A STUDY OF POPULAR POLITICAL PARTICIPATION IN NGOAW SUB-DISTRICT RANONG PROVINCE, THAILAND

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Abstract- This study examines popular political participation in Ngoaw sub-district, Ranong province, Thailand. The purpose is to 1) Study knowledge levels and understanding of the functions of the constitution, and 2) to examine the sources of knowledge and motivations for political participation. The research strategies that relate to these objectives are a literature review about political participation and the content of the Thai constitution, especially in regards to the right of Thai people in local management, and a sample survey consisting of 376 samples from 6,451 people. The major findings are: 1) The samples show a moderate level of knowledge regarding the Thai Constitution and local political participation. They report, however, a low level of participation in local government. 2) The factors that affect the level of participation are gender, educational level, group membership, and media consumption regarding the Thai constitution and local governance.

Keywords- constitution, decentralization management.

I. INTRODUCTION

Popular participation is a very important procedure in society, because humans are social animals and must coexist with one another without obstruction. Willing participation is thus necessary to make members of society feel a sence of ownership and responsibility. This is especially true for participation in politics

The main purpose of local administration is to allow people from a community to contribute to the arrangement and operation of government in order to serve serve the public differently according to the needs of each locality. In this context, the central government enters to control or and coordinate the results in order to build the country as a whole in a manner that remains in line with the principles of self-governance by locality (local government). The most important characteristic of democratic administration is that it must serve the public, and arrange itself to serve the differing needs of the public based on level of development and the corresponding requirements of each locality. In addition, there is a need to distribute the responsibilities of the central government and local governments evenly, in order to stimulate peoples sense of responsibility to the locality in which they live.

II. LITERATURE REVIEW

Documentary research indicates that the factors influential in building popular political participation include personal factors such as understanding of political rights, environmental factors, structural factors, and economic factors (Kowit Paong-ngram and Teeradej Chai-Aroon, 2000, pp. 28-30). These factors may be divided as follows:

1. Personal factors, including basic factors such as gender, education, income, occupation, and age. These factors infuence the feelings of a person and as such should be taken into account by the research. They are also linked to social factors that also influence participation in politics. A person who has a high social status will take an interest in participating in politics more than a person who has a low social status. In addition, while the constitution does not posit a legal distinction between men and women, gender is a key factor determining participation, with studies indicating that men participate more than women, particularly in Thai society. This can be seen by looking at politicians, among whom men are far more frequent than women. Gender can thus be seen as a key factor influencing political participation.

2. Environmental factors are also influential in determining political participation. The political structure of a democracy will generally adopt a means of allowing people to participate in politics, whereas an authoritarian regime will not attempt to expand participation. Environmental factors can thus be divided as follows:

2.1 Political institutions which hold justice as the most important factor will attempt to build a political system which respects rules and has a well-behaved populace. This institution will benefit from building public confidence in the justice system and therefore will be motivated to push people to be more heavily involved in politics.

2.2 The presence of an election system is necessary for democracy because if a state uses power towards the ends of justice, an election constitutes an important criterion for determining the will of the people. The election procedure may limit the rights of people based on social equality, but is nonetheless regarded as an illustration of the popular will. As an agent of the popular will, a healthy election system requires that people generally be honest. It also must have rules so as not to confuse the will of the people, and must be an institution that can reconcile individual differences. There must be measures to not build suspicion that people will use their right to vote

in order to make laws that cause unintended consequences. As such, building an understanding of politics is an important objective.

2.3 Cultural influences, such as behavior associated with a particular way of life, is influential in the way it both adds and subtracts from participation in politics. The family is the main entity that socializes people in culture.

2.4 Media influences are also very important in determining participation. This includes television, radio, and newspapers.

2.5 Knowledge and political understanding of the administrative system, and understanding of the duties of a citizen of the country, particularly understanding the importance of democracy. If people know everything about the political system, they should arrive at the importance of building a political system that affects them in a good way, and understand the potential bad effects of the political system. People will thus try to participate in politics in order to protect their own interests.

2.6 Attitude, meaning feelings and beliefs of the individual, towards politics are important as well. If an individual is happy with the political direction of a country or feel that it's contrary to their interests, this will influence whether or not they involve themselves in politics.

2.7 Community relations are important in building political participation. This includes the right to vote at both a local and national level, as well as volunteer work within the community. This is particularly important in a developing country such as Thailand.

3. Economic factors are also influential. If a country has a good economic structure and high social development, people will be more likely to participate in the political process. This can be seen in countries such as the United States of America, England, and France. All three of these countries have democratic administration, although their political systems are quite different. They all tie people directly into the foundation of power and they all have high GDP.

III. METHODOLOGY

This research will use Quantitative Research with area limits people. The people will include the people who are listed in the census records as staying in Ranong Province, Thailand. This Province has a population of 6,451 persons who will be considered in the research. The researcher will collect data from a sample of this population using a questionnaire. The sample will be used in the education research this time. The researcher has made the sample by choosing from people, with random sampling and ease of use sampling, calculated according to Taro Yamane at 95% confidence levels. The following calculation formula will be used:

$$n = \frac{6{,}451}{1+6{,}452\,(0.05)^2} = 376.64$$

$$n = 376$$

The questionnaire will be used with a sample group of 376 people.

