Attitudes and Behaviour of People in the Province of Phayao towards the Thai National Reconciliation Plan: The Policy Implementation Outcome*

ทัศนคติและพฤติกรรมของประชาชนในจังหวัดพะเยาต่อแผนการปรองดองแห่งชาติ: ผลจากการนำนโยบายไปปฏิบัติ

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Abstract

Thailand has been under the situation of political assemblage since 2005. At that time, the rebelling groups determined their criteria to fight against others and to negotiate with the government so that the House dissolution would be considered. Political violence occurred continuously among a well-organized network. Each congregation has had both direct and indirect impacts on the economy, politics and society at large, from Bangkok to its surrounding districts and spread out across the country. There were a number of injuries and deaths. At that time, the Abhisit Vejjajiva and Yingluck Shinawatra governments had been trying to solve the conflicts between different groups by launching a national reconciliation plan.

This article explores attitudes and behaviour of people in Phayao province towards the previous Thai national reconciliation plan in 2010 as well as studies the success of the policy implementation. The objective is also to stimulate people participation to achieve the peaceful situation under a democratic system with the King as the Head of State. Data were collected through 410 samples in and out the province of Phayao by means of questionnaires as well as structured in-depth interviews among civil services and political officers. Incidentally, it is found that people who lived in the city area did not have different attitudes about the plan from those who lived in the surrounding districts, (significantly at the level of 0.05). The attitude about the national reconciliation plan as a whole is at a high level ($\overline{X}$= 4.46). In consequence, the study shows some unimportant relationship between information-tracking

* บทความนี้มีวัตถุประสงค์เพื่อศึกษาทัศนคติของประชาชนกลุ่มตัวอย่างในจังหวัดพะเยาต่อแผนปรองดองแห่งชาติ (พ.ศ.2553) ความสำเร็จของการนำนโยบายไปปฏิบัติ และกระตุ้นให้เกิดความตระหนักในความเห็นต่างและเกิดแนวคิดภราดรภาพในการอยู่ร่วมกันตามระบอบประชาธิปไตยอันมีพระมหากษัตริย์ทรงเป็นประมุข

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and knowledge about the plan from the sample group, (significantly at the level of 0.05). Therefore, we accept the *null* hypothesis that there is no relationship between knowledge and participation behavior of the sample groups. The result of the interviews shows some opinions towards the reconciliation plan as a government policy. Some informants showed a weariness of public protests. Notwithstanding, for people's participation in data collection, the respondents have had quite a good cooperation. Although some payed a low attention to the plan, they did pose some relevantly good ambitions to resolve the conflicts which are a good sign for policy implementation outcome.

Keywords: national reconciliation plan, political assemblage, political conflict, policy implementation

