

An Assessment Survey of Integrity and Transparency in Local Government Organizations

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Abstract

The level of Local Government Organizations' Integrity and Transparency as well as ways to enhance it in Mukdahan Province of Thailand was investigated in this study, which employed document and survey research methods. The result pertaining to the overall integrity and transparency of Local Government Organizations in the Mukdahan province area was equal to 69.47% -a high level. As the indexes/sub-indicators were considered, it was found as follows: 1) Average transparency index gained 65.45% of the full score, while the indicator of organizational operations gained an average percentage of 68.42 of full score and that of complaints gained a percentage of 44.24. 2) Average accountability index gained 74.47% of the full score. 3) Average corruption-free Index of performance gained 83.46% of the full score. 4) Average organizational Integrity and Culture Index gained 58.37% of the full score. 5) Average work Integrity Index in the agencies gained 63.03% of the full score.

Keywords: Integrity, Transparency, Local Government Organizations

Introduction

Throughout the past decade, there was still news of lacking transparency in the operation and of public complaints about corruption in getting services of the public sector from the civil society continuously. In addition, Thailand was ranked using Corruption Perceptions Index (CPI) by Transparency International (TI) and has gained a relatively low score throughout. In 2015, Transparency Thailand Foundation (TTF) revealed the results of rankings by Corruption Perceptions Index 2015 that Thailand gained a score of 38 from the full score of 100 and ranked 76th out of 168 countries worldwide, while ranked third in the ASEAN's country group in the annual ranking of 2015 (Transparency International, 2016). Fraud and misconduct were widespread in both public and private sectors and private organizations. This is due to the lack of continuity and the delay in propelling the prevention and suppression of corruption and misconduct of the relevant agencies. Some government officials had behavioral misconduct in

abuse of their position, in particular, the use of patronage system in official practice. The operations lacked integration of agencies from both public and private sectors and civil society. Local government organizations of Thailand are a form of government established to delegate power from a central authority to local authorities in the hands of people for solving their own problems and meeting their needs. That will result in improved quality of life and well-being of people in the community. They are the agencies that are closest to most people in the country. Their role and mission, then, will directly affect the local people. So the image of the administration of the local government organizations is essential to have transparent, honest, fair, efficient and effective management mechanisms. And the opportunity should be open for people to participate in the management and audit of performance of local government organizations in every step to reflect the image of good governance in management by the local government organizations per se. According to the statistics of the Office of the National Anti-Corruption Commission (NACC), there was collected information about accusation of corruption among state officials under local government organizations from 2000-2007 totaling 8 years as follows: 1) Personnel of local government organizations covering local administrators, local councilors and local officers were accused of corruption with a total of 5,508 charges and 9,467 cases. The personnel in local government organizations who were most alleged of corruption were those in sub-district municipalities who were accused of corruption with 3, 235 charges and 5,778 cases. Such a problem was caused by on-duty behavior of the personnel of sub-district municipalities. There might be factors or causes that deserve to be investigated in order to be a guideline for development or enhancement of the transparency image in the operation of local government organizations in Thailand (Transparency Thailand, 2015) It is, therefore, necessary to examine the transparency in operation of the local government organizations in order that it could be a body of knowledge and prompt to be utilized for job performance in Thailand's local government organizations and for further meeting the policies of the current government.

Conceptual Framework

In the assessment of integrity and transparency in the operations of local government organizations in fiscal year 2015, indexes/indicators of Office of the NACC were used to determine a conceptual framework of the study which comprised 5 indexes: transparency index, accountability index, corruption-free index, integrity culture index, and work integrity index. The data received were checked by triangulation which included perception assessment, direct experience assessment and evidence-based integrity and transparency assessment follow as Figure 1

