *Good Local Governance and Anti-corruption Through People's Participation: A Case of Thailand* (World Bank), updated 2001, <http://www.worldbank.org/wbi/governance/pdf/orapin_paper.pdf> [accessed 22 July 2006].

1. There is a lack of understanding in decentralisation;
2. There are conflicts among different organisations and staff at the local level, and in the input and output from the traditional forms of local leadership, and the SAOs;
3. There are different policy interpretations among staff at different government levels, especially between provincial and local levels;
4. Problems arising from the influences of the hierarchical system and the bureaucracy in the national administration over government at the local level;
5. There is an overlap or lack of clarity concerning the constitutional responsibilities of provincial and local governments;
6. Local government has difficulty gaining even limited autonomy;
7. Local government struggles with the limited and unstable flow of revenue;
8. The administrative rules and regulations issued by central government are sophisticated for staff at the local level to understand.

8.4.1 Lack of understanding in decentralisation

One of the most basic problems regarding the decentralisation policy has been the readiness of staff at all government levels to put the policy into practice and to operate within it. The central government's persistent focus on its own role, and comparative lack of attention to supporting the development of local level government has resulted in an incongruence of power and authority among the different levels of government. Supremacy continues to be exercised by government at the central level.

The interview data revealed disagreements among respondents regarding whether Thailand's national administration was sufficiently prepared before government launched decentralisation. They showed that basic preparation necessary to support decentralisation was insufficient and that government should do further work.

As already noted, there are different understandings of decentralisation at each of the levels of government. One outcome has been that the process of transferring power was not genuinely put into practice. Staff hear about decentralisation from the government, but they are not generally well informed about decentralisation. They will hear that with the implementation of

decentralisation local communities will develop in a sustained way by allowing the local level to work on and solve local problems more quickly and with better results than central government can expect to do. Only a small number of staff, especially at the local level where the problems occur and affect the outcomes the most, know what decentralisation really is.

Puang-ngam notes that the weakness of a community and the local organisations are a result of government's monopoly on power as well as a consequence of the attention paid to centralisation.⁶⁸⁴ With central government providing the resources and subsidising local government in almost everything and, as a result, local government always gets used to being served and supported by central government all the time. At the local government level, it is noticeable that the staff cannot exercise the powers which were to have been transferred to them.⁶⁸⁵ They continue to be dependent on what the central government requires. Yet even when central government does empower the local level with some real autonomy, staff are not necessarily trained and experienced in exercising such power. Staff do their best and they are able to achieve a degree of success in carrying out the policy. Power actually needs to be transferred to government at the local level. As long as central government continues to hold onto its power, SAOs are inhibited in what they can do.

A lack of understanding about decentralisation is seen also in the difficulty staff at central and local levels face in determining functions, scope of responsibilities, and obligations at the local level. In relation to Thailand's bureaucratic system, the local government has less opportunity to play an important role within the national administration unless it is assigned to do so. Without central government's determination, government at the local level can do little, other than respond to what central government determines. Local government faces confusion over the role it has to play.

8.4.2 Inter-relationships between organisations

Positive human interactions between staff at all levels will enhance implementation of the policy. Positive interactions and good communication, particularly between staff at central and local government levels, will do much to

⁶⁸⁴ Kovit Phong-ngam, *Thailand's Local Governance: Principles and a New Dimension in the Future* (Bangkok: Winyuchon Publication House, 2000), p. 242.

⁶⁸⁵ Respondent 9, In-depth interview. Ministry of Interior 2 June 2008.

enhance implementation of the decentralisation policy as well as achieving the purposes of the policy. Some SAO staff referred to their inter-relationships with other levels of government as acceptable, but not as good as they should be. Inter-relationships among staff are seen as being formal rather than collegial. Furthermore, in a hierarchical system, seniority is an issue that can undermine effective working relationships. In the Thai tradition, awareness of seniority is very strong. To be polite to people is not sufficient. People have to pay respect to others and the more senior people someone knows then the more they have to be polite and pay respect. This can weaken the links in the implementation chain with resistance from staff at central and provincial levels to the aspirations for autonomy from staff at the local level. The central level has the most formal authority and responsibilities compared to the two lower levels, and with this major difference it is noticeable that the existence of good relationships depends on staff attitudes.

Staff attitudes can be shaped by their areas of responsibility. For example, even though the position of staff at the central level can be at the same level as those at the local level, their responsibilities set out in their job descriptions and sphere of duty are different. Staff at the national level are responsible for the whole country or for an area that is larger than that covered by local government staff. Staff at the central level therefore have more authority and power than those at lower levels. Those at the higher level, therefore, tend to see their positions as more important than those at the local level. Relations between the different levels are more likely to be in terms of superior and subordinate, creating a strong hierarchy of duty.

Negative attitudes leading conflicts between different organisations and staff at the local level, particularly between traditional local leadership and SAOs, is another aspect of the problem. As mentioned above, community leaders, who were formerly officials appointed by the Ministry of the Interior through a provincial Governor, were reported as from time to time causing problems for SAOs. These community leaders reportedly saw SAO staff as having limited capacity to develop policies and believed they could do this work more appropriately.

With the establishment of the SAOs, the Constitution was amended to include the provision that the responsibilities of the community leaders were transferred to the SAO. While the Kamnan and Phuyaibaan are no longer in

charge and responsible for the community's affairs, they continued to work as staff in local government and from time to time with SAO staff. After their duties were transferred, three areas of significant difference between the traditional community leaders and the newly established SAOs became apparent.

First, there are the differences in educational backgrounds. In their work on policy implementation, the SAO executives (SAO representatives) and SAO administrators (SAO appointed administrators) had different views. The positions of the SAOs executives depended on the votes they received and their priority was working to maintain their vote. For their part, SAO administrators achieve their permanent positions after passing the recruitment process, which included an examination initiated by the department of local administration. As permanent staff they did not have to seek votes from the local people.

Second, there is a reluctance to share power between the executives and the administrators. The community leaders had not accepted that their roles, responsibilities and power had been reformed with the law change in 1999 in such a way that they no longer had the power they enjoyed earlier. Under the new arrangements, SAOs have more power compared with the community leaders. This has left the community leaders irritated and they felt less important and that, somehow, they had lost face. These tensions affected their working relationships.

Third, the community leaders still had some power and people living in the area continued to pay respect to them and show rather less attention to the new concept of decentralisation. Part of this was due to the importance of seniority in Thai culture, particularly the respect younger people must pay to elders or superiors. Community leaders are perceived as seniors in a community and community members respect their leaders. According to the interviews, senior people in the community are respected and are able to play important roles in the decentralisation policy, leading also to concern that they can work against the implementation policy.⁶⁸⁶ Where SAO staff were new and inexperienced, there was an opportunity for these people to influence the implementation of the decentralisation process or even inhibit the work of the SAO. The interviews did suggest, however, that the tensions between the community leaders and SAO administrators had decreased since the SAOs were first introduced and established.

⁶⁸⁶ Respondent 6, In-depth interview. Ministry of Interior 28 June 2008.

According to Sopchokchai, “[F]ormer community leaders (Kannan and Village Headmen), who were appointed as members of the Tambon Executive Committee before the law was changed in 1999, always played a major role in planning and allocating TAO budgets for development activities. Elected TAO members who are new and inexperienced do not usually have much information and cannot actively participate in this process. As a result, limited resources are allocated for constructing projects” .⁶⁸⁷

In Thailand, seniority has long been part of social activity and, unlike other Asian societies, seniority has long been a major part of Thailand’s tradition and culture. Seniority has been a major factor in the national administration as well. On seniority, Dhiravegin has noted:

Today, the existence of a legal state where the rule of law serves as the pillar of a society and of the modus operandi in an organization, to blindly follow a poo-yai⁶⁸⁸ just because of his or her superior status could land one in troubles. Of more importance, such a value also destroyed confidence and propriety. It also bode ill for a sound judgment on the part of the people in a society.⁶⁸⁹

Paying respect to senior citizens is taught and learned at a young age by all Thai citizens.⁶⁹⁰ Anyone, no matter how advanced their age, who is seen to be behaving in an immature manner, would be submissive and polite once in front of senior people. In general, the issue of right and wrong is not decided on principle but on the opinion of a senior person. Dhiravegin writes:

In a society where principles are criteria for conduct, it may be easier to give a flat no to whatever that is not right. If whatever order given, be it from a poo-yai or anyone, which goes against the right principle, it is to be considered wrong and shall be discarded. Principle is thus the key word here. In a society where principles are loose and where situational ethics serve as the rule, respect for seniority shall feature and hence right and wrong will be confused and twisted. Indeed, it is believed that following the foot-steps of the senior will spare one from being bitten by a dog. That might be true in an age when the rule of law was not a sacrosanct tenet. Today, the existence of a legal state where the rule of law

⁶⁸⁷ Sopchokchai, p. 5.

⁶⁸⁸ Dhiravegin states that the term poo-yai literally refers to the senior person or someone who is well respected due to age, position, social status and some other attributes. A poo-yai is respected for his or her superior status. He or she will be shown deference by those who are of lower status. His or her statement will usually be given due consideration. Poo-yai is opposite to Poo-noi or a junior person.

⁶⁸⁹ Likhit Dhiravegin, *The Poo-Yai-ism or the Seniority System*, updated 28 May 2007, <http://www.dhiravegin.com/detail.php?item_id=000459> [accessed 8 October 2008].

⁶⁹⁰ Atefeh Sadri McCampbell et al., ‘Seniority-based Promotion in Thailand: It’s Time to Change’. *Career Development International*. Vol 4 (1999) pp. 318-320, in Emeraldinsight, <<http://www.ezproxy.waikato.ac.nz/Insight/viewPDF.jsp?Filename=html/Output/Publishing/EmeraldFullTextArticle/Pdf/1370040603.pdf>> [accessed 20 November 2010].

serves as the pillar of a society and of the modus operandi in an organization, to blindly follow a poo-yai just because of his or her superior status could land one in troubles.⁶⁹¹

The issue of seniority in Thailand does have an influence on the bureaucracy. Seniors are not only older, but they also have more experience and so play an important role in the bureaucracy, particularly in encouraging and supporting the juniors. However, seniors can lag behind the local community in terms of culture, knowledge, information, and values. Who would be the people to respond in these consequences, and what would follow? An important question is that if seniors exercise a lot of control in a society, how would this affect the national bureaucracy? Dhiravegin notes:

This is especially true of the state bureaucracy. Such a situation could lead to damages. Indeed, the high-handed politicians who wrecked the society by their high-handed behaviors and corruption practices were allowed to proceed with no single voice of objection simply because of this poo-yai and poo-noi value and the pattern of behaviors derived there from.[...] Many a time, mistakes were made because no one had the guts to stand up and argue against a wrong decision out of respect for the poo-yai. But of more importance are the absence of principles, leading to a lack of confidence and ultimately leadership.⁶⁹²

The issue of seniority has caused concern at the local level in the past, but it was not obvious or serious. There was confidence that the staff and the people that power and authority would be transferred from the traditional local leaders to the newly established SAOs. In his study of promotion based on seniority in Thailand, McCampbell confirms the importance of seniority and shows that the majority of Thai companies use the seniority-based promotion structure.⁶⁹³ McCampbell shows this also happens at the national level where the bureaucracy is based on senior staff who also work in high level positions,⁶⁹⁴ and that the way Thai people respond to seniority adversely affects the organisation's efficiency.⁶⁹⁵ As Dhiravegin observes:

Everyone is looking up to the nod of a poo-yai rather than following the dictum of the correct principles. The society is thus full of people who lack confidence, unsure of what they said and did, turning many of them to appear temporary. Such

⁶⁹¹ Dhiravegin, 'The poo-yai-ism or the seniority system', p.1.

⁶⁹² Ibid.

⁶⁹³ McCampbell, pp. 318-320.

⁶⁹⁴ Respondent 17, In-depth interview. San Sai Gnam Subdistrict Administrative Organisation 4 April 2008.

⁶⁹⁵ McCampbell, pp. 318-320.

an environment will not be supportive of fighting for principle, let alone producing mature individuals with great leadership.⁶⁹⁶

However, the problem seems no longer to happen regularly. It is important that local people are all encouraged to participate because once they understand decentralisation, they can assist the organisations at the local level, especially the SAOs, to work efficiently. There are two matters, which both SAO staff and the people who influence SAO policy within the local area must keep in mind. First, the senior people and politicians need to cooperate with the SAOs and give opinions to SAO staff that support the role of the SAO staff and are reasonable. An overreaction can discredit the work of SAO staff in the way the local people respect the work of the SAOs in the long run.

Second, SAO staff said there had been many times when they followed the suggestions of senior community members to ensure that their actions would be supported by the rest of the community members. This reveals some weakness in the SAO when staff feel dependent and unable to work on their own. It is good to ask for an opinion but SAOs must not allow themselves to be unduly influenced by such opinions. SAOs face the specific circumstances in their local situation and they have to solve the problems which arise, whatever the case may be, because their responsibility is to carry out the policy initiated by the government and to follow it through.

In interviews, several of the community leaders indicated they did not agree with the approach to work of the SAOs. While some community leaders thought that the SAOs could perform their work better if they gained more capacity and experience, others mentioned that several SAO staff did not fully understand what they were supposed to do in their positions and how much they need to respond to their duties. Some community leaders even stated that SAO staff cannot complete their work because they do not understand fully what they have to do.

Some SAO staff did not work to carry out their tasks as intended preferring, instead, to follow the directions of their supervisors at a higher level. This can happen at anytime once the staff who work at a higher level make some comment or recommendation related to the work. If the staff at the higher level give them the right advice, problems can be resolved. However, the bottom line is

⁶⁹⁶ Dhiravegin, 'The Poo-yai-ism or the Seniority System'.

if they make the wrong suggestions and give the wrong instructions then the outcome can be seriously affected and the policy initiated by government placed at risk.

8.4.3 Different Interpretations

In any process of policy implementation, difficulties and problems occur and can be important in determining the outcome of the policy. One area of difficulty arises where there are either staff at different levels having different understandings of the national policies, or through the conflicts and misunderstandings among staff. As mentioned above, while staff at both central and provincial levels share a common understanding of decentralisation, staff at the local level may understand decentralisation differently. For example, staff at central and provincial levels understand that power is devolved to the local level under decentralisation, but it does not mean that the SAOs gain autonomy. Only limited power, authority and autonomy are provided to SAOs, sufficient for them to be able to carry out a policy effectively. Many SAO staff do not understand this in the same way, with several of them believing that the power and autonomy granted by government are insufficient for them to carry out their responsibilities. These different understandings leave SAO staff confused about their roles and responsibilities. This may not affect the outcome of policy implementation as a whole, but it may mean that the local people do not get what they are supposed to get.

Problems over interpreting national policies are of more concern to staff at the local level rather than at the central and provincial levels. Staff at the local level are drawn from different groups of people, including local politicians who are elected as well as appointed staff. Some of these local staff lack a full understanding of government affairs, and of the processes, regulations and rules, and so do not interpret the national policies in the same way as staff at central and provincial levels.

Another issue causing difficulty for staff, especially at the local level, arises where the policy is unclear. There are two issues in this. First, SAO staff report that they find they have difficulty in interpreting policy in accordance with the range of the mandates, directives, acts, regulations and procedures they have to work with. Respondents 34-36 reported the policies are always related to the legal statements. Even though SAO staff realise that the policies are difficult

to interpret, they are concerned about understanding the importance of the policies and to do their best in interpreting the policies.⁶⁹⁷ However, because SAO staff are unsure whether the policies they are dealing with are on the right track,⁶⁹⁸ they sometimes have to use their individual experiences and background to assist them with the policy.⁶⁹⁹

Second, SAO staff faced problems when the policy content was complicated. They reported that there are several times when the policy implementation was inhibited⁷⁰⁰ because they had to work through the whole policy and interpret it carefully. This happened when there was a brand new policy to interpret and there was no information available to refer to.⁷⁰¹ Several SAO staff reported problems in interpreting a new national policy framework before they could work on a development plan. Under the old policy, SAO staff had experience in interpreting the same or a similar policy. Where a policy can be referred back to previous work they have done then SAO staff can work more rapidly in interpreting a new policy. However, when a policy is quite new then SAO staff were unsure whether they were on the right track.

It is challenging for SAO staff to interpret complicated policy in the way staff at higher levels would themselves interpret the same policy and expect SAOs to carry out the policy.⁷⁰² Where policy is unclear or complicated, some SAO staff stated that they normally cross-check with other SAOs or with staff at higher levels. SAO staff also declared that they sometimes had to decide to modify policy to make it more suited to their local conditions which vary depending on their location.⁷⁰³ Respondents therefore also found that central government policies required modification to suit local conditions. They

⁶⁹⁷ Respondents 42-44, Focus group interview. San Sai Gnam Subdistrict Administrative Organisation 15 January 2007.

⁶⁹⁸ Ibid.

⁶⁹⁹ Respondent 13, In-depth interview, Nong Rad Subdistrict Administrative Organisation 4 June 2008

⁷⁰⁰ Respondent 23, Focus group. Rimkok Subdistrict Administrative Organisation. 26 June 2008.

⁷⁰¹ Respondent 12, In-depth interview. Yonok Subdistrict Administrative Organisation. 19 June 2008. Also see more detail in chapter 7.

⁷⁰² Respondents 13 and 23, Respondents 36-39, Focus group interview. Wiang Chiang Saen Subdistrict Administrative Organisation 25 June 2008. Respondents 22, Focus group interview. Rimkok Subdistrict Administrative Organisation 26 June 2008.

⁷⁰³ Respondents 36-39.

commented that when doing so, the goal was to make sure the intentions of the policy were carried out.⁷⁰⁴

Another factor influencing the SAO staff's interpretation of policies is their limited capability. Policies from central government actually provide sufficient details for SAO staff to interpret: however, difficulties can arise in achieving common interpretations of policy when a policy is applied by central government through the same national policy frameworks across the entire country. Some SAO staff are able to interpret and work on implementing the policy without difficulty, making it easier for the other SAO staff to work on the policy. The capabilities of staff are an important factor.

According to respondent 13, SAO staff had no difficulty in interpreting and working on the development plan. They can actually form a team and work very well both within the SAO and with staff at higher levels.⁷⁰⁵ Some SAO staff do find themselves having difficulties in interpreting policies, for various reasons, starting with their lack of experience of working with staff at different government levels.

Not only is the SAO a newly established organisation, but also new to both the organisation staff and its work. It takes time for them to adjust to work with staff at higher levels. In addition, the SAO executives⁷⁰⁶ who depend on winning the election for their position in the SAO often do not have the experience of working with the appointed staff. In these circumstances it can be difficult to follow the national frameworks because they have not learned to work well with the people who can guide them with the policy.

Another factor is the readiness of SAO staff to interpret policy and implement it. Several staff can interpret central government policy, but many staff simply lack the experience and learning to work with the policy. Respondent 9 confirmed that only some staff know what they are supposed to do on the policy. Several SAO staff find it difficult because of the many regulations and details to comprehend.⁷⁰⁷ At times they are unsure whether they have made the right decision, and they get confused regarding the policy's content.⁷⁰⁸

⁷⁰⁴ Respondent 36.

⁷⁰⁵ Respondent 13.

⁷⁰⁶ Every two years for the chief of Tambon Council and every four years for the Tambon Executive Committee.

⁷⁰⁷ Respondent 9.

⁷⁰⁸ Respondent 36.

Having well-prepared staff is very important because SAOs cannot expect the few with the necessary experience in understanding a policy reference and getting assistance with policy interpretation, in dealing with the regulations and processes, to work on policy interpretation all the time. It is necessary to train the new staff for them to become proficient.

As noted in chapter 7, even though SAO staff can develop plans, the implementation of them has to take into account the local conditions. In this, they draw on their own localised knowledge and expertise.

