

CORRUPTION PROBLEM SOLVING IN THAI SOCIETY BASED ON GOOD GOVERNANCE.

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ABSTRACT

Thai society is facing many problems such as economic problem, social problem, environmental problem, prostitute problem, and so on. But there is one problem which Thai society does not pay sufficient attention and this problem still maintains its importance in the current Thai society that is “corruption problem.” Corruption problem solving requires an application of various methods and cooperation from each sector as a mass problem solving. The theories that support this kind of problem solving are various, such as “state of law theory, or state ruled by law”, which means state that is ruled or controlled by law, and “the principle to examine the government power”, which the power of the government can be examined by public and private sector, and so on. Currently, in Thailand there are some groups of people or organizations whether public or private trying to examine the operation of the government. This article presents the ways to solve corruption problems at two levels: Individual level, this level is to create immunity in ethics and professional code of conduct; and social level, this level is to apply good governance principles, which are appeared or existed in Thai society. This depends on how each sector, can join hand in the real and continuous implementation, starting from family, school, organization, community and society in order to create the system of good governance administration in each section of the society.

Keywords: Good Governance, Corruption, Thai Society

INTRODUCTION

Thai Society at the eyes of many people can be viewed in various aspects for its good social culture for helping and supporting each other and so on. When taking a glance at different aspects, the Thai society still has various problems, for examples, economic problem, social problem, environmental problem, and prostitute problem. But there is one problem that Thai people do not pay much attention and importance that is “corruption problem.” Some may view corruption problem as unimportant because they consider that this problem is not their own problem and is not happening around them, but when we consider carefully, we will know that this problem is involved with our lives as people. The word “Corruption” covers broad definitions such as peculation, fraud, and bribery taking, which each meaning is in a sense of negative aspect. The solution to corruption problem requires various methods and cooperation from each sector, and various theories must be applied such as “state of law theory”, which means state is ruled and controlled by law, or “principle to examine the state power”, which means the government power can be examined and investigated by public and private sector. Currently, in Thai Society, there are some groups of people or organizations whether public or private trying to examine the operation of the government, for examples, Office of the National Anti-Corruption Commission, Anti-Money Laundering Office, Office of the Ombudsman Thailand, and so on; at the same time, private sectors such as Non-Governmental Organization, groups of students, youths, pupils and

various medias also examine the operation of the government. This article presents the solutions to corruption problem at two levels: Individual level that is to create immunity in ethics and professional code of conduct; and social level that is to apply various concepts of good governance which are appeared and existed in Thai Society. This depends on how each sector can join hand in the real and continuous implementation of good governance starting from family, school, organization, community and society.

CORRUPTION

The word “Committing corruption” has the same meaning as defalcation or swindling; it can be easily called “corruption.” Chaiwat Suravichai (2003: 13-15) stated that the format of corruption has been developed rapidly with the acceleration rate of capitalism and globalization age. Moreover, people have fallen behind this problem due to a lack of knowledge and understanding. Moreover, some Thai governments do not intend to solve corruption problem seriously, but just show off and pretend themselves to the people as combatting with corruption for the sake of political benefits or to gain advantage over their political rivals. At the same time, they try to propose complex format of corruption or policy corruption with a huge amount of money and benefits. Moreover, both public and private media are used as spokespersons to build good images of that government and distort the realities.

Witayakorn Chiankool (2006: 26-27) mentioned that the current formats of corruptions are consisted of the following:

- 1) Embezzlement, swindling public budget or property to be their own
- 2) Extortion, government officials extort money from private business companies or private business companies give bribery or kickback to government officials to make decision on doing or not doing something that benefits the bribery or kickback providers over other competitors
- 3) Nepotism, hiring or appointing their unqualified kin and partisans
- 4) Cronyism, making contract or concession only for the benefits of their partisans who support themselves
- 5) Insider trading, using inside information to purchase or sell stock in stock exchange market; this includes using inside information to buy and sell international currency, for example, the government officials know that the government will decrease the currency value and tell this information to businessmen and investors to purchase foreign currency in order to make profits after this news is revealed to the public.
- 6) Money laundering, transferring money gained from corruption, fraud, illegal or immoral activities such as gambling, selling contraband goods, prostitute business, being a labor broker, and so on, into the bank, financial institution or legal business in order to whitewash the illegal source of money; this money transfer can be done whether to foreign countries or inside Thailand
- 7) The usage of government officials’ position and powers for the benefits of their own companies or partisans’; this is also called “Conflict of interest”.
- 8) Trading Influence, this corruption occurs when the companies promise to offer benefits to the government officials indirectly, for examples, offering positions in the company when those government officials retire or are unemployed; this also covers offering positions to their relatives or other indirect benefits to the government officials in exchange of providing benefits to their business companies.