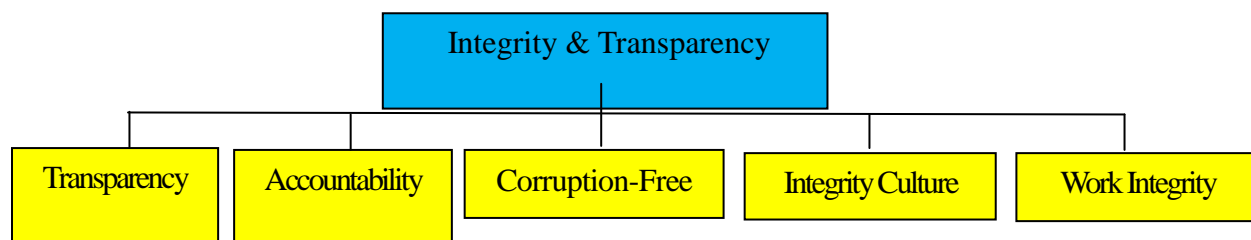


Figure 1 Research framework

Research Methodology

Design and Participants: The assessment of integrity and transparency in the operations of local government organizations in the Mukdahan province area employed two significant forms of research: document research and survey research. The target population in study included:

1. Internal personnel of 53 agencies in local government organizations in the Mukdahan province area whose work experience was at least 1 year or over totaling 2,078 people,
2. Service receivers or stakeholders of those 53 agencies in the Mukdahan province area totaling 5,447 people, and
3. Documents of evidence of local government organizations in the Mukdahan province area totaling 53 papers.

Instruments and data analysis: The instruments in study included 3 forms of the following surveys: 1. internal integrity & transparency assessment (IIT), 2. external integrity & transparency assessment (EIT), and 3. evidence-based integrity & transparency assessment (EBIT). Data collection was done through the response by personnel of the assessed agencies, service receivers or stakeholders to the self-administered survey questionnaire or face-to-face interview as appropriate. As for the method of collecting the survey data for the evidence-based integrity & transparency assessment (EBIT), documents/evidences or related papers were used for reference. The research team checked documents/evidences by themselves.

The agencies that were responsible for the assessment sent the data of pointing out the agency officer's value of guilty verdict from Office of NACC and Office of PACC to the researchers for data processing of item EB 12

The assessment of opinion data from three types of surveys through the analysis of personal background of respondents was done using a statistical package to find frequency and percentage. As for the processing of integrity and transparency scores in the operations of the agencies, the researchers employed the Microsoft Excel program based on the criteria of scoring the integrity and transparency in the operations as the following 5 levels;

80 - 100 points = having a very high level (of integrity and transparency)

60 - 79.99 points = having a high level

40 - 59.99 points = having a moderate level

20 - 39.99 points = having a low level

0 - 19.99 point(s) = having a very low level

Research Results

1. The results of distributing population information of personal background among the sample using the internal survey revealed that most of the staff members of local government organizations in the Mukdahan province area were those whose positions were employees or 53.40% of all; 58.70% of them were females and 37.60% of them were those whose work experience was in the 5-10 year range. As for the population data of personal background of the sample according to the external survey, it showed that most of them or 78.30% were in the 26-59 age range (working age), 55.40% were males; 89.60% had their education attainment lower than the bachelor degree level; 48.50% were self-employed or a business owner; 69.40% were agricultural workers; and 93.10% of them had income lower than 50,000 baht per month.

2. The results of distributing information of population and sample according to the survey disclosed that 2,078 staff members inside the local government organizations in the Mukdahan province area responded to the internal survey by themselves and 5,447 service receivers or stakeholders responded to the external survey by themselves. As for the survey of evidence-

based integrity & transparency, the researchers checked 53 documents or evidences by themselves.

3. The table below shows the integrity and transparency scores gained from the assessment in the operations of local government organizations in the Mukdahan province area.