When a policy is unclear, it is noticeable that those SAO staff who were formerly working at the provincial level reported they had no difficulty in interpreting and working on a policy. With their experience as government officials they have the ability and confidence to work on policy implementation. In addition, with the benefit of their former positions in the government, it is easier for SAO staff to work well with staff in other local organisations and those at higher levels. As SAO executives or SAO administrators they have fewer obstacles in interpreting policy and performing their obligations.

Yet several SAO staff do not have such a capacity and have no background working in the government. In relation to the information in chapter 7, it can be seen that different staff at different levels interpret policy differently. The policy interpretations made by staff are largely determined by their position in government, especially staff in higher positions, who generally interpret policy in a holistic view, which is broader than the implementer at lower level. It is noticeable that staff at the central level interpret the national policy by directive.

The policy process is implemented in each organisation by the head of the organisations who distribute the requirements of the policy to staff, taking into account the policy content and the expertise of staff. At the central and local levels the directive will be given to staff to implement the policy within a given framework which does not give staff the opportunity to argue or discuss the policy. Also, those overseeing staff ensure that staff follow the directives and do not make modifications to suit themselves. SAO staff do have the authority transferred to them by central government to work on their policy. In their development plans, SAO staff can actually have more opportunity to interpret the national policy framework and then create the development plan that facilitates their policy implementation process.

After the transition to democracy in 1932 and with the TAO act in 1997, if the decentralisation policy and the procedure were promoted well and done at the right time, local government in Thailand could have been much stronger than it is now. Unfortunately, there were difficulties in distributing not only the basic knowledge of decentralisation but also in the limited number of experienced staff able to work well under decentralisation.

As noted in chapter 3, Thailand's national administration was always top down in its perspective. Adhering to centralisation leaves staff at lower levels always relying on central government for directives and procedures. Even though Thailand's national administration was reformed in 1932 and the political system was transformed to democracy, the Thai government still followed a policy of centralisation making central government the primary organisation governing the country. This stimulated the emergence of a hierarchical system of administration. Consequently, even though the government launched the decentralisation programme, there was always something missing and government responses ignored the local level policy proposals. The top-down perspective of the higher levels of government persist, while the SAO level perspective assumes a bottom-up approach.

8.4.4 There are influences of the hierarchical system and bureaucracy polity in a national administration to a government at local level

The Thai national administrative system has long been hierarchical (constitution, political culture, and historical background), and it has had a powerful influence on the bureaucracy and the behaviour and work of all government officials. This traditional pattern has had important implications for implementing the decentralisation policy. Hierarchy and the bureaucratic system are closely related.⁷⁰⁹ The bureaucracy invariably is associated with big, unresponsive government programmes that do not work well, and agencies that no one can control.⁷¹⁰ The staff are typically viewed as pariahs of modern government, tied up with red tape, clumsy regulation, and policy blunders. In

⁷⁰⁹ Max Weber, cited in David Beetham, *Bureaucracy*, 2nd edn. (Minneapolis: Open University Press, 1996), pp. 42-43.

⁷¹⁰ Howard E. McCurdy, *Public Administration: A Synthesis* (California: Cummings Publishing Company, 1977), p. 70.

addition, the staff have been called “the dead hand of government and are accused of behaving like public tyrants instead of public servants.”⁷¹¹

Weber’s analysis leads him to argue for the ideal-type bureaucracy in which “every system of autocracy must establish and secure a belief in its legitimacy, which can be done in many different ways.”⁷¹² In Thailand the government has always been concerned with the hierarchical system.⁷¹³ At the national level everything is set in a certain way⁷¹⁴ and a government’s working processes are fixed systematically,⁷¹⁵ and this results in delays for SAO staff. Staff at different levels have different opinions about hierarchy. SAO staff certainly saw problems with the hierarchical system, while staff at central and provincial levels considered it important in the working process. In dealing with several different organisations the government has to have a working process which is well organised, and this can take time.

The Royal Decree on Criteria and Procedures for Good Governance, B.E.2546 (2003) was formulated to ensure the working processes were well organised. As stated in section 6, in the Royal Decree, good governance is an administration that meets the following 7 targets:

- (1) responsiveness;
- (2) result-based management;
- (3) effectiveness and value for money;
- (4) reducing unnecessary work processes;
- (5) reviewing missions to meet changing situations;
- (6) providing convenient and favourable services;
- (7) regular evaluation.⁷¹⁶

⁷¹¹ Ibid., p. 70.

⁷¹² Robert B. Denhardt, *Theories of Public Organization* (Monterey, CA: Brooks/Cole Publishing Company, 1984), p. 29., The legal authority is very significant because it is exercised through the staff. Weber identifies three types of legitimate authority: 1) legal authority which is based on a belief in the legality of certain patterns or rules and in the right of those in positions of legal authority to issue command; 2) traditional authority which is based on a belief in the importance of enduring traditions and those who rule within such traditions; and 3) charismatic authority which is based on an emotional attachment or devotion to a specific individual.

⁷¹³ Respondent 7, In-depth interview. Ministry of Interior 28 June 2008.

⁷¹⁴ Respondent 1, and 5, In-depth interview. Ministry of Interior 2 June 2008.

⁷¹⁵ Respondent 9.

⁷¹⁶ Royal Decree on Criteria and Procedures for Good Governance, B.E.2546 (2003), The Royal Thai Government.

Target 4, lessening unnecessary steps of work, is required to make the working process run rapidly and effectively. In the case of the Thailand's national administrative system, bureaucracy and hierarchy go together and under it, staff are able to work under seniority and directives. Under the decentralisation policy, the link between central and provincial levels, as well as the delegated staff at the local level, can continue to work as they usually do. Nonetheless, with SAOs that are unfamiliar with the bureaucratic and hierarchical system, the working process does appear to be rather complicated.

8.4.5 Overlap and lack of clarity between provincial and local governments

Because staff's implementation in the policy process is important, central government needs to avoid overlap or lack of clarity in staff job descriptions. Yet there are several problems regarding the overlap or lack of clarity in the responsibilities of provincial and local government levels, which not only inhibit the implementation of the decentralisation policy, but also give rise to tensions in their working relationships. Among staff at the provincial and local levels, this problem is not so much in evidence because the local level is subordinate to the provincial level. Generally, the problem occurs where regulations place some contexts against one another.⁷¹⁷ The problems of overlapping job descriptions are less of a problem since the responsibilities at both provincial and local levels are indistinguishable from each other. Moreover, as SAO responsibilities are transferred to the provincial and local levels, it means SAOs can actually carry out their obligations.⁷¹⁸

According to Raksasat, overlap between different government levels occurs from a misunderstanding of the authority and power of job descriptions, which can seriously affect the success of decentralisation.⁷¹⁹ On the other hand, Dhiravegin argues that one of the serious long-term consequences of Thailand's national administrative system is the problem regarding power snatching

⁷¹⁷ Respondent 9.

⁷¹⁸ Respondent 11.

⁷¹⁹ Amorn Raksasat, cited in Trakoon Meechai *Decentralisation* (Bangkok: Sukom and Son limited, 1995), p. 54.

between concentration and decentralisation.⁷²⁰ Moreover, staff at central and provincial levels did not always provide helpful suggestions, with some of them ambiguous. According to respondent 26, when SAOs have to work and engage with other organisations and each are following different procedures then SAOs are inhibited in carrying out the policy. Generally, overlap occurs when SAOs are working on an issue where two to three organisations are involved, each of them holding different views on laws and regulations.⁷²¹ There appeared some overlap of content and, in addition, the SAOs do face difficulties in implementing the policy, particularly where SAOs are dealing with an issue in which another organisation is involved. SAOs normally have to postpone their work while they make certain that there is no overlap with any other organisation's responsibilities.

As indicated by respondent 15, overlap with the provincial level and with other local organisations occurs when the SAOs and other organisations have the same area of responsibility.⁷²² Whenever SAOs have to collaborate with other organisations, especially with the government at a higher level, the SAOs always have to obtain approval first because the areas and scope of responsibilities overlap. SAOs are subordinate to the higher-level organisations. For example, Tasood SAO faced a problem regarding roadworks requiring that a street island be constructed to reduce possible accidents. However, the SAO could not proceed with the work because the highway district and other provincial organisations also had responsibilities in this. As a result, the SAO could not get on with the project but had to contact the relevant organisation for notices, approvals, and cooperation in working together. It took some time for Tasood SAO to finally carry out the work.⁷²³

Another example of overlap between organisations was where one SAO could not solve an irrigation problem because the SAOs' area of responsibility also involved the Provincial administration, as well as the Department of

⁷²⁰ Dhiravegin explains a power snatching between concentration and decentralisation in terms of the situation that there is no genuine devolution of power transferred from the central government to its local government. This makes the local government not only have limited autonomy, but also always rely on the central government. See more in Dhiravegin, p. 97., Likhit Dhiravegin, *The Evolution of the Thai Political System* (Bangkok: *Thammasat* University, 1996), p. 258.

⁷²¹ Respondent 27, Focus group, Mae Chan Subdistrict Administrative Organisation 10 July 2008.

⁷²² Respondent 15, Focus group interview. Paa Or Donchai Subdistrict Administrative Organisation 16 June 2008.

⁷²³ Target focus group interview, Tasood Subdistrict Administrative Organisation. 2007.

Irrigation. Consequently, the SAO could not continue its obligation but had to ask for permission to be able to proceed with a project and whether it had to be assisted by the Department of Irrigation. Another example was from Chiang Saen SAO, located at the border, which found that its area of responsibility, work scope, and activities all overlapped with those of the provincial organisations. Further, some organisations were also delegated by central government to work with SAOs. This meant the Chiang Saen SAO had to inform and obtain approval before they could do anything.

As noted above, another issue arises where the responsibilities of a position are not clear. According to respondent 13, the overlap between provincial and local governments generally happens when SAOs are located in large or important districts, like the Muang district, where all provincial governments are located, rather than in a remote district.⁷²⁴ For example, the SAO in Muang district had to ask for permission and approval from the office of Land Development before using or developing a public area.⁷²⁵

Another example is the Chiang Sean SAO which has difficulty in working with another organisation and with the provincial level. Chiang Sean is in the border area of a country where there was a port connecting with China and Laos and so there are many government offices and organisations, including immigration, customs, marine police, the Mekong Security Unit, the aquatic animal inspection station, and the plant inspection station. In contrast, Nong Rad SAO was situated in the inland area where there are no borders with any county. As a result, the Nong Rad SAO has less difficulty in dealing with different staff from central and provincial levels of government compared to the Chiang Sean SAO. Therefore, while some SAOs face the same problems, the rest of them have difficulties in some matter, depending on their location and the different conditions inside or outside their environment.

When power was transferred to the SAOs, the different regulations in force for different organisations were not brought into line so that they were in accordance with other regulations, leaving some contradictions in the guidelines. Similarly, the areas of responsibility for each organisation were not established clearly and discretely. Central government needs to tidy up these matters so that the organisations' working tasks will flow smoothly. The issue of overlap among

⁷²⁴ Respondent 13.

⁷²⁵ Respondent 37.

organisations is one of the most important issues that needs to be addressed because it influences working structures and regulations. Even though several SAOs face difficulties in delivering the policy, the local conditions turn out to be a cause that initiates the problem itself.

8.4.6 Limited autonomy

The degree of autonomy provided by central government is one of the most important factors determining the success of Thailand's decentralisation. The autonomy has to be sufficient for local government to function and carry out its responsibilities effectively. A core concept of decentralisation is allowing local government to work on its own.⁷²⁶ With only limited autonomy, local government cannot implement the policy of decentralisation.

As noted above, Thailand has paid a lot of attention to centralisation with the result that the requirements for autonomy at the local level have been largely ignored. Despite the launch of the decentralisation policy, staff at the local level have continued to struggle, as outlined above in this chapter. Staff directly appointed by the central ministry continued to play an important role at the local level. The autonomy granted to SAO staff was discussed in interviews with two main issues raised. First, the overlaps between provincial and local administrations, and even among local organisations, outlined above, also affect the autonomy of SAOs, particularly where SAOs are dealing with two to three organisations.⁷²⁷ Some organisations hold different regulations⁷²⁸ which are not in accordance with one another,⁷²⁹ making it very difficult for the SAO to exercise its autonomy and sometimes unable to operate as they should be able to do.

Second, SAO staff mentioned that the central government is unwilling to distribute its power to the local level. Even though central government has transferred powers and responsibilities to SAOs, those government agencies from both central and provincial levels are still significantly involved in the SAOs' workloads. As a result, rather than having responsibilities to perform more complicated and important responsibilities, the SAOs' scope of the obligations

⁷²⁶ Respondent 8, In-depth interview. Office of Local Administrative Organisation, Chiang Rai Province 4 July 2008.

⁷²⁷ Respondent 39.

⁷²⁸ Respondents 21 and 25, Focus group. Rimkok Subdistrict Administrative Organisation 26 June 2008.

⁷²⁹ Respondent 20, Focus group interview. Paa Or Don Chai Subdistrict Administrative Organisation 16 June 2008.

are normally involved with basic needs, such as infrastructure and general works.⁷³⁰

During the interviews, staff at central and provincial levels said they thought that central government actually provided SAOs with sufficient autonomy. SAO staff disagreed with this statement, and argued that even though the central government considered that SAOs had adequate autonomy, SAOs found the autonomy was limited. In addition, with different outside environments and conditions, such as overlap with other levels of government, the local context, and limited revenue, the SAOs had difficulty in exercising the autonomy they had been granted to put policy into practice.

Some staff at central and provincial levels agreed that SAOs did not have enough autonomy, but only a few of them were prepared to talk about the issue. The question arises as to how much autonomy government should grant to the local level. Amonvivat points to Articles, 284 and 285 of the Constitution of Thai Kingdom, BA 2540 (1997) as providing Thailand's constitutional mandate for decentralisation. Regarding local autonomy, these state: 1) local authorities shall have autonomous power in policy formulation, administration, finance, and personnel management; 2) the autonomy should be issued coherently regarding a delineation of functions and responsibilities, and tax between the state and local authorities, as well as among local authorities, and 3) the establishment of a decentralisation committee that can prepare the decentralisation plan, review, monitor, and provide policy recommendations for the Cabinet concerning the implementation of the decentralisation plan and process.⁷³¹

In practice, during the interviews this argument was mentioned in every SAO where the research interview took place. According to SAO staff, they found themselves having difficulty in carrying out their work, even though power was officially transferred. With only limited autonomy SAOs had a power deficit. They also mentioned that central government must provide SAOs with more autonomy, so they can do their jobs better. Central government should consider:

1. What degree of autonomy the central government should consider?
2. How much more is necessary so that the SAOs can complete their policy implementation?

⁷³⁰ Respondents 44.

⁷³¹ Sutapa Amonvivat, *Fiscal Decentralisation: The Case of Thailand*, updated 2004, <http://www.econ.hit-u.ac.jp/~kokyo/APPPsympo04/FiscDect%20_Thailand.pdf> [accessed 5 April 2007].

3. What if there is still limited autonomy, can SAO staff work to meet the highest ultimate goal?

The answers to these questions are:

1. Thailand's national administration has always been centralised, effectively making a local government administered from central government. With every activity and responsibility being determined, local government can then follow the directions of central government. Once local government has its own power to manage their responsibilities, some local organisations have some difficulty, particular where the situation is not clear.
2. Ignoring the local level has had serious long-term consequences because external developments interfere with decentralisation.
3. Instead of distributing power so that local government has the autonomy to exercise its responsibilities, people who hold the power are reluctant to transfer it, creating a major obstacle to decentralisation.

According to respondent 16, since the SAOs were established, the SAO staff have had insufficient understanding of, and insufficient information about decentralisation. The highly centralised thinking of staff who work at higher levels has caused difficulties for SAO staff in implementing national policies.⁷³² Working as a government official in Thailand is very distinguished, so that there is an incongruity between government officials at central level and ordinary people regarding their social statuses. Moreover, having locally elected politicians as part of SAOs causes a reluctance to decentralise power, because central government staff see local level staff as not being ready for change.⁷³³

8.4.7 SAOs and revenue

Another issue to emerge from interviews was the number of SAO staff who mentioned insufficient revenue. Some said that they could not complete the decentralisation programme, while others argued that they could carry on the programme, although they were able to accomplish what they needed to for the policy to be as successful as it should be, and it was expected to be. Opinions

⁷³² Respondent 23.

⁷³³ Respondent 36.

differed among several government officials about the revenue. Some acknowledged that there was insufficient revenue but went on to say that what challenged the SAO was how they could organise those budgets to best effect, as well as making their policy implementation successful.⁷³⁴ In addition, they thought the degree of success should be higher than the minimum required, which does not depend on the amount of revenue, but how best and how well the SAO staff can do with the revenue they get.⁷³⁵

The officials said they understood how difficult it was to have less revenue than what SAO staff expected. However, SAOs must understand that government has to consider how the budget should be distributed and, sometimes, even to arrange revenue for the most important programme or urgent issues. As a result, instead of paying too much attention to the amount of the revenue provided by central government, SAO staff should use their competence and plan to earn extra income.⁷³⁶ Then they could benefit the programme most and to keep running the launched programme.

As stated by Sopchokchai, the SAOs have limited and unstable revenue for their projects, which generally involve “the infrastructure, such as village roads, small bridges, and village water supply systems that require minimum technology”.⁷³⁷ As well as infrastructure projects, the SAOs have to spend in order to expand offices, hire more staff, and undertake several new projects. As a result, several SAOs face financial problems in responding to the demand for services, and so expenditure rises.⁷³⁸

On the one hand, staff at the local level complain that the revenue provided by the government is inadequate. On the other hand, staff at the central and provincial levels accept that the problem of limited revenue for SAOs is not a new issue. Even though each community has different problems and needs, SAOs experienced problems over their limited budgets. The budget for social and economic projects is limited.⁷³⁹

⁷³⁴ Respondent 2, In-depth interview. Ministry of Interior 28 June 2008.

⁷³⁵ Respondent 3, In-depth interview. Ministry of Interior 28 June 2008.

⁷³⁶ Respondent 4, In-depth interview. Ministry of Interior 28 June 2008

⁷³⁷ Sopchokchai, p. 8.

⁷³⁸ Ibid. p. 8.

⁷³⁹ Respondent 39.

SAOs get their revenue from different sources. There are grants-in-aid, local taxes, and annual income.⁷⁴⁰ From this, SAOs gain revenue from the government and from the taxes collected within their local areas. Even though SAOs gain their revenue from different sources, they have difficulty in obtaining enough revenue. The different viewpoints of staff are instructive. Respondent 11 said that SAO staff realised it was very hard to ask for more revenue from the government so they had to find ways of earning more income. Yet still, the income the SAOs could collect was insufficient because the income-raising projects were only limited and the different local conditions influenced what the SAO could do.⁷⁴¹ Central government had to consider all the national programmes and it was not possible for government to fund every project with the amount required to accomplish the project,⁷⁴² making it understandable that the revenue distributed to the SAOs were limited.⁷⁴³

While the staff at the local level pointed out that the problems regarding the limited revenue were from both the central government and local conditions, the staff at central and provincial level, in contrast, indicated that the revenue provided by the government was acceptable.⁷⁴⁴ Even though the revenue was not high, the government, at least, considered that it was sufficient.⁷⁴⁵

Respondent 8 noted that staff at central and provincial levels thought that it was important to understand that central government expects and encourages SAOs to earn their own income. Central government provides the grants-in-aid, and may also provide a subsidy for a necessary case, but the main point is SAOs have to earn their own income. This is linked to the ultimate objective of the decentralisation policy of encouraging and allowing the SAOs to stand by themselves. As this happens, then SAO staff can develop and enhance their performance and achieve their development policy.