Corruption can be conducted in various formats. However, there are two most important formats of corruption: (1) Tax corruption, which politicians and government officials collect from merchants, businessmen and people in the form of commissions and

bribes. Moreover, there is a leakage of money in other forms of public budget allocation. This tax corruption is well-known in Thai society. (2) Conflict of interest, this kind of corruption is more complicated than the first one because it occurs from a complex format of interest such as an income which politicians and their partisans receive from setting up the price of goods and services which they produce at a higher rate. Even though, complex benefit or conflict of interest is not directly illegal, but it is considered as one kind of corruption, known as “Policy Corruption.”

In many cases of corruption, fraudulent persons have used various kinds of frauds which are more complicated. Classification of different kinds of corruption is just to help explain about its problems broadly and explicitly; it is not something that occurs independently. This is relevant to the idea of Charat Suvarnveha (2003: 21) which explained about the vileness of leaders who govern the country with corruption by helping their partisans to take over various important positions, taking side, and creating influence as well as favoritism with the following relations:

1. Offering important positions to their partisans, known as Nepotism. Thai people call this “Dek-Fark, deposited person or well-connected person”, which powerful and influential persons use their power and influence to push unqualified or incapable persons to receive the position for the sake of individual benefits instead of considering qualifications of the persons based on his or her capability and appropriateness to that position. Purchasing position by spending money to receive higher position is the most vileness of this kind of corruption. When the person in charge of that position is inefficient or lack of capability, that person’s performance is deteriorated and no progress can be expected. Moreover, with corruption, the work performance of that person is ineffective.

2. Taking side to create influence without fear or compliance with the law. When they take side and push their partisans to take over important positions, there will be corruption conduct; this occurs by assembling influential persons to do some illegal activities, known as “Cronyism”. Then, there will be an oppression to those inferiors who are their opponents; enforcement of law becomes weak because law is enforced by those influential persons. Moreover, in the process of legislation, there are some influential persons getting involved in corrections of the details of law to protect their benefits and prevent their loss that would happen from law enforcement. Influential persons exist in both central and local region. In some cases, they use their dark power or dark influence to oppress the other opponents.

- 3) Favoritism, this is to help their partisans to receive some kinds of benefits or to escape from being punished in addition to Nepotism and Cronyism. In this case, the persons in charge, instead of doing their activities uprightly and treating people equally, choose to do something that will benefit their partisans, and enforce law just to punish their opponents who have different political standpoint. If their partisans commit mistake or violate the law, they try to conceal or keep it secret. Direct benefits from such action can be expected at that time, and some indirect benefits can be expected later. This is similar to the case that some country rulers try to allocate national budget to their own regions to be their strongholds for the election. This is also called favoritism in allocating budget that is considered as “duty corruption in administration.” These behaviors, when combined together in the country governance, become the most vileness, which has happened at national, local, institutional, and organizational level. This is considered as the serious illness that erodes and weakens the society and economy, which is very hard to cure.

CORRUPTION OR FRAUDULENT IN THAI SOCIETY

Comparing to other countries, the severity of corruption or fraudulent in Thai Society has been ranked as the highest level in the world (Witayakorn Chiangkool, 2006: 6). The collapse of Thai economy occurred in 1996, which called “Tom Yum Kung Crisis or Shrimp Soup Crisis” was originated from many causes which are accumulated for several years. Charat Suvarnvela (2003: 21) expressed his ideas that the aforementioned events had happened from the following: (1) The evilness of governance, which is consisted of corruption, partiality, pushing their partisans to control over important positions, creating influential group, and favoritism; (2) Mistake in management, for example, unworthy investment, resource wasting and extravagant activities, low work efficiency, and procrastination; and (3) Having insufficient necessary factors in terms of physical and human resource factors. These were the results of a lack of good governance in both public and private sectors.

