

THE DISCOURSE OF ‘GOOD GOVERNANCE’ IN THAI LOCAL ADMINISTRATIVE ORGANIZATION: MYTH OR TRUTH

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“Discourse” has been occurred under the difference between what people could say rightly at one time under a set of rule/logic and what they spoke out”

(Michael Foucault, 1972, Quoted in Chairath Chareonsin-O-ran, 2544 : 92)

This article’s purpose were to analyze and criticize the origin, method and behavior inherited as “Myth” in Thai Local Administrative Organizations (LAO’s) under the implementation of Good Governance Principle. The article were composed into four parts including

- (1) The origin of the concept “Good Governance”
- (2) The methodology of Michael Foucault’s discourse
- (3) The analysis and discussion under the policy implementation of Good Governance principle in Local Administrative Organizations
- (4) The conclusion and suggestion

1

The origin and development of the concept “Good Governance”

In the World Bank’s report in 1989 under the “Sub-Saharan : From Crisis to Sustainable Growth” (Naruemol Thabjumpol, 2541), it referred to the failure of the African Sub-Saharan countries’ development, that had been occurred by the lack of Good Governance. The World Bank had defined the word “Governance” as the use of power to manage the countries’ resources for development (Sombun Siriprachai, 2552 : 3-4). This pointed to the significant of Good Governance to restore the economic, so the government had to perform by efficiently, fairly and independent law procedures.

Moreover, the bureaucracy and mass medias were actually accountability and transparency (Bussabong Chareonwattana, 2544 : 196).

Origin of the concept “Governance” could be backed to the middle of the fourteen century by a well-known Italian artist named Lorenzetti. He had painted a famous stucco that illustrated the difference stories between “Good and Bad Governance” (Anne Mette Kjaer, 2004 : 1). The concept of “Governance” had been rooted from the word “Government”, that being defined as the power action of political leaders. This concept had not been widespread after the Second World War, but during the 1980’s it had emerged in a new meaning which being boarder than “government”. However, it had not yet been accepted until then. By etymology, the word “governance” could be backed to a Greek vocabulary “Kubernan” (means to pilot or steer) and being used by Plato who referred to the types of government. In Concise Oxford Dictionary, the “governance” had been used as “government” which defined as the action of governing or the offices or agencies of government (Anne Mette Kjaer, 2004 : 1). However, in 1980’s the political scientist had referred to this word difference from “government” and including the others actors in civil society.

Thailand had been largely excited and confused with the concept “Good Governance” after the economic crisis in 1997 (B.E.2540). The crisis had push Thai government to devaluate Baht currency at July 4, 1997, coping up with the 17.20 billion US.dollars laon from International Monetary Fund (I.M.F.), exchanging with the promise of Thai government to compliance on the “Good Governance” principle (Borvornsak Uwannoo, 2542 : 5). Under this situation some academics had considered that Thailand endorsed the concept of “Good Governance” for restoring the economic crisis but the other group considered that Thailand had been predominated by the World Bank, I.M.F. and the western countries.

The word “Good Governance” had been firstly found Thailand in the Thai world “Dhammarath” by a group of Thammasat University academics. They had proposed the open letter to General Chawarit Yongjaiyuth administration with the “National Good Governance Proposal” demanding the government responsibility for the economic crisis (Nareumol Thubjumpol, 2546 : 56-60. When Thailand had been push to I.M.F. loan projects, so the country were forced to be changing in many things which one of those were the application of “Good Governance” principle.

By literature review, it found that the word “Governance” had usually been used in Thailand as “Good Governance” instead and being firstly translated into Thai word as

“Dhammarath” by Professor Dr. Chaiwat Sadha-Anan, a lecturer of Thammasat University. Otherwise, the word “Good Governance” were still translated into seven other Thai words including “Suprasatsanakarn” by Professor Dr. Tin Prachayapruet, “Dhammaraja” by Ammara Pongsapich, “Karn-Kamkab-Do-Lae-Thidee” by Vorabhatra Tothanakasem and Poolnij Piya-anan, “Pracha-raj” by National Economic and Social Development Board (NESDB), “Rathdhabhi-bal” by Professor Dr. Chi-anan Samuthawanij, and “Karn-Boriharn-Kijjakarn-Barnmueng-Thidee” by Office of Civil Service Commission and ect.

