

ADMINISTRATION IN THAILAND  
CONCERNS  
YOU

*Fred Peterson*

*Government is a trust, and the officers  
of government are trustees; both  
the trust and the trustees are created  
for the benefit of the people*

Henry Clay

AN INVESTMENT IN THE FUTURE

It is a continuing policy of the government of Thailand to modernize and improve its service to its people. In 1933 it founded Thammasat University to educate young men and women, to teach them the values of democracy, to help them to be better officials. It went a step further in 1955 when it established the Institute of Public Administration.

The purpose of the Institute is to help carry the work of Thammasat further; to engage in more specialized and more advanced study and teaching; to give training to officials already serving the government; to provide a source of information and advice to government officials. The Institute of Public Administration is concerned with helping the government serve the people of Thailand better.

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## WHY THIS ARTICLE ?

In the minds of some, administration is a task limited to a very few individuals who perform certain specific administrative functions. To others, it is viewed as a function limited to those who occupy broad policy making posts. In essence, such views would confine administration to an elite few who represent but a very small percent of the officials who serve the public.

Behind these notions there seem to be a number of questions which need an answer: What is the need ? How can the government improve its services ? What is public administration ? Who is concerned with administration ? Where does the Institute of Public Administration fit into the picture ? This article is written to help answer some of these questions.

## IS THERE A NEED FOR IMPROVED SERVICE ?

The national income of Thailand has almost trebled during the past ten years. Today (1960) its total income is about 45 billion baht. The government budget is over 7 billion baht. This is about 15% of the national income. A decade ago, the government budget was less than 5% of the national income. About 65% of today's budget goes to pay salaries and other benefits to its employees.

Thailand has over 22,000,000 people. At the present rate of growth, the number of people in Thailand will double in about 30 years. The number of people in the Bangkok - Dhonburi area has grown almost 7% each year since 1948. City planning experts estimate that the population of the greater metropolitan area reach 7,400,000 by 1990.

With population growth comes a need for increased government service. For example, the number of motor vehicles in Thailand increased from 5,700 in 1947 to almost 52,000 in 1957 an increase of over 900% in ten years. This increase creates

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a need for more and better streets; for more and better roads in rural and suburban areas. It creates a need for better traffic control. It calls for more emphasis on public safety. It means more work in the registration of vehicles and licensing of drivers.

Population growth also results in larger school enrollment. It is estimated that, during the next several years, enrollment in Matayom 1 - 6 will increase almost 70,000 each year. This calls for a steady increase in educational services. Population growth also increases the need for public health services, for improved sanitation, better measures for crime prevention and control, and for improving the way of life in rural as well as in urban communities.

This shows there is a need for more service and that the need is growing. It also suggests a need for better service. Even without population growth, the demand for a higher standard of living calls for better service.

#### CAN GOVERNMENT IMPROVE WHAT IT DOES ?

It is a general rule that what man does can be done better. The history of life seems to be the story of attempts to improve. Thailand not only needs more roads and bridges, it needs better roads; roads that will carry 20,000 vehicles a day instead of 200; bridges on which cars going in opposite direction can meet without reducing their speed.

Not only more schools but better schools are needed; schools with teachers who have themselves been educated to be teachers; not only more doctors, nurses and hospitals but better doctors, nurses and hospitals. And so it goes throughout the services which any modern government offers to its people. Always officials must be alert to ways of doing their work better; of finding more facts about the needs; of applying new techniques; of giving better service at less cost.

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Our welfare, our happiness, our very lives depend in large measure on the quality of government service. Today, your life may depend on proper administration of cholera vaccine. Tomorrow it may be affected by the licensing of taxi drivers. Next week, it may be influenced by the rehabilitation of samlor drivers on selfhelp land settlement. Next month, it may be affected by the preparation of a budget to guide the use of public funds.

Once there was not much to be done about disease. Epidemics came; people died. But now many dreaded diseases can be stamped out. Small-pox, and more recently cholera, were brought under control. The vaccination of whole cities full of people is a complex procedure. Securing the vaccine, finding doctors and nurses to administer it, persuading the people to subject themselves for injection; this all requires a lot planning, coordination and managing. It calls for improved quality of service.

#### GOVERNMENT BECOMING MORE COMPLEX

The work of government not only can be improved, but it must face new situations and solve new problems. There is scarcely a single duty of government which was once simple that is not now complex. Once it was simple to carry a few messages back and forth between King and princes. Now mail must be carried among thousands of persons. Once the senders and receivers of messages were few and known to each other, now they are many and each may be known only to a few; yet each must be found.

Government operations are also becoming more complex because they are so much more numerous. Government once had few employees. Now its employees number in the hundred thousands. This means increased attention to good administration which seeks to straighten the paths to the achievement of government goals; to make

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government activity more business-like; to strengthen its organization; to improve its administrative machinery; and thus improve its service to the people.

