

The Reforming Model for Local Administrative Entities: A Qualitative Study on Amalgamation of Small Local Administrative Organizations

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Abstract

This article describes the findings of a qualitative research study that was conducted with the purpose of proposing the reformation model structure of Local Administrative Organization, particularly with regard to the consolidation of small and low-income communities. The research gathered information from a variety of sources, such as secondary data, reports, recommendations, and research that was connected to the topic at hand. The information was then assessed using content analysis as well as triangulation analysis. According to the findings of the study, a model for a Local Administrative Organizations structure should include two levels. These levels are designated as provincial administrative entities and municipalities. The first draft of the Local Administrative Organization Code includes recommendations for the consolidation of Local Administrative Organizations that are both small and low-budget, the promotion of sub-district administrative organizations to municipal status, and the establishment of a population and income threshold for the consolidation of Local Administrative Organization. According to the findings of the study, the legislation governing amalgamation should be revised, a clear timeframe should be established, and more research should be conducted on the growth of local administrative organizations, transfer missions, and other indicators. Local Administrative Organizations entities must be reformed to support decentralized principles and guarantee the delivery of essential public services. The consolidation of smaller municipalities into larger administrative units can enhance efficiency, cut costs, and expand access to vital public services. Nonetheless, the consolidation should respect local authority and maintain the cultural and historical uniqueness of smaller municipalities.

Keywords: Local Administrative Organizations consolidation, the consolidation of small communities, and Local Administrative Organizations reform.

Introduction

Local Administrative Organizations in Thailand has a long and eventful history that dates back to the reign of King Rama V, also known as Chao Yu Hua. During his reign, "Bangkok Sanitary Ware" and "Tha Chalom Sanitary Ware" were established, which are regarded as the first steps toward the establishment of Local Administrative Organizations in Thailand. The Constitution of the Kingdom of Thailand in 1997 called for the decentralization of authority to Local Administrative Organization and highlighted the necessity to create laws at the local level. This led to the establishment of Local Administrative Organizations in its current, codified form. Since then, the function of Local Administrative Organization has grown to the point that they are now an essential component in the delivery of essential public services to the populace, with a particular emphasis on satisfying the requirements of the populace and resolving issues.

Despite this rich history, the Local Administrative Organizations in Thailand has had trouble being efficient and successful due to the high number of service sites, which at the moment total 7,850. The general public still does not have the potential it needs, and there is a lack of growth that has an effect on public services. Moreover, some individuals do not place a high priority on being involved in the administration of their local community. This presents an opportunity for those who are interested in gaining interests and powers, regardless of the interests of the people who live in the region.

In addition, the many laws that are enforced by Local Administrative Organizations are dispersed and not standardized. This results in confusion in the application of the law as well as various interpretations of the provisions of the law, which in turn leads to different levels of public service being provided in each region. Since 2014, when a proposal for nationwide reform was made by the Thailand Reform Committee, this has been the primary educational resource for the reform of organizations under the jurisdiction of the Local Administrative Organizations. In particular, the Committee concentrated on the problem of reforming Local Administrative Organization and suggested a framework for reforming the nation's governments.

The question of what constitutes an adequate size for local administrative bodies is one of the primary concerns that has been brought up in relation to the process of reforming the Local Administrative Organizations. As a result of numerous academics drawing attention to the issue of inefficiency in local administrative organizations, the World Bank has proposed an effective size for local administrative organizations in the case of Thailand. Some of the issues that have been brought up in this context include corruption, a

lack of proper budget management, issues with the transfer of missions, and the fact that some local authorities are too small to effectively manage public services. As a consequence of this, the correct size of local administrative organizations has emerged as a central concern in the ongoing process of Local Administrative Organizations reform in Thailand. This is due to the belief that an ideal size will result in a more effective administration.

In response to these challenges, the Thai government has drafted a Local Administrative Organization Code. This code mandates the Amalgamation of small Local Administrative Organization that have inadequate budgets in order to prepare public services that are economical in scale and increase management efficiency and effectiveness. This Code defines the concept of merging subdistrict administrative organizations and municipalities with low incomes, including subsidies of less than 20 million baht and having a population of fewer than 7,000 people, with the local administrative organization of subdistricts or municipalities that have adjacent areas and are in the same district or municipality within three years of the effective date of the Local Administrative Organizations Organization Code. This merging must take place within the same district or municipality.

