FROM POLICY ANALYSIS TO POLICY FORMULATION AND POLICY IMPLEMENTATION: THE PERSPECTIVE OF THE NATIONAL EDUCATION COUNCIL, THAILAND

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From policy analysis to policy formulation and policy implementation: the perspective of the National Education Council, Thailand

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IIEP Occasional Papers

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I. INTRODUCTION

This paper attempts to concentrate on the role of policy analysis as a tool leading to decision-making on various alternative policies.

Before looking into the role of policy analysis, it is necessary to clarify the nature of policy analysis itself. Many definitions of policy analysis can be found in the literature. For the sake of clarification, we have selected the following ones:

- According to Wildavsky (1969), policy analysis is "equivalent to strategic planning, that is the process of deciding on the objectives of an organization, on changes in these objectives, and on the resources used to attain these objectives."

- Dror (1971) defines policy analysis as "an approach and methodology for design and identification of preferable alternatives in respect to complex policy issues. It provides heuristic aid to better policy making, without any presumptions to provide optimisation algorithms, and is based on system analysis and behavioural sciences."

- For Ukeles (1977) policy analysis can be looked upon as "the systematic investigation of alternative policy options and gathering and display of evidence for and against each option. This means a problem-solving approach, the collection and interpretation of information and some attempt to predict the consequences of alternative courses of action."

The three above-mentioned definitions are similar in the sense that the analysis is done systematically and deals with the characteristics of policy-making which concerns both the content of policy and the selection among alternatives. It requires the support of relevant and efficient information and is related to the consequences of various alternatives. However, the definition of Wildavsky is more specific, since policy analysis for him should relate to big and important plans, with major consequences.

(1) Quoted in "Rational Techniques in Policy Analysis" by Michael Carley.
At this point, it may be said, more generally, that policy analysis is carried out before policy formulation, since the analysis of the consequences of the various possible policies has to be made in order to supply the necessary information to the decision-maker, so that he may select a particular policy and, after policy formulation, when that policy is being translated into concrete actions, i.e. in terms of plans, programmes and projects for implementation. In other words, it shows the role of policy analysis in relation to policy formulation and policy implementation.

With respect to the role of policy analysis, Johnson\(^{(1)}\) stated that, "Doing policy analysis means making criticisms. Making criticisms means exposing the implicit values that guide our research and recognizing that research which precludes implications for alternative policy choices is not worth doing." In his statement, he stressed the characteristics of policy analysis and the guide for doing worthwhile research on what he called "evaluation policy research."

In Thailand, there are various groups and organizations which are doing policy analysis. NEC, as the policy and planning office for education in Thailand, is one of the public organizations which deals directly with policy analysis, both for policy formulation and policy implementation. Its policy analysis is normally research-based. Evaluation policy research is conducted under the guidance of experts and policy committees, which constitute the major sources for suggestions about areas where research needs to be undertaken by NEC and its operational units.

In regard to the use of research findings as supporting information for decision-making about policy choices, one should consider not only the research conducted by NEC but also that conducted by outsiders. Qualitative, as well as quantitative educational research, is now being recognized. It is the experience of NEC that in conducting evaluation policy research, one can encounter many problems such as that of quality control, since, given the severe time constraint faced by researchers, research results should be available very quickly in order to guide the implementation of change at a particular time.

Owing to the problems mentioned above, it can be seen that the improvement of NEC's role in the field of policy analysis has to be taken into consideration so that it may become a tool for helping policy formulation and preparing its implementation. This paper will attempt to raise a series of questions in order to clarify the issues relating to NEC's activities regarding policy analysis, which is linked both to policy formulation and policy implementation, the two domains of NEC's responsibility.

II. AN APPROACH TO POLICY ANALYSIS

A. Policy Analysis to Policy Making

Since policy analysis is considered a very important activity in the policy-making process, it is essential that clarification of the term "policy-making" be made so as to bring about a clear understanding of its nature.

"Policy-making", of course, is related to a particular political system. Byron G. Massialas describes the political system as "a system of behaviour characterized by authoritative decisions which are accepted as legitimate and binding and it exists wherever authoritative allocations of values affecting the public life of citizens are made."

In so far as the political system affects policy-making, Michael Carley describes the relation between the two elements as follows: "Policy-making is about politics, that is deciding the content of policy, the promotion of values, and choosing among alternatives in an attempt to solve problems and improve human life."

Dimock and Dimock elaborated the term "politics" saying "it is certainly partisanship meaning political parties, pressure groups, lobbying, public opinion and the power struggle for preferment, dominance, control, influence and position."

In the above statements on the characteristics of policy-making, the highlight is on politics. They stress the significant roles of analytical thinking in policy choices. Owing to the differences between various interest groups, it becomes inevitable that policy-making means debate and not agreement.