บทคัดย่อ

การชุมนุมทางการเมืองเกิดขึ้นอย่างต่อเนื่องในประเทศไทย ตั้งแต่ปี พ.ศ. 2548 ลักษณะของการรวมกลุ่มของบุคคลคนต่างๆเป็นแบบเครือข่ายอย่างทั่วถึงทุกภูมิภาคในประเทศไทย เพื่อกดดันรัฐบาลให้พิจารณายุติบทบาทการบริหารราชการแผ่นดินด้วยการลาออกหรือยุบสภา หากฝ่ายรัฐบาลแต่ละสมัยก็มิได้ปฏิบัติตามข้อเรียกร้องเช่นว่านั้น ส่งผลถึงความขัดแย้งทางการเมืองที่ทวีความรุนแรงยิ่งขึ้น การชุมนุมแต่ละช่วงเวลาก่อให้เกิดความเสียหายต่อชีวิตและทรัพย์สินของภาครัฐและภาคเอกชน เกิดผลกระทบโดยตรงและโดยอ้อมต่อเศรษฐกิจ การเมือง และสังคมเป็นวงกว้าง ตั้งแต่กรุงเทพมหานคร เชื่อมโยงออกไปยังหัวเมืองรอบนอกและขยายผลกระทบออกไปทั่วประเทศไม่เว้นแม้จังหวัดพะเยา ในเวลาต่อมารัฐบาลนายอภิสิทธิ์ เวชชาชีวะ และรัฐบาลนางสาวยิ่งลักษณ์ ชินวัตร ได้พยายามแก้ไขปัญหาเชิงนโยบายโดยดำเนินแผนการปรองดองแห่งชาติเพื่อการปฏิรูปประเทศไทย งานวิจัยฉบับนี้มีวัตถุประสงค์เพื่อศึกษาทัศนคติและพฤติกรรมของประชาชนในจังหวัดพะเยาต่อแผนการปรองดองแห่งชาติ เพื่อศึกษาผลสำเร็จของการนำนโยบายภาครัฐไปปฏิบัติในประเด็นการสร้างความปรองดอง และเพื่อกระตุ้นแนวคิดภราดรภาพของการอยู่ร่วมกันภายใต้ระบอบประชาธิปไตยอันมีพระมหากษัตริย์ทรงเป็นประมุข โดยเก็บรวบรวมข้อมูลจากกลุ่มตัวอย่างทั้งสิ้น 410 ตัวอย่าง เครื่องมือที่ใช้ได้แก่ แบบสอบถามปลายเปิดและปลายปิด และแบบสัมภาษณ์เชิงลึกแบบมีโครงสร้างจากข้าราชการการเมืองและข้าราชการประจำในจังหวัดพะเยา

ผลการศึกษาพบว่า กลุ่มตัวอย่างมีทัศนคติเห็นด้วยกับการดำเนินนโยบายแผนการปรองดองแห่งชาติในภาพรวมอยู่ที่ระดับมากที่สุด ($\bar{x}$ = 4.46) โดยประชากรที่อาศัยอยู่ในเขตอำเภอเมืองมีทัศนคติเห็นด้วยมากที่สุดเกี่ยวกับแผนการปรองดองแห่งชาติเพื่อการปฏิรูปประเทศไทยซึ่งไม่แตกต่างจากประชากรที่อาศัยอยู่นอกเขตอำเภอเมืองอย่างมีนัยสำคัญที่ระดับ 0.05 และกลุ่มตัวอย่างมีพฤติกรรมการติดตามข้อมูลข่าวสารไม่สัมพันธ์กับความรู้ความเข้าใจเกี่ยวกับแผนการปรองดองแห่งชาติอย่างมีนัยสำคัญที่ระดับ 0.05 ซึ่งเป็นไปตามสมมติฐาน ผลจากการสัมภาษณ์มองการสร้างความปรองดองเป็นเพียงนโยบายภาครัฐและประชาชนเบื่อหน่ายการประท้วงจากผู้ที่คิดต่างจากรัฐบาล อย่างไรก็ตามประชาชนกลุ่มตัวอย่างให้ความร่วมมือในการเก็บข้อมูลเป็นอย่างดีแม้

คำตอบที่ได้รับบางส่วนจะชี้ว่าประชาชนไม่ค่อยให้ความสนใจในเรื่องแผนการปรองดองแห่งชาติของรัฐเท่าใด แต่ก็ได้ก่อให้เกิดความกระตือรือร้นในการแก้ไขปัญหาความขัดแย้ง ในด้านความสำเร็จของการนำนโยบายปรองดองแห่งชาติสู่การปฏิบัติถือว่าประสบผลสำเร็จ และสามารถกระตุ้นให้เกิดการมีส่วนร่วมในระดับหนึ่ง

คำสำคัญ: แผนการปรองดองแห่งชาติ, การชุมนุมทางการเมือง, ความขัดแย้งทางการเมือง, การนำนโยบายไปปฏิบัติ

