



Reduction of Inequality in Thai Society in a Sustainable Manner: Building Policies on Strengthening Local Administrative Organizations

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Abstract

This article aimed to study the existence of the inequality problem in the society including a situation of inequality in Thai society so as to seek a social policy guideline to reduce the inequality problem in Thai society in a sustainable manner. Based on studying research papers, academic work and theses of scholars in the country and abroad including academic work of international organizations, it is found that inequality possibly includes injustice, inequity or distortion in every sector of the society and it appears to exist further. In Thailand, inequality problem has been with Thai society for such a long time and appeared in many forms, resulting from connectivity of development factors by leaps and bounds, political, economic, and social factors. However, problem solution has not been found in a clear and sustainable manner, leading to a demand in establishing a set of policies on strengthening local administrative organizations with regard to budget, personnel, and building partnership network. If it can be driven to become a national agenda, it can minimize the inequality problem in Thailand in a sustainable manner.

Keywords: Inequality, Policy, Local Administrative Organization

Preface

This social phenomenon that has reflected true existing picture of inaccessibility or accessibility, but unequally, has raised efforts in many scholars to try to find what its real causes are, and whether it derives from different phenomena, such as entry into the globalized era (Globalisation), which seems to have enhanced our world's well-being, but it has also created problems afterwards (Warwik-Booth, 2019, p. 12), or the fact that we have economic development that is too connected to new liberalism (Neo-Liberalism) (Phongpaichit et al., 2009), or even the fact that we have politics that have been retreated too far from democracy (Tanchai, 2019). And day by day, the inequality problem has brought more instability to public affairs administration of the government sector, not only in developing countries in Asia and Africa, but its impact's area has been extended and the problem's expansion is now in a wider scope.

Even in those economically powerful countries that have been praised for their fast-forward development and progress into the economy with priority focus on service sector and financial-sector economy, challenges for public sector administration have been formed continuously and since long time ago. Therefore, many academic works on inequality matter for wealthy countries can be found, for example, the academic work of Giordono et al. (2019), who studied about Social Policy Perspectives on Economic Inequality in Wealthy Countries, which is a review of policy literature on economic inequality in wealthy countries, with information recollected since the year 2008 to the year 2018. This period receives greater attention from social policy scholars, which reflects in interests in both inequality trends and redistributive social policy. It can be found in the study of such researches that most of the literatures try to comprehend both relations between social policies and economic inequality, and factors that are determiners of social policy change and important redistribution that the government sector shall

carry out. (Giordono et al., 2019, pp. 97–98) Moreover, the academic work of Giordono et al. (2019) has also shown that those countries with prosperous economy still have high inequality problems in other dimensions. Depending on economics dimension frame alone is no longer the only alternative. This is in line with the academic work of Warwick-Booth (2019) that has carried out 3 values of economics comparative study as follows: 1) Gross Domestic Product 2) Human Development Index and 3) Index of Expected Years in different schools. It can be detected that both the United States and the United Kingdom are highly ranked in those values, but those values do not contribute to inequality eradication in the society at all, on the contrary, it has actually been deeply and firmly rooted in those countries. (Warwick-Booth, 2019, p. 2)

It is, then, no longer surprising if there are academic works in other dimensions apart from economics one that has occupied the territory for a long time, and study scope has been extended to other fields, such as sociology, political science, administration science, or even policy science, etc., because social inequality problem is beyond mentioning only prosperity of amount of money or economics indices, but there exist other factors that need to be studied more comprehensively, such as focus on health service, education, technology, justice process, sexual, and even political equity, etc., access. Studies from different sciences are trying to seek for methodologies of inequality level measurement and for the ways leading to problem solution according to skilled and effective frame and tools of each own field.

For the Thai society, inequality problem has been faced in different dimensions, both economic and social ones. The research of Phongpaichit et al. (2009) that has studied the Project to Equal Thai Society and researched inequality issue since a long time, indicates that inequality situation in Thailand is really high, especially in terms of income, that results in other types of inequality, both socially and politically. (Phongpaichit et al., 2009) In comparison with the neighboring countries within ASEAN members group, they all have better redistribution than Thailand, even though their economic, social and political conditions are very similar to the Thai ones. Besides, ASEAN strategies go in the same direction, however, Thailand was first in inequality ranking from the world's prosperity report in the year 2018 of the Credit Suisse Research Institute. It revealed that Thailand scored 90.2 in Gini coefficient, which caused the country to be the most inequal in terms of income among ASEAN community, and it was one of the worst four in the world's map, together with Ukraine (95.5), Kazakhstan (95.2) and Egypt (90.9).