However, there were some problem about application of “Good Governance” in Thailand not only in the different translation into Thai word but also the different indicators or component of Good Governance. The component of Good Governance that formulated by Thai government agencies such as OCSC, ODCD, NESDB and Office of Prime Minister Office had been likely similar, especially the Rule of the Office of Prime Minister Office on Good Governance B.E. 2542 comprising six indicators included Rule of Law, Ethics, Transparency, Participation, Accountability and Costly (Bussabong Chareonchaichana, 2544 : 197). The Rule of the Office Prime Minister on Good Governance B.E. 2542 had been revoked by an announcement of the Decree on Good Governance B.E. 2546 instead, that were composed of a different content. The Decree on Good Governance B.E. 2546 had been focused on people benefit, work achievement, efficiency, costliness, deregulation and service facilitate and responsiveness (Somboon Siriprachai, 2552 : 86)

Moreover, The Act of Public Administration B.E. 2534, the volume 7 (B.E.2551) under the article No.11 added by the article No.55/1, it had regulated “the Provincial Good Governance Committee” (or Kor-Tho-Jor). This agency had prominent duties to monitoring and suggesting to all public agencies in provinces except Bangkok in order to perform a long with the Good Governance principles. Eventually, The Regulation of the Office of Prime Minister on Provincial Good Governance B.E. 2552 had been proclaimed.

2

Methodology of Michael Foucault’s “Discourse”

The word “Discourse” had been widely popular at least 10 years without clearly definition in academic debate. The concept of discourse was so ambiguous and nearly empty meaning. Hence, it had been actually used, but it was applied in both different meaning and

context. The most obvious of “discourse” was the concept of constructive language depending on the difference forms of people’s action according to their participation in the social context (Louis Phillips and Marianne W. Jorgensen, 2002 : 1). So, the discourse analysis was to analyze these forms of people actions and roles in the social context. Discourse analysis was an alternative of approach or methodology which not only transferred from quantitative, abstract and generalization to qualitative, concrete and specific studies, but also associated to the significant hypothesis. So, it was so a basic of discourse analysis research.

Michael Foucault (1926-1984), a leader of French postmodern philosopher had justified the word “discourse” as the system and process of constitute identity and significant of everything in the social, including knowledge, truth, power and selfness (Chairath Chareonsin-O-ran, 2543 : 19-20). Foucault considered the truth as the “discourse” which were a concursive construction. Discourse had caused the different regime of knowledge, that justified what being right or wrong. Foucault’s purpose were to examine the structure of knowledge regime, that was a rule of things we could speak or could not speak (Louis Phillip and Marianne W. Jorgensen, 2002 : 4). Discourse had been constructed by the people those occupy power and those who resisted power. It was a technology of power which had been applied to repress, obscure and organize the people’s life. “Discourse analysis” could display the power actions by elaborately.

Discourse was something which nobody could assume constructing or controlling explicitly. So, power by discourse had dispersed and intervened in the horizon and linkage by complicatedly. We could hardly find its center or origin. Eventually, everyone had been occupied by discourse or influenced by power relations under the knowledge or truth (Arnan Kanjanaphan, 2555 : 17-18). The essence of discourse analysis was not to justify whether speech right or wrong, but it was “a set of rule” that justify the speech.

Discourse had been constructed under the different between something that people could speak rightly under a set of rule or logic and something that he speak out. So, the discourse field was those different rules (Chairath Chareonsin-O-ran, 2543 : 21). This set of rule or logic was something that justify the existence, change and obscure of everything. Moreover, Foucault had found that the identity and meaning of everything were occupied and influenced by power and violence that compress and force to be a set of discourse. At the same time, those discourse had still repressed, blocked and eliminated the other

discourse.(Chairath Chareonsin-O-ran, 2543 : 24) The example was the “Male Sex Organ” as “a discourse of man or woman” or “Identity Card/Passport” as “a discourse of citizenship”, etc.

In Foucault’s thought, discourse analysis was to try studying and finding the process, procedure and consequence in order to construct identity and meaning of everything around people under discourse and discourse operation. How was the discourse constructed ? How did it fight for hegemony in order to regulate a set of rule or logic? And with whom was the discourse connected? (Chairath Chareonsin-O-ran, 2543 : 27-28). The discourse analysts had believed that people was only a puppet or follower and rather reproduce a rule of thing than create or initiate a new one. In discourse analysis , there never justify whether the speech right or wrong, but it focused on a set of rule which regulated the speech or action possibly (Chairath Chareonsin-O-ran, 2543 : 29-30).

3

Analysis and Discussion on the Discourse of Good Governance in Local Administrative Organizations

This article focused on the “discourse of Good Governance” in Local Administrative Organizations. We considered the principle of Good Governance as a public policy, so we had applied the conceptual framework about policy implementation process. Professor Dr. Voradej Chandharasorn (2552 : 32-41) had divided the component of policy implementation process into two steps as macro level and micro level.

