

# AN ANALYSIS OF THE ISSUES AND CONTEXT SURROUNDING LOCAL PERSONNEL ADMINISTRATION BASED ON THE DECENTRALIZATION PRINCIPLE AND THE MERIT SYSTEM

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## ABSTRACT

The goal of this research is to provide strategies for managing local staff in line with the merit system by examining the context and problems associated with local personnel management from a decentralization perspective. The method used is documentary research, which is gathering information from documents and examining pertinent topics. This include scholarly articles from Thailand and outside as well as theoretical papers, concepts, and related research. To extract information from analysis and conclusions, the data is processed.

According to the research findings, a single local executive exercises personnel management authority in the framework of local personnel management, which is the outcome of the decentralization of power to local administrative bodies. This causes a large percentage of local staff management to be based on patronage. The majority of the time, civil servants carry out their work to appease local executives. The following are the two main categories of issues with local personnel management: the lack of employees required to run local administrative organizations and personnel management that seriously impairs those organizations' ability to function. The activities of local administrative organizations are somewhat impacted by problems with personnel management, corruption in the administration, and elected local leaders, who are chosen every four years. There should be an ongoing merit-based hiring procedure for both operational and executive public service jobs in order to guarantee that local personnel management adheres to the decentralization principle. To avoid local executives having complete control over who gets appointed to executive posts, recruitment duties should be fairly distributed among the central, regional, and local administrative entities. To directly supervise and audit local personnel management and help civil workers who are subjected to unjust treatment in the course of their work, a committee or agency ought to be constituted. The two-term limit (not to exceed eight years) should be eliminated from pertinent regulations pertaining to the election of local executives. Furthermore, it should be mandatory for local leaders to annually encourage civil servants to receive ongoing training, development, and skill upgrade. In summary, in order to guarantee that local personnel management complies with the decentralization principle's merit system, a continuous hiring process for executive and operational roles should be in place, with duties being fairly distributed among central, regional, and local administrative organizations. In addition, term limits in pertinent election laws should be removed, a committee or agency should be established to supervise and audit local personnel management, and local executives should be mandated to support yearly training, skill development, and knowledge enhancement for civil servants.

**Keywords:** Local Personnel Administration, The Decentralization Principle, The Merit System

## INTRODUCTION

One of the main responsibilities of local administrative bodies is to provide public services, with the goal of establishing the guidelines for providing excellent public services that satisfy the needs of the populace. In addition to promoting harmony within the neighborhood, society, and location, public service delivery must address equality in all of its forms, including social and economic. Good public services improve local residents' quality of life, stimulate the local economy, and create jobs in the community. Thus, in order to handle problems and plan public services, local people management is essential (Somchai Nantapirat, 2022).

The authority to deliver public services pertaining to residents' everyday lives and well-being is transferred when governance is decentralized to local administrative groups. Adequate autonomy is granted to local administrative entities to establish policies, oversee operations, and distribute funds for personnel management and public service delivery. The central government supervises but does not directly manage this autonomy (Piromporn Chaiyon, 2014). The ability of local administrative entities to provide public services that are tailored to the unique requirements, context, society, and culture of their community is enhanced by decentralization. On the other hand, decentralization in terms of general governance, personnel administration, and financial management has been linked to a rise in corruption. According to research by Antonio Bojanic (2022), high levels of corruption frequently accompany decentralization in developing nations. Decentralization is still a preferred strategy for efficient local administration and governance in spite of this. Due to the appropriation of governmental authority and its abuse by politicians and businesses that influence policy for personal benefit, corruption and the patronage system in personnel management are interwoven and have been growing. This is frequently carried out in conjunction with public servants who are favored by political favoritism (Sandiso Mahlala, Lusanda Juta, Lewis Chigova, and Abongile Zweni, 2023).

On the other hand, when local government agencies are transparent in their management of their operations and hold themselves accountable, corruption tends to decline. By using these management techniques, administrators and civil officials are chosen in a way that best assesses their qualifications, skills, and moral character, enabling them to provide open and honest public service (Kshitiz Shrestha, Jorge Martinez-Vazquez, and Charles Hankla, 2022). Merit-based personnel management yields competent and capable civil servants who are driven to improve themselves and their work, from identifying individual accomplishments to hiring, promoting, and awarding civil servants to safeguarding them while they carry out their responsibilities. According to Eloy Oliveira, Gordon Abner, Shinwoo Lee, Kohei Suzuki, Hyunkang Hur, and James L. Perry (2023), this has a favorable effect on the government's performance and serves as a safeguard against corruption.