Those from central government stated that the government always supported and assisted SAOs whenever they requested it. In addition, the staff at the provincial level from the office of local administration provided suggestions

⁷⁴⁰ Respondents 21 and 23., Respondents 22 and 25, Focus group. Rimkok Subdistrict Administrative Organisation 26 June 2008.

⁷⁴¹ Respondent 11.

⁷⁴² Respondent 10, In-depth interview, Office of Local Administrative Organisation, Chiang Rai Province 5 August 2008.

⁷⁴³ Respondent 7.

⁷⁴⁴ Respondent 3.

⁷⁴⁵ Respondent 6, Questionnaire. Ministry of Interior 28 June 2008.

and mentoring to the SAOs as needed. Therefore, it was, according to this respondent, inexcusable for SAOs to continue to argue that they did not have sufficient revenue when they have not tried to do something about it.⁷⁴⁶ Since the government was willing to assist SAOs, this respondent suggested it came back to the SAO staff to raise their performance.

Analysing SAO problems regarding insufficient revenue from the 'top-down' and 'bottom-up' approaches, it can be seen that SAOs have limited capability to develop programmes or activities to raise more income. According to the 'top-down' approach, the government at the local level has never been trained to exercise their authority. The organisations at the local level adhere to the directives from the higher level, but in carrying out the directives from the higher level, staff at the local level have plenty of opportunity to demonstrate their opinions or even participate in the policy-making process.

Even though responsibilities and autonomy were transferred to SAOs under the decentralisation policy, many aspects of the national administrative system did not change. The staff working style remained much the same. The long-standing bureaucratic and hierarchical systems remained and there was reluctance to move to a better system. In short, government officials continued to work as usual, even though under the decentralisation policy the local level should have the autonomy to govern itself. The central level never allowed the opportunities for local government, especially the SAOs, to practice their new role.

The administrative rules and regulations issued by central government were sophisticated for staff at the local level to understand and to expect SAO staff to implement the policy effectively is difficult, and even harder for those staff to do this when faced with the sophisticated national administrative system and regulations. As several staff complained, the central government always concentrated on the 'top-down' approach rather than allowing the local government to participate.⁷⁴⁷ When central government follows the 'top-down' approach this closely it is easier for staff working at the central and provincial levels who are government officials, but it leaves staff at the local level figuring out what they have to do on the policy. SAO staff occasionally face difficulties

⁷⁴⁶ Respondent 8, In-depth interview. Office of Local Administrative Organisation, Chiang Rai Province 4 July 2008.

⁷⁴⁷ Respondent 25, Focus group interview. Rimkok Subdistrict Administrative Organisation 26 June 2008.

with the rigid and complex administrative rules and regulations set down by the Ministry of the Interior. SAO staff further explain that while administrative rules are complex and require many steps for them to follow, the regulations contain many legal terms that SAO staff do not understand and so get confused. Many staff at the local level, especially SAO staff, do not have much experience of the bureaucratic system compared to staff at higher levels. Nevertheless, the staff work with their individual expertise and their willingness without any reservations⁷⁴⁸ in seeking to deliver the government's policy implementation process to the end.⁷⁴⁹ This response supports the bottom-up challenge, introduced by several scholars, especially Lipsky's analysis of the behaviour of front line staff in policy delivery and how difficult it is to control them as they implement the policy initiated by central government.⁷⁵⁰

Respondent 7 reported on the difficulties arising from the national administrative system and the government's concern with regulations, which left staff at the local level having some difficulty in working on the policy interpretation.⁷⁵¹ Inevitably, from the various backgrounds and experiences, staff interpret the policies in different ways in different situations.

According to Lester and Stewart, where the centre concentrates on the 'top-down' approach, this does make the policy implementation process successful, it does fulfil the needs of the policy makers as the key persons to initiate the policy and then work on it until it has been completed.⁷⁵² Yet, central government must realise the importance of their staff at the street level, and make them accountable for the policy implementation process. This approach will have much greater chance of delivering the policy in the local context, and recognise their expert and individual backgrounds and so increase the success of the policy implementation process. Once the policy implementation process is in place, the outcomes will be determined, to a large extent, by the local conditions and by the staff themselves. It is inevitable that not all policy implementations will be as successful as hoped for. With neither the 'top-down' nor the 'bottom-up' approaches being able to deliver the outcome sought, the Thai government should consider a synthesis of the approaches.

⁷⁴⁸ Respondent 5.

⁷⁴⁹ Respondent 11.

⁷⁵⁰ Michael Hill and Peter Hupe, *Implementing Public Policy* (London: SAGE Publishing Ltd., 2002), p. 140.

⁷⁵¹ Respondent 7.

⁷⁵² James P. Lester and Joseph Stewart, Jr., *Public Policy An Evolutionary Approach* 2nd edn. (Belmont, Wardsworth/Thomson Learning, 2000), p. 104.

As mentioned by respondents 24, 25, and 26, SAO staff generally check what precedents there are, together with the regulations and guidelines when interpreting a policy.⁷⁵³ Yet, respondent 11 argued that even though the SAOs check and ensure the policy content matches the requirements in following the task, the best check is to contact the staff who are directly in charge of the policy.⁷⁵⁴ SAO staff can then be certain that they understand the policy correctly and are working on the same task. Of course, if there are gaps in the information or there is no consensus on how to proceed, they can work together so that the policies are consistent with others.⁷⁵⁵

The questions remain as to whether staff interpret the policies correctly, and whether they implement the policies in terms of the regulations, precedence and have the mandate. If staff do not follow the path closely then the policy implementation process can fail. To ensure greater success, the synthesis approach, bringing together both the 'top-down' and the 'bottom-up' approaches is essential. All levels of government have to work both ways if the policy implementation process is to produce the outcomes sought. The policy-making process has to be approached from the top as well as the bottom level.

8.5 Conclusion

When the Thai government promoted its decentralisation programme in 1997, there were several conditions likely to affect the success of the policy. The problems which have arisen have resulted from the traditional, highly centralised and bureaucratic national administration system. Not only did this inhibit implementation of the decentralisation policy as a whole, but it also prevented the development of genuine decentralisation to the local level.

Through the national planning process, the Thai government initiated decentralisation to empower local government. This was a major effort to establish a bottom-up approach. Unfortunately, the decentralisation policy outcome takes time to show the desired results. SAOs are under strict orders from central government to function as efficient local organisations, providing

⁷⁵³ Respondent 36., Respondents 34 and 35, Focus group, Mae Chan Subdistrict Administrative Organisation 10 July 2008.

⁷⁵⁴ Respondent 19, Focus group interview. Pa Or Don Chai Subdistrict Administrative Organisation
16 June 2008.

⁷⁵⁵ Respondent 20.

public services to the local people, and implementing the decentralisation policy in the local areas. To implement what central government determines, local government needs to be aware of what central government requires. This means, somehow, there is the potential for policy implementation gaps as it takes a long process to transmit information. Central government's concentration on centralisation, finally, gives SAOs less opportunity and experience to carry out their role in national administration. With centralisation, local government relies on the central government all the time. No matter what the issue is at the local level, SAOs have to involve the central government as well.

As time went by, the government had developed and endeavoured to solve the problems inhibiting the decentralisation policy. Subsequently, several regulations and royal decrees were created and the national administration is being improved. As they gain more experience, SAO staff have more understanding regarding decentralisation, compared to the time the decentralisation policy was first promoted.

However, even though central government provides local government autonomy, the SAOs lack the capability of carrying out the policy. The degree of their understanding is required to be more comprehensive to make their policy implementation more effective. Additionally, this also means SAO staff have to gain good experience in order to gain more capability to serve and provide the public services for their local area. The participation of local community leaders and people in the local area is essential because they are the people directly affected by the work of the SAO.

Among the SAOs in Chiang Rai province, staff and village leaders suggested that decentralisation in Thailand needed to be reviewed.⁷⁵⁶ This does not mean the whole system is unsatisfactory. Some issues, such as policy, regulations, management and processes, needed to be developed for better outcomes. The participants thought that the whole political system should be reconsidered and more emphasis given to local government. The old fashioned political processes and working styles were too slow in practice and action.⁷⁵⁷ Because the SAO is the foundation local organisation and close to the local people, it is very important for the government to support the SAO so that it can work more effectively. The government should be cautious about revenue, staff

⁷⁵⁶ Respondent 14.

⁷⁵⁷ Respondent 23.

training, staff mentoring, and other things the SAO may need from central government.

The next chapter presents an evaluation of decentralisation of Chiang Rai's Subdistrict Administrative Organisation.

Chapter IX

Evaluating decentralisation

Chiang Rai's Subdistrict Administrative Organisation

9.1 Introduction

The successful implementation of the decentralisation policy would serve as an indicator that government has got the process right. It is not easy to implement such a policy and the central government would have to make certain that not only the bureaucrats understood what decentralisation meant, but also that the Thai people understood what it meant and were well prepared for the change. Bureaucrats at the local level would need to be well prepared because they are the key people to influence the success or failure of the decentralisation policy.

As the decentralisation policy is implemented the SAOs become increasingly autonomous organisations, and as this happens the change in the Thai national administrative system begins to take shape. The former system of national administration, with its adherence to the bureaucratic processes under centralisation, has been replaced by the policy of decentralisation that allows local government to be a more significant actor in the national administrative process, transforming the national administrative system. Central government empowers local government with authority to carry out its policies and programmes, and local government needs to be well organised to carry out the responsibilities placed on them.

The decentralisation policy was launched in Thailand in response to the unique conditions faced at the time. The environment for these changes, discussed later in this chapter, was shaped by Thailand's economic, social and political policies and practices, with their long histories. Even though important changes have been made to the national administrative system, adherence to the old system inhibits implementation of the decentralisation policy. It is not that the Thai people are unwilling to change, but the time it is taking points more to Thailand's strong bureaucratic polity, the longstanding practice of centralisation, the continued existence of the hierarchical system and the gap which still exists between the elite and the ordinary people. Since the government still pays

greatest attention to the central level, and since the elites who hold power are not tolerant of fundamental change, the lower levels of government and the ordinary people do not have the opportunity to participate in politics as promised in the policy. The most obvious example mentioned above occurred after the decentralisation policy was promoted when only a small number of people knew and understood what was involved, while the rest lacked much understanding of the core concept of decentralisation, or of its significance to democracy

Decentralisation in Thailand has gradually developed since the policy was launched. Today, many bureaucrats and people now understand and are keen to participate more fully in the policy. This is a very good indication for the policy because the more people who understand and are ready for it, the easier it is for central government to carry out its decentralisation programme. Certainly, the government can work more effectively, and at the local level many local factors do have an influence on the success of the policy implementation.

This chapter evaluates the decentralisation policy in Chiang Rai's Subdistrict Administrative Organisation. The evaluation is based on the information provided from the in-depth interviews, focus group interviews, questionnaires, private interviews and secondary data. The evaluation will be divided into different categories, which are relevant to the problems affecting the SAOs' policy implementation.

9.2 Background to decentralisation policy implementation

In implementing the decentralisation policy, SAOs need to ensure the implementation process is on the right track and, more importantly, that the policy outcomes meet the central government's aims and bring benefits to the local people. From the initiation of the policy until its accomplishment, the process needs to be well organised. Those responsible for implementing the policy have to work hard to ensure its success. Obstacles to the policy's implementation have to be dealt with, or at least prevented from harming the implementation process. Government has to seek solutions to solve the problems arising from the implementation process.

The government intended that the Tambon Administration Act (TAO) Act 1994 would run in parallel with the Local Administration Act (2457) in responding to the popular demand for decentralisation in the midst of the enduring atmosphere of political reform.⁷⁵⁸ It did this rather than carry out the wholesale development of another system. However, the foundation for decentralisation was not laid out clearly, was poorly organised, and the bureaucrats and local people were not ready to participate in the policy. These factors emerged at the beginning of the implementation process.

Local government at the subdistrict level in Thailand has changed as central government devolved some significant responsibilities under the decentralisation policy to SAOs. Yet there remain several factors inhibiting the success of the decentralisation programme, not least because of the long history of Thailand's pursuit of nationhood.⁷⁵⁹

One respondent at the provincial level noted several issues giving rise to clear differences between the decentralisation policy at the local level and the national system of administration, and the different hierarchical practices and related procedures. This is important since it is the bureaucrats themselves who have the most significant impact on the policy's implementation. As Anderson mentioned, administrative agencies frequently are called on to use their discretion in fulfilling the detail of the policy and in making it more specific.⁷⁶⁰ Bureaucrats have to seek the best method for implementing a policy, making modifications and using their individual experience in order to achieve success.

Given the importance of the bureaucrats in making the policy a success, ensuring that they all work on the right track is necessary. In the 1994 Act, the Thai government made a good start with its proposals to decentralise administrative power to local people, to revitalize local people's participation in community development affairs, and in the provisions for decentralisation of the

⁷⁵⁸ Chaiyan Rajchagool, *Tambon Administrative Organization: Are the People in the Dramatis Personae or in the Audience?* (UNESCAP), [n.d.], <http://www.unescap.org/tdw/Publications/TPTS_pubs/TxBulletin_69/bulletin69_b.pdf> [2 June 2006]

⁷⁵⁹ Likhit Dhiravegin, *Demi Democracy: The Evolution of the Thai Political System* (Singapore: Time Academic Press, 1992), p. xi.

⁷⁶⁰ James E. Anderson, *Public Policymaking*, 5th edn. (Boston, MA: Houghton Mifflin Company 2003), p. 194.

decision making process to people at the Tambon and village levels.⁷⁶¹ The government showed it was paying attention to the demands for greater local participation.⁷⁶²

After launching the programme in 1997, decentralisation was incorporated into the Constitution of the Kingdom of Thailand B.E. 2540 to promote the people's participation and to emphasise that power had been decentralised to the local government. The idea of decentralisation was also included in the Ninth Plan to promote and encourage local organisations, including SAOs, to play an important role in the country's government.

Aside from promoting decentralisation to local level, the Ninth Plan was noted as a crucial national development plan through which the government endeavoured to promote good governance by restructuring and developing the national administrative system. From this, the Ninth Plan became a key point in order to achieve the effective national administration system; the government agencies could provide better goods and services to Thai people once they were well practiced.

Decentralisation in Thailand, however, has not been the success intended by the Thai government. That is to say, while the government attempted to promote a foundation of good governance, the plan did not specify how the government agencies could carry out the decentralisation. Rather than setting in place an effective system of support, the government focused primarily on specifying the anticipated objectives and outcomes.⁷⁶³

The question therefore arises as to what went wrong after the decentralisation policy was promoted. As mentioned in previous chapters, several problems have been identified:

⁷⁶¹ Woothisarn Tanchai, *Decentralization in Thailand. Issues of Government Policy Formulation Towards Decentralization*, [n.d] <http://www.decentralization.ws/icd2/papers/decent_thailand.htm> [accessed 15 May 2006]. (p. 4).

⁷⁶² The idea of decentralisation was introduced and launched during King Chulalongkorn's reign. See chapter 3 for more information.

⁷⁶³ See more detail in chapter 5.

1. The clear differences between the long-established patterns of a centralised, bureaucratic and hierarchical system, and the new scheme for a decentralised national administration;⁷⁶⁴
2. The preferences of those who continue to adhere to the established bureaucratic system rather than the new one;⁷⁶⁵
3. The gap in knowledge and experience between the policy makers and those implementing the policy;⁷⁶⁶
4. The reluctance of those at the national level to empower those at the local level;⁷⁶⁷
5. The continuing habits of centralisation undermining efforts to implement decentralisation, especially at the local level.⁷⁶⁸

Other factors affecting decentralisation include local conditions, such as the disagreements between bureaucrats and the limited capacities of staff. These also inhibit the SAO implementation of the policy at the local level.

9. 3 Evaluating the decentralisation policy

In evaluating Thailand's decentralisation policy it is necessary to understand the bureaucratic system. As noted in chapters 3 and 4, the decentralisation policy was initiated at the central government level. The working interactions between the three government levels are strongly top-down in practice with central government setting out what is required of the lower government levels. These interactions can be seen in each government level.

1) National level

Successful policy implementation requires that all conditions giving rise to difficulty be reviewed and solved promptly. The way in which a policy is designed will affect that policy's implementation and its outcome. Bureaucrats face many conditions and have an array of tools when implementing a policy, and can deliver a different outcome from the one expected from the policy. The context of

⁷⁶⁴ King Prajadhipok's Institute, *Decentralisation and Local Government in Thailand The KPI Congress III* (Bangkok: Tammada Place Ltd., 2002), p. 91.

⁷⁶⁵ Ibid.

⁷⁶⁶ Thanet Charoenmuang, cited in Trakoon Meechai, *Decentralisation* (Bangkok: Sukom and Son limited, 1995), p. 22.

⁷⁶⁷ Chai-anan Samutvanich, cited in Meechai., p 12.

⁷⁶⁸ Amorn Raksasat, cited in Trakoon Meechai, *Decentralisation* (Bangkok: Sukom and Son limited, 1995), p. 54.

the policy process often involves factors which can influence policy implementation and produce a result which is only somewhat successful or even a failure. Government should, therefore, pay close attention when designing policy and discuss the ideas and intentions behind the policy with all relevant people. Developing good policy is much more than the plans for the policy but also the policy makers and the breadth of their ideas and visions. A lack of knowledge in making a policy will definitely limit what the policy as a whole can achieve.

In Thailand, lower level bureaucrats generally have less opportunity to participate in the decision-making process. This comes from the long history of centralisation in government and reliance on a 'top-down' approach. In his study, Nagel outlines the stages in policy formation and implementation that they are always related to one another. He also refers to how and why statutes get adopted in by legislatures, precedent which is established through the courts, and decisions developed and made by government executives and administrators. Once agencies from the various branches of government know the details of a policy area, and the way in which it is to be implemented, then their awareness of how to reform policy procedures effectively will be raised.⁷⁶⁹ Bureaucrats who work on putting the policy into practice can carry out their policy more easily.

2) Provincial level

Bureaucrats at the provincial level work under the directions of the central government, and in doing this, they are empowered to exercise their authority as well. Unlike some bureaucrats at the local level, those at the provincial level have to complete and pass the recruitment tests before being employed. This is a significant matter and it has had an important impact on the decentralisation policy process. The knowledge bureaucrats at the provincial level have of the specific areas is very different to those of bureaucrats who work at the local level.

The interview data reveals that staff at the provincial level had a far more extensive knowledge and understanding of decentralisation than those at the local level. Furthermore, the knowledge and understanding of the provincial level

⁷⁶⁹ Stuart S. Nagel, *The Policy Studies Handbook* (Massachusetts: D.C. Heath and Company, 1980), pp. 31-32.

government bureaucrats was very close to the staff at the central government level. Staff at the local level did not have such understanding or knowledge with the result that they had more difficulties implementing the policy. Further, the provincial and central level bureaucrats were able to work together better, while working with local level staff is more difficult. Part of the reason for this is that because some staff at the local level were elected to their position and do not have to go through the recruitment process that requires the candidates to take an examination and interview.⁷⁷⁰

With the admission processes so very different, it is very difficult to get the two groups of staff to work together in the same routine jobs. Staff at the provincial level do not have such problems in their work because they have well-established tasks and procedures. This makes it difficult for staff at provincial and local levels to work together well. Moreover, with the lack of experience among the local level staff, mistakes occur in some of their work that need to be corrected. Even though those mistakes are not major, they indeed delay the working process.

3) Local level (Subdistrict Administrative Organisation)

After an uncertain introduction of the decentralisation policy, staff have learned much from their own experiences in working with it. They have become more confident in working on their duties so that the obligations regarding their roles and experiences concerning implementation of the policies have become more established.