Macro Level : The policy implementation in macro level were concerned with the central or superior agencies in order to transform the policy into plan or project and the adoption of the operational agencies

Micro Level : The policy implementation in micro level were concerned with the operational agencies throughout the countries and also the partnership or stakeholders. This level was included into three processed

- (1) The mobilization of all partnership/stakeholders concerning to the policy
- (2) The implementation and operation
- (3) The continuous and institutionalization

In this article we had applied the concept of those policy processes, so we divided the analysis of “Good Governance discourse of Local Administrative Organizations” into four parts

3.1 The Structure and Law

Thailand had 7,835 Local Administrative Organizations throughout the country (Data as March, 9, 2558) including 76 Provincial Administrative Organizations, 2,440 Municipalities, 5,335 Tambol Administrative Organizations and a special local organizations including Bangkok Metropolitan Administration and Pattaya City. Each type of LAO’s had been established by the Act of their own and being corporation. Under the relationship to the central government, Interior Ministry (by Interior Minister, Provincial Governor and District Chief) had direct authority to monitor and supervise the LAO’s. This had led to the controversy and debate whether LAO’s should be directed or controlled by the central government or not, so this circumstance had reflected as “a discourse of justification”.

The concept of “Good Governance” had been obviously occurred in Thailand from outside, so we could justified that it had derived from a set of rule or regulation which people had received and hold (Chairath Chareonsin-O-ran, 2544 : 113). In the other word, Thailand had imported the concept of “Good Governance” under the influence of the World Bank’s report in 1989, that had pointed out to the lack of “Governance” in the African Sub-Saharan countries. After Thailand had suffered by economic crisis in 1997 (2540) and being push to the International Monetary Fund’s loan project. Therefore, many groups of people had cried and demand for the country reform especially the government reform coping up with the compulsory conditions of International Monetary Fund, that forced Thai government to adopt the concept of “Governance”. Since then, Thai people all way of life had been mostly excited to the word “Good Governance” widespread throughout the country, but until now the situation of “Good Governance” in Thailand were never improved especially in LAO’s. So, we could say that the word “Good Governance” was just as “a discourse of Good Governance”.

There were so different in definition and indicators of the word “Good Governance” among various agencies, so it led to point out that “the power under discourse dispersed and penetrated in horizon and linkage by complicatedly and hardly to find its origin and center” (Arnan Kanjanaphan, 2555 : 17-18). Hence, the Vision, Goal and Strategy of LOA’s had been just formulated as “a form without content”. In the other word, the principle of Good Governance could not be actually practiced or conducted by the politicians or officials in LAO’s. Under the situation that people or supervising agencies had hardly examined or evaluated the performance of their implementation, so we could justify as “a Myth” in implementing the policy of “Good Governance”. Moreover, in 2009 the Office of Prime Minister had declared the Office of Prime Minister Regulation’s Regulation on Provincial Good Governance B.E. 2552 (2009) or “Kor-Tho-Jor” in order to support and promote the policy throughout the country. This circumstance led to reflect as “a discourse of Provincial Good Governance”, too.

3.2 Activities and Practice

The Interior Ministry had a duty to transform the policy of Good Governance into projects and activities under the responsibility of the Department of Local Administration that being established in B.E. 2545 (2002) with the Vision as cited “ a public agencies for promoting LAO’s to compliance with the principle of Good Governance for people’s well-being”. Besides, the agencies had formulated a strategy to develop the local personnel in B.E. 2557-2560 as following “The LAO’s personnel have been protected with the morale and ethics issues, Good Governance and being reliable and faithful by people within B.E. 2560”. However, the situation of LAO’s lacking of transparency and integrity had been continuously low, because there were a plenty of bribery and corruption problem in LAO’s both politicians and officials widespread. The evidence to support those mention was the report of the Political and Economic Risk Consultant : PERC in B.E. 2550, it had indicated that Thailand had been ranked by the third of the most corruption in Asia (Kovit Puang-gnam, 2553 : 6).

Besides, in the report of Thammasat University Research Institution, it had pointed out to the causes of corruption problem in LAO’s into seven issues including (1) lacking of transparency in budgeting and accounting (2) power abused and bribery (3) the loopholes of regularity and law (4) lack of knowledge and understanding among officials (5) lack of announcing the projects or activities’ details (6) lack of investigating by outside agencies and

civil society and (7) power dominated and influenced by local politicians. So, the LAO's had usually applied the principle of Good Governance as only "justification" in order to obscure their mistaken or irregularity. These were more likely as "a Myth" or "Image Setting" of the agencies. In fact whether "Good Governance" would be conducted by the people or agencies or not had not been significant because those people had hardly enough time to study or examine the existence of "Good Governance". So, they had just spoken or referred to something like "Good Governance" by occasion.