In this connection, when social inequality problem has become the problem that the whole world agrees upon its existence and realizes in joint solution and that it can no longer be neglected in this contemporary era, many world organizations, such as the United Nations (UN) and the World Bank, have tried, in a diligent manner, to carry out their duties for definition determination, including for ways of problem solution in a bigger scope, so the member states can take them as operating guidelines. Of course, Thailand is one of those world organization's member states and most importantly, has situation of high inequality in various dimensions. Therefore, it is highly necessary to depend on policies that are able to reduce this problem. Besides utilization of income and welfare policies, being able to redistribute to all sectors in a more just manner will be able to reduce such inequality.

Hence, this article aims to study existence of inequality problem in the society, and also inequality situation in the Thai society, in order to seek for social policy guidelines for sustainable inequality reduction in Thailand.



Existence of Inequality in the Society

In this contemporary situation where the global community has opinions in the same direction that social inequality or disparity situation is existing phenomenon, which has become more complicated as time goes by. And most importantly, since it is a matter than can no longer be neglected, this provokes eager in various world organizations, such as the United Nations (UN) and the World Bank, to come out to determine regulations, rules, including strategies to tackle these problems under the maneuver targets with clear-cut timeframe, so they are as if a leading map for the member states to follow. But these tactics might still be concentrated in a few dimensions only. Actually, inequality matter still has many other dimensions to be considered, such as, sociology, anthropology, political science, social sciences, etc., works, so they can be integrated and public policy determination, including nation development direction for precise problem solution, can be achieved.

This part will, then, be literature review of academic works from both inside of the country and abroad, regarding definition of inequality problem in different dimensions, strategies to eradicate inequality, including reasons and existence of the inequality issue.

Definition and Maneuvers for Solution of Multi-Dimensional Inequality Problem in the Society

Perspectives of the World's Organization

In the view of the International Organization as the *United Nations*, under the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), endorsed by all member states of the United Nations in B.E. 2558 (2015), blueprint for peace and prosperity of the people and the world both nowadays and in the future, was carried out. The important key of the sustainable development are 17 Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), with which claims for immediate realisation by all developed and developing countries were made. The topic of Reduced Inequality was listed in goal number 10 from all 17 development goals on intra and international inequality reduction. (United Nations, n.d.)

For the view of the International Organization as the *World Bank*, under the research report in Fair Progress? Economic Mobility across Generations around the World (The World Bank, 2018), such report contains important findings as follows: in many developing countries, income movement is low compared to educational movement. Also, unemployment rate seems to play an important role in the reasons why there are a big gap between high education and low income movement in the developing countries. In poor families, especially in the poorest parts of the world, the possibility of the next generation moving onto another economic scale in the future is low, because in the countries with low to medium income, chances of classes enrollment in children group is also low. (The World Bank, 2018)

The abovementioned report leads to construction of tactics to reduce inequality, disparity and to promote joint prosperity, while this progress has to always have sustainable characteristics. In this regard, the past 25 years have shown us that inequality is inevitable and all of the countries can prudently decide on policies to combat inequality and to improve lives and opportunities of the poor people. In various cases, this needs financial, social and labour market reforms, which will contribute to build a more comprehensive and prosperous society.

However, the World Bank realizes that there is not an only way to reduce inequality and to promote joint prosperity. There are some lessons from the successful countries that have been proved to be able to widely help other countries under different situation, and that shows the existence of good policy, such as macroeconomic firm base, sustainable growth and strong labour market, and external factors that have played their parts in successful progress of inequality reduction. This policy is the policy that is adequate for the context, including

the financial policy that is able to boost flow in income searching and to reduce chances of poverty trap, market access that is more flexible for the disadvantaged and teenagers, adjustment of competition among the employers and strengthening of labour protection from racial and sexual discrimination that can create equal opportunities in the labour market, construction of just and progressive tax system that can create capital sources for progressive investment and reduce scope of income and prosperity inequality, which are main drivers of low liquidity in most of the societies. More importantly, local policies are important when considering equal opportunities.

In the Perspectives of the Scholars

In the view of sociologists, the academic work of Warwick-Booth, 2019, under the work named Social Inequality, they see that inequality is explanation of injustice, disparity, full of distortion in every sector of the society and will always exist. However, the existence of inequality will be challenged from both political and academic studies. For definition giving, Warwick-Booth (2019) emphasizes that it shall be studied according to the frame of "*Social Sciences*" integration characteristics. Depending on any frame alone is useless for further studies since social inequality can no longer be considered by money value only anymore. Therefore, Warwick-Booth (2019) determines difference levels of social inequality and inaccessibility to different things into 5 dimensions as follows: 1) Income difference, which can be measured by money value 2) Resources difference, such as, scarcity and inaccessibility to life and property securities, including inaccessibility to clean water, for example 3) Strength difference, derived from the society pushing some groups out of the society and they become silent groups or marginalized groups of the society 4) Status difference, which is low social status compared to income 5) Social capital difference, which is unequal, uneven accessibility to social networks.