Putting the right person, with the necessary experience and knowledge, into the right job is important for achieving good outcomes. Staff at the local level are expected to develop and deliver the policy and put it into practice. Where there are different behaviours representing different degrees of commitment and coordination,⁷⁷¹ then the policy implementation outcomes are likely to have various degrees of success. The readiness of SAO staff for decentralisation has been a problem, and this has been due to central government's failure to ensure

⁷⁷⁰ While the candidates normally apply to work in the ministries or departments that are relevant to their educational backgrounds depending on the announcement, most vacancies also require that the candidates hold a degree in the specific area suitable to the job description for each position.

⁷⁷¹ Peters B. Guy and Jon Pierce, *Handbook of Public Administration* (London: SAGE, 2003), pp. 207 - 209.

the basic requirements of knowledge and readiness. Staff needed to have a good basic knowledge of decentralisation and knowledge of the new administrative system. Other government employees involved with implementing the decentralisation policy also needed to know about this.⁷⁷²

9.4 Evaluating decentralisation in Chiang Rai's Subdistrict Administrative Organisation

9.4.1 The tendency towards the central administration

The central government has an important role in the national administrative system. Unless the decentralisation policy receives regular attention it will be inhibited.⁷⁷³ For example, the policy is inhibited when the normal flow of government is interrupted, such as has occurred when the military takes over key areas of the national affairs. Even if decentralisation initiatives are not dissolved in such circumstances, it is very difficult for the local organisations to obtain approval for a proposed new programme, to raise revenue, or obtain assistance for projects when the government is not operating normally. Changes of government through elections or other means are another condition resulting in difficulties for implementation of the decentralisation programme. Change in government brings different points of view and policies, and variation to the detail of the decentralisation policy. While some aspects of policy may continue to be carried out, others are withdrawn as the new government pursues new visions.

2. The provincial level

The provincial level of government has fewer roles in decentralisation compared to that at the central level, but there are several organisations at the provincial level which are expected to support and work in cooperation with government at the local level. The office of local administration at the provincial level can help SAOs in their work with these organisations. Given the limited capabilities available to the SAOs, it can be difficult for staff to support, follow up and advise all the organisations they work with at the local level.⁷⁷⁴ In addition,

⁷⁷² George C Edwards III, *Implementing Public Policy* (Washington D.C: Congressional Quarterly Press, 1980), p. 1.

⁷⁷³ Respondents 1 and 2, In-depth interview. Ministry of the Interior 28 June 2008.

⁷⁷⁴ *Ibid.*, Respondent 1.

the limited number of provincial level staff makes it difficult to support SAO staff. They have, therefore, tended to play the role of information brokers.

Another difficulty at the provincial level is the lack of an effective system for reporting progress on policy outcomes to the government, and assessing the policy implementation by SAOs. The system is loose and vague, meaning there are shortcomings in the extent to which government learns of problems with the policy. If government does not know when there is a major problem, it is less likely real problems will be resolved in a timely manner.

3. The local level

With the wide range of development experienced across local areas (subdistricts), it is clear that the government's decentralisation policy faces many hurdles. Further, subdistricts are at various levels of development and this influences the policy implementation process resulting in different outcomes and levels of policy achievement.

In initiating a national policy, a government faces the challenge of ensuring it is responsive to different areas. SAO staff do have to deal with the different conditions of their local areas and there is a realisation by staff that not all goals set by central government will be met. SAO staff do modify aspects of the policy to suit their particular situation.

Two major problems faced by SAOs were, first, not having a clear understanding of their position description and of the underlying principles, priorities and scope of their role, which gave rise to difficulties in working with other staff from other organisations, as well as working on their own responsibilities. Respondents considered a training programme was needed to develop SAO staff skills and comprehension of their responsibilities, and second, some SAO staff were not well integrated into the local level bureaucracy, were not well trained, and did not share the broader organisational goals. This had implications for how they carried out their roles. These staff did not have adequate knowledge and experience of decentralisation, they did not participate fully, and worked only on the direction of the authorised staff.⁷⁷⁵

⁷⁷⁵ Respondent 15, In-depth interview. Pa Or Don Chai Subdistrict Administrative Organisation 16 June 2008.

9.4.2 Different policy interpretations among staff at different government levels

Staff bring a range of interpretations to the policy, which lead to shortcomings in the process, as staff at central and provincial government levels bring their understanding of the policy which is different to that of the staff work at the local level.⁷⁷⁶ Unlike the central and provincial level staff, the local level staff are not well placed to interpret policy for two main reasons. First, SAO staff have had difficulty scoping their work to ensure it is in line with the national policy's frameworks, as set out by the government. Participants reported that on several occasions SAO staff were asked to reconsider their programme proposals and to make them more concurrent with the national plan before their plans could be approved.⁷⁷⁷ Second, SAO staff find difficulties with understanding policy contents that are sophisticated, for example, that are expressed in legal terms. Without understanding what is required they cannot work on their policy in the required way.

9.4.3 Difficulties arising among different organisations and staff at the local level

The inter-relationships among staff and other people working on the policy at all levels are significant. Difficulties have arisen between different government levels which continue to adhere to the old working patterns. Those who underestimate what SAOs can contribute to the decentralisation policy tend towards supporting centralised government processes.

Disagreements among different organisations have frequently occurred during the policy implementation process. These disagreements have been between the SAO organisations and the higher-level organisations where there are different regulations and procedures in force, and where there has been an overlap between different organisations and levels of government, making it difficult for the SAOs to do their work, particularly when responsibilities are shared.

⁷⁷⁶ Respondents 1, Respondent 5, Questionnaire. Ministry of the Interior 2 June 2008., Respondent 7, In-depth interview. Ministry of interior 28 June 2008.

⁷⁷⁷ Respondent 8, In-depth interview. Office of Local Administrative Organisation, Chiang Rai Province 4 July 2008.

The seniority system, which was originally based on the Thai culture and tradition was a cause of conflict.⁷⁷⁸ Disagreements over seniority among staff can be made worse when patronage is evident. Seniority within the SAOs influences work processes, particularly where solutions cannot be achieved after careful discussion.⁷⁷⁹ Generally, the seniors are the SAO executives and they decide whether a policy or working task should be approved.⁷⁸⁰ The conflicts generally involve the younger staff who find they cannot do anything much about it.⁷⁸¹

It is a Thai tradition that seniors are very important and that younger staff should treat them with respect and be very humble before them. But such customs do not necessarily help in carrying our government policy, and staff need to bear in mind that it is their roles which are important.⁷⁸² The respect shown to the seniors should be limited and only to a reasonable degree. This does not mean the younger staff should be obstinate or rude, but rather that SAO staff have to fulfil their roles and distinguish their roles and their work from personal issues. Where there is too much concern about seniority, the younger staff, especially those who hold higher positions or are expert in a specific area, do have difficulties in carrying out their work. Moreover, if this takes too long, the working system will be impracticable and time consuming as the younger staff spend time listening to the seniors for the sake of tradition. Such behaviour concerning seniority does not help the effective running of the system as a whole.⁷⁸³

9.4.4 Hierarchy and bureaucracy at the local level

Central government is necessarily the primary level of government so that it can govern the country effectively, but this has negative consequences for government at the local level working to implement decentralisation. The tendency towards centralisation not only reinforces the Thai bureaucratic system,

⁷⁷⁸ See more in Likhit Dhiravegin, *The Poo-yai-ism or the Seniority System*, [n.d.], <http://www.dhiravegin.com/detail.php?item_id=000459> [accessed 8 October 2008].

⁷⁷⁹ Respondent 23, Focus group interview. Rimkok Subdistrict Administrative Organisation 26 June 2008.

⁷⁸⁰ Respondent 12, In-depth interview. Yonok Subdistrict Administrative Organisation 19 June 2008.

⁷⁸¹ Respondent 21, Focus group interview. Rimkok Subdistrict Administrative Organisation 26 June 2008.

⁷⁸² Respondent 11, In-depth interview. Rimkok Subdistrict Administrative Organisation 18 June 2008.

⁷⁸³ Respondents 14 and 17, In-depth interview. San Sai Gnam Subdistrict Administrative Organisation 4 April 2008.

but also the hierarchy within the system. The lines of authority within the national administration are strengthened from time to time and affect the degree to which decentralisation occurs. Even though the government launched the decentralisation programme, the reality of the national administration means there is something missing from the decentralisation policy process. The SAOs, which are supposed to be accountable for implementing the decentralisation policy, are inhibited by the hierarchy within the bureaucratic system. Several points follow from this.

First, Thailand has a long tradition and practice of centralisation in government. The bureaucracy and hierarchy are very strong and central government, which has always played an important role, remains in command of the nation's affairs. This leaves provincial and local government working under the orders of central government with little or no opportunity to prepare themselves effectively for decentralisation.

Second, after the decentralisation programme was promulgated the SAOs found they were unable to perform their obligations effectively. The old and established bureaucratic system continued to operate over government at the local level and limit what the SAO could do.

Third, staff at higher levels, especially at the central level, are reluctant to transfer power to staff at the local level. Those staff at the higher government levels attempt to justify their hold on power by asserting that staff at the local level are not ready to perform their tasks under the decentralisation policy. Consequently, instead of allowing the government at the local level to carry out their responsibilities under decentralisation, central government staff continue to operate in a way that defeats much of the purpose of decentralisation. The result is that the SAOs find themselves in a major dilemma in not knowing what they can actually do.

Several SAO staff responded that hierarchy was always present, inhibiting and delaying their work in putting policy into action.⁷⁸⁴ In addition, some SAO respondents reported the continuing problem of overlap between organisations, especially at the provincial level. Consequently, they had to put

⁷⁸⁴ Respondents 12 and 14., Respondent 13, In-depth interview. Nong Rad Subdistrict Administrative Organisation 4 June 2008.

their work on hold and cross check with the relevant organisations before continuing their work.

9.4.5 Overlapping responsibilities between provincial and local government

There was overlap between SAOs and other organisations after the launch of the decentralisation policy. Some of the overlap occurred generally, and related to the transfer of power to the SAO from the former officials who were formerly responsible for responding to the organisations or responsibilities. Other overlap arose from the regulations and orders still being applied and subject to amendment or other adjustment. Overlap, or a lack of clarity over responsibilities, exists, first, between provincial and local governments and, second, between local organisations.

For SAOs, responsibilities are not clearly set out. Regulations are not always linked to one another, creating contradictory situations for SAOs, particularly in delaying the working processes. Such overlaps can be solved in time, but where neither the SAO nor the organisation the SAO is working with cannot continue their work, then there are unnecessary hold ups and tasks are not completed on time.

Overlap also occurs when the government makes grants to an SAO and to a local organisation where both of them are working on issues in the same area.⁷⁸⁵ This leaves staff confused and carries the risk that staff would ignore work on the issue concerned and leave it to another organisation. If both of them ignored the work then the public services would not be completed.

9.4.6 Limited autonomy

Another difficulty for SAOs which frustrates their capacity to implement the policy effectively is the degree of autonomy they have. Central government must be careful to ensure that SAOs have the autonomy they need for implementing the policy without unnecessary problems and delays. Several factors can influence the autonomy SAOs have, and end up by reducing the SAOs' autonomy.

⁷⁸⁵ Respondent 26, Focus group interview. Mae Chan Subdistrict Administrative Organisation 10 July 2008.

The autonomy provided by the central government is the main factor which enables the SAOs to implement the decentralisation programme and, in empowering SAOs, government needs to ensure there is sufficient autonomy granted to the SAOs for them to carry out their work. Further, the autonomy granted has to match the tasks given to the SAOs so they can work properly.

Almost all SAO staff mentioned the issue of autonomy in interviews, and reported that the autonomy they were granted was insufficient for them to carry out the policy.⁷⁸⁶ Other respondents, including staff at central and provincial levels and also a few SAO staff, considered that the autonomy they had was sufficient and suitable for their responsibilities. While respondents did report difficulties over the extent of the autonomy transferred to the SAOs, a more important problem was that the government transferred more obligations and responsibilities than the SAOs could carry out. Respondents among SAO staff who mentioned the issue of limited autonomy worked in the larger organisations rather than in the smaller ones. The larger SAOs have more responsibilities to look after. The issues of autonomy were also mentioned by respondents where an SAO could not exercise its autonomy because of an overlap among organisations.⁷⁸⁷

While there is an imbalance between the degree of autonomy and the extent of the responsibilities, the attitudes of SAO staff can also make their work less effective. Even though several SAO staff considered there was insufficient autonomy, there was no mention of how SAO staff could implement the policy more effectively even where the autonomy was insufficient. The different points of view expressed by respondents at different levels reveal the way staff at both provincial and district levels, and also the SAOs, understand the role, structure and organisation of government, and, in particular, that local government is a sub branch of government and can only have limited autonomy. The different points of view also reveal the lack of a positive attitude which some SAO staff bring to their work. SAO staff expressed much concern about the degree of autonomy but did not show enthusiasm to make an effort to do their best with the autonomy they had. Since some SAOs reported they could genuinely work under this condition without any problem, then it should be possible for other SAO staff to do the same.

⁷⁸⁶ Respondents 11, 12, 13, 14 and 17.

⁷⁸⁷ Respondents 28 and 29, Focus group. Mae Chan Subdistrict Administrative Organisation 10 July 2008.

9.4.7 Traditional forms of local leadership and SAOs

The traditional forms of local leadership have quite an impact on SAOs, and respondents reported there had been several occasions when traditional community leaders sought to influence and persuade SAO staff to do what they wanted them to do instead of following the government's policy.⁷⁸⁸ Several conditions give rise to this problem. First, there are the negative attitudes toward each other among community leaders and SAO staff. Staff are supposed to have a good attitude regarding their jobs and their colleagues, but it was obvious that several of them do not get along with one another, and this includes the community leaders as well as SAO staff.

Respondents indicated there were disputes between several of the community leaders and SAO staff with the result that they avoided interacting with each other. Their limited communication, participation and sharing of experiences indicated that there were hidden conflicts between them. In interviews, community leaders considered that SAOs do not have the capabilities and experience to work effectively.⁷⁸⁹ For their part, SAO staff saw the community leaders as meddling too much in the SAO's responsibilities.⁷⁹⁰ Respondents reported the negative attitudes of community leaders to SAO staff and that community leaders always underestimated SAO staff.⁷⁹¹

Second, the relationships between the community leaders and the SAO staff appear to be very cursory and delicate. Respondents revealed that only a few SAOs invited community leaders to participate in their work. The other SAOs refused to do that, arguing that the job descriptions were nothing to do with the community leaders. One respondent reported that conflicts arose when people misunderstood their role.⁷⁹² In the case of the traditional forms of local leadership, the community leaders, known as the phuyaibaan and the Kamnan, were on the boards of the TAO.⁷⁹³ The disputes among them can originate when the community leaders with politico-administrative responsibilities realise their

⁷⁸⁸ Respondent 25, Focus group interview. Rimkok Subdistrict Administrative Organisation 18 June 2008.

⁷⁸⁹ Respondent 11.

⁷⁹⁰ Respondent 19, Focus group interview. Pa Or Don Chai Subdistrict Administrative Organisation 16 June 2008.

⁷⁹¹ Respondent 20, Focus group interview. Pa Or Don Chai Subdistrict Administrative Organisation 16 June 2008.

⁷⁹² Respondent 7.

⁷⁹³ Respondents 42 and 43, In-depth interview. San Sai Gnam Subdistrict Administrative Organisation. 4 April 2008.

positions as legal entities have been undermined by the SAO becoming the effective legal entity, as well as being responsible for the management of the Tambon and associated villages.

In any case, even though both community leaders and SAO staff have differences and disputes, they can indeed cooperate regarding their duties. Respondents reported that despite their evident differences, they are required to work together.⁷⁹⁴

Third, besides the problems between community leaders and SAO staff, there are other people, who used to have a power within a local area, who are well respected by the community members, as well as the politicians, especially at national level, who also influence the SAO's policy implementation. Even though these people do not directly interfere with the SAOs work, their actions and comments can influence the ordinary people in the community,⁷⁹⁵ especially when those actions and comments are against the SAOs.

It is noticeable that, even though the problems between community leaders and the SAO staff are not severe, once tensions accumulate they can become bigger problems. In addition, it is the character of senior Thai people to always behave as appropriate as people who demand respect and they will remain silent when they do not agree with something.⁷⁹⁶ They remain silent and without any means of adjusting their differences and understandings, their relationships can worsen. The relationships will be very weak and the problems will affect good cooperation and teamwork necessary in working on policy implementation.

9.4.8 Limited and unstable revenue

The main reasons for establishing the SAOs was to provide a range of goods and services to the local people, and to assist the central government to work more effectively. The outcome of the policy implementation process should not only meet the government's expectations, but also should provide benefits to the local people. In addition to the different factors outlined above that influence the way in which SAOs are able to implement the policy, limited and unstable revenue is another of the problems faced by SAOs.

⁷⁹⁴ Respondents 19 and 20.

⁷⁹⁵ Respondent 11.

⁷⁹⁶ Respondent 8.

SAO staff respondents reported that the issue regarding inadequate and unstable revenue varies across the different SAOs, according to their local area. SAO respondents indicated it was not always an easy matter for them to spend the revenue they received to solve the whole array of problems before them. This was not because the revenue was considered to be below what had been set by central government in the national plan, but because the number and degrees of severity of the problems were considered to be beyond just the revenue allocated.⁷⁹⁷

Interestingly, some SAO staff respondents also indicated that the revenue and grants provided from the government were actually quite a reasonable amount. On one hand, the financial resources SAOs derive through local taxes and for special programmes, leaves very little for SAOs to use toward the significant or big projects they are planning to work on. On the other hand, with several projects and activities over and above the SAOs' routine responsibilities, SAOs can request supports from other organisations if they face any difficulty with insufficient funds.⁷⁹⁸

As mentioned in chapter 7, the policy implementation outcomes can result in lower standards after the implementation process is done. Several SAO staff respondents mentioned that this problem was related to the limited revenue. Most of them only said that the revenue was very tight and insufficient to continue implementing the policy.⁷⁹⁹ However, even though the revenue obtained from the government is inadequate, the SAOs are required to create activities to earn extra income, which assists the SAOs to gain more revenue. It also helps to fulfil the central government's aim of developing SAOs that can self govern. The government wishes to have SAOs that can actually work and carry out policy rapidly and effectively. SAO staff need to understand their situations and carefully work on their policy capacity, and to work under the condition of only limited revenue. If SAOs only complain and do nothing, waiting for the government to support them at all times, then they will never make any change. The SAOs will never develop the skills which will enhance their overall capabilities and get them to the stage where they can rely on themselves. It is the aim of central

⁷⁹⁷ Respondents 26 and 27, Focus group. Mae Chan Subdistrict Administrative Organisation 10 July 2008.

⁷⁹⁸ Respondent 23.

⁷⁹⁹ Respondent 28.

government to establish the SAOs so they can lighten the load, and as this happens then the government will be able to support and encourage them.

9.4.9 Lack of participation in planning and decision-making processes

Although promoting the decentralisation policy, Thailand's national administration continues to be dominated by a 'top-down' perspective, which gives the local people less opportunity in political participation.⁸⁰⁰ Respondents noted that the SAOs did not have a public relations programme for working within the community.⁸⁰¹ Even though SAOs arrange public hearings in order to announce proposals and programmes and to listen to the opinions of community members on their plans or new projects,⁸⁰² very few people really know about it.

As mentioned by the participants, SAO public hearings or activities are sometimes not announced in sufficient time that people can prepare themselves to participate. In addition, the announcements are also limited to a small area and are not spread out as much as they should be.⁸⁰³ There are, therefore, limited numbers of people who actually have the opportunities to participate and notice what their SAO is doing.