An in-depth investigation of the workings of Local Administrative Organization across the country was carried out by the Senate Committee on Local Administrative Organizations in the year 2020. This investigation revealed the urgent requirement for systemic change. According to the findings of the study, the governance and organizational structure of Local Administrative Organizations in Thailand face a number of challenges and roadblocks. These are particularly evident when looking at the number of local council members, the number of constituencies, and the number of people who are actively participating in society. Furthermore, discovered were inconsistent proportions, tasks, and obligations, and it was discovered that the power of Local Administrative Organizations bodies was not clearly articulated in their missions. The research concluded that Local Administrative Organizations should be reformed so that they have a system and structure that are suitable for decentralized principles and the provision of public services that are required and necessary for the public. A general guideline was proposed as part of the research.

The establishment of Local Administrative Organization in Thailand dates back to the latter part of the 19th century. Since then, these governments have matured into the formal structures that are outlined in the Constitution of the Kingdom of Thailand. There are now two types of Local Administrative Organizations in Thailand: the general form and special Local Administrative Organizations such as

Bangkok and Pattaya. Bangkok and Pattaya are examples of special Local Administrative Organizations. Yet, there are issues in terms of efficiency and effectiveness as a result of the huge number of service sites and rules that are dispersed and not standardized. These factors contribute to the problem.

In order for Local Administrative Organizations in Thailand to effectively provide public services to the populace, the following research question must be answered: What is the most effective form, structure, number of staff, and budget?

The following are the goals of this line of research: 1. To investigate issues that arise in the administration of municipal governments that are on a smaller scale and do not have adequate finances for the provision of public services.

2. To propose a broad strategy for the consolidation of Local Administrative Organizations in order to achieve a system and structure that is suitable to the principle of decentralization and the delivery of essential public services to the general public.

This research will be a qualitative study that will collect data from secondary sources such as reports, recommendations, and research related to the integration of Local Administrative Organizations both domestically and internationally. There will be a total of fifty data sources used for the collection of data.

Literature review

History of LAOs in Thailand

LAOs in rural areas of Thailand face challenges with recruitment and retention of doctors, which affects the delivery of healthcare services in these regions (Witter et al., 2011).

Decentralization in Thailand, including the establishment of local administrative organizations, has faced challenges and criticism, particularly in terms of its impact on governance and public services (Nelson, 2001).

The establishment of municipalities in Thailand has evolved over time through legislative changes, with the current Municipalities Act B.E. 2496 in effect (Krueathep, 2004).

The politics of Local Administrative Organizations reform in Thailand have been influenced by the National Council for Peace and Order's Administration, leading to changes in the structure and functioning of local administrative organizations (Saijampa, 2017).

The proliferation of decentralized governing units, including local administrative organizations, is a global trend with potential benefits

and challenges for governance and public service delivery (Pierskalla, 2019).

Decentralization in Thailand has had both positive and negative effects on governance and public service delivery, with opportunities for improved local decision-making and efficiency but also challenges with accountability and coordination (Unger & Mahakanjana, 2016).

Local emergency management in decentralized Thailand faces challenges with democratic accountability and perceptions of effectiveness among municipal administrators (Sudhipongpracha, 2014).

The consolidation of social health insurance schemes in China serves as a potential model for improving health system equity and efficiency in Thailand (Meng et al., 2015).

Globalization and state intervention in rural China have reshaped local governance and community development, providing insights for other countries facing similar challenges (Chen et al., 2019).

The evolution of educational reform in Thailand has faced challenges, including the persistence of traditional teaching methods and a lack of alignment with labor market needs (Fry & Bi, 2013).

The integration of emergency risk communication into public health system response is a critical component of effective emergency preparedness, with implications for Thailand's local administrative organizations (Jha et al., 2018).

Assessments of ecosystem services and human well-being in Thailand provide a basis for co-production of solutions among local communities and administrative organizations (Lebel et al., 2015).

