

The roles of governments in the education reform policy in Thailand from 1999 - 2009

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Thesis submitted in fulfilment of the requirements for the degree of
Professional Doctorate in Public Administration
University of Canberra
2015

Abstract

The most recent education reform policy in Thailand officially began in 1999, when the National Education Act came into force. It was considered the most comprehensive reform in Thailand's history. From 1999 to 2009, many governments and ministers of education assumed power. Their roles in implementing the education reform policy as stipulated in the National Education Act were significant. This research examines the roles of each government and each Minister of Education in implementing the education reform policy after the National Education Act came into force in 1999 to the end of the first decade of this policy. This research is qualitative and is undertaken by two main methods: document analysis and semi-structured interviewing. This research analyses the factors which influenced the implementation of the education reform policy based on the top-down approach to policy implementation analysis. The governments of Thailand within the timeframe of this research can be divided into three groups: (1) the Democrat Party from 1999 to the beginning of 2001 and from the end of 2008 to 2009; (2) the Thai Rak Thai Party and other political parties associated with Thaksin Shinawatra from 2001 to 2006 and in 2008; and (3) the government appointed by the military junta after the coup d'état on 19 September 2006. Based on the top-down approach to policy implementation analysis, there are five major factors which obstructed the implementation of the education reform policy from 1999-2009, namely: (1) the size of target groups involved and affected and the extent of change required by the policy; (2) the ambiguity of the National Education Act as the main framework of the education reform policy and other related regulations; (3) the lack of one main agency responsible for implementation of the education reform policy; (4) different levels of commitment and leadership of the governments; and (5) political instability in Thailand, especially from 2006-2009.

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Acknowledgements

A large number of people contributed to this thesis. First and foremost, I wish to thank my supervisors, Dr Robin Tennant-Wood and Dr Christopher Sadleir. Without their continuous academic and moral support from my first year at the University of Canberra (UC), this thesis would not have been completed. I also owe my gratitude to Sue Uzabeaga, Faculty Research Support Officer, Faculty of Business, Government and Law, who has been with much patience assisting me in many different ways throughout my study.

In Thailand, co-operation from a wide range of stakeholders in the education reform policy was of paramount significance. I thank all key informants who were willing to give interviews and to provide their information and opinions on the policy. The key informants are politicians who were responsible for the education reform policy in Thailand from 1999 to 2009, bureaucrats of the Ministry of Education and other related agencies, school executives, teachers, educational supervisors, scholars, and the chairperson of the National Parent Network Association.

My thanks also go to all of my lecturers and supervisors during my undergraduate and postgraduate studies in Thailand. They have always supported me morally and academically. Knowledge I got from them is a strong foundation for my thesis.

On a more personal note, I thank my family in Thailand who has been supporting me throughout my study. My husband, Thosaphon Chieocharnpraphan, has always been on my side for nine years in hardship and in happiness. Without his company, I would not have been able to come this far. Gregory Bruce Bradford, my best Australian friend who has made my life in Australia happy and enjoyable. He is also my best English teacher who has patiently taught me English since 2010 so that I can write this thesis more effectively. I also wish to thank Thomas Knight, who has always patiently fixed my computer. Without his assistance, my work would have been lost.

I am also in the debt of Allan and Jenny Nicholls, my homestay parents. They are like my father and mother in Australia. Without their kind support and generous assistance, I would not have been able to settle down well in Canberra. I thank all my Thai friends in Canberra. They are not only friends, but they are also my family members in Canberra. Last but not least, I thank Phenphan Weissel, my first Thai friend in Australia, who has always cooked delicious Thai food for me. The support from compatriots is always significant overseas.