In addition to the public relations programmes and public hearings, SAOs generally report progress on the outcomes of policies in written form, and made available in the form of a pamphlet. However, these cannot convey much information to the people. Even though SAOs make an annual report, which comes out in the form of documents or booklets, only a few people get that information. The people who live in the local area do not actually take much notice about such reports. Respondents mentioned that although the SAOs report on policy outcomes and yearly activities through documents or booklets,⁸⁰⁴ those reports are indeed neglected. The booklets are only distributed to some people and organisations,⁸⁰⁵ with the ordinary people not receiving the information.⁸⁰⁶ People then tend to think that SAOs only work on their own and never invite other people to be involved. Furthermore, this can lead people to

⁸⁰⁰ See chapter 7 for more information on lack of people participation in planning and making decision.

⁸⁰¹ Respondent 13.

⁸⁰² Respondent 12.

⁸⁰³ Respondent 15.

⁸⁰⁴ Respondent 20.

⁸⁰⁵ Respondent 17.

⁸⁰⁶ Respondent 14.

conclude that SAOs are not transparent, and that they present an opportunity for corruption.

To prevent the consequences of such a lack of public awareness, SAOs need to call public meetings where they inform the people about their programmes and plans, and report the outcomes of the previous programmes to the local people regularly.⁸⁰⁷ This would bring transparency to the SAOs' policy implementation, and also communicate to the community the benefits being achieved. This would in itself promote more community participation and cooperation.

9.4.10 Administrative rules and regulations issued by central government

As mentioned earlier, Thailand's national administration is highly bureaucratic, and the public administration system is highly centralised.⁸⁰⁸ Hierarchy always plays an important role at all government levels. As long as the bureaucratic system plays such a central and important role, there will be difficulties, particularly for lower level staff, arising from hierarchy. At the local level, SAOs constantly face problems with the hierarchical system at the higher levels and the way it inhibits policy implementation, and delays their work.⁸⁰⁹ With the layers of the working process, SAO staff have to follow the process, step by step and level by level.

It is noticeable that respondents at the higher levels did not mention anything about hierarchy. They had accepted it and become used to the hierarchy of authority as part of the national administration. SAO staff did mention hierarchy and the way it frequently influences their work. It is clear that hierarchy is significant and is unavoidable, particularly for SAO staff. The hierarchy is maintained in an effort to make certain that all government organisations will run effectively, but there are also problems, which arise through the reliance on hierarchy, particularly where government wants to make changes to the administrative processes, or adjust performances and solve problems involving

⁸⁰⁷ Respondent 15.

⁸⁰⁸ UNESCAP, *Local Government Structure in Thailand (Local Government Structure and Decentralisation of Autonomy)*, NESCAP Virtual Conference, [n.d.], <http://www.unescap.org/drpad/vc/orientation/M4_anx_3.htm> [accessed 6 June 2009].

⁸⁰⁹ Respondents 12-14.

the hierarchy. The national administrative system can perform expeditiously with fewer obstacles.

Another area of difficulty for the SAOs arising from decentralisation is the sophisticated way in which regulations, issued by central government, are expressed. It can be very difficult for staff at the local level to understand what the regulations are saying. As mentioned earlier, staff recruitment processes for the SAOs are different from those for staff at higher levels. Developing a common understanding of regulations across all staff, from the SAO to the higher levels, is very difficult and challenging.

SAO staff generally have only limited experience for their work and their educational backgrounds are not high, which means that SAO staff have difficulty in engaging their performance in policy implementation. Several SAO staff who reported difficulty regarding the sophisticated regulations struggled when they had to interpret policy. SAO respondents mentioned that the problem of complicated regulations generally occurs together with the problem of overlap, which will be explained further below.

9.4.11 SAO staff capacities to implement policy

As noted above, SAO staff capacities to implement policies are limited, leaving only a limited number of staff who can work on the policy implementation process.⁸¹⁰ Several of them acknowledged having difficulty in working in their role under decentralisation, because of their lack of knowledge of, and experiences in, decentralisation. In addition, there were the requirements of the bureaucratic system. But most of all, SAO staff displayed very limited and inadequate experience to carry out policy. First, SAO staff lack the capacity in management.

For policy implementation to succeed there needs to be sufficient staff, at each level of government. Some SAO respondents said there were not enough staff, while others had no problem with this issue. Organisations mentioning inadequate levels of staffing do not reveal whether it is a matter of inadequate staffing levels or whether it is about the limited capabilities of the existing staff to carry out the policy.

⁸¹⁰ Respondents 42-44, Respondents from target focus group interviews. Paa Sak Subdistrict Administrative Organisation 17 January 2007, Respondents from target focus group interviews. Tasood Subdistrict Administrative Organisation 23 January 2007.

Second, SAO staff lack the capacity in working in the policy implementation process. Several times SAO respondents reported difficulty in implementing policy. If SAO staff lack the necessary expertise, understanding and skills, then they will be unable to solve the problems. Where there is a lack of expertise SAO staff can improve their skills by participating in the training programmes offered by the government. While attending training programmes is helpful, staff also need to develop and practice their skills and experience in working on the policy implementation process.

Besides shortcomings in managing the implementation process and working towards it, several SAO staff appeared to misunderstand, or to not understand, their role and duties. This is particularly important when it comes to working with other organisations in carrying out their tasks. SAO staff need to be able to cross check with the other organisations whose duties overlap with those of the SAO staff.⁸¹¹ Failure to do this makes for difficulties and brings confusion to their role and duties, while also delaying the policy implementation process.⁸¹² In misunderstanding their role and duties, on several occasions SAO staff overlapped with staff in other organisations.⁸¹³

Even though the SAOs were established in 1995, several staff members are still not focused on the requirements and implications of decentralisation. When the SAOs were first established it could be argued that staff were inexperienced⁸¹⁴ and required more time to improve. Nevertheless, this no longer applies. Ten years is sufficient time for staff to develop and resolve the problems of the decentralisation policy. Where staff at all levels of government are complacent about their work, the decentralisation policy will not be launched and implemented effectively.

9.4.12 Unclear policy

In evaluating the implementation of decentralisation, it is important to keep in mind that the way SAOs work on the policy are different from those staff at

⁸¹¹ Respondents 21, 22, 23 and 25, Focus group interviews. Rimkok Subdistrict Administrative Organisation 26 June 2008.

⁸¹² Respondents 36-39.

⁸¹³ Respondent 11.

⁸¹⁴ Respondent 10, In-depth interview, Office of Local Administrative Organisation, Chiang Rai Province 5 August 2008.

higher levels. Nevertheless, SAOs have to work within the national policy frameworks and other regulations which they are required to follow consistently.

Three reasons for policy being unclear are: 1) national government policies are not clear to SAO staff; 2) policies are well made but there was a gap in communicating the policy between policy makers and policy implementers; and 3) policies are well made but the SAO staff have difficulty in interpreting and following the policies. Several SAO staff respondents mentioned that central government policies were unclear for SAO staff. They mentioned there had been many times when SAO staff had been confused in interpreting policies. SAO staff also reported difficulties in determining the scope of policies, particularly when those policies were linked with the regulations, and which also related to other organisations. Some of the overlap of regulations may not be real, but just appear to overlap.

Respondents reported that this problem occurs when SAO staff are uncertain or misunderstand the policies, sometimes because the policy contains too many details. Where parts of the policy are associated with legal interpretations then this also creates a lack of understanding. With limited capacities, SAO staff find it is difficult to implement policies.⁸¹⁵ Because of this, SAO staff have to make sure they do not work against other organisations' regulations and procedures. In addition, with different regulations, performances, and rules the staff come across to policy interpretations which do not coincide with one another. SAO staff cannot even scope the policy content to the same degree as that expected by central government⁸¹⁶ because the SAOs also have to adapt the policies to suit their local limited conditions.

SAO staff respondents mentioned that the regulations and procedures in each organisation, for example, the municipalities, SAOs, and other local organisations, do vary in various ways. There are several times where regulations contrast with others or overlap with one another.⁸¹⁷ To solve this problem government should put all procedures on the same track, so that all government organisations follow the same procedures. This would do much to ensure public services can be performed more rapidly and effectively.

⁸¹⁵ Respondents 42-44.

⁸¹⁶ Respondents 13, 25, 38.

⁸¹⁷ Respondent 42.

9.5 Conclusion

The SAOs are the local organisation at the lowest level of the government administrative system and play an important role in the government's goal of decentralisation. In the case of Chiang Rai SAOs, it can be seen that the SAO staff face several problems caused by the government at central level, such as problems regarding administrative structures, ambiguous regulations issued by central government, and limited revenue, resources and autonomy. Problems stemming from traditional forms of leadership and the staff capabilities also lead to difficulties in implementation. As long as these issues remain unaddressed, it is difficult to anticipate that the SAOs can actually accomplish the decentralisation policy and reach the goal.

Chapter X

Summary, Conclusions and Recommendations

10.1 Introduction

During the late 20th century, decentralisation played an important role in the governance of several countries, especially in Western and Asian states. In European countries with histories and backgrounds based on strong national governments, decentralisation was more widespread. In these states, vital democratic governance led to a people inculcated with the mechanisms through which they are able to realise their roles. Thus, when their governments promoted decentralisation, the people were able to respond with ease. In contrast to their European counterparts, Asian countries exhibited a characteristic of decentralisation, which revealed a more utilitarian approach to local self-government. In several Asian states, differing drivers of decentralisation resulted in a range of economic and administrative reforms. In Thailand, decentralisation was adopted to foster a mixture of economic, administrative and political reforms.

Whether governments look to decentralisation as a means of achieving democratic political outcomes, fostering economic development or social reforms, or as a response to a community's wish to have greater control over their affairs, decentralisation has been adopted to involve much greater participation by officials and people at the local level. In some countries however, decentralisation is still controlled by their central government which maintains the government's authority.

This thesis has focused on Thailand's decentralisation and policy implementation through the case study of the Subdistrict Administrative Organisation (SAO), which is the foundation unit of Thailand's local government system. In developing decentralisation policy, the process and other factors which influence decentralisation are discussed below.

10.1.1 Aim

Thailand's first seven National Plans strongly promoted economic development, economic stability, economic structural adjustment, and poverty eradication in both rural and urban areas, rather than on social development,

which caused an imbalance in economic development between the big cities and the remote areas. Not only was there a drift of people moving from the rural areas to the big cities, especially to Bangkok and surrounding provinces, seeking employment, there was also big gap in the income and living standards between those people who lived in Bangkok and surrounding provinces, and those who lived in the remote areas.

The main purpose of the decentralisation policy was to balance the development of human, social, economic and environmental resources to achieve sustainable people-centred development, as well as to promote sustainable development at all levels of society. In order to eliminate the gap between rural and urban areas, and to ensure people remained living in their local areas, attention was given to improving their quality of life through the creation of employment opportunities and enhanced local services - education, health, and other amenities - through the promotion of decentralisation.

10.1.2 The Process

The Thai government embarked on a long-term development plan and outlined a policy of decentralisation as part of the 1997 Constitution and through the work of the Social and Economic Developments Plans, particularly the Ninth and Tenth Plans. The prime objectives of this development included:

1. Balancing the development of human, social, economic and environmental resources to achieve sustainable people-centred development, as discussed in chapter 5;
2. Decentralising administrative power to local people, as discussed in chapter 6; and
3. Revitalising participation by local people in community development affairs and to empower people in the decision-making process at the Tambon and village levels, as discussed in chapter 6.

In pursuit of decentralisation policy, all government officials and staff, especially those at the local level, were encouraged to enhance their capabilities and work more effectively, and Thai people were also strongly encouraged to participate in decision-making processes and in the monitoring of the government officials' operations more fully. To be effective, local government staff needed to

understand fully and be well practised in the government's plans for good governance.

10.1.3 Early steps toward decentralisation

In initiating and promulgating the National Economic and Social Development Plans the Thai government consistently failed to recognise the prospect that the Plans could not actually be delivered in reality. In theory, while the documents discussed the importance of the developing, thriving, economic, political and social communities, in practice, however, not every Plan contained strategies to achieve the intended outcomes.

The decentralisation process and the principles of good governance contained in the Ninth Plan were launched too soon. As discussed in chapter 7 and 8, neither the officials nor the Thai people were ready to respond to the concept of a decentralisation policy. In addition, the officials and Thai people had not had time to prepare themselves for the new decentralised national administrative system. In other words, while in some areas the local staff and community were prepared to respond to the call for decentralisation, in others, there was a lack of will and understanding of the true essence of decentralisation. To simply introduce the concept of decentralisation with the promise of good outcomes without considering how best to achieve that end, as governments globally have done, consigns the process to failure.

The government promulgated its decentralisation policy through the Ninth National Plan but its national administrative system did not allow decentralisation to be practised at the local level. Several factors affecting the decentralisation policy were based on cultural and political practices, such as the tendency toward centralisation and the hierarchical administrative system, which became an obstacle inhibiting the successful implementation of the decentralisation policy. First, while the government attempted to launch the decentralisation policy and the principle of good governance through the National Plan, these concepts were new to the officials, especially those tasked with putting the policy into practice. The Plan was not specific as to how officials were to respond. As a result, those officials with little understanding of the new scheme of the national administrative system, could not implement the policy effectively.

Second, the long-standing systemic tradition of a highly centralised national administration, where central government played a major role in providing resources and implementing policies effectively and rapidly, reinforced local government's subordinate position. The 'bottom-up' approach has simply not been part of the Thai psyche. This impacted on the local level officials' ability to work independently, as they had worked under the command of the central government for so long, as discussed in chapter 7.

Third, during the implementation of the decentralisation policy, there was still a lack of people's participation and working practice under good governance. The 'top-down' approach continued in the national administrative system, which was opposite to the concept of decentralisation. Adherence to the national bureaucratic system and centralisation did not change. Accordingly, the mission of the Ninth Plan, to strengthen the local administration system, did not work effectively, as discussed in chapter 7.

10.1.4 Solution

The Ninth Plan, with its promulgation of decentralisation and the principles of good governance, delivered an average degree of success. The Tenth Plan contained a greater emphasis on ensuring the successful development of decentralisation policy through the inclusion of a number of strategies. Under the Tenth Plan, decentralisation, good governance and the sufficiency economy philosophy were extensively promoted. It also included guidelines designed to accelerate the development of laws to support efficient and effective implementation of the plan's strategies. These included 1) studying and researching bodies of knowledge, 2) learning processes to support implementation of the strategies of the Tenth Plan, 3) developing systems of monitoring and evolution, 4) devising indicators of development outcomes at all levels, and 5) developing databases and networks at all levels linking central, regional and local administrative bodies. As a result, the government was able to follow the progress of the plan more easily.

The Tenth Plan also recommended four additional guidelines for major development strategies in creating good governance and strengthening decentralisation, as noted in chapter 5. However, more support and encouragement from the government were required to oversee and supervise the officials in ensuring that the national administrative system was effective. At the

time of writing this thesis, the Tenth Plan is still being implemented, so the outcome of the plan cannot yet be evaluated.

10.1.5 Discussion

Thailand's decentralisation program

Even though provincial and local level governments are part of the national administrative structure, and decentralisation is about transferring responsibilities from the national government to the local level, local government still remains part of, and under the supervision and control of, central government. The government still needs to further develop its officials and strengthen the national administrative system to sustain its decentralisation policy.

First, there needs to be a good understanding of decentralisation among officials at all levels. As discussed in chapter 4, although the government promoted decentralisation, central government continued to play an important role in conducting the country. While the adherence to the 'top-down' approach was a way of guaranteeing that national policies were effective, staff at higher levels were reluctant to see power transferred to local staff, as outlined in chapter 8. From this, since everything had to be determined at the national level, and local government could only represent government in carrying out policies, it could not fully exercise authority. Therefore, there was little possibility of successfully developing decentralisation.

Second, only a few government officials at the local level understood what was required under decentralisation and faced difficulties in seeking the best way to respond to the policy, leaving central government still playing a vital role in local government. In the case of Thailand, with its long tradition of centralisation, the first steps of policy implementation must be inclusive of central government support and assistance to local government to ensure local government can implement the policy effectively. However, the degree of control must be lessened to allow local government to gradually become independent.

Third, to facilitate the local level to perform its responsibilities, clear job descriptions are needed at all government levels to define the parameters of the governance at each level of the national administration. As discussed in chapter

7, an overlap and lack of clarity concerning the respective responsibilities of provincial and local government is another matter that limits the success of decentralisation. The rules of procedure the local staff are required to follow are, sometimes, too complicated, as noted in chapters 7, 8, and 9. Therefore, it is essential that the government review the relevant rules of procedure and codes of law so that they are in accord with one another, thereby eliminating overlap and ambiguity regarding responsibilities.

Fourth, policy implementation can potentially be a problem if there is a lack of mentoring and supervision of staff at the lower levels. This is a sensitive issue as the degree of support and resourcing must be in the right proportion. Whether central government provides too much or too little assistance, either way the policy can be inhibited. Yet, regardless of providing mentoring and supervision, if the government does not provide sufficient revenue, autonomy and education of the principles of decentralisation, the successful implementation of policy will continue to face difficulties.

Subdistrict Administrative Organisation

Although SAOs have been established for over a decade, they have had difficulties in performing their responsibilities effectively from time to time. The problems the SAOs face in general are as follows.

- As discussed in chapter 6, three different conditions have a significant impact on the establishment and operation of SAOs: the territory covered, the number of villages in the area, and SAO revenue. An SAO's area may include a lot of forest, while other SAOs have a large number of villages. As a result, some SAOs have difficulty in generating revenue they can earn from special activities to develop their localities and cover expenses.
- As discussed in chapter 8, old centres of power in the locality make it difficult for SAO staff to promote decentralisation and good governance as set out in the Ninth National Economic and Social Development Plan.
- There has been some controversy about central government's intentions regarding decentralisation in view of insufficient autonomy being granted to SOAs. This argument was mentioned in every SAO where the research interviews took place.

- There was controversy over the lack of revenue granted by central government to support the SAOs. For many of those interviewed this was one of the big issues affecting the work of SAOs. As mentioned in chapters 7 and 8, this argument was raised as part of the argument about the capability of SAOs to manage their revenue provided by the government. However, as was also discussed, this problem of limited revenue originated at the time the SAOs were established.
- Overlaps in responsibilities occur between the SAOs and some other organisations, especially at provincial and local levels. Even though the SAO has the authority to fulfil and perform its obligations, sometimes the SAO has difficulties in their dealings and work with other organisations and has to wait while other organisations consider the matter.
- Despite the theory of decentralisation, there are controversies about what autonomy SAOs should have. As outlined in chapters 7, 8, and 9, staff at national and provincial levels consider that the autonomy granted to SAOs by central government is sufficient for the SAO to work and achieve its responsibilities. However, staff in SAOs and other organisations see the autonomy as insufficient.
- Policies determined by central government are sometimes unclear to SAO staff, causing major problems because implementers face difficulties in interpreting the policy. In implementing policy, local government agencies may do things differently from what the government expects, with different degrees of success depending on conditions, environment and areas where staff work.
- Conflicts occur both outside and inside the SAO. The outside conflicts arise between SAO staff and ordinary people over the understanding each has of decentralisation. The internal conflicts can have a significant influence on an SAO's policy implementation. Chapters 7 and 8 outlined several conflicts within the SAO. When those in conflict avoid interaction with one another, the work of the SAO suffers through the lack of good teamwork. This influences an SAO's performance of its responsibilities in developing the locality.
- A problem of patronage may exist among SAO staff, especially between executive and administrative staff. In addition, as noted in chapter 6, patronage also occurs between SAO staff and the people who were formerly leaders in the local area.