(1) Byron G. Massialas, Education and Political System, the University of Michigan, Addison-Wesley Publishing Company, 1969.
(2) Carley, Michael, op.cit.
(3) Quoted in Carley, Michael, ibid.
Analytical skills are required for the purpose of proposing policy choices in the policy-making process. Such analysis may follow a systems approach. In Benveniste's view\(^{(1)}\), systems approach to policy "provides an analytical overview of problems that are inaccessible to the single decision-maker." In other words, "systems approach to policy does rationalize decisions." Beneveniste's view calls for the data-handling skill which may be undertaken by a variety of techniques and strategies. The significance of both technical and political aspects in policy formulation is to be taken into account.

Systems approach is very closely related to the policy-making and can be considered as a technical approach towards decision-making. The role of policy analysis (as the systems approach implies) is, hence, to enlighten the policy process from a particular perspective. On the other hand, the relationship of policy analysis to policy making is very strong but retains its own character.

B. Framework of Policy Analysis

Analysis is normally made for the purpose of identifying problems and trying to solve them. A particular technique of analysis is used as an aid to get information which helps in problem-solving and decision-making. The analysis of policy-making works in the same manner. The framework of policy analysis is, therefore, concerned with two elements. One deals with policy problems as the conceptual framework. The other is about activities which seek specific information serving as tools to predict the consequences or the outcomes of the alternatives and lead to decision-making. The two elements of that framework can be described as follows:

1. Conceptual Framework

The starting point of policy analysis, within a policy-making process, is to conceptualize the problem so that it can lead to the specification of the relevant systems which are to achieve the desired goal. This stage generally deals with policy problems and policy choices. The conceptual framework described by Strokey and Leckhauser\(^{(2)}\) seems to be the clearest and the simplest one. They suggest a five-part framework:

\(^{(1)}\) Benveniste, Guy, *The Politics of Expertise*, Berkeley, the Glendessary Press, 1972
\(^{(2)}\) Strokey, Edith and Leckhauser, Richard, *A Primer for Policy Analysis,*
1. **Establishing the context.** What is the underlying problem that must be dealt with? What specific objectives are to be pursued in confronting this problem?

2. **Laying out the alternatives.** What are the alternative courses of action? What are the possibilities for gathering further information?

3. **Predicting the consequences.** What are the consequences of each alternative action? What techniques are relevant for predicting these consequences? If outcomes are uncertain, what is the estimated likelihood of each?

4. **Valuing the outcomes.** By what criteria should we measure success in pursuing each objective? Recognizing that inevitably some alternatives will be superior with respect to certain objectives and inferior with respect to others, how should different combinations of valued objectives be compared with one another?

5. **Making a choice.** Drawing all aspects of the analysis together, what is the preferred course of action?

Although Strokey and Leckhauser insisted that the five criteria areas must be considered, they did not expect an analyst always to proceed from one stage of the analysis to the next, but to revise the framework to suit his own operational style.

In establishing the context, it is essential to focus attention on policy areas where there is widely-shared consensus and treat delicate issues cautiously. The problem areas in analysis may be examined in terms of equity, equality, efficiency and effectiveness in qualitative or quantitative terms, or according to the impact on the economy and so on. Once the analyst knows what the problem is about, he will conceptualize it in order to eliminate courses of action that will be costly, redundant and unfeasible, thus finding a way to seek the preferable choice and propose a course of action. This proposed course of action should take into account the consequences as well as the unexpected effects. The issue of making choices that favour the present at the expense of the future is raised and an explanation of how to think about choices and how they can be compared is presented.
As the role of the policy analyst is to provide relevant information to a policy-maker, to become an efficient member of the policy research team, he should have not only analytical skills, but also understand the policy environment, as well as the political implications. Benveniste believed that theoretical knowledge is helpful, but it is no guarantee of political sensitivity. The analyst, in this regard, is required to have the ability to work under pressure and time constraints, the ability to communicate and acquire trust and the ability to work in a team and present results which can overcome political interference.

2. Analysis Activities

Once the whole process has been conceptualized, one can begin gathering information for a systematic analysis in the same way as research, monitoring or evaluation are conducted.

"Policy research" is widely recommended both in terms of evaluation policy research and social policy research. Johnson\(^{(1)}\) defined policy research as "the research that begins with the understanding that selection of observable indicators in a choice-making activity, which has to clarify the condition of the target population, the operating characteristics of programmes intended to reach that population, and the consequences of human policy choices." In his view of evaluation policy research, criticism is one of the most important characteristics. As far as doing policy research is concerned, this means that policy research leading to a form of description is only a rudimentary step in understanding policy. But to go beyond that in evaluation research involves criticism of policy choices in terms of other alternatives which could have been made.

With his experience in political aspects of policy-making, Benveniste underlined the need for social policy research. According to him, social policy research "is one dimension of the process of policy-making, and what is said in that research should also take into account how it will be interpreted."