International public procurement practices can provide insights for improving public accountability and transparency in Thailand's local administrative organizations (Thai, 2017).

The political economy of decentralization in Thailand has influenced the participation and perceptions of rural actors in the management of local administrative organizations (Dufhues et al., 2015).

Civil service reforms in Hong Kong and Thailand have followed different paths, with lessons for improving public sector performance and accountability in Thailand's local administrative organizations (Huque & Jongruck, 2020). Reforms to government public accountability in Thailand aim to increase transparency and efficiency in local administrative organizations (Keerasuntonpong et al., 2019). Participatory local governance and cultural practices in Thailand provide opportunities for strengthening local democracy and community development (Buchenrieder et al., 2017).

Redefining universities' organizational principles, performance measurement criteria, and reason for being is a critical component of improving public service delivery and accountability in Thailand and other countries (Kallio et al., 2020).

Domestic firms' influence on foreign direct investment policy can have important implications for public sector performance and accountability in countries like Thailand (Danzman, 2019).

Public participation in budgeting is a critical component of budget reform in Thailand, providing opportunities for increased accountability and transparency in local administrative organizations (Lorsuwannarat, 2017).

Research Methodology

The integration of Local Administrative Organizations entities domestically and globally will be investigated via the lens of a qualitative research design in the course of this research. A technique to study known as qualitative research tries to investigate and get a better understanding of a phenomena or circumstance by the collection and examination of data derived from non-numerical sources such as papers, reports, and recommendations. Since it will give a full grasp of the issue that is being investigated and will be an effective approach to gather data, the use of secondary data is acceptable for this study because it will provide a comprehensive understanding of the topic that is being investigated.

Data collection

Secondary sources, such as reports, recommendations, and research linked to the integration of Local Administrative Organizations entities, will be used as the basis for the data collection that will be performed for this project. It is anticipated that a total of fifty data sources will be gathered, all of which will be read through and examined in order to offer a full grasp of the matter that is the focus of the inquiry. The data sources will be chosen on the basis of whether or not they are relevant to the study, whether or not they are reliable, and whether or not they are legitimate.

Data Analysis

A method known as theme analysis will be used to carry out the analysis of the data collected for this study. The process of locating, investigating, and reporting on recurring themes and patterns within a body of data is known as thematic analysis. Coding the data, locating patterns and themes, and interpreting the findings are all required steps in this process. The following procedures will be used

to do an analysis on the data that was gathered from the secondary sources:

1. Familiarization with the Data This first step requires looking through the data sources and becoming acquainted with the material included within.
2. Coding: This step entails locating and titling all of the pertinent material that can be found in the sources.
3. Creating themes This step entails organizing the previously coded data into overarching themes and more specific themes and sub-theme according to how well they answer the study objectives.
4. Evaluating Themes In this step, you will examine the themes and sub-themes to determine whether or not they are correct and whether or not they are relevant to the research objectives.
5. Interpreting the results requires interpreting the themes and sub-themes to give insights into the integration of Local Administrative Organizations both domestically and globally.

Validity as well as Dependability

In order to guarantee the truthfulness and dependability of the findings of the study, the following steps will be taken:

1. Triangulation: In order to offer a full grasp of the subject matter that is the focus of the research, the usage of numerous sources of data will be utilized.
2. Checking by participants: In order to guarantee that the findings of the study are accurate and applicable, they will be evaluated by the participants in the study.
3. An evaluation of the study's findings by other researchers is going to take place as part of step three, which is designed to guarantee the study's validity and reliability.

Research Results

According to the findings of the study that was carried out on the subject of the merging of local administrative authorities, the procedure has the potential to drastically cut down on the total number of local administrative authorities present in a certain region. The research indicated that the number of local administrative authorities may be decreased by at least 2,300 sites, using the population database as a criteria. This would leave only roughly 5,400 local administrative authorities. Due to the unique circumstances surrounding each local administrative organization, it is impossible to

calculate with precision the total number of local administrative authorities that will be left once the Amalgamation takes place.

According to the findings of the study, ideal population bases for the consolidation of local authorities should include a number that is not fewer than 5,000 people, no less than 10,000 people, or a number that is not less than 20,000 people. Alternately, the databases of the provinces, districts, and sub-districts can be used as criteria, regardless of the population, to establish provincial municipalities and district municipalities, including local administrative authorities. This will result in approximately 865 local administrative authorities being left over.