- Even though the SAO was established over a decade ago, SAO staff do not understand as much as they are expected to know. As discussed in chapters 3 and 4, local government has experienced little self-governance. When the SAO became more autonomous after the 1997 constitution, members of the SAO council and commission achieved their positions through election, while ex-officio SAO members were discontinued. This development presented difficulties for the SAO at times due to the different requirements of working under decentralisation.
- The lack of popular participation in the local area makes difficulties for the SAO in working with the local people and gaining support and cooperation from the community members.
- SAO staff need to show their commitment to the organisation and show themselves to be part of it and, in that way, convince the community that the SAO staff really work for it. From this, as noted in chapter 7, the SAO will not only gain advantages by having assistance and support from the local people, but also they will have more opportunity to know the real problem that their local area requires to be developed.

10.2 The propositions

In chapter 2, a total of 15 propositions, derived from the discussion of policy implementation, were set out. The linkages between the theoretical framework and the research findings are outlined below.

- 1) Policy implementation is best understood by looking at the goals and strategies adopted in the statute (Birkland).

Policy implementation must be concerned with the goals and strategies to be adopted; however this research finds that paying attention to goals and strategies does not guarantee that the policy implementation process will succeed.

In Thailand, decision makers at the top level make the policy but implementation of the policy is often difficult. Goals are often ambiguous in the complex policy contexts, with the result that local staff face difficulties in putting the policy into practice effectively. When front-line staff at the local level are not able to respond well to the policy conceived at the top level, they either modify or

ignore some points of the policy contexts in order to make the policy suit the local conditions. Certainly, the outcomes of the policy implementation vary according to how well local level staff can respond to the policy, as noted in chapter 7. Understanding the goals and strategies is important in understanding policy implementation but, in the end, policy implementation depends on the capabilities and capacities of those doing the implementing.

- 2) Policy implementation is best understood from the lowest level of the implementation system (Birkland).

As noted in chapter 2, several scholars agree that street-level staff play an important role in the policy implementation process. However, this research finds that policy implementation is not always best understood from the lowest level of the implementation system, particularly where the policy formulated from the top level is inappropriate. The government is certainly responsible for determining the policy and the SAO staff are responsible for putting the policy into practice, yet the policy implementation process may not be carried out fully. Central government needs to understand how SAO staff respond to, and implement, the policy. At the lowest level the policy can go awry through the limited capabilities or lack of experience of the front-line staff. Nevertheless, as noted in chapter 7, several SAO staff mentioned the difficulties in interpreting and understanding the policy context. At other times there was an overlap between organisations, or SAO staff could not put the policy into practice effectively due to limited funding provided by the government. While front-line staff can by their own actions, cause policy failure, the policy itself must be appropriate and implementable as well.

- 3) The policy implementation process is best understood by analysing and organising policy from its end points (Elmore).

As noted in chapter 7, even though the policy is developed by central government, the policy implementation approach is modified, as SAO staff either ignore or adjust some points of the policy context for a better outcome or to suit local conditions, and as the SAO staff seek the assistance of other government organisations in carrying out their responsibilities.

Policy makers at central level have little knowledge of whether a policy is carried out in the way they proposed or whether it is even appropriate to an

SAO's local conditions. The policy implementation process covers all stages, from the initiation of the policy until the front-line staff have put the policy into practice. The policy maker must be concerned about how the policy is implemented at the street level, as they are the ones who experience the policy the most. With the benefit of the experience of front-line staff and their feedback, policy makers are able to initiate more appropriate policy in the future. Accordingly, this proposition is supported by this research.

- 4) The 'top-down' approach is better where there is a dominant programme such as where the law is well-structured, where there are limited funds, and where there is a situation that someone requires a programme structure quickly. Nevertheless, the 'bottom-up' approach is better when there is no single dominant programme, or where interest is expressed in the dynamics of the policy implementation process at the local level (Sabatier).

This research shows that the 'top-down' approach is better where there is a dominant program if the policy implementers are well trained and have sufficient experience. The research findings show that the implementers who can respond to the decentralisation policy most effectively are those at the central and provincial levels, for instance, the 'top-down'. However, policy implementers at the local level still have difficulties in putting the policy into practice because they need to take a more comprehensive approach to achieve a better outcome.

In the case of Sabatier's proposition that the 'bottom-up' approach is better when there is no single dominant program, the research findings of this study show that only the SAO staff who have sufficient capabilities and skills, and sufficient revenue, can respond fully to the policy. SAO staff who do not have the capabilities and skills needed still face difficulties in interpreting the policy content and have to request assistance from other organisations. Staff at the provincial level are the people who offer advice and guidelines to SAO staff, so that they can continue to implement the decentralisation policy.

- 5) Clear messages sent by credible officials and received by receptive implementers who have or are given sufficient resources and who implement policies supported by affected groups lead to implementation success (Goggin).

Clear messages from the government organisation at higher levels are very significant for SAO staff in implementing the policy correctly. This research finds that even though the SAO staff sometimes have their difficulties in implementing policies when they are ambiguous and complicated, the staff at the Office of Local Administration can assist the SAO staff to continue their work through to the end. This is particularly the case when dealing with policy related to legal terms. From this, the research study supports Goggin's proposition that it is very significant that the government must provide policy implementers with clear messages and sufficient resources.

- 6) Even though policy makers aspire to develop appropriate policies, there is no guarantee the implementation process will be successful because policy drift can shift policy aims and later make the objective of the policy go awry (John).

This research supports the proposition there is no guarantee that the policy implementation process will be successful. Many factors affect the implementation process, including the capabilities of the staff to interpret the policy, the local conditions that will affect the policy implementation process, the approach of the implementers in delivering the policy, the clarity of the policy, the resources allocated to the SAO and the assistance available to SAO staff.

Even though policy drift does not obviously occur as SAO staff follow the working plan, it has been noticeable that SAO staff do adjust their approach to make policy fit the local conditions. Accordingly, the policy implementation outcome can be different from what the government expects, as noted in chapter 7.

- 7) If implementation is defined as putting policy into effect, that is, action in conformity with policy, then compromise will be seen as a policy failure. But if implementation is regarded as 'getting something done', then performance rather than conformity is the central objective, and compromise a means of achieving performance, albeit at the expense of some of the original intentions (Barrett and Fudge).

According to Barrett and Fudge, policy implementation failure may be understood as the top level actor trying to get the lower actor to conform to their

policy expectations. From this, instead of controlling policy execution or objectives, policy implementation should be seen as a negotiating process in order to avoid implementation failure. It should be acceptable for local level staff to modify the policy implementation process as long as the goals are met.

This statement is supported by the research findings, as noted in chapter 7, because in practice, the SAO staff hardly respond in accordance with policy, but only attempt their best to make it as possible as they can. This happens as different organisations have different factors that influence the policy implementation process, and they are different from the government's intentions. However, where local staff do modify the policy implementation process, as long as it is within the setting and scope of the policy, it should be acceptable as long as the goals are met.

- 8) Policy implementers may know what to do and have sufficient desire and resources to do it, but they may still be hampered in implementation by the structures of the organisations in which they serve (Edwards).

Policy implementers may know what to do and have sufficient desire and resources to do it, but they may still be hampered in implementation by the structures of the organisation. Edwards identifies two significant factors inhibiting policy implementers as 1) standard operating procedures and 2) fragmentation. Standard operating procedures are routines that allow the policy implementers to make their everyday decisions. Even though by using the standard operating procedures officials can save time by avoiding making individual judgements about specific situations, there is a possibility that the standard operating procedures are inappropriate to the policy initiated by the government.

This research shows that where SAO staff face difficulties in making decisions because they are not sure what to do, they check with staff from a different SAO or with officials at a higher level to make certain that what they do is appropriate, as noted in chapter 7.

With fragmentation, responsibility for a policy area is dispersed among several organisation units with too many government organisations and government agencies responding to a particular policy, giving rise to difficulties in making decisions in policy implementation.

This research finds that the SAO staff face difficulties arising from fragmentation, rather than from the standard operating procedures. Normally, SAO staff follow the plan that has been already approved by central government and, unless there is an emergency, follow the standard operating procedures.

However, there are many government organisations and officials working in Thailand's administrative system, as noted in chapter 3. This gives rise to difficulties for SAOs in working with other organisations because they always face problems according to overlap with other government organisation at higher levels. As a result, the SAOs cannot continue their obligations, and have to wait for the problem to be solved.

9) One of the critical resources in policy implementation is clear and concise information. If policies are innovative and highly technical, the implementers need to have sufficient information, a clear context, direction, and structure (Edwards, Sabatier, Paul and Mazmanian).

Because decentralisation is so new to government officials, including the SAO staff, government must provide local government agencies with assistance to strengthen implementation of the decentralisation policy. This research shows that Thailand's adherence to centralisation means that staff at the local level have few opportunities to exercise their authority. Front-line staff continue to rely on the national government for direction. Consequently, staff who are expected to put the policy into practice are not able to do so effectively.

As noted in chapter 7, staff have different understandings of the decentralisation policy. Local staff do not have the capabilities and experience, and have difficulty with interpreting the policy context particularly where legal terms are used, in dealing with issues of overlap with other organisations, and where their job descriptions are not clear. They also find themselves having directions which are unclear and are not concise, or even when there is not sufficient information to follow in making a decision. This always causes confusion and uncertainty about the policy or what is to be done. Moreover, to solve the problem, local staff have to ask other SAOs to check whether they understand the same thing. If what they understand coincides then they continue their work. But if not, they will call staff at the provincial level, depending on the area of the job.

- 10) Policy implementation must be supported by sufficient funding otherwise the task cannot be accomplished (Kelman).

Funding is one of the most important factors in the success of the policy implementation process. This research finds that the lack of government funding seriously inhibits the policy implementation process. As noted in chapter 7, the SAOs have only limited funding, and when other organisations request financial support from the SAO this leaves the SAO with little in reserve to carry out their responsibilities. This problem appears when there are too many duties transferred to the SAOs to accomplish, but there is only limited revenue for undertaking all the duties.

In addition, according to the law, even though the SAO can earn additional revenue, it is very difficult for them to earn much because the amount of income they can earn depends on the size of the population, the type of property the SAO owned, the amount of infrastructure facilities and services, and the sources of donation in each local area. Consequently, the SAOs have had to request further assistance from higher levels to continue with their projects.

- 11) Implementation orders must be consistent as well as clear if policy implementation is to be effective. Transmitting contradictory instructions does not make it easy for operational personnel to expedite implementation. Nevertheless, implementers are at times burdened with inconsistent directives (Edwards).

To implement the policy effectively is difficult, but to put the policy into practice while the implementation orders are inconsistent is even more difficult. In theory, the government attempts to promote a decentralisation policy and empower the SAO to play an important role at the local level. In practice, the government has not shown much concern about assisting the SAOs to be able to work under its decentralisation policy. There are three reasons for this. First, the SAOs do not have the autonomy to work under the government's decentralisation policy, as noted in chapter 7. Second, working with other organisations gives rise to difficulties for the SAOs because the regulations, precedence, and responsibilities practiced by those different organisations have not been revised and updated and they continue to operate as before. Consequently, SAOs face

difficulties arising from the overlap which occurs when there are more than two government organisations involved, as discussed in chapter 7. Third, the SAOs have limited revenue in order to carry out the policy because of the limited revenue from government at the higher level, and the limited income SAOs can earn in their local areas, also noted in chapter 7. As a result, SAOs are not able to implement the policy effectively. This point is also relevant to Kelman's as mentioned above.

- 12) A prime cause of implementation failure arises because the policy contents or policy characteristics are ambiguous for government agencies to implement. While those who are policy-makers require implementers to be competent and to respond to the policies correctly, ambiguous policies may lead the frontline workers to interpret the policies in different ways (Rawson, Hill and Hupe).

As SAO staff understand and put the policy into practice as the government intends, the more likely the policy of decentralisation will be implemented effectively. Where the policies are ambiguous then SAO staff will apply their individual knowledge and experience to make their policy implementation process more effective.

Generally, SAO representatives have more difficulty interpreting the policy than SAO staff who are appointed. They have less experience and knowledge of working under the administrative system. When the two groups have to work together, some issues invariably cause conflict because they disagree on what should be done, as noted in chapter 7.

This is a significant and serious point for the government because the objective of decentralisation policy is to allow SAOs to serve the local people. As SAO staff have difficulties in interpreting policy they apply their individual interpretation to the policy implementation process, and this can become risky for the success of the policy initiative.

- 13) Street-level staff bring their individual background and experiences to the implementation process: their individual judgements, values, opinions, experience, history and background, influence how they interpret and apply policy directions (John, Hill & Hupe).

This research finds that individual background and experiences are very significant to the policy implementation. When the SAO staff implement policy, they sometimes brought their understanding and experience into their implementation of the policy. Even though they realised that they could not modify the policy, the SAO staff could only interpret and implement the policy differently depending on their individual educational backgrounds, their working techniques, and their good relationships with the provincial and local level. With the combination of limited staff capabilities and experiences, together with the many different factors and conditions faced by SAOs during the policy implementation process, they result in different degrees of success in implementing the decentralisation policy, as discussed in chapter 7.

- 14) Many factors can determine the success or failure of policy implementation, including regional factors, the local context, cultural practices, the mix of ethnicities, assumptions around gender, economic forces, changes in social and economic conditions, the availability of new technology, and the political circumstances of the target group (Jackson, Hill & Hupe, Howlett & Ramesh).

This research finds that local conditions are a major influence on policy implementation. For instance, as noted in chapter 7, the Nong Rad SAO sometimes faced difficulty in putting the policy into practice due to the range and mixture of ethnicities, which means that they have to deal with the different cultural and traditional issues before carrying out their obligations.

This research also finds that another factor inhibiting SAOs' policy implementation processes come from cultural factors, especially the influence of traditional local leadership. Those community leaders who have good relationships with the SAO staff can work together well, as they offer assistance, share experiences and provide suggestions. As a result, the SAO's policy implementation can be delivered effortlessly. Where there is conflict between

traditional community leaders and the SAO staff then relationships between them are strained. As noted in chapter 8, this problem normally involves three factors:

1) The differences in educational backgrounds between the SAO staff and the former community leaders;

2) A reluctance to share power between the executives and the administrators which occurs when community leaders have not accepted that their roles, responsibilities and power changed after the law change in 1999;

3) The community leaders still have some power over the local community. The people who live in the local area continue to pay respect to those community leaders and show little attention to the new concept of decentralisation and the SAO because they do not believe that the SAO can perform their obligation as well as those former officers did, as discussed in chapter 8.

These conflicts between the community leaders and the SAO staff are not obvious, but they affect and inhibit the SAO's policy implementation because there is a lack of local participation, and the local people are uncertain whether the SAO staff have sufficient capability to provide goods and services to the community, as noted in chapter 7.

15) Coordination and collaboration problems between organisations at the vertical level may impede the policy implementation process because of gaps or breakdowns between the multi-layers of governments (Hill & Hupe).

According to this research, central and local government staff follow their working routines and respective duties, and rely on the exchange of documents rather than relying on verbal exchanges. However, conflicts do happen among the staff at the SAO level, especially among staff in the same organisation. These conflicts can be due to personal issues and attitudes. Conflict among SAO staff needs to be addressed because the staff need to work together. When they attempt to avoid interacting with one another, then the policy implementation can go awry, as noted in chapter 7.

In addition, the research found that SAO staff do not understand decentralisation in the way other staff at higher levels do, and that this can affect the government's decentralisation policy. This gap between staff at different

levels can be very serious, especially if there are poor working links between the different levels. Also, when SAO staff are unable to interpret the policy in the way the government officials at higher level do, then there are difficulties in putting the policy into practice, as noted in chapter 7.

10.3 Conclusion

This thesis contributes to the theory of policy implementation in accordance with the 'top-down' and 'bottom-up' approaches as they influence policy implementation, whether successfully or unsuccessfully. The thesis also contributes to the theory of policy implementation failure in relation to both the 'top-down' and 'bottom-up' perspectives.

This thesis contributes to the theory of policy implementation failure by understanding and analysing factors such as cultural practices, local contexts, economic forces, the changes in social and economic conditions and their impact on the policy implementation process at the local level in a stable system, as discussed in chapter 2. However, the literature does not fully address the implementation process and policy implementation failure in a complex social community.

From this, the thesis argues that the failure of the policy implementation process occurs in the complex social community, which can be explained by the dominance of the centralist process, which is a part of the prevalent cultural imperative. With the tendency of the 'top-down' approach, problems in policy implementation failure arise from three main conditions. First, the influence of the long-standing monarchical system over society and its approach to the national administrative system through precedence and hierarchy resulted in a stratified society with political power of the hand of elites, while the ordinary people had few opportunities to participate in politics. Consequently, there was a lack of awareness when the government promoted its decentralisation policy, as discussed in Chapter 3.

Second, the endemic hierarchical system influenced the officials to adhere to the traditional way, which made the policy implementation process more complicated and slow as there were many layers of authority. This can be seen in the case of Thailand which led the government to launch the policy of decentralisation in 1997. Third, the consequence of a long-term tradition and

practice of centralisation in government can create dependence on a national administrative system. At the lower level, the capabilities of officials are limited because they have to work under central government with little or no opportunity to exercise their own power. In the case of Thailand, when the government initiated the policy of decentralisation, there was a varying lack of bureaucratic capabilities across all levels and this was reflected in the degree of success.

10.4 Recommendations

As has been shown above, the Thai government faces a range of problems in implementing its decentralisation program and the following section suggests alternative strategies under the National Development Plan, and for the SAOs.

10.4.1 National Development Plans

The Thai government has long been seeking to develop the economic system through its National Economic and Social Development Plans. The Ninth Plan's proposals for development through good governance and decentralisation have been quite successful as more officials respond positively to the national plan, as noted in chapter 5. The government has introduced the concepts of good governance, decentralisation, self-governance at the local level, and has supported greater participation by the population as promoted in the Ninth Plan. The Tenth Plan can be successful only if central government genuinely allows local government to practice and play its role. Central government will need to provide support and advice to the local government organisations, but should not return to the old ways of controlling local government.

There are several key issues for central government in seeking to assist in the implementation of the decentralisation policy.

- a) The law needs clarification, power needs to be delineated clearly, the authority and responsibilities of each of the three layers of government levels need to be clarified;
- b) Sufficient revenue must be allocated to local government organisations for them to carry out their responsibilities, and encouragement given to local government organisations to create more activities to earn more income;

- c) The capabilities of local government organisations need to be enhanced;
- d) The scope and authority of government at all levels need to be outlined clearly, especially the functions transferred from central government to local government;
- e) Criteria regarding policy implementation outcomes which the local government organisation can use as a guideline need to be set out;
- f) The internal audit system needs to be enhanced to strengthen the policy implementation process;
- g) Criteria used in allocating resources among the different government levels need to be set out clearly;
- h) A system to strengthen transparency of the local government's functions and responsibilities and the awarding of merit is needed;
- i) Creating greater consciousness among staff at all government levels will mean that they will identify themselves more fully as a part of a decentralised and national administrative system;
- j) Public participation in decentralisation needs to be promoted;
- k) The Thai people, especially the youth, need to be encouraged to be responsible for themselves and for other people, and to enhance political participation. People need to be encouraged to participate in local government.

10.4.2 Decentralisation

For the decentralisation policy to succeed, government needs to do more than set out the policy, as has been done in the past. Government must pay close attention to the staff whose job it is to implement the policy to avoid mistakes which lead to policy failure.

As discussed in chapter 2, once a policy is launched there is no guarantee that the implementation processes will succeed. In the case of Thailand, it is not the outside conditions which inhibit the government's policy implementation but more the lack of understanding of the core concepts of the decentralisation program. Not all staff understand the meaning of the decentralisation policy or of the working system under decentralisation. Nevertheless, the lack of understanding about decentralisation at all requires intensive attention, since this is where the policy implementation process will succeed or fail. To explain this,

while the government decides to devolve power to the local level and allow officials at the local level, as well as the local people to participate in decentralisation, there are different degrees of readiness of staff at all levels in working under decentralisation. This suggests that the decentralisation policy was launched too soon, as noted in chapter 7.