By the law, the Interior Ministry had authority to supervise and oversee the LAO's, but in fact they could not actually supervise and examine the LAO's because the Interior (by provincial governor and district chief) had still depend on the LAO's resources and budget or asked for LAO's assistance. So, this circumstance had reflected that "the supervising or inspecting" could not be conducted possibly. Moreover, the central or superior agencies had often initiated a plenty of projects and activities for "Local Administrative Organizations Good Governance in Transparency and Participation Contest" for a lot of million Baht prize. These projects or activities hosted by the National Agencies had often been criticized and suspected by many people and outside world. Hence, the contest project of Good Governance of LAO's had been remarked as "a discourse of Good Governance Contest" because these were treated as a "symbol" or "image setting". In Foucault's view, he called as "a ritual of truth" (Arnan Kanjanaphan, 2555 : 126). These projects and activities were displayed as the agencies' righteous and sacred for people obediently.

3.3 Politicians and Officials

The success of policy implementation in Good Governance had to depend on both local politicians and officials as well as all parties. Therefore, the article were divided into three levels including (1) the acceptance on Good Governance code (2) mobilization of community and civil society (3) implementation, continuity and institutionalization

Firstly, the acceptance on Good Governance principles among LAO's politicians and officials. According to a plenty of works, they found that Thai LAO's had severely suffered with the problem of bribery and corruption for a long time. In Weerasak Kruethep and Jaras Suwanmara (2553) on "Decentralization and Reform in Thailand" (Volume 4) were found that Thailand LAO's had faced with at least two problems (1) unworthy in budget spending

(2) inefficiency performance. Moreover, in the Administrative Court's report concerning to the LAO's, there were a lot of problems divided into 3 groups by following

(1) The cases about wrongdoing or irregularity of politicians relating to interest conflict and their own benefit and drug cases

(2) The cases about personnel management relating to misconduct of promoting, transferring and salary

(3) The cases about the superior officials who responsible to the LAO's such as provincial governors and district chief, not conducting or practice irregularly or abstain the duty.

For those reason, we could say that the LAO's politicians and officials had not conducted by the principle of Good Governance, so we likely believed that Thai LAO's politicians and officials had more likely low acceptance in the policy of Good Governance. Hence, the LAO's Vision, Goal and Mission for example a Northern Provincial Administrative Organization had a vision focusing on "development... for well-being city in order to sustainable development under sufficient economy and Good Governance", had become just a "slogan" or "discourse", because there were more likely gap between the vision mention and a real practice of their agencies.

Secondly, Mobilization of community and civil society in policy

implementation. It was hardly to mobilize for supporting of Good Governance in LAO's especially in the rural area, because people could not gather easily or lack of civil society. In contrast, most of people had usually been dominated and influenced by the politicians. These politicians had usually organized a group of voting base throughout the country. These group of voting bases had usually been used as a tool and mechanism for politics such as "public hearing" by the Constitution. So, these politician could usually win the election and they had usually cited the popular word as "let hearing to people voice" or "let people decide by their own". These words and action under power were called as "a discourse of democracy", too.

Thirdly, the implementation, continuation and institutionalization. According to the two topic above had led to decide in the third level. If there were lacking of acceptance on Good Governance of LAO's personnel and hardly mobilized by civil society and community,

the implementation and operation would hardly be achieved. The reasons could be considered in the three points as following

- (1) Lacking of ideology among local politicians
- (2) Spoils or patronage system in Thai politics for a long time
- (3) Lacking of strong mechanism for investigating and suppressing the

corrupt politicians and state officials

Moreover, the local politicians had still set an activities and behavior which were likely to display just as an “image making” or “symbolic” of their agencies. There were many examples such as the vinyl boards, electronic signboards and enormous pictures illustrating the mayors preying a monks or elderly people. These behavior had likely displayed those mayors a moral or ethical man in order to make a popularity and suffrage. However, these activities had likely done by irregularly because they had usually consumed public budget and resources. These projects and activities were included a helping projects for the poor, children, elderly man and disable people or many time merit for traditional and religion rituals. Many projects were concerning to make a study trip both in country and abroad, these projects were likely justified as “improving personnel potentiality”. However, these study trip could hardly be examined and evaluated by effectively and costly. Furthermore, the mostly mayors and chief of LAO’s had still played a “big donor” (a merit) for public interest in various occasion such as donating for schools and hospitals by using public budget. So, we could pointed out that these project and activities were likely “a discourse of Local Administrative Organizations’ Good Governance”.