At the end of this work, an effort to seek for conclusion on more equality in the world societies is carried out, and it can be divided in 2 answers. The first one consists of holding onto technology power is a way that is able to reduce inequality, because technology plays a part in strengthening the organization, or a person can add value to those things and the people can access important information. Also, another important answer is that social policy will be the tool to combat inequality problem. But this does not mean that all policies are able to solve successfully. The policies shall be able to redistribute justice to all sectors. (Warwick-Booth, 2019, p. 245), which is in line with the academic work of Ferguson (2015), anthropologist who proposed guidelines in inequality reduction by just redistribution in the work Give a Man a Fish: Reflections on the New Politics of Distribution. For this work, Ferguson (2015) went on field research in the south of the African continent, connecting politics with development, rurality with city, perspective changes on wealthiness and poverty. In this regard, he used ethnological theory and concluded scope of truth seeking that a set of policies that could build equality and justice in African societies, should have been established. This justice redistribution can lead to successful welfare society through resources redistribution. (Ferguson, 2015, p. 55)

In the view of the economists, the work of Phongpaichit et al. (2009) under the project's topic, "For the Equal Thai Society. Study of Prosperity and Power Structures for Reforms", finds that economic inequality is normally the cause of inequality in other dimensions, such as, political, policy determination, accessibility to education and other public goods and services, respect gaining and society classification. The researcher has a hypothesis that in the end, income and property concentration will lead to political power concentration as another circuit of mechanism to support prosperity concentration. But many countries are able to reduce economic inequality by tax policies and public sector's spending as well. As for Thailand, income inequality slightly decreased in B.E. 2544 (2001) due to decentralization of power to the local levels, universal health



coverage policy, policy to expand credits for those with limited income, and policy on 12-year education free of charge. But such reduction was not so big, because our inequality index remained high.

In this regard, expectation for low-income houses to be able to send their children to good-quality schools, and to universities, for low-income farmers to be able to access credits with appropriate prices and improve their production's efficiency, and for the people living far away to be able to access different public goods and service as well as those living nearby public goods and services but they are insufficient or of low-quality, is partly because the government has limited budget, and this limited budget derives from little tax collecting (17% of GDP). Phongpaichit et al. (2009), then, proposes tax collection modification, which will increase income in one-fifth proportion. And a bit of tax system reform will increase one-third of the income. This will help spending on creation of public goods, that are essential to economic growth, and reducing inequality without creating further debt burden. What Phongpaichit et al. (2009) proposes is not a revolution. It is only following what other countries have already been doing. And for social and political aspects, many parties; writers, scholars, and media, need to help one another to adjust the culture that seems to have sustained inequality, such as, accepting that people have different political opinions and satisfaction is a good beginning, decentralizing power, and opening of opportunities for the people to participate in policy making procedure in all forms, shall continue to progress, building awareness to the society on discreet methods those in power use to try to transmit influence towards political and policy directions. Such effort may block or impact on a considerable amount of people negatively. It is a must because it will lead to discussion on guidelines to cut such tendency and create equality. (Phongpaichit et al., 2009)

In the perspective of local administrators, the work of Tanchai (2019) under the academic work named *Overcoming the Inequality: Challenges of the Thai Society*, it is seen that the state of "Democracy Recession" that has happened in democratic countries, both in the East and the West, derives from the fact that people lack of confidence in representative democracy, because this representative is not able to reduce "inequality". Nevertheless, Tanchai (2019) views that democracy with quality and inequality are interconnected, which means that high inequality will affect the quality of democracy, because some economically powerful groups, politically powerful groups, will intervene and have political decision power, and it will result in working for the benefits of their own selves and groups. On the other hand, democracy without quality will result in greater inequality in the society; inequality deriving from justice procedure, public policy, service provision for the people, are included, and it will even result in political division and discrepancies in the society.

The proposal of Tanchai (2019) is for the local government organization to be the principal organization in driving solution to inequality problem in the society, because the local government organization is like base of the democratic system. It is a school to practise building political knowledge to the people in the local area by opening opportunities for the people to truly participate in administration, management and self-development as "owners", because the "core" of local government is government by the people (in the local area), of the people (in the local area), and for the people (in the local area), since executives, congressmen are all elected by the people. Then, these "representatives" can determine policy and local development direction pursuant to the people's needs. (Tanchai, 2019, p. III)



Inequality Situation in the Thai Society and Solution to the Problem

From the past that the people who have had disadvantages or have been underprivileged might have neglected the problem and thought that inaccessibility to resources derives from beliefs on merits, karma or other religious beliefs. But when the world progressed and changed into globalization phenomenon, modernity has come to replaced old paradigms, and they have been challenged, until communication through online social networks becomes more common, awareness and political alert on civil rights are also high. The people who have had disadvantages or have been socially pressured start to question inequality and inequity, why they are not granted opportunities to access public services. This leads to greater discontent and mistrust on the government's performances in addressing the problem.