From this, the government must educate officials at all levels, and the Thai people need to know and understand decentralisation deeply. Meanwhile, the government must train its officials, especially those who are at local level, to comprehensively understand the decentralisation policy.

Administrative system

Several reforms are indicated for the administrative system. First, the regulations, legislation, decrees, rules of procedure, administrative guidelines on decentralisation and local government organisation need to be clear, understandable and uncomplicated. Second, the government must allow local government to have sufficient autonomy to carry out its own responsibilities and should establish a system that is able to provide information, supervision and support for local government as and where needed. In addition, the government should set out the criteria and scope of the delegated officials regarding their responsibilities and authorities over the local government organisations. Third, educational programs regarding constitutional mechanisms, offered for the public and local politicians, would give people more understanding and familiarity with the administrative system. This would require some amendment to the laws on local public participation.

Capability of staff

Two reforms are suggested for improving the capability of staff. First, government should organise annual training programs in different areas for local government organisations, especially for SAO executive committees, council members, and staff, to enhance their administrative capacities. SAO staff would then be encouraged to perform their obligations more effectively and work well with staff from the different government levels. Second, because of the limited capabilities available in mentoring and giving advice to SAO staff, the government should put in place programmes to develop these capabilities. Such

a monitoring programme should develop a mentoring system which is effective, maintains a support system, and it is concerned with continuing to supervise the local government organisations and provide useful information to the local government organisations. From this, SAO staff can perform their responsibilities more fully and effectively.

Morale and transparency

The government should promote and increase the population's awareness regarding the election of officers to SAOs, and increase the transparency of the process. The government should also encourage staff at all government levels to be neutral and loyal to their responsibilities.

Good relationships

In creating and launching its decentralisation program, government should encourage the local people to participate in the decentralisation program because those people have crucial roles to play in the development of their local administration. The government should also encourage and promote good relationships among its staff at all levels. This will enable them to collaborate and support one another.

10.4.3 Subdistrict Administrative Organisation

As noted previously in chapter 9, the SAOs face several conditions which make difficulties for them. It is not simple for an SAO staff member to determine a successful policy implementation. SAOs have several alternative strategies to consider:

Administration system

There are many ways in which SAO staff can develop their understanding of their organisation and how to work well with staff from other organisations. First, the SAO should allow and give community members more opportunity to participate in policy implementation by providing information, proposing activities and plans, and providing support. The SAO should allow and encourage community members to participate in overseeing, examining and controlling

implementation of SAO policy. SAO staff should be encouraged to work effectively within the limits of its revenue.

As well as the criteria set by the government at national level, the SAO must set criteria within its organisation to make certain of, and strengthen, their performance in policy implementation. The SAO should encourage its staff to develop a good network at work.

The SAO should organise and set an evaluation system within the organisation in order to evaluate the policy implementation process and outcome. The SAO should also set a system which develops, reforms, and solves the problems that occur. The SAO should hold public hearings in planning local development policy. This would not only assist the SAO to work and solve the right issues, but also create an understanding among the local people.

Capability of staff

The government should organise annual training programs for local government organisations, especially special programs for the SAO staff who require more skills and capabilities in managing their obligations. The government should develop and maintain mentoring and support systems, and continue to supervise the local government organisations and provide them with useful information. The SAO staff, especially those staff at the higher level should have a good and positive vision in order to create activities, exercise organisation, and develop their local area.

The SAO staff need to have a greater understanding of their capabilities and to enhance them by attending training programs provided by the government, and staff, especially those at the higher level, should allocate staff responsibilities according to their backgrounds and expertise. Those who are new to the working system should be trained fully to understand what is required of them.

Morale and transparency

SAO staff should know their role and responsibilities and work to fulfil them fully and to be loyal to the organisation. SAO staff should also understand the significance of their responsibilities and their affect on the whole community.

They should work to ensure the best possible outcome. SAO staff should have be mindful of service and be very friendly in serving their community.

SAO staff should eradicate corruption, patronage, power and ascendancy and other forces within their local area that may influence the policy implementation in a negative way. SAO staff should have a high level of awareness of themselves as a part of the organisation and the community. They should promote good governance under a transparent system based on merit.

SAO staff should report to local people on their working process before the work begins, while the work is in progress, and after the work is completed. From this, people who live in the local area can check and learn what the SAO staff do to provide them in terms of goods and services.

Good relationships

SAO staff should have good relationships with staff from other organisations at different levels and within its organisation. This will allow them to work happily in a good working atmosphere with no conflicts and stress. They should promote activities within the organisation, with other organisations at provincial and local levels, and within the community to maintain good relationships. And, finally, SAO staff should have good public relations with the local community and work to promote activities that will result in the community developing a trust in the SAO and its staff.

10.5 Recommendations for further study

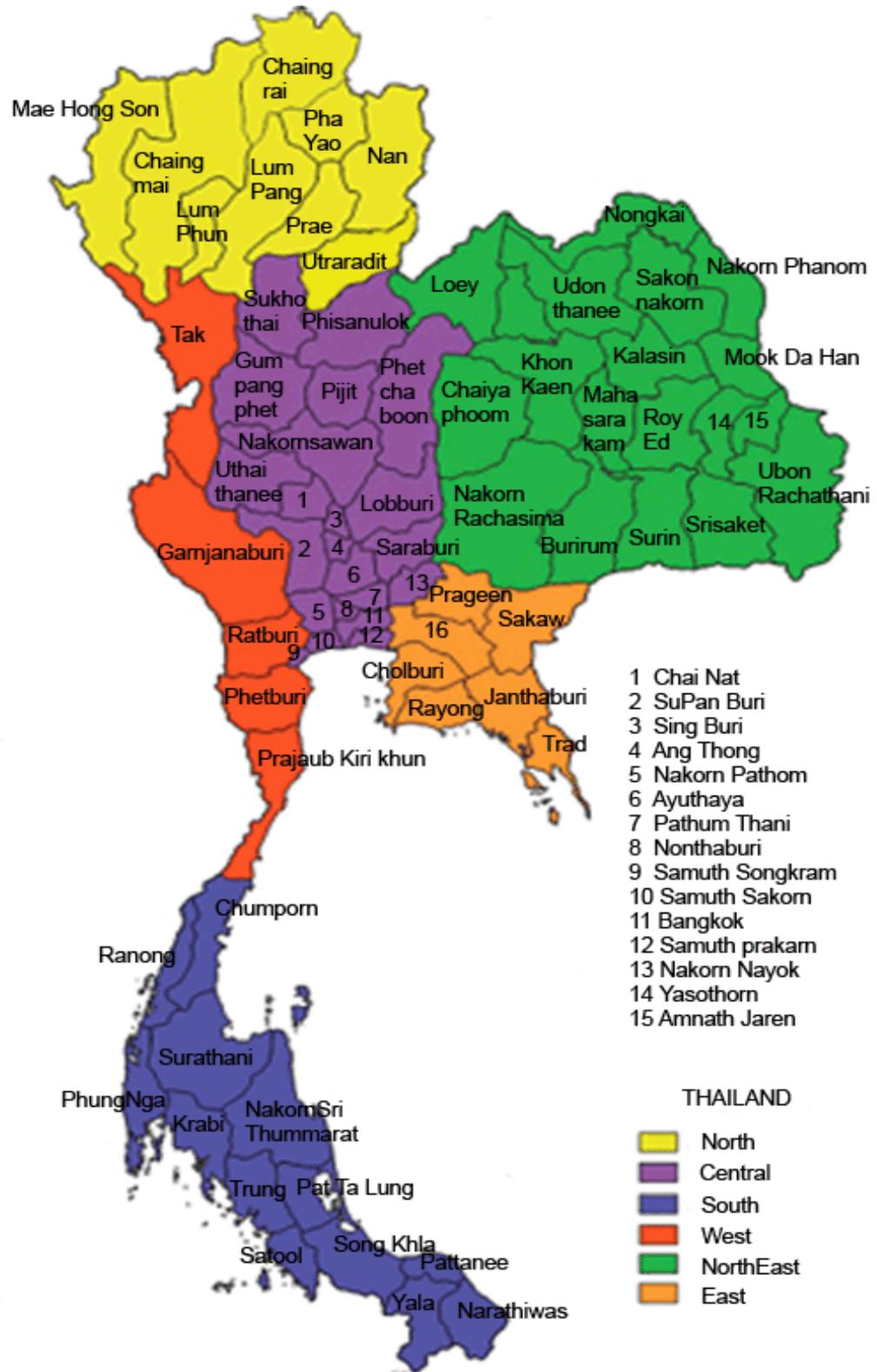
The decentralisation policy is very significant for Thailand at this time, as discussed in chapter 4. The policy was included in the 1997 constitution that presented a new scheme of national administrative system, and in the National Economic and Social Development plans as the government endeavoured to focus more on decentralisation and local government as a strategy to promote the social, political and economic development of Thailand. However, the government's decentralisation policy has not been completely achieved, due to the strong culturally-based traditions of centralisation. Only a small number of officials know and understand the significance of decentralisation, and the evolving structure and potential role for local government. In addition, this factor

also influences the reluctance to transfer power, causing negative attitudes, and influencing the way government officials follow the new scheme of national administration under decentralisation, as noted in chapter 8. Adherence to the old bureaucratic systems still exists, as the national administrative system remains focused on centralisation and government officials still continue to work in their familiar working style. Further study about the attitudes of government officials to the government's decentralisation policy under a new scheme of national administrative system is recommended.

With the 1997 Constitution, the Ninth Plan (2002-2006) and the Tenth Plan (2007-2011), there has been considerable emphasis on good governance, enhancing the national administrative system, decentralisation and fostering public participation. Even though the Ninth Plan promoted good governance, as noted in chapter 5, it became clear that there were deficiencies in the new national administrative system. One area for further study is the degree to which staff respond positively to the government's policy on governance, and their capabilities in interpreting and implementing the policy. Particular emphasis would be on the behaviour and attitudes of staff to change at the local level.

Another area for further study concerns how best to improve staff capabilities and understanding. Even though the central government already provides training programs all year round, and even though they are offered at a basic level for all staff, only a small number of staff participate. A major training program is needed for all the staff eligible to attend but it needs to be focused on what staff at the local government level genuinely require. In this way, the government's national policy can be delivered more effectively.

Appendix A Map of Thailand



Source: <http://www.transparent.com/thai/regional-dialects-of-thai-part-1-of-2/>

Appendix C

Subdistrict Administrative Organisation in Chiang Rai to be transformed to Tambon Municipal 2008-2009

SAO	District	Year of transforming	Remarks
1. Pa Or Donchai	Chiang Rai district	2008	Case study
2.Nang Lae	Chiang Rai District	2008	
3. Wiang	Chiang Kong	2008	
4. Krueng	Chiang Kong	2008	
5.Paa Tan	Khuntan	2008	
6. Tyang Hom	Khuntan	2008	
7. Pasang	Mae Chan	2008	
8.Maiya	Paya Meng Rai	2008	
9Takhaopleuk	Mae Chan	2009	
10.Mae Khum	Mae Chan	2009	
11.Muangyai	Wiang Kaen	2009	
12.Laingao	Wiang Kaen	2009	
13.Takam	Wiang Kaen	2009	
14.Paa Ngew	Wiang Papao	2009	
15.Wiang kalong	Wiang Papao	2009	
16.Ngew	Teuang	2009	
17.Ngao	Teuang	2009	
18. Sansai Ngam	Teuang	2009	Case Study
19.Maeyao	Muang Chiang rai	2009	
20.Dong Mada	Maelao	2009	
21. San Makha	Paded	2009	
22.Mengrai	Paya MengRai	2009	
23. Mae Suey	Mae Suey	2009	
24.Mae Sai	Mae Sai	2009	

Sources: Adapted from Department of Local Administration. 15 December 2009, Ministry of Interior

Appendix D
Discussion Guide for Focus Groups
Decentralisation and Policy Implementation: Thai Development Plans and
Subdistrict Administrative Organisation (SAO) in Chiang Rai

The focus group discussion will begin with a welcome and comments introducing the topic and key theme of the research - i.e., the capacity of SAOs to implement the policy of decentralisation. The discussion will cover the following topics:

Decentralisation

1. What is your understanding of decentralisation? How has the process of decentralisation worked? (its origin, its purpose)
2. What challenges has your SAO faced in coming up with its own programmes and policies of decentralisation?
3. What alternative plans or programmes has your SAO done in order to solve the problems of the decentralisation policy?
4. What challenges or problems does your SAO face under this decentralisation policy?
5. What is likely to assist the SAO in implementing the decentralisation policy?
6. What are the main issues you think should be examined further?
7. Who have advised you on the policy in detail?
8. Who is responsible for implementing decentralisation?

Inter-relationships between organisations

1. Describe how the policy implementation process has worked in terms of cooperation between the SAO and other organisations at provincial levels and local levels.
2. What has worked well in implementing the decentralisation policy?
3. What has proved to be more difficult in implementing the decentralisation policy? (About what? Major? Minor?)
4. Has the SAO faced any challenging inter-relationships in cooperation at the principle and local levels?

5. Does your SAO face any hierarchical conditions in cooperation between provincial and local levels?
6. What problems does the SAO face in cooperation from those two levels?
7. Do you receive any support from central government or other organisations?
8. What are your SAO solutions or alternatives to solve the problems? How do you deal with that?
9. What significant issues do you think should be considered?

Different Interpretations

1. How do you interpret decentralisation policy before the implementation process?
2. What is significant in the decentralisation policy interpretation?
3. What do you consider are the challenges in interpreting the decentralisation policy?
4. What problems do the SAO staff have in interpreting the decentralisation policy and how are the problems solved?
5. Do you think decentralisation policy determined by central government is appropriate? Why do you think it is appropriate? If not, why is it not appropriate?
6. Have you or your SAO modified policy to suit your local area and the SAO's conditions?

Other conditions

Internal capacities (SAO)

1. How did you implement policy in general and in a particular area?
2. What challenges, difficulties, or problems does the SAO face in implementing the decentralisation policy?
3. What conditions within your SAO make it difficult for staff to implement the decentralisation policy?
4. What solutions do you suggest to solve the problems?

Autonomy

1. Would you describe how you participate in policy implementation decision making?
2. What assistance does the central government support your SAO in policy implementation?
3. What policy method does your SAO use to implement policies?

Revenue

1. Would you describe how you implement policies for revenue provided by central government?
2. In your view, what challenges has your SAO faced in revenue?
3. What alternatives has your SAO made in order to solve the problems?
4. What challenges or problems does the SAO face in this whole revenue problem?

Appendix E

Discussion Guide for In-depth Interview

Decentralisation and policy implementation: Thai development plans and subdistrict administrative organisation (SAO) in Chiang Rai

Questions

Decentralisation

1. What specific changes have occurred since the policy of decentralisation was announced in 1997?
2. How has decentralisation worked?
3. How has your SAO been able to deal with the additional demands as a consequence of the policy of decentralisation?
4. What is required to ensure the SAO can effectively carry out their new responsibilities?
5. Where are the main problems?
6. What are the main points to which the SAO should pay more attention?

Inter-relationships between organisations

1. Describe how the process of policy implementation has worked in terms of cooperation between the SAO and other organisations at the provincial levels and local levels?
2. What inter-relationship challenges have the provincial and local levels, especially the SAO, faced?
3. What do you think about the hierarchical condition in between a provincial and local government?
4. What problems do the provincial and a local government face with cooperation?
5. What solutions or alternatives have you made to solve the problems?
6. What significant issues do you think should be considered?

Different Interpretations

1. Could you describe how different the provincial and local levels (the SAO) interpret policies before putting policy into practise?
2. What is significant in policy implementation interpretation? And how does it work?
3. What are challenges in the SAO policy implementation interpretation?
4. What problems do the SAO staff have in policy interpretation and how do you solve the problems?
5. Do you think policy determined by central government is appropriate? Why do you think it is appropriate? If not, why is it not appropriate?
6. Have you reported or experienced SAOs in modifying policy implementation?

Other conditions

1. Describe and comment on a policy implementing failure in terms of SAO staff capacity, autonomy and revenue.
2. What impacts on policy implementation at the SAO level?
3. Do you have any suggestions about the problems?
4. Do you have any alternatives or solutions to solve the problems?

Staff Capacities

1. Describe how SAO staff implement policies.
2. What challenges, difficulties, or problems does your SAO face in policy implementation?
3. What conditions within your SAO staff themselves make it a difficulty to implement policy?
4. Are there any factors the SAO staff could consider to increase staff capacities?

Autonomy

1. Describe how the SAO participates in policy implementation decision making?
2. In which way can central and provincial governments contribute to the SAO in policy implementation?

3. What challenges do the SAO face in terms of gaining autonomy in policy implementation?
4. What degree of autonomy and support should be provided SAO in order to successfully implement policy?

Revenue

1. What revenue is provided by central government to the SAO?
2. What challenges has the SAO faced in terms of limited revenue?
3. What alternatives have the government presented to address the limited revenue?
4. What proposals has the SAO made to government to address the limited revenue?