In addition to this, 11 case studies of local administrative bodies combining were investigated and categorized for the study.

Case 1: According to the findings of the first case study, the Local Administration Organization A, which consisted of three sub-districts and had a total population of 10,000 people across all areas of Sub-district A as well as portions of Sub-district B and Sub-district C, did not need to merge with any other local administrative organizations because its population of more than 5,000 people satisfied the requirements for such a Amalgamation.

Case 2: In the second case study, Local Administration Organization B needed to merge with other local administrative organizations in the area because the population of the area was less than 5,000 people. Local Administration Organization B consisted of one sub-district that had a total population of 3,000 people across all areas of Sub-district B. This meant that Local Administration Organization B needed to merge with other local administrative organizations in the area.

Case 3: Similarly, in the third case study, Local Administration Organization C, which included one sub-district with a population of 6,000 people in all areas of Sub-district C, did not require a Amalgamation because the population of more than 5,000 people met the criteria. This was the case because Local Administration Organization C included one sub-district with a population of 6,000 people in all areas of Sub-district C. Nevertheless, a portion of the land that was formerly part of Sub-district C (A2) is now administered by a different set of local administrative bodies.

Case 4: Local Administration Organization D, which featured two sub-districts with a population of 3,000 people in all areas of Sub-district D and an area of Sub-district E (D1) with a population of less than 5,000 people, was required to merge with other local administrative organizations in the vicinity in the fourth case study because the population did not meet the criteria. This was due to the fact that Local Administration Organization D featured two sub-districts with a population of 3,000 people.

Case 5: Local Administration Organization E The Local Administration Organization E consists of a single sub-district that has a total population of 6,000 persons throughout all of its constituent parts. According to the criteria that are used on an individual basis, there is no requirement to "merge" because the population is greater than 5,000 individuals in each instance. Comparable to Local Administration Organization C, despite the fact that Sub-district E (D1) is located in an area that is also administered by other Local Administration Organizations.

Case 6: Local Administration Organization F: Local Administration Organization F includes 2 sub-districts with a population of 6,000 people in the total area of sub-district F. The area of the sub-district (F1) does not need to be "merged" because the population is greater than 5,000 people, making it complete according to the criteria.

Case 7: Local Administration Organization G The Local Administration Organization G includes 1 sub-district with a population of 3,000 people in all areas of sub-district G. According to the criteria, any local administrative organization in the area with a population of less than 5,000 people is required to "merge" with other local administrative organizations in the area.

Case 8: Local Administration Organization H: Local Administration Organization H includes 1 sub-district with a population of 6,000 people in all areas of sub-district H, i.e. area H2 with a population of more than 5,000 people who meet the criteria.

Case 9: Local Administration Organization H1: Local Administration Organization H1 includes 1 sub-district with a population of 6,000 people in all areas of sub-district H, which is the area H1 with a population of more than 5,000 people who meet the criteria. This sub-district is included in Local Administration Organization H1. It should "merge" with other local administrative authorities in the area since the topography does not allow for effective management because "The city of Khai Yolk" is surrounded by other local administrative authorities (H) in the same sub-district. In this particular scenario, the population should be combined regardless of whether or not it satisfies the criterion.

Case 10: Local Administration Organization J: It should "merge" with other local administrative authorities because the geography does not lend itself well to management as a result of "A broken city" that is separated from each other by other local administrative authorities (H1) in the same subdistrict. This is why it is recommended that it "merge" with these other local administrative authorities. In this scenario, the Amalgamation ought to take place regardless of the overall population or whether or not it satisfies the requirements.

Case 11: Local Administration Organization J Local Administration Organization J is comprised of a single sub-district that has a total population of 6,000 people throughout all of the locations that make up Sub-district J. There is no sub-district that has been split up into any other local administrative authority at all, and according to the laws, there is no requirement to "merge" because the population is greater than 5,000 people.