Therefore, different scholars have tried to search for the real root of the problem by using methodological tools pursuant to their own skilled paradigms. And in the end, it is found that there are many phenomena that cause inequality in the Thai society. First of all is entry into the globalized era (Globalisation), which seems to grant greater well-being to the world, but it actually has caused more problems afterwards. (Warwick-Booth, 2019, p. 12) This goes in line with when Prawet Wasi saw that modern development led to more modernity, such as construction and convenience for daily life. But it cannot be rejected that development according to the main stream or western civilization has resulted in unsustainable "Balance Loss", and has led to inequality problem that is overlapping with balance loss. (Wasi, 2019, p. 12) Some ideologies believe that high inequality problem is result of policy realization according to "Neo-liberal" model, which has been widely disseminated intra and internationally. (Phongpaichit et al., 2009) When Thailand takes neo-capitalist economic policy as intra driving force, it might seem to promote the economy well, but as time goes by, economic system highlighted in competition will kick many people who are unable to catch up with this field's competition out of the cycle, and they will become marginalized people in the end. Also, political structure of Thailand still shows obvious existence of a closed system, with which, in the end, if Thailand does not progress into the perfect democracy or what Wutthisarn Tanchai calls this kind of situation as "Democracy Recession", inequality problem will keep on piling up. This is pursuant to the research of Phongpaichit et al. (2009), which indicates important causes, because politics is controlled by a small amount of elite. In the national level, the ones solely in charge of important policies are concentrated in civil servant, executive, CEOs, and big politician groups. It is not a standstill system, on the contrary, it sucks new power group heads to become their alliances, through different networks and bound by patronage relations and division of reciprocal benefits. In the local level, the power is concentrated in a handful of families of rich businessmen, with civil servants and politicians as their supporting spines. Therefore, in every government, it is likely that there exists absolute negligence on inequality reduction policy. (Phongpaichit et al., 2009)

This part is presentation on inequality situation in Thailand, that many scholars have studied, researched through different dimensions, especially that the territory has been expanded beyond income and property inequality. The end will be presentation on proposals of inequality problem solution that various scholars are confident about.

The academic work of Prachatai (2019) studied and researched inequality problem in the Thai society continuously and since a long time ago. Prachatai (2019) thinks that Thailand has quite long economic development and has had National Economic Development Plans since 10 years ago. In the beginning, prosperity was main focus, without caring about how such economic prosperity could be redistributed. Therefore,



this is the problem collected from the past. After some time of development, it is detected that the people in the upper class or already had prior prosperity have become more prosperous both in terms of income and properties. Redistribution has not been carried out to the lower classes. That is why inequality has been piled up since a long time. As economist, Prachatai (2019) chooses to use inequality measurement tool, which is utilization of inequality coefficient (if it is close to 1, inequality is high, and if it is close 0, inequality does not exist). He found out that the past 30 years, such coefficient has always been between 0.45–0.5. Even though the economic growth during some periods were 10%, some were minus, but income redistribution until now still has not improved significantly. And apart from inequality in income and spending dimensions, the study of Prachatai (2019) has extended its scope to cover property, educational, public health, social welfare, working area, capital access and infrastructure, and justice process inequalities. This goes in line with the study of Direk Pattamasirawat, who has tried to reflect on inequality that has various economics indices, such as, income, property, salary, or educational underprivilege, area and locally financial inequalities, etc. (Patamasirawat, 2016) Regarding governments' performances in issuing policies, Prachatai (2019) thinks that they are not really focused on inequality problem solution. Tax or different welfare policies are half-way made. Spending on public policy is not appropriately efficient, either and they are not focusing on equality promotion in the society. Moreover, the past policies on governments' resources management have intensified the problem even more. (Prachatai, 2019) This is pursuant to TNN2 True Vision784 (2019), that views that performances of the governments through different policies to solve inequality problem are considerable, such as policy on State's welfare card issuance, policies on premium for the elderly and the handicapped, etc. But in Nuannoi's vision, they still are unable to redistribute to all the classes, especially not to the truly poor classes. This leads to conclusion that welfare measures can help solve the problem only a little bit, but in a long term, they are not sustainable. (TNN2 True Vision784, 2019)