Background and Important of the issue

It has been reported that Thailand has been facing a serious conflict in the last 5 years. The major causes of conflict are likely from the demand for power and benefits (Pitchaya Suksai, 2011). Thai people have experienced a long continuation of political psychological situation. During 2005 until 2011 was really a political assemblage. It was an era when people were suspicious of each other. There was a spread of both good and bad information from diverse media and different political polars who tried to convince their comrades to clearly separate from the other side. The alliance of these political groups has had a very well organized movement and a strong network. Among them, there were such as the People's Alliance for Democracy (PAD) and the United Front for Democracy against Dictatorship (UDD). These people claimed that they fought against each other under the same basic principles of a democratic state of which the King is the Head of the State. More importantly, the uprising groups determined their criteria to negotiate with the government to consider dissolution. Political violence occurred continuously. People became more and more detest and did not accept others who had different political opinions, even among relatives, close friends, or those who worked in the same place. Each political gathering has had both direct and indirect impacts on the economy, politics and society at large, from Bangkok to its surrounding districts and spreadout across the country (Borwornsak Uwanno, 2011). There were a number of injuries and deaths.

Political violence caused by political conflicts mentioned above has already happened in many countries around the world such as in the United State, South Africa, China, Indonesia and South Korea. Some of the causes of conflict are also about political power such as the different political ideology in China and Taiwan (Tnews, 2014). The case has put forward the arguments made by the sovereign in a concrete stage. The result of such a phenomenon causes a disadvantage to the society. Conflict, for C.L. Barnard (1968:145) in his book '*The Functions of the Executive of the standards,'* is caused by different operating. To

him, inequality in overwhelming of power or influence to negotiate over the opponents takes a main part in conflict.

It is a big question to every sector such as media, academic institutions, and social network to resolve and to achieve reconciliation. According to J.D.B. Miller (1986), the meaning of such political conflict is something that is "not subject to compromise". He stressed that '*an acceptance of conflicts is a key to politics,'* no matter with or without an intention to cause or to prevent resistance to change. Various suggestions for a remedial process have a similar target of living peacefully and to get to it through a gentle manner Cavender L. (2012). It might be possible to achieve a political compromise. The notion of '*politics'* has quite a specific meaning. Political scientists, politicians, and many writers like William Mackenzie or Bernard Crick, and Andrew Heywood (Heywood, A., 2007) have agreed and defined '*politics' as a negotiation of benefits presented to the stakeholders to consider and define the policies that would profit the public*". To set forth, some academic groups and private organizations have tried to create a guideline to prevent any rebelling to recur again. Had a conflict continued, it would escalate into a chronic problem and may be expanded to violence and the uprising. At that time, the former Abhisit Vejjajiva and Yingluck Shinawatra governments had been trying to set up a policy to abolish conflicts between different groups and decided to launch a national reconciliation plan (here onward would mention as 'the plan') (Internet projects for residential laws, 2013). Within the five steps of policy process (policy formation, formulation, decision, implementation, and evaluation) (Sombat Thamrongthanyawong, 2010), one would agree that the most crucial and difficult part is to make it work or to turn decisions into events of getting things done. That means a good administration is needed. However, good management for policy implementation would consist of several essential activities. For a system model proposed by David Easton which suggests the input-output method, the implementation step of the output might need to be emphasized.

To achieve the policy outcome as mentioned earlier by Christopher Hood(1976 cited in Martin Minogue, 1993), firstly, one has to specify and clarify the policy objectives. According to Hood, although some philosophers may recommend a 'real administration model' that an administrative system should be unitary with a single line of authority, such system could not exist. The best way suggested is that the information about the policy must be accurate and well communicated (Hood, 1976 cited in Martin Minogue, 1993).Moreover, to succeed in policy implementation for an international democracy, the participatory approach is also important (Itthichai Sidam, 2010). If it is a subject of spontaneous participation, to get things done

wouldn't be a problem. Nonetheless, if there is an attempt for a coercive or an induced style, to get people involvement might be a hard work for every government.