Appendix F

Chiang Rai Subdistrict Administrative Organisation basic database 2006

No.	Province	District	SAO	Estab Size	Established Year	Areas (Km. Sq.)	Number of Villages			Member of the SAO council			Deputy of chief executive			Populations			Grant	Revenue	Expenditure	Income (Estimate)
							All	shared	Toto	Male	Female	Total	Male	Female	Total	Male	Female	Total				
1	Chiang Rai	Khuntan	Ta	S	1996	58.99	11	8	19	31	7	38	2		2	3,211	3,197	6,408	9,851,135.50	18,450,446.51	5,035,872.77	11,776,000
			Paa Tan	S	1996	72.25	14		14	24	4	28	2		2	4,001	4,049	8,050	10,944,011.79	15,457,644.79	11,376,110.32	13,300,000
			Tyang Hom	S	1996	132.2	21		21	34	8	42	1	1	2	6,132	6,039	12,171	14,228,570.99	21,232,351.29	14,828,167.37	18,035,100
2		Wiangchai	Wiangchai	S	1997	25.6	14	3	17	26	5	31	2		2	3,631	3,795	7,426	11,188,926.01	16,269,495.01	8,275,706.84	9,118,940
			Vieng Nua	S	1996	46	12		12	19	3	22	2		2	3,289	3,357	6,646	8,682,926.96	28,057,413.16	5,223,968.49	6,397,450
			Don Sila	S	1996	101	17		17	31	3	34	2		2	4,958	5,004	9,962	10,547,769.90	29,923,778.90	6,796,424.97	16,000,000
			Muang Chum	S	1997	48	7	1	8	12	4	16	2		2	2,338	2,411	4,749	7,159,670.08	14,881,866.56	5,683,453.00	6,270,000
			Paa Ngam	S	1996	117.9	15		15	23	5	28	2		2	4,673	4,491	9,614	9,212,824.56	14,211,341.56	4,241,680.90	9,940,283
3		Wieng Papao	San Salee	S	1996	363	12		12	22	2	24	1		1	4,536	4,396	8,932	12,195,860.52	24,160,737.52	8,759,263.73	14,000,000
			Vieng	S	1997	207	6	5	11	17	5	22	2		2	5,311	5,017	10,328	12,097,667.54	21,527,961.54	8,432,009.03	16,900,000
			Ban Pong	S	1997	97	7		7	12	2	14	2		2	2,608	2,613	5,221	11,765,729.36	15,642,751.36	5,583,413.18	10,061,292
			Paa Ngew	S	1997	150	16		16	29	3	32	2		2	4,698	4,794	9,492	13,919,152.81	18,982,934.81	9,637,432.48	16,590,547.50
			Vieng Kalong	S	1997	32.96	15		15	29	1	30	2		2	4,895	4,863	9,758	12,806,328.28	17,815,637.28	8,621,492.98	16,000,000
			Mae Jadee	S	1997	158	12	3	15	23	7	30	2		2	3,374	3,173	6,547	10,213,409.81	14,483,867.81	7,043,018.31	11,573,366
			Mae Jadee Mai	S	1997	290	14		14	26	2	28	2		2	4,940	4,826	9,766	12,721,912.86	23,416,738.86	6,516,976.86	15,000,000
4		Paan	Vieng How	S	1997	68	8		8	14	2	16	2		2	1,743	1,746	3,489	7,161,571.22	12,313,980.22	1,844,416.57	6,000,000
			Hua Ngom	S	1996	61.2	1		1	25	1	26	2		2	3,860	3,954	7,814	10,556,381.56	20,022,851.56	6,773,590.82	13,037,500
			Mae Or	S	1994	130	20		20	33	7	40	2		2	5,628	4,985	10,613	12,573,521	24,186,912.00	9,991,780.48	14,861,400
			Sanklang	S	1996	77.91	18		18	30	5	35	2		2	4,761	4,630	9,391	11,751,382.61	23,588,849.61	6,640,821.63	12,256,000
			Tantawan	S	1996	57.86	12		12	19	3	22	2		2	3,195	3,248	6,443	9,713,205.75	229,371.55	8,085,388.07	11,892,600
			Doi-ngam	S	1996	33	14		14	23	5	28	2		2	3,511	3,313	6,824	9,926,329.34	14,129,035.34	11,672,011.98	13,500,000
			Muang Kham	S	1996	40	17		17	30	4	34	1	1	2	4,339	4,450	8,789	12,290,326.91	17,304,632.91	3,380,561.75	15,000,000
			Santisuk	S	1997	14	9		9	14	4	18	2		2	2,733	2,884	5,617	354,108.48	9,511,266.63	3,493,933.51	10,756,254
			Paa Hoong	M	1996	210	18		18	32	4	36	2		2	4,987	5,082	10,069	12,760,519.91	18,815,786.91	14,489,457.17	17,609,369
			Tarn Thong	S	1996	59.23	11		11	20	2	22	2		2	2,758	2,741	5,499	9,822,912.55	19,857,876.55	4,914,191.13	12,660,000
			San Ma Ket	S	1994	94	19		19	36	2	38	2		2	5,722	5,836	11,558	14,007,938.56	24,271,565.56	8,676,403.82	15,500,000
			Sai Ngam	S	1996	69.35	17		17	28	6	34	2		2	4,926	5,139	10,065	14,528,755.81	26,530,570.81	9,861,476.27	19,000,000
			Maung Paan	S	1996	23.26	17	6	23	41	5	46	2		2	5,784	6,059	11,843	18,881,735.81	25,877,560.81	12,209,922.38	21,288,075
			Charem Muang	S	1996	51	22		22	38	6	44	2		2	4,849	4,693	9,542	12,209,481.73	25,264,860.73	8,776,597.16	8,000,000

Chiang Rai Subdistrict Administrative Organisation basic database 2006

No.	Province	District	SAO	Estab Size	Established Year	Areas (Km. Sq.)	Number of Villages			Member of the SAO council			Deputy of chief executive			Populations			Grant	Revenue	Expenditure	Income (Estimate)
							All	shared	Total	Male	Female	Total	Male	Female	Total	Male	Female	Total				
			Mae Yen	S	1997	25.56	11		11	18	2	20				2,801	2,929	5,730	7,923,994.35	11,640,418.35	1,090,228	10,612,150
5		Maelao	Paa Kor Kam	S	1996	48.26	6	2	8	12	4	16	2		2	1,586	3,867	3,194	7,359,790.75	12,294,567.75	13,666,283.36	9,230,768
			Dong Mada	S	1997	60	15		15	29	1	30	2		2	3,760	3,867	7,627	11,999,981.50	16,496,192.50	5,543,101.84	15,749,600
			Chommokkeaw	S	1996	41.2	10	1	11	18	4	22	2		2	2,083	2,021	4,104	8,923,895.21	14,694,422.21	9,142,922.99	5,000,000
			Pong Prae	S	1997	52	9		9	14	4	18	2		2	2,167	2,207	4,374	8,243,355.06	15,288,808.06	5,632,426.29	8,500,000
			Bua Salee	S	1997	20.5	12		12	20	4	24	2		2	2,111	2,255	4,366	8,175,040.45	11,114,894.65	7,015,487.27	11,000,000
6		Wiang Chiang	Dongmahawan	S	1996	68.81	11	1	12	21	1	22	2		2	3,067	3,003	6,070	10,334,267.13	14,048,664.13	9,644,702.94	11,500,000
		Roong	Paa Sang	S	1996	62.41	16		16	31	1	32	2		2	4,962	4,899	9,861	12,781,453.89	29,661,281.23	6,086,386.66	15,215,600
			Toong Kor	S	1996	44.6	11	4	15	23	3	26	2		2	3,160	3,205	6,365	8,090,060.02	9,791,420.18	7,320,401.83	12,792,824
7		Mae Sai	Mae Sai	S	1997	20	7	1	8	12	4	16	2		2	3,904	4,268	8,172	17,688,292.30	21,735,427.30	9,194,134.86	20,000,000
			Viang Paag Kam	S	1996	31	6	4	10	15	5	20	2		2	4,707	5,175	9,882	17,688,384.75	29,767,626.58	21,426,827.76	18,050,000
			Pong Paa	S	1996	42	12		12	19	5	24	2		2	4,055	4,265	8,320	13,354,987.66	17,684,576.66	12,449,508.18	16,124,000
			Ko Chang	S	1996	44	13		13	25	1	26	2		2	4,582	4,603	9,338	15,473,203.20	20,346,973.62	14,191,839.50	17,641,000
			Srimueangchum	S	1996	42	9		9	15	3	18	2		2	2,406	2,663	5,069	10,481,459.33	20,564,897.33	5,881,207.82	11,800,000
			Ban Dai	S	1996	32.5	8		8	16		16	1	1	2	1,999	2,114	4,113	8,485,916.06	11,437,756.06	6,340,540.56	10,494,250
			Huay Krai	S	1996	37.33	5	5	10	10	2	12	2		2	1,245	1,329	2,574	7,314,682.36	11,998,847.09	4,670,894.22	8,200,000
			Pong-ngam	S	1997	42	12		12	23		23	2		2	4,722	4,838	9,560	11,310,839.62	16,714,856.62	7,999,498.69	14,530,000
8		Chiang Kong	Rim Kong	S	1996	86	9		9	15	3	18	2		2	3,245	3,187	6,432	8,405,581.72	11,986,993.72	7,549,435.15	9,400,000
			Sataan	S	1996	101	16		16	30	2	32	2		2	4,661	4,711	9,372	13,294,994.89	23,984,133.75	7,315,461.51	14,850,000
			Huay Sor	S	1995	257	23		23	40	6	46	2		2	6,376	6,181	12,557	14,364,705.09	27,983,700.09	3,857,080.00	11,000,000
			Sri DonChai	S	1996	94	18		18	32	4	36	2		2	4,489	4,399	8,888	11,789,356.34	17,290,256.34	6,443,479.45	14,350,000
			Viang	S	1996	120	9	3	12	21	1	22	1	1	2	4,027	3,957	7,984	10,482,194.88	15,340,324.88	6,609,670	13,412,850
			Krueng	S	1996	99	11		11	20	2	22	2		2	3,548	3,520	7,068	10,137,032.83	14,107,176.83	9,319,610.11	12,000,000
9		Mae Fah Luang	Maesalongnai	S	1996	269	26		26	45	7	52	2		2	12,747	12,744	25,491	24,239,354.50	35,496,083.50	17,666,231.76	36,027,516
			Terdthai	S	1996	168	18		18	32	4	36	1		1	11,432	11,368	22,800	22,292,633.56	30,488,761.56	10,572,179.94	26,220,000
			Mae Fah Luang	S	1999	109	19		19	31	7	38	2		2	6,804	6,777	13,581	18,966,165.56	33,375,393.56	21,193,149.23	29,500,000
			Maesalongnok	S	1996	115.26	13		13	20	6	26	2		2	7,557	7,577	15,134	15,978,506.06	21,833,858.06	11,312,349.99	23,976,000
10		Mae Suey	Sri Toi	S	1997	222.58	12		12	23	1	24	2		2	2,971	2,758	5,729	9,092,134.32	22,386,015.32	5,178,423.84	10,464,368
			Paa Dat	S	1996	288	22		22	42	2	44	2		2	5,408	5,423	10,831	12,832,546.51	26,276,742.51	8,554,255.14	17,890,000
			Chediloung	S	1999	93.59	5	1	6	9	1	10	2		2	1,102	1,041	2,143	6,491,826.48	10,138,478.79	5,628,531.94	6,697,724

Chiang Rai Subdistrict Administrative Organisation basic database 2006

No.	Province	District	SAO	Estab Size	Established Year	Areas (Km. Sq.)	Number of Villages			Member of the SAO council			Deputy of chief executive			Populations			Grant	Revenue	Expenditure	Income (Estimate)
							All	shared	Total	Male	Female	Total	Male	Female	Total	Male	Female	Total				
			Taa Kor	S	1996	387.58	27		27	44	8	52	2		2	9,376	8,948	18,324	20,432,332.12	28,853,346.12	16,459,484.23	26,215,800
			Mae Suey	S	1997	150.15	14	1	15	28	2	30	2		2	3,474	3,461	6,935	17,431,943.08	24,838,559.08	10,707,858.86	16,220,000
			Maeprik	S	1996	38.04	13		13	26		26	2		2	2,995	2,905	5,900	8,228,201.43	12,323,609.43	5,251,581.59	13,538,000
			Vavee	S	1997	359	25		25	48	2	50	2		2	12,251	11,729	23,980	22,260,777.18	47,167,088.00	14,460,788.92	35,420,000
11		Paya Meng Rai	Mae Pao	S	1996	111	17	1	18	34	2	36	2		2	5,229	5,217	10,446	12,897,723.78	18,490,110.78	8,137,926.16	16,000,000
			Maiya	S	1996	131	17		17	30	4	34	2		2	5,617	5,465	11,082	14,156,513.96	19,677,276.96	12,069,214.25	14,080,667
			Mengrai	S	1996	90.41	10	2	12	20	4	24	2		2	3,135	3,225	6,360	9,634,860.55	17,516,189.09	8,043,611.68	12,474,436
			Mae tum	S	1996	66	11		11	20	2	22	2		2	2,527	2,517	5,044	9,354,525.14	17,055,012.14	5,231,233.11	10,523,000
			Taawkwan	S	1996	150.58	8		8	15	1	16	2		2	2,392	2,300	4,692	8,284,193.88	14,356,367.88	7,229,507.70	9,294,781
12		Wiang Kaen	Por	S	1996	299	20		20	38	1	39	2		2	8,233	7,793	16,026	16,250,399.26	35,352,322.26	10,814,494.65	12,875,000
			Takam	S	1996	76	6		6	12		12	2		2	2,741	2,555	5,296	9,816,277.13	18,024,611.13	6,124,205.53	7,933,093
			Muangyai	S	1996	84	9	9	18	16	2	18	2		2	3,716	3,638	7,354	10,723,782.43	20,817,404.43	15,725,537.50	8,173,300
			Laingao	S	1997	76	6		6	11	1	12	2		2	1,705	1,729	3,434	7,537,832	10,146,137.00	3,880,116	6,400,000
13		Mae Chan	Mae Chan	S	2003	32	7	4	11	18	4	22	2		2	3,200	3,755	6,955	18,458,845.96	11,097,407.09	4,124,738.09	10,470,000
			Mae Khum	S	1996	22.07	8	3	11	14	1	15	2		2	3,165	3,262	6,427	11,057,626.79	14,538,545.79	10,987,941.19	12,660,860
			Mae Rai	S	1996	12	9		9	15	3	18	2		2	3,925	4,248	8,173	11,654,116.25	15,507,990.25	4,948,667.55	12,264,700
			Paa Tueng	M	1996	220	20		20	37	3	40	2		2	11,021	11,154	22,175	23,173,616.31	32,249,489.31	19,955,030.34	28,000,000
			Paasang	M	1996	42	15		15	29	1	30	2		2	5,879	6,195	12,074	21,826,013.15	34,442,223.15	21,693,555.44	22,000,000
			San sai	S	1996	29.38	4	4	8	13	3	16	2		2	1,186	1,198	2,384	6,168,794.49	10,390,660.49	2,837,329.41	8,400,000
			Sri Kam	S	1997	85	10		10	18	2	20	1	1	2	3,467	3,642	7,109	7,868,279.67	19,287,766.67	12,899,357.26	11,600,000
			Chomsawan	S	1996	28.8	10		10	19	1	20	2		2	2,084	5,160	7,244	8,352,247.18	11,562,039.18	7,035,179.57	11,290,000
			Takhaopleuk	S	1997	106.76	14		14	27	1	28	2		2	3,811	3,735	7,546	11,131,381.37	22,621,087.85	8,881,901.84	14,269,300
14		Chiang San	Wieng	S	1995	34.74	7	2	9	15	3	18	2		2	3,370	4,075	7,445	21,683,285.86	25,144,518.86	15,091,197.57	15,500,000
			Yonok	S	1995	50	8		8	13	3	16	2		2	2,366	2,394	4,760	8,835,244.60	13,782,923.60	10,341,444.15	8,431,495
			Paa sak	S	1996	60	13		13	22	4	26	2		2	4,006	4,329	8,335	12,057,958.18	16,534,978.18	12,945,687.69	14,750,000
			Sridonmoon	S	1996	90	13		13	26		26	2		2	4,324	4,606	8,930	11,041,354.45	20,423,024.45	8,403,297.91	10,000,000
			Bansaew	S	1997	209	15		15	25	5	30	2		2	5,829	5,612	11,441	13,439,941.57	28,461,869.37	14,219,269.70	11,910,000
			Mae nguen	S	1997	101	12		12	20	3	23	2		2	4,292	4,178	8,470	10,759,604.50	20,181,275.50	7,914,933.68	8,600,000
15		Teuang	Mae Loi	S	1996	79.6	13		13	24		24	2		2	3,500	3,496	6,996	9,925,937.70	13,983,752.70	12,934,008	10,500,000
			Sri Don Chai	S	1996	66.5	10		10	19	1	20	2		2	2,733	2,441	5,174	8,731,007.51	17,712,847.51	13,517,869.37	9,800,000

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No.	Province	District	SAO	Estab Size	Established Year	Areas (Km. Sq.)	Number of Villages			Member of the SAO council			Deputy of chief executive			Populations			Grant	Revenue	Expenditure	Income (Estimate)
							All	shared	Total	Male	Female	Total	Male	Female	Total	Male	Female	Total				
			Nong rad	S	2006	61.7	7		7	13	1	14	2		2	2,138	2,096	4,234	8,021,603.89	15,436,141.89	8,305,926.51	7,848,200
			Ngao	S	1996	88.4	20		20	33	7	40	1	1	2	4,756	5,954	10,710	13,029,047.37	13,029,047.37	12,945,815.77	12,658,120
			Tub Tao	S	1996	99.4	25		25	46	4	50	2		2	6,147	6,156	12,303	13,688,749.66	20,263,937.66	11,033,754.62	17,645,688
			Ngew	S	1996	95.6	24		24	44	4	48	2		2	6,335	6,317	12,652	15,424,901.73	22,050,937.73	5,635,192	12,673,580
			San Sai Ngam	S	1997	59.9	7		7	12	2	14	2		2	2,410	2,018	4,428	8,077,346.57	175,038.81	6,203,366.92	9,359,276
			Chang Kian	S	1996	76.3	12		12	20	2	22	2		2	2,315	2,307	4,622	8,717,795.30	2,167,973.30	6,226,383.55	10,200,407
			Plong	S	1997	82.56	6	3	9	18		18	2		2	2,150	2,115	4,265	8,358,865.21	11,140,813.21	9,561,708.72	9,561,708.12
			Wieng	S	1997	64	22	2	24	44	4	48	2		2	6,959	6,970	13,929	18,823,087.05	39,210,629.85	27,497,755.60	26,515,270
16		Muang	Taa Sai	M	1996	64	13		13	21	5	26	2		2	4,131	4,403	8,534	15,222,752.19	19,699,417.18	10,861,156.47	15,500,000
		Chiang Rai	Doi-hang	S	1996	91	8		8	14	2	16	2		2	2,286	2,186	4,472	8,911,816.47	11,881,012.47	4,938,649	7,000,000
			Doi-lan	S	1996	113.9	22		22	43	1	44	2		2	5,306	5,469	10,775	14,752,145.64	26,176,802.84	9,138,459.01	12,980,315
			Nanglae	S	1996	55	16		16	30	2	32	2		2	5,033	5,262	10,295	13,412,034.88	25,671,819.73	3,949,842.73	17,000,000
			Mae Korn	S	1996	108.45	13		13	21	5	26	2		2	2,591	2,621	5,212	10,629,061.62	14,636,027.62	8,753,992.74	8,407,000
			Hueychompuu	S	1996	259	11		11	21	1	22	2		2	6,761	6,592	13,353	15,067,099.80	20,419,926.80	10,842,896.18	14,640,200
			Sansai	S	1995	53	11		11	16	3	19	1	1	2	4,452	4,769	9,221	21,756,253.51	29,699,204.31	5,130,271.15	12,000,000
			Robwieng	M	1996	17.859	4	1	5	9	1	10	2		2	1,070	1,245	2,315	10,760,834.41	16,474,313.01	10,987,194.94	9,000,000
			Tasood	S	1999	57.56	11		11	20	2	22	2		2	5,771	5,781	11,552	15,602,426.57	19,916,009.57	8,075,491.21	12,800,000
			Rimkok	M	1995	48	7		7	13	1	14	2		2	2,282	2,457	4,739	9,749,675.55	12,710,649.55	6,554,525.74	10,500,000
			Maekaotom	S	1995	102	23		23	43	3	46	2		2	6,064	6,374	12,438	15,726,981.77	39,601,291.77	13,694,034.22	19,181,926
			Maeyao	S	1997	273.7	18		18	29	7	36	2		2	10,108	9,870	19,978	27,377,478.32	20,113,441.32	17,408,391.69	17,000,000
			Paor donchai	M	2004	72	21		21	39	3	42	2		2	4,865	5,113	9,978	14,264,755.17	20,908,846.17	9,677,377.51	13,000,000
			Huaysaak	M	1996	108.79	30		30	55	5	60	2		2	8,862	8,927	17,789	23,507,301.86	31,977,482.86	16,693,808.22	20,000,000
			Wieng	S	1996	17.86	4	1	5	9	1	10	2		2	1,070	1,245	2,315	10,760,834.41	16,474,313.01	10,987,194.94	9,000,000
17		Paded	San Makha	S	1997	27.3	8		8	14	2	16	2		2	2,586	2,503	5,089	8,820,509.49	14,758,081.50	6,961,816.69	13,707,600
			Sri po nuen	S	1999	8.5	8		8	16		16	2		2	1,001	1,003	2,004	6,079,903.79	8,549,969.79	3,884,140.80	6,699,000
			Rongchang	S	1997	44.6	12		12	24		24	2		2	2,438	2,440	4,878	8,416,111.32	15,412,282.32	7,593,182.93	10,847,200
18		Doi Luang	Nongpakor	S	1997	56.57	10		10	17	3	20	1	1	2	2,355	2,285	4,640	8,156,459.11	15,215,202.11	5,566,173.54	10,960,000
			Chokchai	S	1996	170	12		12	24		24	2		2	4,528	4,273	8,801	9,147,630.84	13,260,277.84	7,812,925.51	14,894,200
			Pongnoi	S	1996	72	11		11	22		22	2		2	3,026	2,908	5,934	10,191,684.61	20,102,037.33	5,585,807.17	11,039,180

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