Regarding the work of Wasi (2019), there have been perspectives on inequality that besides economic or income inequality, there are inequalities in other aspects as well, such as, inequality because of origin, ethnic inequality, skin-color inequality, sexual inequality, residential inequality, inequality because of age, social inequality, inequality in rights, etc. For inequality in Thailand Wasi (2019) thinks that it has existed since before the modern era. It was like an inequality seed waiting for water and fertilizer, so that one day, it would blossom into great inequality. Moreover, since the Thai society wanted to be developed into modernity, just like the Western, together with infrastructural development; expansion of public sector's services, economic and industrial development, these factors have been accelerators of unbalance, which would become inequality problem in various aspects: 1) economic inequality 2) inequality in human dignity 3) social inequality 4) economic inequality 5) health inequality 6) inequality in access to official justice procedure and 7) inequality between genders. (Wasi, 2019, pp. 12–14)

Nonetheless, when scholars try to comprehend that this inequality matter that has stayed with the Thai society since a long time ago, has appeared in many forms due to connectivity among fast-forward progress factors; political, economic and social factors, inequality in the Thai society can be concluded in the following aspects: 1) political, with political participation centered and connected to the elite class of the society included 2) economic, deriving from a gap between the rich and the poor that is too wide, with different income and capital collection, property ownership, included and 3) social, which means privileges both in practice and omission of practice. Whether it is education, health, gender and access to justice procedure, clear solutions to this problem

have yet been found. It is acknowledged that during the last years, there have been efforts from many sectors that have tried to solve this chronic issue, but it is still not completely eradicated. And of course, social problem cannot be solved scientifically, where fixed and ready-for-use answers would already be provided. Social science scholars who study inequality issue have tried to create solid research works with different methodology. And even though it is not like a medicine that can cease the disease right away, but at least there have been efforts in seeking healing guidelines for this problem solution in a long term, and it can be emphasized that “social policy”, found by scholars and true existing “inequality problem” in the society have strong relations. (Giordono et al., 2019) Social policy is the way-out of the problem that drives the government to bring it to the national agenda.

When reviewing scholars’ literature regarding policy proposal in research or other academic works, there are hopes that guarantors which can really ease inequality situation in the Thai society occurring. Ideologies can be divided into 3 big policy groups as follows: 1) *Policies related to financial measures*, such as tax policies; land tax, heritage tax. There shall be reform in tax collecting so that it is more meticulous, and in public spending so it is more clear (Phongpaichit et al., 2009) 2) *Policies promoting welfare or aiming to become a welfare State* and 3) *Policies promoting decentralization of power of the central government and adjustment of roles of working structure so that they are more decentralized to the local administrative organizations*.

Therefore, when learning standpoints as scholar trying to create policies with the expectation to have them developed into “national policies” or “national agendas”, paradigm’s frame of the author still views that inequality in the Thai society really exists and it tends to expand its scope to the further-away gap in inaccessibility to public services and income-seeking gap, especially because the author is interested in mission and academic area in local administration subject, which brings some realization of the problem beforehand. Also, when the author had a chance to go to the real study field and got in contact with the local people since he was student until now that he is scholar in a university, the head offices have supported him to carry out such field studies continuously. Hence, he sees that for the last years, inequality problem in the society, especially in the rural areas with situation of high inaccessibility to different public services before, such rate has genuinely decreased, because *when Thailand promoted decentralization of power of the central government*, and Thailand started to adapt it for real use since after the Constitution B.E. 2540 (1997) was promulgated. Even scholars viewed it as formation of political conscience among grass-root class, and not the middle class in the city like before, as political movement that would pressure for continuous change. (Phongpaichit et al., 2009) And even though development of political situation in Thailand has had its ups and downs, but performances according to the local mission have continuously and ceaselessly been carried out. However, policies to be promoted and sustained shall not mention about “power decentralization” alone. It is not enough, and its territory shall be expanded to Strengthening the Working Infrastructure of the Local Administrative Organizations, because the important purpose of the local administrative organizations is to grant welfare to the people in the local area. They shall realize the true problems of the people and they shall have sufficient strength to reach precise and sustainable problem solution in the end.