It is clear from the aforementioned problems that the goal of local administrative organizations is to deliver effective public services that cater to and fulfill the demands of local residents. Decentralization helps local administrative entities accomplish their goals more successfully. Decentralization has, however, also resulted in a rise in corruption in addition to giving management more autonomy. The dishonest actions of local executives and civil workers within local administrative bodies are the root cause of this corruption. Public service delivery will be extremely effective if corruption can be decreased and the merit system in

personnel management can be strengthened. As a result, the researcher is keen to investigate the circumstances and problems surrounding local personnel management that are founded on the decentralization principle and compatible with the merit system. Furthermore, the researcher hopes to suggest methods for local staff management that adhere to the merit system and the decentralization idea. The findings of this study have the potential to enhance and correct local personnel management in a way that enhances the effectiveness of public service delivery while maintaining compliance with the merit system.

### **Objectives**

1. Investigate the local personnel management context in the context of decentralization.
2. To look into local people management problems in a decentralized environment.
3. To identify decentralization-aligned local human management strategies that adhere to moral standards.

### **The advantages realized**

1. To provide knowledge of the problems and circumstances surrounding local personnel management within the decentralization framework.
2. To educate on the ethical standards that should be followed when managing local staff within a decentralized structure.
3. To improve public service delivery efficiency, local government entities might apply decentralization-based standards for human management to their workforce.

## **METHODOLOGY**

Documentary research, or gathering data based on documents, can be used to implement the decentralization-based rules for local people management. This study falls under the category of documentary research, with laws, rules, and standards pertaining to municipal personnel management—particularly in the areas of hiring, screening, and testing—serving as the main analytical foci. Additional materials comprised of ideas, theories, relevant studies, and scholarly articles from Thailand and other nations. Three primary points are covered by the data collected from analysis and conclusions using data processing techniques.

1. The local personnel management framework, which adheres to the decentralization idea.
2. The issue of ethical local personnel management based on the decentralization philosophy.
3. Local government organizations should follow guidelines for ethical personnel management based on the decentralization principle to improve the effectiveness of public service delivery.

## **RESULTS**

1. Local administrators have nearly total freedom in the framework of local personnel management, which is the outcome of the devolution of power to local government organizations. They collaborate with local civil officials in a direct supervision model. Due to their access to staff at all levels, local administrators may be more biased than those in central

government when it comes to personnel management. This could have both positive and negative effects. Due to the possibility of favoritism, career advancement, and compensation considerations in work performance evaluations, civil servants are compelled to fulfill the demands and satisfaction of local administrators, resulting in a high reliance on patronage systems.

2. There are various dimensions to local personnel management challenges. It is discovered that while ethical personnel management has a significant impact on the operations of local government organizations, a shortage of sufficient personnel has a negative impact on those organizations' ability to function. The election of local administrators every four years and the management of staff concerning corruption have a substantial effect on the functioning of intermediate-level local government entities.

3. In order to comply with ethical norms, guidelines for managing local staff under the decentralization principle should include ongoing recruitment efforts to alleviate the scarcity of critical individuals for local government organizations. Ethical standards should guide the right distribution of recruitment tasks across central, regional, and local levels. Establishing committees or units tasked with directly supervising and inspecting local personnel management to ensure fairness is necessary in terms of personnel management in compliance with ethical norms. These groups or committees ought to provide as a safety net for government employees who might be treated unfairly as a result of their own job performance. The legislation pertaining to the election of local administrators, who are chosen every four years, ought to be changed in light of this. It should not be specified that a person may only hold office for a maximum of two terms in a row, totaling eight years. This is due to the fact that in certain places, having local administrators who are well-liked by the community and have proven to be effective performers promotes ongoing development in that area. Policies ought to stay the same and not adapt to suit the needs of specific people. In terms of personnel development, standards ought to be set so that local administrators support the annual training or skill development of civil officials in their work functions, as well as the ongoing advancement of their expertise. Furthermore, criteria for entry into positions should be developed based on ethical principles, taking into account each person's knowledge and abilities, and guaranteeing that local administrators do not have an excessive amount of influence when choosing people for managerial positions in order to prevent corruption and manage personnel.

## **Discussion**

Following a review of the challenges and background surrounding local personnel management in accordance with the decentralized authority principle, researchers have determined the following salient findings from their analysis.

1. The devolution of power to local government entities gives birth to the context of local personnel management. The Department of Local Administration (2567) reports that there are currently 7,849 local government organizations (excluding Bangkok) made up of 76 provincial administrative organizations, 30 municipalities, 195 subdistrict municipalities, 2,247 subdistrict administrative organizations, 5,300 municipalities, and Pattaya City. As a result, there exist many local government entities that are often tiny in size and employ a small number of people. Personnel at all levels are directly accessible to or known by local administration. As a result, patronage systems are frequently used in municipal personnel management to transfer rewards between local administrators and civil servants. Order-

following civil officials who make local administrators happy are likely to be given preferential treatment and be the subject of special compensation reviews. This is in line with Afnan Charansarn (2012) assertion that the patronage system is a means of benefit exchange predicated on unequal interpersonal ties. Patrons and clients may trade goods, services, cash, guarantees, and protection, among other things. And According to Ittisak Worakit (2020), the informal patronage system in Thai culture is defined by the importance of "giving" in the hopes of obtaining help in return as a type of reciprocity in connections between patrons and clients. Because patron-client relationships are the norm in Thai society, it is necessary for these connections to remain stable through ongoing benefit exchanges.