Herein, the authors are interested in exploring if the chosen method to diminish conflict was well defined in accordance with the policy implementation process. As the situation in policy launching was rather a top-down approach or a single line of authority model, did the public in general accept or agree to follow such a solution? Did 'the plan' be able to get into the core part of the problem? Did the people understand what the above-mentioned governments wanted to imply? This article would find out if there any differences in people's attitudes and behaviour of people in Phayao province towards the previous Thailand national reconciliation plan in 2010, in terms of the policy implementation outcome. Phayao province is chosen to conduct the research because it is one of many provinces in Thailand where people, during the past five years, were politically active. As shown in many documents, some of them supported the political way of former Prime Minister Thaksin Shinawatra who is deemed to be the central point of political differences in Thailand (Pitchaya Suksai, 2011). It is envisaged that the feedback from this study would provide a platform for Thai people to accomplish a good conflict management.

Research Objectives

1. To explore attitudes and behavior of people in the province of Phayao towards the 2010 Thai national reconciliation plan.
2. To recognize the success of public policy implementation.
3. To stimulate the people participation in Phayao province to achieve the peaceful brotherhood status under a democratic system with the King as the Head of State and accept different political ideology.

Sample

Research population was determined primarily in central district of Phayao province as well as in densely populated suburb. This is to stimulate data collection where there tends to be more political activities. The selected areas for data collection are Dok Kham Tai, Chun, Mae Chai, and Chiang Kham districts. The sample included 410 samples from the overall 488,864 population in Phayao province (Office of Phayao province, 2013) calculated by Taro Yamane method (1967), which allows 5% error.

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Research Tools

The research tools for this study include:

1. A close and open - ended questionnaire which consists of three parts. The first part is basic information of the respondents. The second and third parts are questions about people attitudes towards the Thai National Reconciliation Plan. This includes three aspects of public opinion namely: knowledge and understanding of the rights and duties under the constitution, attitude about reconciliation plan, and some ideology in political participation.

2. A structured in-depth interview which has various questions to cover the research topic and to be able to easy categorize and then analyze.

Data Collection

The research was conducted to collect data in various ways as follows.

1. Documentary Research: by gathering comments on the study and analysis of academic papers on the policy analysis, especially for a reconciliation plan, constitutional reform, political reform in Thailand, some issues in political ideology, and etc.

2. Field Research: by collecting data from people living in the province of Phayao, both in the city and other districts. Data were gathered by a distribution of questionnaires as well as an in-depth interview about people opinion towards the reconciliation plan and access for Information tracking about 'the plan'. The key informant groups, especially those who involved in research topics such as the Election Commission Phayao province, Governor, Chief Executive of the province and district, were questioned individually.

3. Observation: by the researchers on some political events, including activities related to the creation of harmonious unity to reform the country which organized by local organizations in urban and suburban selected districts.

Conceptual Framework

This study has been conducted under the concepts related to policy implementation process, the national reconciliation plan, the constitutional and relevant laws, political and administrative reform, and democratic and political ideology. According to Minogue (1993), policy implementation is a crucial aspect of the real world of public policy-making that has been neglected in theoretical literature. One should seek to make a significant distinction between implementation and outcome. It is dangerous to assume that what has been decided will be achieved. (B.J. Loasby 1976 cited in Martin Minogue, 1993: 19-21). In this study, the researchers have been trying to point out an important part for the policy

implementation process. The perception of the policy and access in policy communication are defined as key factors for people's participation in and attitudes towards 'the plan'. The study framework was set as follows.