Policies to Strengthen Local Administrative Organizations

It has already been over 2 decades since Thailand has lived with the discourse on “*power decentralization to local administrative organizations*”, and of course, the phenomenon that has shaken the whole country was when



the Constitution of Thailand B.E. 2540 (1997) was promulgated, and it resulted in that the whole system of the Thai public administration started to reform its organizations in a serious manner. This is because the Constitution's purpose was political reform of the whole system. The important key was to reduce centralization of power of the State and to redistribute power to the people. This is in line with economist scholars like Trakoon Meechai (as cited in Boonchuay, 2018, p. 2), who considers that one mechanism is to increase roles and importance of the local administrative organizations. And during that time, what was concrete was issuance of new laws to promote power decentralization, such as Determining Plan and Procedures in Decentralization Act B.E. 2542 (1999), Local Personnel Administration Act B.E. 2542 (1999), and including the establishment of the Decentralization Committee and the Office of the Decentralization to the Local Government Organization Committee as mechanism to drive decentralization policies. Before the past decade, Thailand pushed forward power decentralization and local administration that greatly impacted on changes in local administration system, such as opening of opportunities for the people to choose their own deputies, and including the highest-ranking executives directly, granting the people their participation in news receiving and their participation in direct local administration, decentralization in duties and budgets. And the outcome was that many local administrative organizations started to have initiatives in management innovation and have works supporting strength in their own communities. Therefore, the period since the year B.E. 2540 (1997) until now can be considered as the golden era of true decentralization of power to the local areas.

Nonetheless, when the situation seems to have reflected transformation from rurality to urbanization, in other words, the rural areas haven changed to become more prosperous in a progressive manner, especially when the financial policies were provided in all areas for public structure development, the far-away areas have grown more than ever but problems and obstacles can still be found, which also block local organizations' performances, such as resources redistribution in each area has become more unequal, resources have been distributed to the more prosperous areas, small local administrative organizations have received limited provision, or even obstacles in terms of various bureaucratic rules, etc.

This part will, then, involve consideration of strengths that are like tasks and duties that come with challenges of the local administrative organizations, including success deriving from trust in the central administration regarding decentralization of power and mission to reduce inequality problem in the society, which will lead to creation of policies that are able to strengthen the organizations, so that they can continue to persist. (Boonchuay, 2018, p. 2)

The important question of local administrative organizations (LOAs) in currents of ideas regarding modern local administration that scholars both from inside and outside of the country have been trying to create frames and definitions, are new challenges that the local administrative organizations shall pay attention to by trying to increase competition ability, so that their own local areas are progressive and able to face challenges in constantly dynamic contexts. Therefore, power decentralization is not solely interested in fixed areas and territories, institutions with political structures, including task and duty frame, anymore, but all efforts shall be convened in order for administration systems to be systemic and to provide well-being to the people, and such redistribution shall be equal and just. This goes with trendy words in the Thai society some time ago, "Water flows, bulbs are lightened up and good ways give works". (Boonchuay, 2018, p. 3) Until when missions were transferred to LOAs to support the first stage of power decentralization plan of the government, comprising 2 operational plans, with 262 missions in total, then it was detected that mostly, the government was focusing on

transferring infrastructure development and development of quality of life of the people in the local areas. And that resulted in that the organizations had to, greatly, adjust accordingly.

However, when local administrative organizations received the big proposition in this challenge, it means that tasks came with responsibilities, as Wutthisarn Tanchai (2562/2019) classified “responsibilities” of the local administrative organizations nowadays into 3 as follows: 1) legal liability 2) social responsibility and 3) political responsibility. (Tanchai, 2019, p. 230) When responsibility is combined with high trust from the central and regional agencies in the local organizations that they will be able to solve the local problems themselves and most importantly, the quality of life of the people in the local areas have to be good, reduce inequality, and expect comprehensive creation and redistribution of resources, the local administrative organizations have to try their best to develop different innovations that suit their areas or are pursuant to their “Geosocial” (Tanchai, 2019, p. 241). That is why various local administrative organizations have been developing a lot of innovations that bring them prizes as guarantees of their success.

Innovation and Success from Trust from the Central Agencies Regarding Power and Mission Decentralization to Reduce Inequality Problem in the Society

Due to the fact that local administrative organizations have used main ideology frames in power decentralization, in other words, they have focused on freedom of ideas and decisions in income provision matter, subsidies, including power and duties in mainly providing different public services to the people, innovation and development of efficiency, and quality of public services of the local administrative organizations, by constantly initiating new ways of rural administration are really important. The ideas of the American economist scholars, Tiebout & Oates (as cited in Charoenmuang, 2007), has clearly reflected when combining locally political ideology and economist ideology with important focus on worthiness in resources selection. Tiebout has a view that people in the local areas shall also have rights to select, especially any local administrative organizations that are able to widely offer new alternatives to the people as consumers, and with lower tax rate charge, will be more popular. The people, then, uphold rights to elect heads of local administrative organizations that tend to fully provide new and just public services. (Charoenmuang, 2007) Regarding local administrative organizations of Thailand, even though the interest of different scholars that have entered to study territory of local administration increased more after the promulgation of the Constitution B.E. 2540 (1997), it is evident that missions of the local administrative organizations are clear. And more importantly, structure within the organizations is a lot more strengthened than before. But local administrative organizations still need to have their management and public service provision skills trained so that the potential of the performances is more strengthened. (Boonchuay, 2018, p. 18)

