

# TRAINING IN THE THAI CIVIL SERVICE

Chindalak Vadhanasindhu  
School of Public Administration  
National Institute of Development Administration  
Thailand

## Training in the Thai Civil Service

### Introduction

The value of training is still a controversial issue. A high proportion of people in civil service and private organizations regard most training as a waste of time, money and manpower. To others it is seen as a panacea, a magic answer to the problems of an inefficient civil service. In fact, training is merely one of the important means of developing a sound and effective administrative system. There is a need for a far greater understanding in its widest sense and in all its forms.

Training certainly is teaching with clearly defined objectives, but it is also learning. There is no training, unless something has been learned as well as taught. With particular reference to the civil service, training is the reciprocal process of teaching and learning a body of knowledge and the related methods of work. It is an activity in which a relatively small group of persons, acting as instructors, impart to the larger mass of civil servants knowledge which is believed to be useful in the work of the latter; and at the same time the instructors assist the larger body of civil servants to perfect skills which are useful in their work. In brief, training imparts knowledge and develops skills.

In Thailand, the civil service training was not a new phenomenon. As a traditional kingdom, Thai bureaucrats spent their boyhood and adolescent period in the temple compounds where monks taught them letters, arithmetic, moral and legal subjects. That was a real sense of training. Thailand was also one of the pioneers who had a training school for government officials in early nineteenth century. This paper will deal with the development of training in the Thai civil service from its inception up to the present day, its training policy and objectives, its training goals, strategies and priorities, and the training programs of the Civil Service Training Institute in 1983.

### Historical Development of Training in the Thai Civil Service

Training was one of the necessary requirements for Thai civil servants for a long time. Historically, admission to the civil service was arranged according to a patronage system. Those who entered into the public service were admitted first as apprentices and later were appointed to full-time officials if their apprenticeship proved satisfactory. They were trained to attain the merit of being well-versed in the civil service. It was obviously the in-service training.

During the administrative modernization period in the reign of King Chulalongkorn, there was an increasing demand for well-trained and highly qualified personnels for government service. Thus, an institute of formal training was in need. The first government training school, the Royal Pages School, was established in 1902. Students were taught both the theory and practice of government so that on graduation, they were prepared to take positions in the civil service. By 1910 this school had developed into a Civil Service College. Its main objective was to prepare public administrators. As this college grew, its activities had expanded to cover such field as administration, engineering, education, agriculture, etc. In 1916 the Civil Service College was elevated to the status of a university and named Chulalongkorn University.

When the Civil Service Act was promulgated, it was necessary to mention about training. The first Civil Service Act 1928 specified that the newly appointed civil servants had to be apprenticed for 6 months. The Civil Service Act of 1933 also prescribed that training was given to the new recruits prior to their appointment. It was stipulated in the Civil Service Act of 1954 that for the purpose of promotion of government officials in case where it was deemed expedient, the Minister might arrange a training program for them prior to the promotinal examination.

In those days, training for civil service was carried out in occasion with rather limited purposes such as for promotion and for specific technique required by certain agency. It could be noted that the training objective played no significant role in providing knowledge and skills of public administration. Moreover, modern effective technique was still not applied to the training.

The establishment of Institute of Public Administration at Thammasat University in 1955 was a turning point. Training in the Thai civil service was rapidly developed among government agencies. The Training Division, that was set up in the Institute provided certain new concepts and practices to the civil service training. The new formulated

training methods had been followed later on by numerous government agencies.

The modern training era in the Thai civil service began in the days of Prime Minister P. Pibulsongkham. Realizing the importance of training, the Council of Ministers set a policy dated June 22, 1957, which read as follows:

"The Council of Ministers considered that efficiency of the civil service is one of the most significant means for the attainment of national development and progress, law and order and people's happiness. Such effectiveness and efficiency of public service can be however, obtained by training... to improve the administrative capability of the administrative level officers... Consequently, a policy regarding training should be laid out and practised by all government agencies as follows:-

(1) Follow the government training policy and programs as well as take after the regulations and methodology of training set by the Advisory Training Council.

(2) Publicize, expand and develop civil service training activities.

(3) Encourage and provide for all civil servants with ample opportunity for training as much as possible."

For the purpose of co-ordinating and developing training activities of various government agencies, the National Advisory Training Council was established later in that year.

The Council consisted of the Prime Minister as Chairman, members of all ministries' Permanent Secretaries and five experts. The Council was assisting and coordinating administration of training programs of various government agencies. The Council also appointed a director of training to work in cooperation with the Institute of Public Administration.

At the ministerial level, there was a committee composed of the Permanent Secretary as Chairman and members of Director-General and other high ranking officials. This training committee was responsible for the supervision and control of the ministry's training activities in accordance with the government's training policies and procedures as put forward by the Advisory Training Council. There were also departmental training committees which performed duties similar to those of the ministerial committees.

Unfortunately, the Advisory Council was very short lived. Due to political change and most committee members were too occupied with regular works, finally this training council was practically dissolved.