Charat Suvarnvela (2003) added that the most evilness is corruption or fraudulent which is pervasive in politicians and high-ranking administrators in various public departments. Politicians have much power, especially the power to dismiss or transfer high-ranking government officials to other positions. Moreover, politicians have direct or indirect power to seek benefits from government officials from various government projects, especially in spending national budget or budget from other projects after the obtained percentage has been identified. Lower ranking government officials who do not cooperate in this activity cannot maintain their job security. Those who cooperate in such corruption will take this as an opportunity to seek benefits for themselves, which lead to deterioration of spending system of national budget. Thus, peoples’ money is not worthy spending. Some good projects cannot occur if commission or bribe is not paid, whereas some projects that have been approved are not appropriate or worthwhile, and are not responsive to the need of the local people. Benefits that occur from the expense of local budget including collection of illegal tax are under the monopoly of fraudulent enterprises in building infrastructure. Some enterprises set up high cost of service which forces people to pay it higher than the real price. In private business sector, administrators operate business for the benefits of themselves and their partisans, causing weakness to the company, which may lead to a loss or bankruptcy of the company and business. Witayakorn Chiangkool (2003: 7-8) summarized that corruption of politicians and government officials has incurred the current and future loss to Thailand at least four of the following: 1) Minorities who are influential persons swindle public resources to be their own illegally and unethically. Politics has not been developed to be in the form of democracy which people have right and equity. 2) Distortion of the usage of the country resources which does not benefit a majority of people such as having less budget for developing education and public health, building street and permanent structures with low quality, which must be renovated frequently and people receive low quality services. 3) Monopoly by big politician businessmen, who do not support fair and effective competition; this leads to weakness and underdevelopment of public and private sector. 4) Youths and people have a value of admiring richness, and success by considering that frauds for their benefits such as cheating examination, expressing privilege, favoritism, and minor fraud are generally done by the others. Adhering to such value leads to a lack of ethics and morality of the people. People think of contesting and competing among each other and taking advantage of each other without following the rules and regulations and discipline; they have no commonsense in working together, and are greedy and have no pride and dignity. Therefore, it is very difficult for them to join hand in personal, communal, and country development.

THE WAYS TO SOLVE CORRUPTION PROBLEM

Solving corruption problem requires two important components: The first is to create the value of having ethics and professional code of conduct at individual level, and the second is to support the concept of good governance to be accepted by each section of the society, and to be the rule and regulation of the society. In addition, solving corruption problem should emphasize both personal and public matter. For personal matter, civil servants at all levels, in addition to not committing corruption, should have a spirit of hating corruption as a dangerous disease which has an effect on themselves; they should behave as good examples of the others. This value should be developed from family, communal and social level. There are researches which confirm that children who are indifferent to corruption or consider that committing corruption is not guilty because of seeing the behavior of their parents as their samples. On the other hand, public matter is very important, which can create merit, good conduct, and good environment to the society. Therefore, it is necessary for the Thai society to consider corruption as the evil conduct. Some people are indifferent to corruption because of seeing bad conduct of some political and social leaders at all levels. Some may misunderstand that committing corruption is acceptable such as the statement "Corruption can be done if the work performance is good."

THE RESOLUTIONS TO CORRUPTION PROBLEM IN TWO LEVELS

1) Solving corruption problem at individual level. Prawes Wasi (2003: 21) explained about social revolution focusing on seven issues. The first issue is to create new value and common sense; value and common sense should be the center and spirit of the society, person, organization or society. Value and common sense can lead to the development of personal behavior to be ethical. Creating new value and common sense does not mean discarding previous good tradition and value; good thing must be preserved, maintained and supported. But we need to create the value and common sense of living together in a big society, which is linked with other societies, that are complicated and dynamic. People need to pay attention to ethics, virtue and morality because these are the tools for creating happy and peaceful society.

2) Solving corruption problem at organizational level. In professional areas, each new and old member of the organization must learn about professional ethics in order to maintain good reputation of the profession and prevent damage that may cause from unethical behavior of some members. In order to control the behavior of each member in appropriate way, each organization has enacted professional ethics or ethical code, which is a form of ethical conduct that each professional member should follow. Each organization has identified its own ethical code, for example, teacher's ethical code of conduct, nurse professional code of conduct, pharmacist professional code of conduct, dentist professional code of conduct, and so on. Wariya Chinwanno and Kulab Rattanasachatham (2003: 2) described that professional code of conduct means code of conduct, behavior, regulation, and courtesy, which each professional organization lays down to maintain and improve prestige, reputation, status of member, and merit in order to increase peace, happiness, and progress of a person, profession and society.