Dissertation of Boonchuay (2018) tried to collect studies and research of scholars who have studied about local administrative organizations, and it was found that most of the scholars consider that problems occurring in the local areas usually require people for such areas to solve the problems themselves. For example, Charas Suwanmala has studied and researched about *New Ways of Local Administrative Organizations in Thailand* since B.E. 2548 (2005). This research collected and presented different projects at that time. Charas Suwanmala presented the word, “innovation” to the public for the first time by proposing that *combination of power and innovation* have significant relations between each other. The number of innovations, then, started to increase in parallel with power decentralization. And more importantly, diverse innovations would show success of decentralization as well. These innovations or projects are divided in 10 (Boonchuay, 2018, p. 8) as follows:



educational creative, health, security, natural resource and environmental innovations, for example. This implies that these 10 missions will redistribute equality, equity and justice to the areas. This goes in line with the ideas of Nelson et al., (2011) political scientist of Northern Illinois University, who has studied innovation management in local administrative organizations: evident analysis of municipality in the suburban area, in Chicago State, the United States of America, and defined the concept of local innovation in this research that “innovation in local organization” is not only invention, but also any change in the organization with a goal to improve efficiency within the local areas, both in policies and principal plan, “*Best Practices*” of the municipalities in general. It has become normal that the municipalities may borrow policies among one another, but there has always been adaptation to the different contexts of their local areas. These policies often require innovation of the municipalities to well-manage. Adjustment is pursuant to specific needs of the organizations, law, and it is important to receive support from both inside and outside of the organizations. (Nelson et al., 2011, p. 305)

In this regard, the author wishes to bring up a study case from field study that was carried out to collect information for development that could be initiated, new ways or innovation in successful administration that could be found in *criminal protection*, which is the problem that affects peace and order in the communities and societies. These different projects have been carried out until reaching satisfaction of the people in the rural areas, because they could really solve the problems within the communities. They could reduce criminal problems, deriving from inaccessibility to resources, such as modern technology tools for criminal protection.

Regarding the case study of local administrative organization that has Project on Criminal Protection and Security Strengthening in the Community, Project of Rangsit City Control and Command Center or RCC Center, it can be found that the project has developed and searched for guidelines to solve problems for the people who have faced troubles, so that they can be compensated. The people can access the municipality through many channels, can access up-to-date information rapidly. Therefore, the municipality of Rangsit established a center to support city development context, people’s service, facilitation, peace-and-order keeping, security in life and properties. They developed Rangsit City Control and Command Center or RCC Center, which is located inside of the building of the office of the municipality of Rangsit, 8th floor. The past performances have shown that the amount of troubles or requests for problem solution and initial compensation for the people have been processed rapidly and up-to-date. And that brings more security and safety to lives and properties of the people than before. (Boonchuay, 2019, p. 349) This project is guarantee of real success of the local administrative organizations in developing the quality of life of the people and the communities to have better well-being. It reduced inequality problem within the society well and in the future, this kind of management’s scope shall be extended to have more coverage and comprehensiveness. And the main objective is to respond to the people in the local areas.

Policies of the Rural Areas in the Future that are Strengthened by the People, of the People and for the People

Success of local administrative organizations’ performances in developing “innovation” or in other words, potential in resources provision and redistribution has been shown, are problem solution up to its real core and root. Moreover, it has well reduced problem of not being able to access resources, and it will be able to solve the problem in a sustainable manner if the central government is willing to further strengthen the local administrative organizations than before. Thailand has lived with the discourse of decentralization of power to the local areas since 20 years ago, it is now time to expand such territory.

Therefore, free transfer of power of the central or regional government to the local administrative organizations is the important way-out of inequality reduction in the society. In other words, when over 4,000 innovations created by the local administrative organizations, have been sent to the Department of Local Administration, according to the policy to evaluate efficiency of the local administrative organizations (Local Performance Assessment: LPA), success of power decentralization since B.E. 2540 (1997) until now is demonstrated. The author considers this pleasant and that it is a correct beginning of efforts to redistribute justice and equity. However, some problems that drag performances and works of LOAs down can still be detected. What the central government needs to take into account is that it is time to *adjust the paradigms*; the local administrative organizations are agencies that are always ready to corrupt and they need to be monitored, nourished as if they were “little kids waiting for free snacks” or as parents taking care of their children. The central government has already created immunity to the local areas for over 20 years, and LOAs have already proved that they can make their local areas prosper and progress far. Expediting strengthening in the next level will build sustainability to the local administrative organizations in reducing inequality problem in the society and redistributing resources in a just manner. This strengthening may be considered from different matters as follows:

1. Budget strengthening, which means that the local areas shall be granted rights and power to collect taxes and manage taxes by themselves already, after having to depend on the central government's provision and lately, such provision no longer reaches the percentage stipulated in the law, or sometimes such provision is unequal, and more importantly, when they received subsidies, but they could not use such budget for public service provision, due to legal limitations that might not have granted power or that the laws contain so strict accountability that the local administrative organizations lack of freedom to carry out the works.