\(^{(1)}\) Johnson, Ronald N. *op.cit.*
It is interesting to examine closely the term "social policy". This term may be interpreted in the sense that one should go beyond a mere cost-benefit analysis and take into account societal, moral and cultural aspects. In other words, in the field of research practices, there has been a notable change of interest with the recognition that qualitative research is as important as quantitative research. In addition, it is worthwhile to translate research results in a language which can be understood by the general public, avoiding the use of technical jargon.

Another possible activity of policy analysis is the above-mentioned policy monitoring and evaluation. Besides the carrying out of data collection and analysis by the monitoring system, evaluation checks the relevancy and efficiency as well as effectiveness of the implementation of policy in terms of programmes and projects. Monitoring and evaluation help us understand certain phenomena more deeply. They often have policy implications and help us to clarify policy options or suggest new programme directions.

To sum up, it may be said that the role of the policy analyst may be a little broader than that of the researcher. The policy analyst should not only base his analysis on the information he has gathered, but should also synthesize all the related research and studies, and, with his ability of analytical thinking and awareness of political implications, propose alternative policy choices and recommendations in order to assist the decision-maker in policy formulation.

C. POLICY ANALYSIS TO POLICY FORMULATION AND POLICY IMPLEMENTATION

It has been indicated in the above section that policy analysis usually turns out in practice to be problem formulation at the beginning and the presentation of results of analysis to the decision-maker at the end. The results of analysis may or may not lead to a specific policy. If a policy is formulated, the next step is the translation of that policy into concrete actions.

At the policy formulation stage, the analysis is done for the purpose of enlightening or influencing policies. The analyst often looks at the effects of each alternative and tries to make a comparison. He suggests policies cautiously since he should take into account the climate of political life at a particular time.
In order to go beyond policy formulation, the evaluation process is considered a very significant step in identifying the consequences of policy decisions and the translation of policy into plans of action. To evaluate the implementation of policy, we focus both on the policy content and its implementation process.

The interesting conclusion about the dichotomy of analysis made by Wolf[1] is cited here to show the different characteristics of analysis: "Ex ante analysis is future oriented policy analysis in that it provides information to decision-makers before particular actions take place" and "Ex post analysis" on the other hand, is a check on what did happen - examination and measurement of the actual consequences of some programme or policy."

III. THE ROLE OF POLICY ANALYSIS IN NEC

Studying policy analysis is only a beginning. It may be useful if one assumes oneself to be a policy analyst to try to put the academic skills acquired in the field of policy analysis into practice. The purpose of this part is, therefore, to look at the policy analysis task as it is performed in NEC which is the policy and planning office for education in Thailand.

1. Who is doing policy analysis in NEC?

As mentioned earlier, the purpose of policy analysis is twofold. Firstly, it deals with policy problems, i.e. the problems that need analytical thinking for resolution. Secondly, it deals with activities, those that help supply the necessary information to the decision-maker. This paper puts particular emphasis on the latter aspect which concerns the carrying out of research, and analysis which is the main policy analysis tasks in NEC.

NEC has performed a number of activities in relation to policy analysis. The results of activities, such as educational policy research, analysis of related factors concerning issues in education, and the analysis of policy implementation (as monitoring and evaluation) serve as information for policy-makers and perhaps as advice.

(1) quoted from Carley, M. op.cit. p.37.
NEC's role in making policy analysis has existed since it was first established in accordance with the National Education Council Act of 1959\(^{(1)}\) as an office dealing with educational planning at all levels and educational policy formulation. Its role in policy analysis was highlighted in the 1969 Act\(^{(2)}\) which emphasized the mobilization of resources to organize education, and the revision and improvement of the National Education Scheme. Hence, educational research and analysis have been encouraged as a way to improve knowledge in order to help the development of the educational system.

As a result of the 1969 Act, five divisions were set up in the NEC. One division was made responsible for administrative affairs. The other four divisions, responsible for academic areas, were respectively:

- the Educational Planning Division
- the Educational Research Division
- the Educational Statistics and Analysis of Educational Conditions Division
- the Educational Promotion Division

These four technical divisions are meant to explore, study, analyse, monitor and evaluate the educational phenomena so as to make recommendations on educational objectives and policies and to prepare the National Scheme of Education and the National Education Development Plan.

At the present time, the 1978 Act\(^{(3)}\) is being implemented. Compared to the 1969 Act, some elements of the duties and administrative structure have been revised. The main function of NEC, however, remains to focus on the recommendations about educational policies and educational plans. The policy section was established informally in 1978, under the Division of Educational Statistics and Analysis of Educational Conditions. It performed the analysis of policy content and the preparation of educational policies in areas assigned by the Government, as well as assisting in policy formulation for the educational plan.