Table 1 The integrity and transparency scores of local government organizations in the Mukdahan province

Items	(Average %)	Interpretation
1. Transparency	65.45	High
2. Accountability	74.47	High
3. Corruption-free	83.46	Very High
4. Integrity Culture	58.37	Moderate
5. Work Integrity	63.03	High
6. weighted score	69.47	High

4. Table Showing Details of Scores from Assessment of Integrity and Transparency in the Operations of Local Government Organizations in the Mukdahan Province Area as Distributed According to the Data Sources

Table 2 Scores from Assessment of Integrity and Transparency in the Operations of Local Government Organizations in the Mukdahan Province

No.	Index/Indicator in Assessing Integrity and Transparency in the Operations	Weighted Score (100)	EIT	EBIT	IIT	Score Gained (100)	Score After Being Weighted
1	Transparency	26	60.82	68.45		65.45	17.02
	1.1 Operations of the Organization		68.42	68.83		68.42	
	1.1.1 Giving and Disclosing the Purchase Data of Disbursement		70.40	57.20		63.80	
	1.1.2 Performance Standard		61.70	77.27		69.49	
	1.1.3 Fairness/Without Discrimination		69.79	79.12		74.46	
	1.1.4 Participation		0.00	45.90		45.90	
	1.1.5 Achievement of Official Performance		71.58			71.58	
	1.1.6 Data According to the Mission Are Accessible		0.00	84.50		84.50	
	1.1.7 Channels for Complaints		69.65			69.65	
	1.2 Response to the Complaint/ Report of the Result		21.79	66.70		44.24	
2	Accountability	18	76.39	72.54		74.47	13.40
	2.1 Responsible to the Duty Performed		76.39	72.54		74.47	
3	Corruption-free	22	83.46			83.46	18.36
	3.1 Perspective of Perception		68.68			68.68	
	3.2 Direct Experience		98.24			98.24	

Table 2 (Con.)

No.	Index/Indicator in Assessing Integrity and Transparency in the Operations	Weighted Score (100)	EIT	EBIT	IIT	Score Gained (100)	Score After Being Weighted
4	Integrity Culture	16		25.75	67.66	58.37	9.34
	4.1 Organizational Culture				72.41	72.41	
	4.2 Anti-corruption in Organization			25.75	62.91	44.33	
5	Work Integrity	18			63.03	63.03	11.34
	5.1 Personnel Administration				59.24	59.24	
	5.1.1 Direct Experience				55.20	55.20	
	5.1.2 Perception				63.28	63.28	
	5.2 Budget Management				68.07	68.07	
	5.2.1 Perception				68.07	68.07	
	5.3 Integrity in Delegation				64.29	64.29	
	5.3.1 Perception				63.24	63.24	
	5.3.2 Direct Experience				65.34	65.34	
Integrity and Transparency as a Whole		69.47					

Conclusions and Discussion

Conclusions

The result of assessing the overall integrity and transparency in the operations of local governments in the Mukdahan province area in fiscal year 2015 was equal to 69.47% which was considered at high level in having integrity and transparency in the operations. As the indexes/sub-indicators were considered, it was found as follows:

- 1) Transparency Index as a whole gained 65.45% of the full score, while the indicator of organizational operations gained an average percentage of 68.42 of full score and that of complaints gained a percentage of 44.24.
- 2) Accountability Index as a whole gained 74.47% of the full score which was classified into the lone perception perspective of accountability which was 74.47%.
- 3) Corruption-free Index of performance as a whole gained 83.46% of the full score. It can be classified into the perception perspective indicator which gained 68.68% of the full score and the direct experience perspective indicator which gained 98.24% of the full score.
- 4) Organizational Integrity and Culture Index as a whole gained 58.37% of the full score. It can be classified into the organizational culture indicator which gained 72.41% of the full score and the organizational anti-corruption indicator which gained 44.33% of the full score.
- 5) Work Integrity Index in the agencies as a whole gained 63.03% of the full score. It can be classified into the personnel administration indicator which gained 59.24% of the full score, the budget management indicator which gained 68.07% of the full score and the fairness of delegation indicator which gained 64.29% of the full score.