2. Issues with Local Staff Management in a Decentralized Environment: In light of the staffing deficit, there are many barriers to hiring for leadership and operational roles. These include financial constraints and relevant legislation that set rules and guidelines that are incompatible with real-world application. In particular, the Central Committee for Local Civil Service or Local Personnel has set standards, procedures, and hiring practices for executive positions. Notably, the Office of the Central Committee for Local Civil Service or Local Personnel (2024) states that the application price for recruitment cannot exceed 800 baht per individual due to budgetary limits. Smaller provinces suffer from a lack of applicants for open positions, a lack of funding to carry out the hiring process, or problems with patronage and corruption tainting the hiring process. As a result, hiring becomes inconsistent and ineffective, forcing acting authorities to cover open positions and perhaps lowering overall operational effectiveness. The results of Jamjun Sripalaew's (2016) study, which examined the issues with human resource management in the Kosum Phisai District of Maha Sarakham Province's Subdistrict Administrative Organization, are in line with this. According to the study, manpower planning is an essential step in achieving organizational goals because it entails evaluating and establishing the operational parameters of the business. As a result, in order for an organization to succeed, it must effectively and sufficiently plan its staff to carry out responsibilities within the business. And A research on the issues and challenges facing the Nang Takian Subdistrict Administrative Organization in Mueang District, Samut Songkhram Province, was carried out by Phana Panpijit in 2020. The study discovered that the Nang Takian Subdistrict Administrative Organization is still facing a serious personnel deficit. The organization has created personnel frameworks, but it has not been able to hire civil servants in accordance with them. Current civil officials are faced with increasing workloads as a result of central government functions being transferred to them. Nevertheless, hiring has continuously fallen short of need. It was discovered that patronage systems are employed in the evaluation of merit in human resource management based on the merit system. in terms of compensation as well as the assignment of public personnel to different roles. As a result, rather than carrying out their jobs for the greater good, the majority of civil servants do so in accordance with the inclinations of local administrators. This is in line with Wasinee Thadech's (2020) assertion that merit-based hiring practices and standards for evaluating candidates' credentials, expertise, and abilities should be used by local administration bodies. This guarantees that employees are qualified for their duties and have the skills and knowledge required for them. And According to Marlan Hutahaeon and Johnson Pasaribu (2021), better personnel management is required for efficient operations. This involves moving away from a patronage system—which depends on the support of partisans, relatives, or networks—and toward a merit-based system, which places an emphasis on each employee's competence and accomplishment. This change would ultimately help the organization and the general public by raising morale and encouraging people to continuously improve themselves. People would put the good of the group ahead of obtaining favor from

legislators or council members. It was discovered that when local administrators are chosen by election every four years, civil servants would have to adjust to the new administrator's rules and regulations, which would cause a lapse in their job. This is consistent with the findings of Nisanart Thanarangsarit (2014), who studied the contribution of subdistrict administrative entities on Phayao Province's agricultural development. According to the study, there are detrimental effects on municipal administration from the mayor's frequent changes in office because policies become inconsistent and challenging to put into practice. The study's findings about personnel development included problems finding funding for it as well as civil servants' lack of incentive to do better because their performance reviews did not match their real job output. This is consistent with Suwanna Khundiloknattawasa's (2019) research, which found that supervisors and agencies must take action if civil servants perceive that patronage impedes their ability to develop in their careers. To raise the morale of federal officials, it is imperative to emphasize performance in annual reviews in order to increase faith in the merit system. By keeping competent civil personnel inside the company instead of depending on or resorting to patronage, this strategy seeks to increase productivity. The study on personnel management and corruption discovered that well-organized mutual benefit arrangements or the formation of a single network between public officials and local administrators are the main causes of corruption in local administration. This is in line with the findings of Eloy Oliveira, Gordon Abner, Shinwoo Lee, Kohei Suzuki, Hyunkang Hur, and James L. Perry (2023), who claimed that upholding the merit system acts as a deterrent to corruption by protecting public servants in the course of their work and by recognizing individual merits in hiring, career advancement, and rewarding civil servants. Furthermore, KENNEDY OTIENO PANYA and MAKORI MORONGE (2023) claimed that politicians who meddle in politics in an attempt to reap large rewards quickly are the cause of political and economic inequities. Politicians also have influence on procurement procedures for the advantage of their friends, family, and relations. This involves selecting representatives from their own network to serve as authorities in different sectors. This political scheming is similar to a patronage system, which degrades society and has negative effects on the economy.