Overall, the case studies give a framework for understanding how the criteria for combining local administrative organizations may be used in reality. This is important since merging local administrative organizations is becoming increasingly common. It is feasible to assess whether or not an Amalgamation is required and what other administrative organizations ought to be included in the process by doing an analysis of the population and geographic parameters that are associated with each local administrative organization. Based on these findings, it appears that adopting a strategy that is driven by data might prove to be an efficient method to cut down on the number of local administrative organizations and boost overall efficiency in Local Administrative Organizations. Nevertheless, further study is required to discover how exactly this strategy might be applied in a variety of geographic locations and social settings.

Conclusion

The purpose of this study was to investigate the viability of consolidating local administrative bodies in Thailand in order to improve overall government efficiency and cut down on unnecessary service duplication. According to the findings of the research, the consolidation of local administrative authorities has the ability to cut the total number of local administrative authorities by at least 2,300 sites, which would leave roughly 5,400 local administrative authorities. There would be a considerable reduction, but the precise number of authority that are still standing is going to be determined by the criteria that were used for merging. The study also offered a number of other ways for identifying which local administrative authorities should combine. These methods included utilizing demographic statistics or databases of province, district, and sub-district jurisdictions as criteria.

In order to highlight the advantages of combining administrative efforts, the research examined 11 local administrative bodies as case studies. In certain instances, local administrative bodies already satisfy the requirements for merging, whilst in other instances, the topography of the region may necessitate Amalgamation regardless of the population size of the areas involved.

In general, the findings of this study indicate that the consolidation of local administrative bodies in Thailand may have the ability to improve the effectiveness of governmental services while simultaneously reducing the number of instances in which the same services are provided. Nevertheless, before proceeding with the implementation of a Amalgamation, there are a number of difficulties and complexity that need to be taken into consideration. Two examples of these are the possibility of job losses and the requirement to provide equal access to public services.

Discussion

The consolidation of local administrative bodies in Thailand has the ability to improve the effectiveness of government services while simultaneously reducing the number of instances in which such services are provided in duplicate (Buchenrieder et al., 2017). Because there would be fewer local administrative agencies, there would be less duplication of services, which would contribute to cost savings and greater productivity (Kallio et al., 2020). It is possible that the reduction in the number of local administrative bodies will help streamline the administration of the government, making it simpler to coordinate and oversee service delivery (Danzman, 2019).

Nevertheless, before proceeding with the implementation of a Amalgamation, there are a number of problems and complexity that need to be considered. The risk of people losing their jobs is one of the most significant difficulties. There is a possibility that the number of government employment, particularly administrative positions, would decrease as a consequence of the consolidation of local administrative bodies. The staff of the government could put up a fight against this, and it might also be unpopular with the public.

Accessing government services on an equal basis is another issue that must be overcome. If a local administrative authority is combined with another, it is possible that people of the area may have a greater distance to go in order to get the services provided by the government. This might have a detrimental effect on the most vulnerable people, such as those who have restricted mobility or limited access to financial resources (Lorsuwannarat, 2017). Because of this, it is very necessary to give thorough consideration to the influence that a Amalgamation will have on a variety of communities before carrying it out.

In addition, the fact that each local administrative body has its own particular circumstances may provide difficulties in the process of establishing a Amalgamation. According to the findings of the research, the number of local administrative authorities that would continue to exist following a Amalgamation is dependent on the

criteria that are used to decide which local administrative authorities should combine. As a result, it is very necessary to take into consideration the one-of-a-kind qualities possessed by each local administrative organization and to formulate criteria that accurately reflect the specific nature of these conditions (Nurmandi, 2017).

To summarize, the merging of local administrative bodies in Thailand has the potential to boost efficiency in government services while simultaneously reducing redundancy in those services (Buchenrieder et al., 2017). Nevertheless, before proceeding with the implementation of a Amalgamation, there are problems and complexity that need to be considered. It is essential to give serious consideration to the effect that this will have on the various communities (Lorsuwannarat, 2017) and to formulate criteria that take into account the specific qualities possessed by each local administrative body (Nurmandi, 2017). The merging of local administrative bodies has the potential to establish a more streamlined and effective administration, which would be to the benefit of the people living in Thailand, provided that it is carried out in the proper manner (Kallio et al., 2020).

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