Discussions

The assessment of integrity and transparency in the operations of local governments in the Mukdahan province area of the fiscal year 2015 could be discussed as follows:

- 1) The transparency index was assessed from the perspective of service receivers or stakeholders based on the experience in receiving service from the state agencies (external assessment) and

the evidence-based assessment on the basis of facts in the agencies' operations. It was a measurement of practice according to the conditions or procedures in operating transparent, fair, and ethical service giving following the authorities prescribed by local government organizations in the Mukdahan province area of fiscal year 2015. This index gained a score of 65.45% which was at high level. It was classified into the indicator of organizational operations which gained a score of 68.42 at high level and into the response to the complaints which gained a score of 44.24 at moderate level. The result of this showed that the local government organizations in the Mukdahan province area gained the assessment of transparency in the operations as a whole at a rather good level. Moreover, as each indicator was considered, it was found that some indicators gained a score of moderate level such as the indicator of giving and disclosing procurement information which gained 57.20% of the full score and the indicator of participation which gained 45.90% of the full score. This result may be because local government organizations in the Mukdahan province area in fiscal year 2015 operated by giving and disclosing information rather less in the following matters: operating about procurement and disclosing information of procurement for each project to the public via websites or other media including analysis/development of plan for procurement process. This is to say that the internal officers may have little knowledge and understanding about the preparation of information on documents/evidences which were sub-indicators of giving and disclosing the procurement information.

In addition, there was an index of the overall response to complaints/notice of appeal in which the local government organizations in the Mukdahan province area gained a score of 44.24 which was at moderate level. The result of this may be because the agencies that had been assessed might not be prescribed with steps/ procedures of complaints, how to response or report to the notice of appeal for those who intended and needed to complain, channels available for those who wanted to complain, those who were determined to be responsible for the complaints, a system to follow-up the complaints and inform the complaint results to those who complained in a concrete way. All of these reasons may be the causes that made the service receivers or stakeholders assess this aspect at a very low level (21.79) which was not in agreement with the score gained from documents/ evidences which was at high level (66.70).

2) The accountability readiness index was assessed from the perspective of service receivers or stakeholders according to the experience in receiving service from government agencies (external assessment) and to the documents and evidences on basis of facts in the operations by agencies. The index was from the measurement of integrity in performance among the state officers, in exercise of legal authority and in practice according to the role of efficient, effective and work quality responsibilities. This index gained 74.47% of the full score which was at high level. It comprised a sub-indicator of accountability to the operations of which the scores from service receivers or stakeholders and from documents/ evidences were nearly the same. The result of this may be because the personnel who were officers of local government organizations in the Mukdahan province area had readiness in the operations according to their tasks of practice in service duty with politeness, enthusiasm, willingness to work fast and attempting to the success of work.

3) The corruption-free performance index was merely assessed from the perception of service receivers or stakeholders in a state agency's service giving (external assessment). It was a measurement from 2 perspectives - perception and direct experience concerning the state officers who operated their tasks without fairness and transparency and not according to standard processes during service giving and not in steps of giving service. There was discrimination

when being offered with a special condition or motive, when expecting to earn the extra money, when soliciting contributions and when begging for the donation in exchange with some entertainments. This index earned 83.46% of the full score. It was divided into the indicator of perception perspective which gained 68.68% of the full score and into the indicator of direct experience which gained 98.24% of the full score as considered at high and highest levels respectively; and they were congruent in the same direction. The result of this may be because the personnel or officers of the local government organizations in the Mukdahan province area in fiscal year 2015 operated fairly and transparently following the standard procedures during delivering service or steps of service to the receivers without discrimination for any sake of special condition or motive to take bribes for themselves or a group of friends. That is the reason of why it resulted in giving service with fairness at the highest level of performance following the standard procedures or steps of service among the agencies' officers.