3.4 Accountability and Participation

There were a plenty of research concerning to accountability and participation by civil society such as Suthawan Walaisathien (editor) (2546) in “ Good Governance in Industrial Environment”. It considered that Thai government policy had abused industrial environment more largely. The government had mostly supported the capitalist and merchant by neglecting the participation of people and civil accountability. This circumstance had led to the problem of industrial environment impact inevitably. The work of Niphon Phaumpongsathorn and others (2543) in “ the strategy for resist Thailand corruption : economic

concept on corruption market”. The work had quoted a corruption formular of Dr. Robert Klitgaard as following

$$Co = M + D - A$$

Co = Corruption, M = Monopoly, D = Discretion and A = Accountability

This formular were to describe that if there were a strong monopoly and discretion but weak accountability, so there would be a lot of corruption.

The tendency of monopoly and discretion in Local Administrative Organizations had occurred after the promulgating of Thailand Constitution B.E. 2540, which promoted and focused on the policy of decentralization to Local Administrative Organizations. This led to establish a numerous of LAO’s and promoting the independent and empower to the LAO’s great largely, but at the same time, we had lacked of sufficient mechanism for supervising and monitoring these LAO’s from power corrupted and irregularity. Hence, we could say that the policy of decentralization to LAO’s were more likely justified as “a discourse of decentralization to Local Administrative Organizations”. Because the discourse were the display of power action and knowledge under a set of rule or logic, that had a role to dominate or socialize people in society obediently.

4

Conclusion and Suggestion

The study of discourse analysis on Good Governance of Local Administrative Organizations, applied a well known French postmodern philosophy, namely Michael Foucault (1926-1984) could help the interesting readers and student understanding more about the real world under a postmodern methodology. Especially, this article helped to understand the obscure and conceal knowledge and the truth under “a discourse”.

The word “Governance” had been backed to the fourteen century by an Italian artist, Lorenzetti. The concept of “Governance” had been rooted from the word “Government”. This concept had not been widespread after the Second World War. Until in the World Bank’s report in 1989 under the “Sub-Saharan : From Crisis to Sustainable

Growth”, it had referred to the failure of the African Sub-Saharan countries’ development, that occurred by the lack of Good Governance.

Thailand had adopted the concept of “Good Governance” after a devastated economic crisis in 1997-1998 (2540-2541) under the condition of International Monetary Fund’s project loan. In this article we had applied the concept of policy processes, so we divided the analysis of “Good Governance discourse of Local Administrative Organizations” into four parts including (1) structure and law (2) activities and practice (3) the people and (4) accountability and participation

By conclusion, the concept of “Good Governance” had been used in Thai society in different meanings and indicators of various public agencies. This circumstance had reflected that the power under discourse were to spread and penetrate in the horizon and linkage complicatedly and hardly to find its origin or center. The Local Administrative Organizations’ vision, goal, value and strategy had been justified as “a form without content”. So, these were considered as a “Myth” of Thai bureaucracy, because the politicians or officials had been accustomed to display the act of “Good Governance” for people. Moreover, the LAO’s had created the projects and activities to promote the Good Governance without actually perform. So, those projects and activities were formulated as an “image making” for the agencies. In the other word, the code of Good Governance in LAO’s had been likely as “a discourse of Good Governance”. In fact whether “Good Governance” would be conducted by the people or agencies or not had not been significant because those people had hardly enough time to study or examine the existence of “Good Governance”. So, they had just spoken or referred to something like “Good Governance” by occasion. Finally, the Local administrative Organizations’ action and behavior about the Good Governance principle had been occurred under a set of rule or logic that differed from the truth.

Suggestions

The author had no intention to suggest the reform of Thai society, bureaucracy and Local Administrative Organizations, because I considered that many people could understand and awareness in the problem. However, the significant point I would like to advice was to consider and justify the **“philosophy, ideology and principle in solving the problem by cautiously” especially in socio-politic issues. Thailand should have been released or**

liberated from dominated or influenced by the International Organizations or the powerful countries under “a discourse of Good Governance”.

Finally, the author had no intention to attack or damn any agencies or institutions. The article’s aims were to point out the knowledge and truth in another side that being obscured and concealed by the operation of “discourse” in Thai society.

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