### WHAT IS PUBLIC ADMINISTRATION?

Administration is getting things done through people. Simply defined, to administer is to have charge of, to manage or direct. In its broad sense, administration is the management of interests, such as the conduct of business, public affairs or government. A distinguished student of administration once said: "Public administration is the management of men and materials to accomplish the purposes of government."

Administration is everyone's concern. Intelligent administration is needed for optimum progress in achieving the goals of government. Broadly conceived, sound administration helps us define our goals clearly and to realize them more fully. Clarifying our goals and formulating ways to reach them assume that man is capable of rising above the forces of his environment and building a meaningful pattern upon them.

In a government employing over 200,000 people, there are administrators at several levels. At the upper levels, there are administrators who have major responsibility for policy formulation and program planning; for determining organization structure; for administering and controlling work activities; and for evaluating results. In Thailand, such responsibilities are discharged largely by special grade officials, such as Directors General of Departments, Under-Secretaries of State and Ministers. Administrators at this level who do work of this kind may be regarded as Executives.

There is another important group of administrators in government. These are the people who supervise the work of others within the framework of policies and programs established by the executives. In Thai Government, these people are heads of divisions and sections. Because they supervise the work of people in the divisions and

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sections of various government organizations, they are often referred to as Supervisors.

Executives and Supervisors share responsibility for administration. Both are concerned with the management of men and materials to accomplish the purposes of government. Both have an important role in achieving the goals of government. Both are members of the management team.

## FROM GOALS TO ACTION

Out of the growing needs in Thailand, major policy goals of the government have emerged. For example, the government has indicated it will stress economic improvement of Thailand as a major policy objective. This calls for emphasis on industrial and agricultural production and the development of cooperatives and communications.

The government is concerned with improving the way of life of the villager. Low productivity, poor health, poor sanitation, and inadequate housing are prevalent in rural areas. How can the villager be stimulated to do something about these conditions? How can the government formulate public policy in such a way that these problems can be tackled with increased effectiveness? How can such policy, once formulated, be administered so that the desired improvements in village life do occur?

The government is also concerned with developing trade and commerce in Thailand to the fullest extent, since economic prosperity depends heavily on international trade. How does the government formulate public policy which is effectively aimed at increasing national income and export earning? How does it administer such policy so that national income and export earning do in fact increase?

How does a nation formulate its plans to carry out major policy goals such as these? How does it translate these plans into action? In short, how does a nation

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move from where it now is to the place its national goals say it should be? What kind of a road map is needed? How does it travel to its destination? What does it take to get there?

#### IS TECHNICAL KNOW-HOW ENOUGH?

To carry out goals such as these requires a great deal of technical know-how. For example, an increase in agricultural productivity calls for a knowledge of better farm practices, the use of improved varieties of rice and improved breeds of cattle, the use of fertilizer and better land use. It involves improved practices on rubber plantations.

To improve health, better diets may be required. Ways to control cholera epidemics and stamp out other diseases require knowledge of a very specialized nature. A great deal of technical know-how is involved. Such knowledge is very essential if these objectives are to be reached.

In addition, there is a great deal of technical know-how involved in the construction of roads, the building of dams, the increase of electric energy for industrial purposes, and many other activities needed if industry and agriculture are to be improved. Without the necessary technical know-how, major policy objectives could not be achieved.

But technical know-how alone will not produce the results sought. Many problems today remain unsolved -- not for a lack of technical answers but rather for a lack of effective management. If these objectives are to be achieved someone must have charge, someone must manage, someone must direct the activity. Someone must provide leadership.

Someone must know how to introduce change in a way that the people who are to carry it out will accept. He must be able to help them understand the results of

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the proposed change. He must develop the skill and ability to carry out the change. He must create a situation in which the people can work together effectively under the new conditions, with possibly a new set of relationships among the people involved.

This means sound administration. Viewed in this light, administration of government affairs becomes a process of managing these technical improvements, of bringing about change in such a way that major policy objectives are achieved to the fullest degree possible.

### ADMINISTRATION IN LARGE ORGANIZATIONS

Government lives, moves and acts through organizations of people. We call them Ministries, Departments, Councils or Commissions. A common factor running through all these organizations is that people are closely associated under some kind of direction to accomplish certain stated purposes. There are executives, supervisors and employees. The relationships in human organization do not automatically result in harmony and productive outcomes. There may be frictions and strains in the working relationships. There may be misunderstandings. There may be indifference to getting the work done. There may be conflict between individuals and groups.

Compared with the relationships found in earlier forms of society, such as in the hunting, pastoral, or agricultural society, where the family was the work unit, the relationships among people working in large organizations creates a greater need for adjustment. This new demand on human nature requires careful thought and planning if productive results are to occur.