The policy analysis activities were not only performed by the policy section, but also by each individual technical division. The Research Division conducted policy research mostly in order to support the policy analysis tasks. The Division of Statistics and Analysis carried out the collection and revision of data and information and the analysis on the educational situation for strengthening the information system. The Division of Educational Promotion

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(1) see NEC Act 1959.
(2) see NEC Act 1969.
(3) see NEC Act 1978.
also took part in policy analysis when it disseminated some specific educational policies to the public and awaited the feedback. The Educational Planning Division, as a planning body, also conducted some policy research and analysis of related factors, as well as monitoring and evaluation.

In early 1984 there was an attempt to restructure the organization of the NEC. The new organizational structure is in the process of being approved. The policy and planning tasks are merged in a division called the Educational Policy and Planning Division, whereas evaluation and criteria setting are carried out independently by the Division of Educational Evaluation. The Division of Educational Information, in addition to collecting and analysing data and information, also provides services to other divisions, both in terms of computerization and documentation. The Educational Research Division conducts mostly applied research and explores the development of research work.

Although the new organizational structure has been established, the role of policy analysis in NEC remains unchanged. Some tasks or duties are transferred to other different divisions for the convenience of administration, and according to the competence of professional staff. But the activities remain to support the main duty of NEC in making recommendations on educational policy and educational plans.

2. How the activities about policy analysis are conducted

Without any change in the major domains of NEC's responsibility, even though the new organizational structure has been established, we may presume that the policy analysis tasks operating in NEC are within the three main activities of research, analysis of educational phenomena, and monitoring and evaluation.

Research, as one main activity in the process of policy analysis, is conducted both in terms of fundamental and applied research. Yates in his book "The Role of Research in Educational Change" describes the distinctions and sometimes the similarities between the two types of research as follows, "By pure (fundamental, basic) research, we mean the kind of systematic study that has intellectual curiosity as its prime motivation and understanding as its principal objective." And, "By applied research, as the epithet suggests, we mean the kind of systematic study (often similar in form and sometimes identical with that pursued in pure research) that is motivated by the need to solve some problem that has arisen within

(1) The Descriptions of the New Organizational Structure and Staff Allocation Requirements, NEC, 1984.
the educational system,...(1) Carron concluded that although the two types of research are different, the difference is only relative. He stated that "the difference is not at the level of the overall approach nor at the level of the methods but rather in the type of motivation inspiring the researcher." With respect to fundamental research, he stated that although it "attempts to make social reality more lucid and thus, in the last analysis, to facilitate action", it is not relevant with only short-term requirements, but it will "no doubt become so in connection with long-term requirements." His view may be applied to the research which has been made by NEC. Fundamental research may be a relevant approach to seek the basic needs of the educational system in order to serve the long-term requirement of the National Scheme of Education (8-10 year plan). It could also be the basis for the preparation of the National Education Development Plan (5 year plan).

At present, NEC puts emphasis on applied research, especially in the field of evaluation policy research. Research findings are normally used as information for policy options and policy formulation in the medium-term plan or the National Education Development Plan. It is also used for the revision of policy when necessary.

In NEC, evaluation policy research or research related to policy recommendations are frequently suggested by Thai social scientists associated with education. In order to carry out such research projects,... a policy committee is established. This committee is made up of key policy-makers and administrators concerned with the policy in question. The committee provides a statement of the research problem and poses key questions which need to be answered. A working research group then carried out the research in accordance with agreements made by the policy committee. Once the research is completed, a working draft is presented to the policy committee for review. A final copy of the research report is then prepared which is submitted to the key administrative agencies concerned and also broadly distributed to universities, libraries, other related governmental agencies, the mass media, etc. For research dealing with a major policy issue, a seminar is normally organized to review the research results. Such seminars emphasize policy implications and prospects for the implementation of policies suggested...". (2)


Let us now discuss about the approach and strategies being used in conducting policy research in NEC. In so far as the conceptual framework is concerned, the above quoted statement explains how the process is taking place.

It is hoped that the social scientists, who are members of the Committee, can look for a consensus on delicate educational issues on the basis of their understanding of the power structure and of the political climate. This group of people is thus assigned to address major policy issues related to the equity, quality and relevance of education. As Thailand moves into the 80s, more emphasis is given to these areas. Establishing a policy committee comprising the administrators and policy makers concerned with education is a strategy to involve decision-makers in the research process. Carron clearly supports this idea when he indicates that "All research has social implications, requirements in this areas should not be decided by researchers alone nor by decision-makers alone.....without any doubt, the reformation of the problem constitutes the most delicate aspect of project definition - more important than the choice of tools or the precise structuring of the subsequent study." Problem formulation is then based on the real needs of the population, not on any textbooks nor any authorities.

In addition to the participation of decision-makers and administrators in the policy committee and the work done by the research team leading to research findings, it can be seen from the quoted statement that NEC also regards the universities, libraries and the press and radio as important institutions that convey the results of educational research to the public.