2. Personnel strengthening. The local agencies should be able to select the civil servants that will join their management team, local assembly and the local people themselves, instead of having to wait for selected personnel from the central agencies. Because they might obtain people from other local areas and those people do not really comprehend such local context.

3. Public-Private or Public-Public Partnership strengthening, by making partnership among control network systems, so that local good administration and governance can be obtained. In this connection, the important principle is to emphasize on changing from the central government to the communities. In other words, when the central government, which is head office, has already decentralized power to the destination offices (LOAs), the destination agencies must show evident potential by strengthening such networks as follows:

3.1 Between Public and Private Sectors

Expedition in this aspect's potential development is opening opportunities for the private business agencies or even other players that are not from the public sector, to jointly initiate, cooperate and decide on different policies and projects that LOAs already considered and think that if they are carried out by the private sectors, more benefits will go to the people in the local areas than carrying them out themselves, such as projects that require high and costly technology, etc.

3.2 Between Public and Public Agencies

Expedition in this aspect's potential may be the work between central or regional agencies and local administrative organizations, in order to reduce inequality deriving from inaccessibility of the people in the communities to different resources, through local innovation projects, according to the needs of the people, for example, cooperation with the Ministry of Public Health through primary service network projects near the center



of the municipality of Hat Yai, Songkhla Province, and project of construction of warm community clinic of the municipality of Rayong, or cooperation with Agricultural Office of the province of the provincial administrative organization of Ang Thong Province in the Chemical-Free Agriculture Project, etc.

Nevertheless, if policies to strengthen local administrative organizations are driven from the central government or the policy-makers until they are successfully created as the public sector's tool to reduce inequality in the society, the author considers that they really solve these collected problems, because the local administrative organizations are the government's agencies that are the closest to the people, and they shall know the problems and the needs in this era of more complications, of the people in the areas. Moreover, when local leaders assuming the decision power in the name of the people require trust from the people sector, these leaders need to be socially responsible when thinking of any policy to reduce the problems. They need to listen to people's voice first, directly or indirectly (through the assembly). And when such leaders can solve the problems precisely, they will gain more popularity from the people in return, and that is reciprocity. Therefore, sustainability of the policy set to respond to inequality problem solution can continue to persist.

Epilogue

When inequality, inequity or distortion problem of political, economic and social structures become the world's agenda, because it does not happen only in the countries that need intense development, but new and old industrial countries also face the same problem. That is why the world organizations such as the United Nations (UN) and the World Bank also are eager to seek for problem solution, by determining rules in a big picture for the member states to take as practice guidelines.

Of course, the current situation emphasizes that inequality problem still exist in the Thai society, and scholars have tried to search for different causes according to their own paradigms and concluded that it might have come from rapid globalization tendency, which results in realisation of extreme neo-liberal economic policy, and that is contrary to the political system that tries to use closed structure, which finally leads to democratic recession situation.

Nevertheless, when considering that persisting problem in the Thai society is still complicated and has appeared in many forms; income, education, health, dignity inequalities, etc, efforts to try to find guidelines for inequality reduction through creating of *social policy set* is, then, an important tool towards precise, sensitive problem solution. There is also ambition that this policy set will become "national agenda" in the future.

However, when paradigms of the author still have confidence and faith in national administration system in the form of power decentralization, carried out under local administrative organizations, because the last 2 decades have demonstrated success in inequality reduction in the society, especially in the rural areas. It has been evident through various innovations according to tasks and duties granted by the central and regional agencies. Still, some problems that drag operations can still be found in a considerable amount, such as strict law on operation accountability, etc.

This leads to efforts in this present decade that mentioning only about power decentralization to the local areas is no longer sufficient. Therefore, establishment of policy set to strengthen local administrative organizations in different aspects, such as, budget, personnel independences or even network creating between public and public agencies or between public and private sectors, are answers of strength to continue to solve



inequality problem, which is more and more complicated each day, in a sustainable manner, and most importantly it has to be really suitable for the context of such societies.

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