Out of this situation grows a need for better administration. The effort to direct, guide, and integrate human energies toward a common purpose assumes increasing importance. As organizations grow in size and become more complex, it becomes increasingly important that the functions of administration be analyzed, understood and

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applied. Out of such study and analysis comes a common body of knowledge, attitudes, approaches, and methods which can be useful in a wide variety of situations. The application of these methods in a specific situation requires insight, skill, patience and understanding. To effectively coordinate the efforts of people is a skill of such high order that it becomes a social undertaking of vital importance to the public.

Administration in Thailand, then, is concerned with the creation of an organization structure which makes it possible for people to work effectively toward a common purpose. It is concerned with the selection, development, and maintenance of a work force which can achieve the goals of the organization in an efficient manner. It is also concerned with the development and use of financial and material resources in achieving these goals. It is concerned with those human factors, those human values which make it possible for people to work together in a social and cultural setting to achieve specific goals.

#### TOWARD A MORE SYSTEMATIC APPROACH

It is quite clear that the administrator performs certain specific and well defined functions. He sets objectives; he defines the goals. He formulates a statement of policy. He sees that the policy is put into effect. This is a conscious process of selecting and developing the best course of action to achieve the objective. He judges if the goal has been reached at a reasonable cost. He defines authority and responsibility; he coordinates and integrates activities within the organization. These functions need attention at all levels, from the section chief, on through to the highest offices government.

If a common body of knowledge grows out of the study of administration, what kind of an administrator does such study produce? What are the attitudes, the

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insights, the understandings which can make for a more systematic approach to administration? A complete answer to these questions is beyond the scope of this article. But even a partial answer may be useful. If the incompleteness of these ideas is recognized, they may help the student of administration formulate for himself a more complete and a more adequate answer.<sup>1</sup>

A Factual Attitude. The professional administrator has the patience and the desire to get the facts on which to base his decisions and actions. He does not hesitate to make reasoned judgments where the situation demands, based on available facts, even though these facts are incomplete. He recognizes that in many situations, some facts bearing on the problem cannot be known. Or even if they could be known, there may not be time to dig them all out.

Search for Truth. He tries to be as precise in reasoning from fact and premises as the situation permits. He seeks out premises and conclusions that are true. He is constantly seeking truth. But he does not shrink from the problem because some truths may not be susceptible of proof. Here he distinguishes "authority of facts" from "authority of command".

Fits Theory to Reality. He recognizes that present theory is based on available facts. He is willing to abandon theoretical concepts which do not fit a specific problem. In essence, this is a process of forming true theory by testing to find what will work for him in practice. In this way, he forms his own philosophy of management, which he adapts as new facts become available.

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<sup>1</sup> For a more complete discussion, see "The Managerial Mind" by Charles E. Summer, Jr. in the Harvard Business Review, Jan. Feb. 1959.

Consistent and Timely Action. Clear and precise reasoning from premise to conclusion is needed if decisions and proposed actions are to be workable. Sometimes it is necessary to substitute reasonableness for pure logic if action is to be timely. The desire for action, to change things, creates a willingness to take the calculated risk of action.

Test Past Decisions. A good manager tries patiently and creatively to test the results of his decisions by seeking out variables that can be identified and measured. In such testing, he does not become so enchanted with systems that he postpones future decisions or shuns judgment when action is necessary. Through such testing, he constantly seeks to improve his work.

#### THE STUDY OF ADMINISTRATION IN PUBLIC AFFAIRS

Recognizing the scope, the complexity, and the significance of administration in government affairs, and the benefits that can accrue to the nation and its people from a systematic study of administration, the Kingdom of Thailand created a Faculty of Public Administration at the University of Thammasat, by Royal Decree, given on the 15th day of June, B.E. 2498 ( A.D. 1955).

The purpose of this Faculty is to help the Government do for its civil affairs what the Command Staff School aims to do for its military affairs. If special training in military science can improve military activity, then special training in administration can improve the management of civil affairs. To help the Government improve its management practices and to improve its administrative processes, the Institute of Public Administration was established as a higher-degree granting institution. It engages in four broad areas of activity: graduate study, in-service training, consultation and research.

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1. The graduate program leads to a degree of Master of Public Administration. It is offered to students who complete a two-year course of full-time study. The student must earn 30 semester hours of credit in approved courses at the graduate level, all in the field of administration. In addition, he must write a thesis, based on independent and original research, which contributes useful knowledge to the field of administration.
2. In its broader sense, the Institute program was created to provide useful training for government officials in the administration of public affairs. In-service training was made a part of the program to provide specific training which would have direct and immediate application to the needs and problems of the Government.

As a part of its in-service training activities, the Institute gives attention to the development of managerial skills for top positions, to the improvement of supervision in departments, divisions, and sections, to the development of specific skills needed by workers, and to the orientation of employees.