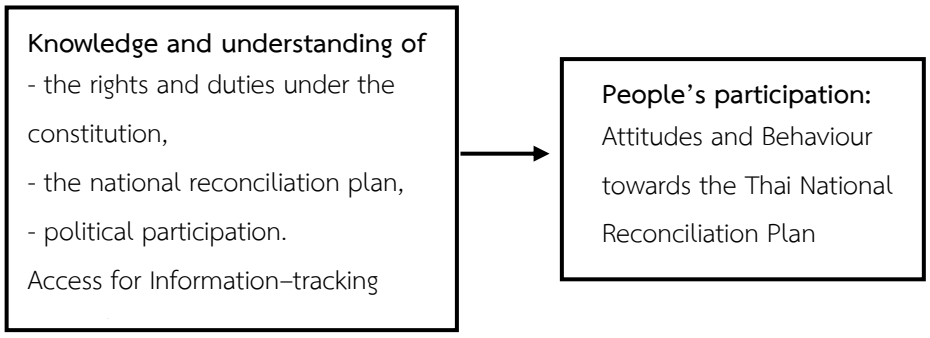


Figure 1. The Study Framework

Hypotheses

1. Attitudes about national reconciliation plan for Thailand reform

H0 The attitude about national reconciliation plan of the sample group in urban area is not different from the sample group in suburban.

H1 The attitude about national reconciliation plan of the sample group in urban area is different from the sample group in suburban.

2. Information-tracking behaviour related to knowledge.

H0 The behaviour in information-tracking of the sample group in urban and suburban areas does not relate to general knowledge about national reconciliation plan.

H1 The behaviour in information-tracking of the sample group in urban and suburban areas relates to general knowledge about national reconciliation plan.

Data Analysis

An analysis of data and statistics used in this study are as followings:

1. Quantitative Method to analyze basic information of the respondents using computer program including frequency, mean, standard deviation, and chi-square test that 0.05 level tolerances are acceptable (Field, A., 2005).

2. Descriptive Method to explain some characteristics, indications and information which cannot be translated into quantitative data.

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Research Results

The results of the study are summarized below.

1. Personal data of the overall sample by sex, age, marital status shows that the majority were female (52.5%), 26.8% were in the age range of 40-49 years, and the marital status was accounted for 54.0 %.

2. The study found that there was 51.55% less than a bachelor's degree, followed by 20.7% in BA and 20.0 % in other educational levels respectively. For occupation, it was found that most of the population were in agricultural activities (44.84%) when minimum personal income per month was 5,000 Baht (35.12%).

3. The research results in people's attitudes and participation in information tracking relates to knowledge about the national reconciliation plan are shown in Table 1 and Table 2 below:

Access for information-tracking about the national reconciliation plan	Per cent		
	urban area	suburban area	Total
Every day	36.2	26.2	31.2
Every 7days	25.7	33.8	29.7
Others	17.1	15.1	16.1
Not interested in following the information	21.0	24.9	23.0
Total			100.0

Table 1. People's participation in information-tracking about 'the plan'.

From Table 1, the information-tracking behaviour about the national reconciliation plan of the sample groups inside and outside the city in terms of availability is divided into 4 aspects. It shows that the sample group inside the city tended to participate in the information tracking about 'the plan' rather regularly every day (36.2%), while those outside the city preferred to get in touch with the information every 7 days (33.8%). The study also shows that the majority of the population followed the information about 'the plan' (77% or 316 people).

Respondents	People's attitudestowards 'the plan'				
	N	$\bar{x}$	S.D.	χ^2	Sig.
Urban area					
- Agreed with 'the plan'	79	4.20	0.419		
- Not agree with 'the plan'	21	4.10	0.477		
Suburban area					
- Agreed with 'the plan'	280	4.30	0.509		
- Not agree with 'the plan'	25	4.16	0.555		
Total	410	4.22	0.511	0.536	0.153

Table 2. The relationship between people's attitudes towards 'the plan' inside and outside the city

From Table 2, personal attitudes towards the national reconciliation plan of the sample groups inside and outside the city was compared. The total average value of people's attitudes of the sample groups inside and outside the city is 4.22. The result from Chi Square test is 0.536 with 0.153 significance. This can be concluded that the attitude towards 'the plan' of the sample group inside the city was not different from that from outside the city, significantly at the level of 0.05.

4. In regards to the relations between people's behaviour towards 'the plan' and the knowledge about 'the plan', the results are as follows.