3. The lack of key persons for local government operations should be addressed by the approach to local personnel management, which is founded on the idea of decentralizing power in conformity with moral principles. Recruitment of operational and managerial staff should be ongoing, following the guidelines of moral systems. It is important to assign recruitment tasks to local, regional, and federal government agencies in a fair manner. Research on Human Resource Management : A Case Study of Teacher and Educational Personnel BangkokThian District Bangkok Metropolitan Administration by Kanta Kaewpram (2020) found that in order to prepare the responsible agencies, specifically the Education Office, to recruit and appoint personnel to fill positions in accordance with the established manpower framework, planning for personnel recruitment, manpower allocation, and monitoring of vacancies due to transfers, relocations, resignations, and retirements in advance are all important components of problem-solving strategies. In line with Chaiyan Chaiyaporn's (2013) assertion that a system of effective governance does not always revolve around individuals, groups, or oligarchs who are deemed "outstanding," but rather requires a structure in which no single person holds total authority. This kind of government is known as a hybrid constitution.

If managerial government officials rise to their positions through an ethical system, they wouldn't need to depend on local managers to take on their responsibilities in terms of human resource management in line with ethical standards. This would stop local managers from pressuring civil personnel to perform tasks that encourage corruption. In addition to committees

or units entrusted with directly supervising and inspecting local human resource management, it is recommended that a central committee be established in order to screen and choose managerial public officials. This acts as a safety net for public employees who might be treated unfairly because of their own work or moral obligations. It encourages equity and advancement in order to motivate staff members to perform their jobs with motivation. In line with Kodiyao Buaraheang's (2011) research findings, the study proposes that the Department of Local Administration establish a central committee to oversee the recruitment and selection process in order to ensure uniform standards. The study examined the Personnel Administration Problems of Sub-district Administrative Organization: A Case Study of Mayo District, Pattani Province. This procedure should be followed in an open, equitable, transparent, and scrutinized manner in order to hire employees who possess the necessary skills and knowledge. Additionally, the research findings support the findings of Jiraporn Chumbangmang's (2013) study on the factors influencing the productivity of employees in Siam Limited Company, which found that motivational factors—particularly those pertaining to opportunities for growth and advancement—are statistically significant at the .05 level.

Laws pertaining to official elections should be amended by local government representatives, who are chosen every four years. It shouldn't be stated that a person can only hold office for two terms, totaling no more than eight years, as in certain places, having local government representatives who are well-liked and trusted by the community promotes ongoing development in that area. Individuals shouldn't influence policy changes. In keeping with the findings of Pipat Pitisivapat's (2565) study, "Factors Affecting The Performance According to The Powers and Duties of The Village Headman: A Case Study of Mae On District, Chiang Mai Province," which addresses the term of office, it is proposed that village headmen should support the state in discharging their responsibilities in accordance with the authorities assigned to them. Work may not be constant if terms of office are restricted. It is also desirable to impose performance evaluations every four years, as this encourages village headmen to do their duties with diligence.

In terms of personnel development, annual standards for local administrators to support the ongoing education, training, or skill development of civil servants in their job functions should be set. When it comes to managing personnel and preventing corruption, qualifications for employment must to be founded on moral principles and take into account candidates' qualifications and experience. The ability of local administrators to choose who gets appointed to management roles shouldn't be unrestrained.

## **Suggestion**

### **1. Suggestions for using the results of the research**

1.1 The lack of key personnel for the operation of local government organizations and the issue of personnel management in accordance with ethical principles are determined to be highly problematic. Thus, with ethical standards serving as the primary guideline, the central committee of civil servants or local government administrators should hasten the hiring of civil workers or local government officials for both executive and managerial posts. It should also be specified that a committee to support the moral standards of local government representatives or public servants exists in order to support those who are not treated properly.

1.2 In order to provide managerial civil servants trust in the ethical system and empower them to carry out their tasks to the best of their knowledge and skills without

depending on politicians for their own development, it is critical to comprehend and manage personnel administration honestly.

1.3 In terms of personnel development, standards for local administrators to encourage and assist local employees' or civil servants' ongoing self-improvement should be set.

## **2. Suggestions for additional study.**

2.1 It is a good idea to look into the relationship between local administrators' tenure criteria and the effectiveness of local development initiatives.

2.2 Studying the problems and efficacy of Bangkok's Ethics Committees for Civil Servants and Civil Servants in relation to people management inside the company is advised.

2.3 To determine if local personnel management is effective, it is advisable to examine the participatory management approach in personnel administration and compare it with the mixed governance theory.

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