To help the government carry on needed training on its own, the development of competent training staffs in the ministries is given attention, both through specific course and through follow-up assistance as needed.

3. To better serve the government, there is an important function of consultation, the giving of advice and assistance to government officials on specific problems of administration. Such consultation may range from suggestions on the organization of a government agency, the design
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and evaluation of training programs, the analysis of specific management problems, to the review and improvement of management practices in a specific agency. Consultation may cover the whole scope of government activity. Not only can such consultation afford practical help on specific problems; it is also a means of keeping the teaching geared to practical needs of the government. It is a means of helping the faculty mature and develop to meet increasing responsibility.

4. In the search for truth that will add further to the store of useful knowledge in the field of administration, research activities are of vital importance. Reliable research is a central need in the improvement of administration. In addition to the research activities of the graduate students, members of the staff carry on research in administration. Such study of administrative practices can add much that is useful to our knowledge of administration. This is a significant part of the program for improving the management of public affairs. Research can provide a solid base for teaching improved administration.

As an essential part of graduate teaching, in-service training, consultation and research, the Institute has established a library, which has over 10,000 books in the field of administration. In addition, the library contains a wide variety of professional magazines, booklets, pamphlets, and periodicals. All provide a rich resource of current literature in the field of administration. New books, periodicals, official publications and documents are being added to the library on a continuing basis. This library is becoming an increasingly important resource for the study and improvement of administration.

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## HOW CAN INSTITUTE SERVICES BE SECURED?

The staff of the Institute seeks to maintain continuing contact with officials of the government. In this way, the Institute aims to keep abreast of government needs. Any official can ask for assistance or advice. Normally this is first explored on an informal basis. Where there is reason to believe the Institute may be of service, a written request should be made to the Dean of the Faculty, outlining the kind of assistance sought. If the type of help needed can be provided, the project will be undertaken by appropriate members of the staff.

Such assistance may include specific courses to meet a particular need, as the facilities and staff of the Institute permit. Announcement of such courses is made, giving details as to the nature and purpose of the training and establishing criteria for the guidance of officials in selecting people to attend. Generally, such courses are designed to deal with a particular problem and to help a group of individuals performing a common function. The aim here is to provide training that will have direct and immediate application in the government.

## BECOMING A STUDENT

Admission to the Institute as a graduate student may take place in one of two ways. An individual may make application for admission to the Institute as a graduate student if he holds a bachelor's degree from a recognized institution of higher learning in Thailand or abroad. Such an applicant must pass a qualifying examination in public administration, political science, history or economics. Since the examination and the instruction are in English, students must have a mastery of the English language.

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An individual may also become a student of Institute if he is selected by his ministry for this purpose. To be designated by his ministry as a student at the Institute, he must hold a bachelor's degree from a recognized institution of higher learning. He must also satisfy his ministry as to his ability and qualifications to pursue the course of study with definite benefit to the government as well as to himself.

In offering training in public administration, the Institute attempts to maintain high standards. This means that the student must be diligent in his study if he is to meet the requirements set. He must also have a high capacity and a deep interest in the field if he is to profit fully from his study. In becoming a student at the Institute, the individual needs to remember that a high educational standard is the most direct route to improved competence in the public service. Only by meeting high standards can the student secure training that will meet the growing demands of government service.

#### A LOOK INTO THE FUTURE

The task facing the public servant today is that of improving the effectiveness of government in meeting the needs of its people. In doing this, the public servant must be responsible as well as responsive to those needs of people which relate to their standard of living, their health, their happiness and general welfare.

This means adapting the practices in government to meet new and changing conditions. Those which are essential must be preserved. Those which are only partly effective should be strengthened and improved. Those which are not useful should be cast aside.

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Such a task is a monumental undertaking which can be accomplished only by men who fully accept their obligations and who dedicate their creative and productive energies to the task which lies ahead. This calls for leadership which is not only dedicated, but which also has the skill, the insight, and the understanding needed for effective administration in public service.

With the growth in size and complexity of government and in the scope of functions performed, it has become increasingly important that this leadership be systematically trained for such service. The doctor, the lawyer, the engineer must complete years of professional training before he can practice the arts of his profession. The day is rapidly approaching when the administrator, the manager, be he military or civilian, must be equally well trained for his profession: the management of public affairs.

The rapid growth in recent years of programs specifically designed to prepare public servants for important government posts is evidence of increasing recognition of such need. As such programs grow and mature in depth and scope, they can become increasingly important in the development of a strong competent leadership in public affairs. They can be an important force in encouraging everyone in government to become a student of administration. For today, who can afford not to be a student of public affairs?

*Education is no longer thought of as a preparation for adult life, but as a continuing process of growth and development from birth until death,*

Stephen Mitchell

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