In his paper, Sippanondha underlined the fact that although the strategy mentioned above has proved to be reasonably effective in Thailand, it has an inherent weakness because there is a tendency for such a process-oriented approach to soften proposals, policies, and ideas in order to reach compromises (which are considered so important in Thai society). Owing to this characteristic of Thai society, the policy formulation is not in accordance with the fundamental objective of solving a specific issue. This has an impact on the implementation of policy: it happens that some policies are never actually implemented.

(1) Sippanondha Ketudat, op.cit. p.6.
(2) Carron, Gabriel, op.cit.
(3) Sippanondha Ketudat, ibid.
Some other problems the NEC frequently encounters are noted here. The first problem indicated by Sippanondha is related in particular to commissioned research and/or the use of select expert committees. He stated that great care must be exercised to ensure that such groups address policy areas with some flexibility - i.e. that the power structure is prepared to accept the likely changes to be proposed or suggested. As policy research is always concerned with political implications, we may say that it is oriented to sensitive areas. The social scientists or experts, in choosing policy areas, have to bear in mind that they are also dealing with politically sensitive issues. Trying to understand the political implications is one way of having effective political participation. In their political role, however, they can expect to encounter a political reaction to their work. At times they seem to succeed and influence policies, too often they seem to fail. The failure leads to discouragement and therefore it is easy for them to become frustrated and refuse to be involved again in efforts that are likely to prove fruitless.

The second problem is that time constraints in conducting policy research can cause a serious problem in quality control. Policy research of the evaluation type, as already mentioned, focuses on the consequences of policy decisions. The results of the research will imply policy recommendations or criticism as well. This is why the results have to be reliable so that they can be accepted by the policy-maker. Without adequate time, quality cannot be guaranteed which, in fact, leads to waste of time, human and financial resources.

The last problem that will be mentioned here concerns communication. There is a need for translation of research results from technical language into common language, so that the public can understand. There has been an attempt to disseminate research results to the general public in two ways. One way is the dissemination of the full technical report for the restricted group of initiates. Another is a brief version in non-technical language for a wider public. Carron, in his paper, suggested two other methods. One is by means of oral presentation and/or visual methods. The other is that instead of presenting the research results directly, they can also be presented as useful information for a specific training programme organized for decision-makers.
To bring this section to a conclusion, it is essential to mention other organizations that conduct educational research in Thailand. These organizations, as they are doing a part of the policy analysis, are the universities, governmental departments and agencies, research centres and private organizations.

The universities, especially the Faculty of Education, do research primarily in the area of educational psychology with strong emphasis on standard surveys or experiments. For the most part, this type of research has had little impact on policy and planning.

The educational research conducted by government departments, and especially operational agencies such as the Ministry of Education and Ministry of the Interior, normally focuses on procedural and implementation questions. The result is therefore to show the linkage between policy formulation and policy implementation.

Research centres, such as the National Institute of Research, and private organizations, such as the Bangkok Bank or Kasikorn Thai Bank, have also been given the task of carrying out research into educational problems in which they are free to initiate research.

Coordination and cooperation between various research organizations is becoming more effective. People are better able to understand that research results will lead to better facilities and more relevance in education. Again, just to sum up, without the perseverance of social scientists who raise policy issues to launch research projects, the results of research would no doubt prove in vain, since they do not serve reality.

The second activity, conducted by the NEC for the purpose of policy analysis, is monitoring and evaluation. This activity overlaps to a certain extent with the above-mentioned research, especially evaluation research. Gordon et al. (1977, p. 28) viewed that, "monitoring and evaluation can be aimed at providing direct results to policy-makers about the impact and effectiveness of specific policies." In other words, the aim of conducting evaluation research and monitoring and evaluation is a unified one. The main differences between the two activities have to do with technical skills such as those of the design of the context and methodology used.

(1) quoted from Carley, M. op.cit.
Even if this report has already dealt with evaluation characteristics, it may be useful to discuss a little more about them and to show that monitoring and evaluation should be considered as important as research in the policy analysis process. When we mention evaluation, we always precede it with the term "monitoring". The term "monitoring" by its sense means "the follow-up study of a specific programme which requires relevant and efficient information, so as to serve in the evaluation process." Let us make the brief conclusion here that monitoring is contained within the evaluation process. By its nature, evaluation attempts to see what happened in the programme specified by a particular policy. It generally follows a cost-benefit or cost-effectiveness approach and is concerned with programme objectives. On the other hand, programme evaluations are structured in terms of efficiency and effectiveness and affect the type of basic questions which are asked. The basic questions are those of whether or not and to what extent did the programme achieve its objectives and at what cost? Qualitative evaluation, however, is as important as quantitative evaluation when it attempts to answer questions concerning social costs, whereas the quantitative evaluation is only concerned with economic costs.