THE WAYS TO SOLVE CORRUPTION PROBLEM BASED ON GOOD GOVERNANCE

Modern organizations focus on improving organizations' strategies to be relevant to good governance principles in order to create organizational justice, which is considered as one of the most important factors to increase harmony, unity, loyalty, employee satisfaction, employee commitment, and job satisfaction (Sukhumpong Channuwong, 2018: 43). Good governance is the new word in the academic area. In Thailand, this word is generally used after the constitution of Thailand 1997 has been promulgated. Good governance means good ruling, good governing, good management, good administration, ethical state, or good corporate governance. The Royal Academy defined good governance as "Good ruling system"; Thailand Prime Minister's Office also identified good governance as "Good methods for ruling the country and society with merit." Surachai Kawanmuang (2005: 2-3) described that the principles of good governance can be implemented to develop working strategies to be more effective, which can be operated by adapting the rule of law, reducing excessive regulations which cause tardiness and delay in the work system, implementing a transparent decision, and defining appropriate rules, regulations and guidelines in the management. As such, it can free an organization from bribery and corruption, and create justice in the organization, community and society at large.

By its substance, good governance is the component of working with efficiency, virtue, transparency, justice in order to create good ruling system in all sections of the society (Udom Mungkasem, 2002: 7). Samrit Yotsombat (2006: 295) mentioned that there is a necessity in continuing operation for improving good governance in the short term period, middle term period and long term period with revolution of the following three parts: 1) Government sector must revolutionize its role, duty and structure, and working process in Government sector to be the mechanics of managing social resource with transparency, honesty, fairness, efficiency, and with high quality in providing quality public service to the people. This can be done by changing attitude, value, and working methods of government officials; and they should consider benefits of the people as the main purpose. 2) Private sector must revolutionize and support business sector to have transparent working rules, be responsible to stakeholders, be honest to customers, have good service standard, be able to work with public and private sector smoothly. 3) Civil sector must create awareness in human right, duty and responsibility towards economy, society, and politics starting from individual, group, and community in order to be the strength of the country with quality, knowledge, and understanding in the principles and mechanics of good governance.

Orapin Sopchokchai (2004) summarized in her article titled "Good governance: Concept and experience in Thai government sector" the universal concept and definition of good governance in six categories: 1) Public participation, 2) Honesty and transparency, 3. Accountability, 4. Political legitimacy, 5. Fair legal framework and predictability, and 6. Efficiency and effectiveness. She also integrated an implementation of good governance into government sector. She added that the Thai cabinet has issued the regulations of the Office of the Prime Minister based on good governance in the year 1999, which was effective on August 30, 1999. Even though some government officials understand and are familiar with the principle of good governance, but the real implementation of good governance is still limited. Therefore, in the year, 2003, the Thai cabinet has cancelled the aforementioned regulations of the Office of the Thai Prime Minister, and contained the principles of good governance in section 3/1 of the Government Administration Act (version 5) 2002, and enacted the Royal Decree on Criteria and Procedures for Good Governance 2003, which was promulgated in later year. In summary, the Thai government sector is trying to improve good governance by setting the methods of working in accordance with good governance principle

with the main purpose to push government sector to develop system, format, process, management and public service to reach a universal and high quality standard.

CONCLUSION

Corruption or fraudulent is the serious problem in Thailand; it is difficult to prevent and suppress because it is hard to find the real information. Some who are concerned about the future of Thailand are worried that this problem is the same as dangerous cancer which is spreading throughout the body of the patient. If life is to be reserved, there should be treatment method, which is direct to the point, expeditious and severe.

Currently, this corruption problem covers complex benefits or conflict of interest, which causes severe damage to Thai economy, politics, society, and culture, leading to the accelerating use of natural resource, public property, budget and so on. Such acceleration of natural resources creates damage to natural resource, which causes environmental problem, imbalance to ecosystem, imbalance between the city and town, unfair distribution of income and property, poverty problem, and social and cultural problem. Therefore, each person and organization should cooperate in ceasing or solving corruption problem by living his or her life and by managing organization in accordance with the principles of good governance.

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