Knowledge and perception about 'the plan'

Behaviour	Knowledge about 'the plan'		Total
	Yes	No	
Followed the information about 'the plan'	244 77%	72 23%	316 100%
Did not follow the information about 'the plan'	38 40.7%	56 59.3%	94 100%
Total	282 68.8%	128 31.2%	410 100%

Test Statistics

	Knowledge
Chi-Square[a]	0.574
df	1
Asymp. Sig.	0.709

Table 3 The relationship between knowledge about 'the plan' and the information-tracking behaviour

Table 3 shows that the behaviour in information-tracking about 'the plan' of the sample groups both in urban and suburban areas, somewhat, did not relate to the knowledge and perception about 'the plan' significantly at the level of 0.05, with Chi Square test = 0.574 and significant value at 0.709. Therefore, the *null* hypothesis is accepted.

Discussion

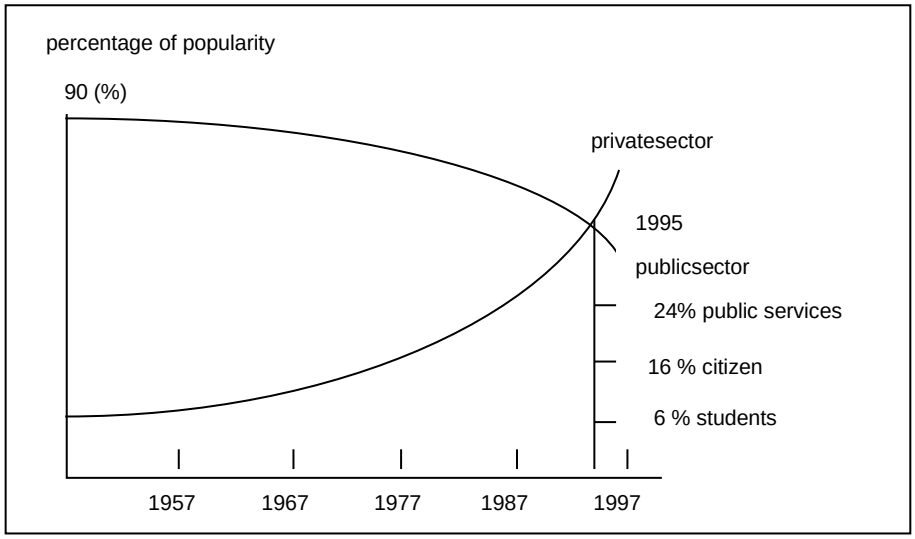
The results of the study show a little greater number of female than male of overall research population in Phayao province. The majority of the population were married, in a range of 40-49 years of age, lower than a bachelor's degree, and in the agricultural activities with a moderate income of about 5,000 Baht per month. That means most of the research population were in a working age and quite active.

The research results in Information tracking behavior in terms of availability of the sample groups show that most of the population living in urban area tended to follow the information about 'the plan' every day, while the population living in rural area preferred to follow the information every 7 days. The study also reveals that a good number (60.5%) of the research population followed the information about the national reconciliation plan (316 out of 410). This fact is in accordance with Pet-ampai Monkhonjiradej et al. (2014)'s work. She stated that: if the people in the community aware and understand about the benefit of the decision (policy), people participatory would be well succeeded. Moreover, to have an opportunity in the planning process would help improve the policy outcome.

Surprisingly, there was no relationship between information-seeking or tracking behaviour and knowledge about the plan from the sample group (Table 3). That is 351 out of 410 of the population continually followed the information about 'the plan'. Such findings might reveal personal interest of each respondent but might not enough to state that the informants have had a good perception about 'the plan'. Though, with 77% of the population who followed the information and had a good knowledge about 'the plan' can be a positive sign of a success policy implementation process.