With reference to the two purposes of policy analysis as described by Wolf on page 10 about ex ante and ex post analysis, we may come to the conclusion that...programme evaluation, as well as evaluation research constitute ex post analysis.

In carrying out programme evaluation in education, NEC also uses educational evaluators or evaluation committees. The committees comprise programme developers, implementors, educational evaluators and persons experienced in those specific types of programmes. The results of the evaluation are disseminated to the implementing body and the associated agencies, as well as to the general public. If the programmes are sponsored by external agencies or are under loan or credit agreements, the results will also be submitted to them.

Problems always arise whenever evaluation is undertaken. The carrying out of programme evaluation in education in NEC obviously faces some problems. The first problem concerns the use of the committee structure in educational evaluation. Since assessments regarding both quantitative and qualitative aspects are built into the evaluation process, they seem to reduce the degree of compromise (said to be in the nature of Thai
society). Far beyond the problem of setting criteria is the difficulty of encouraging the implementing body to have a high regard for the criteria used by the experts. Even though some of the quantitative criteria are established by government agencies, the implementing body cannot accept them. The reason may be because they cannot apply them to implementation at a certain stage. The same situation also happens with qualitative criteria. The question is "who is the best one to judge?"

The next problem which deserves to be mentioned here is the lack of essential information and the continuity of information. It happens that the implementing body (usually the implementors or the coordinators of the programme assigned by the agency) do not, very often, cooperate enough. Given the fact that information is seen as subsidiary work, data and information are often insufficient and very crude. An evaluation cannot cover all elements, as planned, and, unfortunately, some of them must be ignored.

The last problem to be mentioned here is quite a crucial one. The implementors always feel that to evaluate a programme or project they have implemented is to evaluate directly their performance on that programme or project. And the results of the programme (or project) evaluation usually focus on the deficiencies of the programme. The implementors cannot accept this form of evaluation for the programme they are involved in. Finally, they give a negative reaction to the evaluators and evaluative agency.

To sum up, in the evaluation task of NEC, it is apparent that four points should be taken into consideration. Firstly, effective, efficient, relevant and sufficient information. Secondly, techniques which suit the evaluative project, as well as the technical skills of the evaluation team. Thirdly, criteria taking into consideration both qualitative and quantitative aspects. And fourthly the dissemination of the evaluation results, as well as the acceptability by the implementing body, both in terms of cooperation and positive attitude to this task.

The third activity in the policy analysis process of NEC is the analysis of the educational conditions and related factors. Not only does the research, monitoring and evaluation team directly use policy analysis, but also does this type of analysis. The analysis is concerned with educational conditions and related factors which have an impact on
thé educational system. These factors are inevitably of a political, economic and socio-cultural nature.

The analysis follows a systematic approach. The collection of data, review of programme inputs/outputs, methodology adopted according to its relevance to a specific programme are all mobilized so as to answer a particular question. Moreover, the cause and effect relationship should not be ignored as it is a valuable aid to policy-making.

This activity, on the other hand, is broader than the two former ones since it considers the results of the related research and monitoring and evaluation as a whole. The synthesis of the results of these activities leads to alternative proposals. Criticism for each option is made. This moment may be the last phase of the policy analysis task. The proposed policies are then submitted to the decision-maker as the final task in the policy analysis process.

As the analysis is continuous, the analysts have to work by successive iteration in the process. Whenever the policy is being formulated, the analysts should be prepared to go beyond whilst at the same time taking care of the policy which has been implemented.

Just to illustrate how this final activity has been structured in NEC, "the NEC also appointed a select expert committee to address a specific issue. Committee members normally represent a wide range of related agencies and relevant academic disciplines... Such committees are given a limited period of time to formulate a policy statement for presentation to the Government, usually the Cabinet. In making its recommendations, the committee draws upon the expertise and experience of the committee members themselves, analysis of related research and review papers, and consideration of public opinion as expressed primarily in the mass media...."(1)

In the preceding sentence, it should be noted that consideration has also to be given to the related research and analysis by the operating agencies, other agencies in charge of educational research and analysis, the views of political group members and the mass media, all of whom are involved in the policy analysis process.

(1) quoted from Sippanondha Ketudat, op.cit. pp.5-6
Figure 1. The relations of policy analysis to policy formulation and policy implementation

In order to see how the role of policy analysis goes far beyond the educational system, the illustration given below may be used:
Generally speaking, the NEC carries out three main functions: analysis (including research and monitoring and evaluation), policy analysis, and planning. Each function attempts to serve the main duty of NEC in making recommendations on educational policy and educational planning. Each has its own characteristics as seen in the differences of techniques and methodologies.

Since the analysis results are inputs for policy analysis, there is no need to mention that again. We will focus on the other two functions: policy analysis and planning. We now have an idea as to how policy analysis is formulated. To ensure we understand the term "policy" in the same way, a definition of policy is given. Benveniste's definition may be one of the most quoted "a policy is a set of decisions for which (1) a considerable amount of cogitation is required and/or (2) the implication of the decisions on future goal attainment is perceived to be important."