This research about participation in politics by people is researched using a quantitative methodology, by using three methods as follows:

1. Documentary research of similar studies pertaining to participation in politics. The researcher has done investigation into zero research data , (DRIC), making use of the National Research Committee office to find studies pertaining to the factors that make people participate in politics. Using these studies, the researcher has concluded that the best way to study these trends is by using a questionnaire with three interview groups.

2. Construction of a research tool based on the relevant documentary research to study the provisions of law and intent of the constitution of the Kingdom of Thailand of 2550 Buddhist Era (2007), and other documents that relate to the aims of the research. The researcher has also interviewed legal experts and local administrators in order to construct a tool to collect high quality data. This tool has subsequently been tested for reliability with a sample of 30 people using Chronbach's Alpha. The research tool consists of the following components:

2.1 General data, including gender, education, relationship status, membership in community groups, and the frequency of using mass media such as television, radio, newspapers, and conversations with neighbors.

2.2 Questions about understanding and the attitude towards participation in administration, as well as aspects of decentralization, such as the rights and the duties of local areas under the Thai constitution of 2550 Buddhist Era (2007). Questions regarding local administration and decentralization are divided under two headings. These are,

2.2.1 Understanding of local administration. These questions have a multiple choice answer, with a score of 1 representing a correct answer and a score of 0 representing an incorrect answer.

2.2.2 Attitude towards local administration. These questions use a five point rating scale, with the descending points representing strongly agree, agree, unsure, disagree, and strongly disagree.

2.3 Questions regarding participation in local administration. These questions will use a three point rating scale, with the descending points representing attend regularly, attend sometimes, and never attend.

Having used the tool to obtain a sample, the accuracy can again be tested as follows:

Table No. 1 Accuracy analysis of the questionair results having cut inconsistent questions.

Questionnaire	Question amount	Validity
Feelings towards community	9	.7012
Understanding	14	.7195
Attitude	21	.8786
Participation	28	.9388

The table indicates that the questionnaire meets the accuracy index of .7012-.9388 and as such, the researcher has kept remaining questions to use for data. The researcher will then choose people and collect the data from population groups, and will do data analysis with trade base statistics, and data analysis multiple regression analysis.

3. Focus group interviews, selected from education records within a 1-2 distance. These are cross referenced with the community population database so as to collect data from those who still live in the community. The interviews will aim to collect data that reflects participation in politics, obstacles to participation, and the influence of development on participation. The focus groups will be divided as follows;

3.1 Informants received from educational records, interviewed using a guide consisting of 5-8 questions.

3.2 Community leaders, contacted by way of appointments, such as group leaders, village headmen, and members of the municipal government.

3.3 Informants contacted incidentally who hold opinions that may be relevant to the results of the research.

FINDINGS / RESULTS

The Thai Constitutions of 1997 and 2007 both emphasize a push to protect the rights and freedoms of people by encouraging participation in administration, and aim to check the increase of state power through both adjusting the political structure to have greater stability the stability and be more effective. In order to do this, they consider the rights and freedoms of important people. The constitution now gives precedence to the rights and freedoms of people in regards to the right to life, the right to bodily autonomy, the right to assets, and other rights. The result directly builds the state, such as the right to present bills. If compared with other Thai constitution (except for the 1997 constitution), the rights presented in this one authorize special cabinet members and members of parliament to have fewer rights to get contributions from people in presenting bills to the council

The main point of the 2007 Thai constitution is to set a policy for populate participation in 87 subdivisions in which the state must manage the establishment of popular participation in policy-making, as follows: (1) to encourage people to participate in specifying policies and plans to develop economy and society on both national and local levels, (2) to encourage and support popular participation in making political decisions, plans, developing the economy and society, and arranging to serve the public, (3) to encourage and support popular participation in using every state level power of organization academic format or following various branches of occupation or the other formats, (4) to give people a strong sense of politics and have the law establish development funds for cities and citizens in order to help advance public activity in the community and support the administration of networks of people-centered groups in which everyone can give their opinions and present the requirements of the community in the area, (5) to encourage the testimony and study of old people regarding political development and democratic administration, and how they have been shaped by the role of the king as a leader and role model, to encourage people to use their vote honestly. If the occurrence of these phenomena is the substance of popular participation in politics, then there are various issues regarding the law and technique of political administration, for example, interest groups, pressure groups, and mobs who break laws. Popular participation is a procedure by which people and participants gain and lose, have a chance to give data, give their opinions, give advice, consult, and share information, including the direct supervision of people in all activities that affect the lives of people by participating. The aforementioned will bring about specific policies and decision-making in the government.

The major findings are :

1) The sample displays a moderate knowledge level and understanding of the people-oriented functionality of the constitution of Thailand: 49.5 %
2) The practice in participating in using power of oneself has a rather low percentage of 2.8 %

SUGGESTIONS

1) The government should encourage people to understand their right and the duties according to the constitution.
2) The constitution must have permanence and longevity and assure the rights and the freedoms of people who will have the understanding to build the constitution.
3) People should be given a chance to share the political innovations used in their local administrations.

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