In consequence, the study shows that people who lived in the city area did not have different attitude about 'the plan' from those who lived in the surrounding districts, significantly at the level of 0.05. Therefore, we accept the *null hypothesis* statistically significant at the level of 0.05.It is quite an excellent result that the attitude about 'the plan' as a whole is at a highest level ($\overline{X}$= 4.46). This implies that people quite understand what the governments at that time wanted to achieve. Moreover, despite the different behaviours which did not relate to the knowledge concerning 'the plan' and while the situation in policy launching was rather a top-down approach, the sample groups could comprehend what the government wants to communicate. At this point, Stoner & Freeman (1989)'s techniques in conflict management to provide more policy information in order to stimulate more conflict might not applicable.

Normally, people in the north of Thailand do have quite a good response in political activities. They formed up several political parties (Pitchaya Suksai, 2011). This study discloses a different point of view. The result reveals a peaceful side of people in northern area as well as their natural low attitude towards political subject which is much different from data shown in the media.As a political philosophy stated by Aristotle, the father of political science, that "*Human being is social animal"* (Somsak Kiewkingkaew, 2013). This signifies human habit to congregate together. Hence, a group participation and an agreement based on good information would put policy into practice (Kowit Poung-ngam and Preedee Chotchuang, 1998). Many examples about political reform or management system improvement have already happened several times in the past (Rung Keawdaeng, 1997). That depends also on people's satisfactory and participation. The image below shows an example in public agreement and participation in political reform in Thailand.



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Figure 2 The popularity of the Thailand government (Jeera Hongladarom in Rung Keawdaeng, 1997:44)

As stated earlier that this study has an aim to explore attitudes and behavior of people in Phayao towards the 2010 Thai national reconciliation plan and to recognize the success of public policy implementation, the result is satisfy. Although a good unitary administration management with a single line of authority looks far behind in many countries, it really happens here in Thailand.

Conclusion and suggestions

This study of *Attitudes and Behaviour of People in the Province of Phayao towards the Thai National Reconciliation Plan: The Policy Implementation Outcome* is not really a study of conflict management. It deals instead with people attitudes and participation in policy product about the national reconciliation plan.

The results from this study show that the majority of the research population were in a working age who are quite political active. Mostly (316 out of 410or 60.5% of the study groups) tended to be satisfied to follow political information and most of the population living in urban area tended to follow the information about 'the plan' every day. It is astonished that their behaviours in political activities have nothing to do with knowledge about the national reconciliation plan. This makes us refuse our null hypothesis. Moreover, there is no difference between locations of domicile towards people's attitudes about 'the plan'. In addition, despite high political awareness and a large number of population were said to have high admiration for former Prime Minister Thaksin Shinawatra, the informants have had a good cooperation in data collection. They did pose some relevantly good ambitions and were stimulated to resolve the conflicts which are good signs for policy implementation outcome.

In fact, in Thai history, political conflicts during the years 2005-2011 is rather a big question. Although conflict is inevitable, nobody would like to let it occur because it could lead to a breakthrough and violence (King Prajadhipok Institute, 2013). We do not refuse any diversity. A person shall have different knowledge, skills, attitudes, perceptions and moral. However, conflict could take place very easy. Some conflicts do not have any solution. Some ended it by allowing another party to win (Win-Lose Method), but this may not be a sustainable solution. From a study of Pitchaya Suksai (2011), it is also recommended that, for Thailand, the best way to resolve the exiting political conflict is to pass through a peaceful approach together with the rule of law. In particular, morality, justice and ethics should be emphasized. More publicity to help communicate and make understand the reform policy,

human rights and civic duties under the democracy regimes should be reinforced by all parties. This would sustainably reduce the Thai political conflict.

The feedback from this study might lack some important issues. We couldn't directly define yet if 'the plan' was gotten into the core part of the problem. It is, then, recommended that some researches in this area should be encouraged to carry on because the situation of reconciliation is still continued and action plan for national reconciliation, for national reform act has not been completed. It is also envisaged that reconsideration for policy implementation technique would be lighted up and that Thai people would be encouraged to live harmoniously in a land of brotherhood under the democratic system.

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