Some questions arise from this statement, i.e., what should a policy issue be? and, in what way should that policy issue be included in the policy formulation in order to serve the real needs of the society?

One additional question may be necessary in order to go beyond the policy itself: "is the content of the policy formulated as important as the way the policy is implemented? This question may lead to the issue of the relations between policy, planning and implementation.

In order to show the relations between policy, planning (or plan as the outcome of a planning process) and implementation, the policy statement of Benveniste may be quoted: "A plan is the outcome of a planning process. The planning process is the conscious evaluation of interrelated decisions and policies prior to undertaking action. Both policies and plans are statements of intents, and they are statements about the characteristics of future events. If these intents and descriptions of future events are thought to have a high probability of being realized, the plan or policy is implemented, not only through directives and formal orders but also through a simple process of individual reorientation. Because they believe that plan will be implemented, individual decision-makers take into account the image of the future contained in the plan to guide their own choices."
Although policy and planning are interrelated, this does not mean they use the same techniques and methodologies. Policy is prepared with the help of policy analysis, as was shown in the section on the policy-making process. Planning itself also has its own techniques. Such techniques include projections, target setting, priority establishment and so on. Thus we may say that policy (or policy analysis) and planning are conducted separately but their functions are related. If we look at the figure showing the relations between them (Figure 1), we will see what is in between policy formulation and policy implementation. The planning task is to attempt to translate policy into plans, programmes and projects for the purpose of optimizing the use of resources within a fixed-term period of time. Policy analysis and planning are separated by policy making and policy formulation. Without a set of policies, planning cannot be done.

Implementation of plans, programmes and projects takes place when there is cooperation between various groups of people. Although policy is formulated by a particular group of people, it may affect everyone. The possibility for the programme or project to be implemented therefore depends on the cooperation of the decision-makers involved, the politicians concerned, the political party members involved, the general public, the press and, finally, the implementors.

NEC, as a policy and planning office, does not have the function of policy implementation but of encouraging the implementation of policies. NEC's responsibility in doing analysis on policy implementation is by means of evaluation research, and monitoring and evaluation of the programmes or projects implemented for specific policies. The implementing body is not as concerned with the results of evaluation as it should be. It is necessary to note here what Sippanondha said about staff-line functions: "Unfortunately, in Thailand, there is less respect for staff organizations, the functions of which are frequently perceived as being too slow, given the immediate information needs of line decision-makers."

D. Some major issues to be considered

Some major issues about the NEC's policy analysis task which have an effect on the educational system, both in terms of policy formulation and implementation, may be described as follows:
1. The first issue is related to the performance of the NEC on policy analysis activities. The following questions arise:

a) To what extent is the policy issue (addressed by the group of social scientists or the NEC's staff) relevant to the real needs of the society and how is the relevancy assessed?

It is apparent that the 1978 National Scheme of Education has been influenced by the Educational Reform of 1974-77. The results of the related studies, both of the NEC and other organizations, have led to the decision for reform. The decision for reform reflects the relevancy of the selected policy issue. Being aware of the political climate, careful consideration is given to the opinions of the political group members, the decision-makers, the implementors, the communities and the mass media.

b) Do NEC's staff have the proper technical knowledge and experience to conduct such activities as research, evaluation and monitoring and analysis, and have at the same time a bird's eye view of education and related factors.

On the one hand, in its technical role the staff engages in activities by carrying out one or more specific techniques. On the other, they engage in the political value judgements of various interested parties. They are expected to search for results that will lead to better policy choices. Carley's statement, in his book on "Rational Techniques in Policy Analysis" is relevant to this point: "The more explicit the results of the activity, the better the policy analysis."

At present NEC is making a major effort to build up its staff capacities. The training programmes on educational research, planning and evaluation are organized by the NEC, both for NEC staff members and those of other educational organizations. Also an NEC staff development programme has been established. Staff are sent abroad or within the country to study or join specific training programmes in education. It is essential that such training programmes, especially those organized by NEC, should concentrate not only on technical knowledge, but also on the effective roles of researchers, evaluators, planners and analysts. Furthermore, they should reveal in what way the results of the activities lead to educational policy, planning and implementation.
c) To what degree is the data collection done systematically and how is it effective and relevant to the needs of the users?

Information is one of the most important factors in the planning process. Attempts to improve the management information system (MIS) have actually been made in NEC. One attempt was in early 1984 when there was a revision of the NEC's organisational structure. The improvement of the MIS is carried out in terms of computation and documentation facilities. Since NEC has no implementing bodies under its responsibility, in addition to the work on the design of the information system, it has to establish effective cooperation with the implementing bodies, outside NEC.

d) Are the studies (activities) done within a relevant time limit?