4) The organizational integrity and culture index was assessed from the perception perspective of agencies' officers (internal assessment) and from the facts of documents/evidences in the agencies' operations, and from information about pointing out the value of a guilty verdict from the Offices of NACC and PACC. The index as a whole gained 58.37% of the full score which was at moderate level. It was divided into agency officers' perception perspective which gained 67.66% of the full score, while the facts from documents/evidences gained 25.75% of the full score of which both were not congruent with each other. This result reflected that local government organizations in the Mukdahan province area in fiscal year 2015 ran their operations without the perfect document/ evidence keepings in dealing with conflict of interest, for example: report of meetings or seminars inside the organizations for giving knowledge about conflict of interest, preparation of manual for performing the tasks in prevention of conflict of interest, improvement of task performing steps or of records for preventing the conflict of interest, guidelines for practice in monitoring personnel in their respective agencies to check whether they have any relationship with the proponent of procurement or not. It included the report of performing results for prevention of conflict of interest and the implementation of recommendations from the report to improve the work system. In addition, there was no clearness about making an operational plan in prevention and suppression of corruption in each fiscal year and the organizational personnel were not apparent in joining as a group for transparent management. That might be a cause to gain a low score for the agencies' documents/evidences.

5) The work integrity index was assessed from direct experience and perception perspective of officers inside the agencies in order to measure the system of management inside the agencies in the matter of personnel administration on the basis of human resource management principles: recruitment, development and retention of human resource, management of budget based on the principles of value-for-money and of fairness in delegation, of having knowledge and capability, and of performance standard. This index gained 63.03% of the full score by gaining 59.24% of the full score in the personnel administration indicator, 68.07% of the full score in the budget management indicator, and 64.29% of the full score in the fairness in the delegation indicator. When considered as a whole, this index received a score at high level. Some sub-indicators still gained a score at moderate level such as one in personnel administration. This result reflected that personnel of local government organization in the Mukdahan province area in fiscal year 2015 perceived their inappropriate remuneration in comparison with their inputs of knowledge and capability. They may have the opinion that the assessment of merits had low levels of fairness and standard. They might suspect that the patronage system came to interfere with

personnel administration and the environment in the workplace had not been impressed by personnel/officers.

Suggestions

Suggestions for policy

Local government organizations in the Mukdahan province area should determine a policy or plan of action as the direction to improve the image of transparency in organizational management, especially in the aspect of culture and morality in organization by focusing on official performance according to the mission of the agencies that were governed by the principle of morality and ethics following the code of ethics and professional conduct for efficient anti-corruption. The policy that should be defined was to improve the keepings of agencies' documents/ evidences concerning the procedures to cope with the problem of conflict in interest and to join as a group for transparent management and prevention and suppression of corruption resulting in working without pointing out the value of a guilty verdict of the agencies' officer by Office of NACC and Office of PACC.

Suggestions for Practice

- 1) The index and sub-indicators that the local governments in the Mukdahan province should be improved or developed urgently first were the indicators of response to the complaints/ notification of complaints followed by indicators of anti-corruption in organization, participation of service receivers or stakeholders and personnel administration respectively by a focus on keepings the documents/ evidences of agencies in the systematical, efficient, fair and public-open ways.
- 2) The agencies that have been assessed should improve their management urgently in order to be elevated with a high degree of prospective scores in the operational transparency. Those agencies recommended to do so were as follows: Nongkhaen Municipality followed by Khamcha-i Sub-district Municipality, Nikhom Kham Soi Sub-district Municipality, Puwong Sub-district Municipality, and Don Tan Phasuk Sub-district Municipality respectively.
- 3) There should be an improvement of data disclosing system through the website of work units on the issue of complete and up-date assessment in integrity and transparency management, especially the process in procurement by providing some information technology officers to help ease the process. The public can access to take a look at it conveniently and it should also include the revelation via media or some other communication channels.
- 4) The instrument such as an interview should be used additionally by making an interview with service receivers or stakeholders, for example, contractors, bidders, civil society representatives, representatives of educational sector and religious representatives in order that they are able to get informed of in-depth information about transparency in management of each agency.

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