It has been found that the studies, especially on policy issues, carried out under severe time constraints, face the problem of quality control. On the contrary, studies which are not completed in time cannot be taken into consideration. Such situations constitute not only a waste of time, money and energy, but also lead to the discouragement of the staff involved.

e) Are the results of studies translated from technical language to a language which can be understood by the general public?

For public use, as mentioned before, brief reports are presented in non-technical language to facilitate understanding. Presentation of results in the form of attractive visual materials or by intervening in particular seminar programmes organized for the decision-makers is often done.

2. The second issue relates to the communications system which facilitates cooperation amongst agencies at the policy as well as implementing level, and brings about a multiplying effect.

One aspect of the issue refers to the committee structure, in which all agencies concerned, including the policy and implementing bodies (both public and private), are members, and another aspect (which is a delicate one) concerns the liaison and cooperation between NEC and the agencies concerned. Some questions may be asked:
a) Are there any public influences (or political pressures) on the various government administrations at the two levels of organization?

In the case of committee structure, as well as the formal liaison and cooperation system, support is needed from other organizations. Policy-making and planning require resources. Such formal consultations or communications provoke potential resistance. As long as public policy and planning deals with resource allocations, the agencies (both government and private) make decisions on the basis of their own goals.

As mentioned, it is a characteristic of Thai society to soften crucial issues by compromise. It should be the direct duty of NEC to moderate that degree of compromise by increasing the capability to promote its desired objective. To be more explicit, explanation should be based on facts and measurement according to the methodology of the social science, and should lead to better evaluation. The efficient support of this approach certainly depends on the qualification of staff members and the relevance and quality of information.

It is very important to look not only at the formal system of communication but also at the informal communication network. The fact that the formal inter-organizational system is limited requires that the informal professional cooperation among organizations be more effectively established. It is obvious that within the large bureaucracies which carry out the day-to-day routine, a big effort is needed in order to influence the staff in the way they undertake their routine work, though this may require a long period of time. This means that cooperation among the internal NEC units, as well as outside organizations, is necessary.

Once we are clear about the problem of communications, we can examine why the effects of the operation are so. This leads to the second question.
b) What should be the effective communication that leads to the success of policy formulation and implementation?

In an attempt to answer this question, we may look back to the issue of liaison and cooperation and consider it as one very important element. At the same time, the NEC should consider how its role has been performed in relation to the scope of its functions and responsibilities. There are the overlap and duplication of responsibilities between individual agencies involved in educational policy and planning, both at the national level, i.e. the NEC itself; the NESDB, and the national and departmental levels, i.e. the NEC and the Planning Division attached to the Under-Secretary Office of the MOE. At this point, it is apparent that a better understanding of the scope of functions and responsibilities among agencies is in urgent need of being clarified.

In addition to the clarification of the scope of functions and responsibilities between agencies, it is essential that NEC establishes a good liaison and cooperation with these agencies. In this paper we consider good liaison and cooperation to include the strategies used, both formal and informal, as well as the coordinators in charge. The coordinators should play an effective role in work assigned to them. They should understand thoroughly the nature and the objective of the work. Moreover, they should be willing to execute the work, be able to perform under pressure or time constraints, have the ability to work within a team and, lastly, have the ability to communicate and acquire trust. The coordinators' role is both official, as in the bureaucracies, and unofficial, as in meetings where the politicians, decision-makers, administrators, implementors, beneficiaries (communities and students) and mass media are to be found. The understanding and acceptance of the various parties concerned should lead to the achievement of the objectives and may be implementation will take place.

3. The last issue concerns NEC staff but in terms of behaviour, attitude and quantity. There are at least two short but very important questions which arise:
a) To what extent does the staff undertaking the studies really understand the objectives and goals of such studies?

The objectives of the programme or project must be very clear on this point, as well as the details, such as the target population to be reached, the time limit and the costs. Once descriptions of the task have been made clear, the staff knows to whom the task is directed and how it will benefit the society: they will then be willing to work and with pride.

b) Does NEC have sufficient staff to carry out each individual task under its responsibility?

This question is a critical one. The above analysis shows the diversity of responsibilities the NEC has been entrusted to handle.

IV. CONCLUSION

As the NEC deals with the three activities (research, monitoring and evaluation, and analysis) in the policy making process, it is essential that the skills for doing policy analysis be vested in NEC staff. The use of techniques in each specific activity is as important as the use of analytical skills to carry out policy analysis. Moreover, concern for the political, social, economic and cultural environment is to be taken into consideration, since it is a sensitive and critical issue. On the whole, it may be concluded that analysis skill is very useful, both for formal and informal ways of working.

To focus on the point of policy analysis with which this paper is concerned, we may end up with what Michael Carley said, "the success of policy decisions is related to the implementation of those decisions - policy making is not a linear process - resulting in a decision but an iterative process."
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