It was over 17 years that training in the Thai civil service did not

have any co-ordinating center. The Office of Civil Service Commission conducted very limited training programs such as the orientation for government official who got fellowship to study abroad and training programs on personnel practices and administrative process. During this period, most of the training programs for the civil servants are conducted by Institute of Public Administration at Thammasat University (later this institute became part of National Institute of Development Administration, NIDA) as well as the Academy of Local Government Administration (ALGA) under the Department of Local Administration which organized training programs for their staff. Beside these agencies, many government agencies also had their own training programs. However, training programs were organized according to their needs, they were not coordinated with other agencies and most of the training programs were conducted in an unsystematic manner.

The effort to coordinate the training activities in the Thai civil service was made again in 1974. The Council of Ministers realized the problem of training the civil service. They decided to establish Planning and Coordinating Center attached to the Bureau of Standards and Development, Office of the Civil Service Commission. The Planning and Coordinating Center was vested with the duties and responsibilities

- 1) to suggest training policy, plan, and objectives;
- 2) to co-ordinate training activities;
- 3) to provide all government agencies with various training information;
- 4) to encourage and co-operate in training evaluation;
- 5) to encourage the recording of employee's training achievements.

In 1975, the civil Service Act of 1975 also confirmed the responsibility on the civil service training of the Office of the Civil Service Commission. Chapter 12 of that Act stated that "the Office of the Civil Service Commission has a duty to co-ordinate and conduct activities concerning the development and training of civil servants."

In the late 1970's the United Nations Development Program (UNDP), through a project in Thailand, developed a proposal for the establishment of national center for management training for the Thai civil service. In December 1980, the Civil Service Training Institute (CSTI) was legally set up as a division attached to the Office of Civil Service Commission according to the UNDP's proposal. This training institute offers non-residential training program in order to fulfill the need for a central institution which is capable of providing the necessary leadership in management training as well as coordinate and assist the training activities of others government departments.

The objectives of this training institute are as follows:

a) to create a central institution of a high competence devoted to the development of managerial skills of senior and middle level officials in government and state enterprises;

b) to provide systematic management training program at middle and other levels to foster creative managerial and leadership behavior;

c) to provide a forum for the exchange of ideas and the improvement of delivery of public services through better planning and understanding of national policy objectives;

d) to prepare senior and other officials for assuming a wide range of managerial responsibility as they progress in their career;

e) to carry out administrative research programs which would help understand the problems of Thai administration and propose appropriate solution, as well as enrich the training functions with direct and relevant case materials evolving from research findings;

f) to provide, through a highly trained staff, management consulting services to the government departments;

g) to develop appropriate training material that reflect the Thai experience.

The institute will provide assistance to the departments which do not have their own training units to organize and conduct training programs.

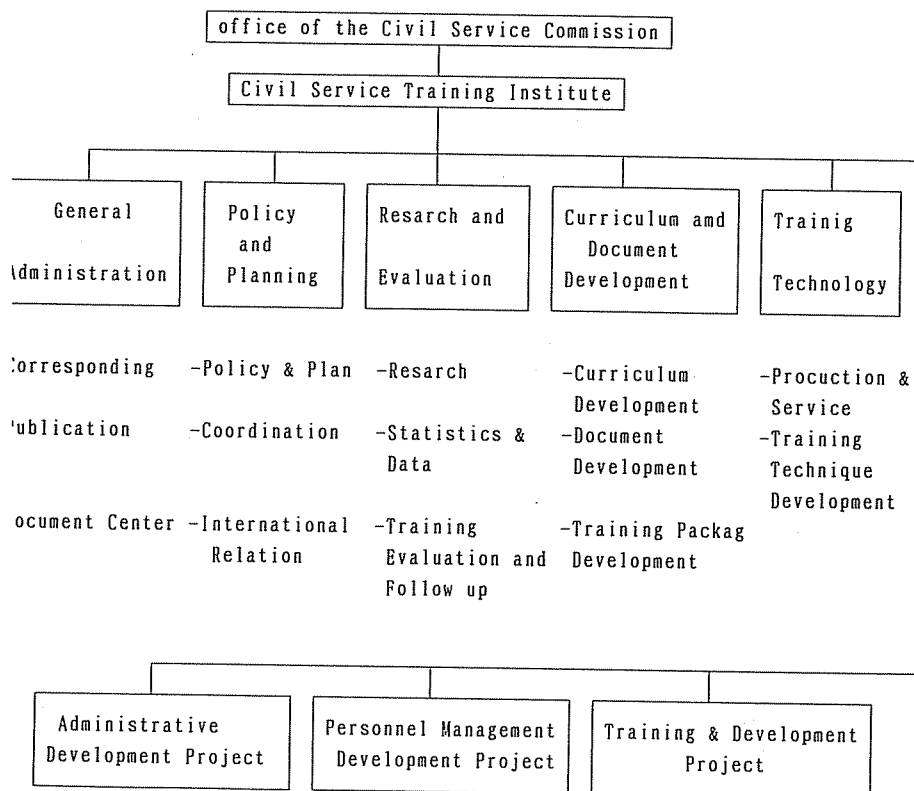
It will also coordinate and keep records of civil service training throughout the government. The institute would, therefore, help carrying out the strategy of the Civil Service Commission in developing the human resources in the public service. This strategy is two prongs: (1) to develop program vertically by strengthening the departmental training centers in providing programs in functional and technical areas; (2) to develop program horizontally for all government departments to strengthen and up-date management skills and knowledge. The aims of the horizontal approach are to establish a general acceptance and utilization of modern management techniques in carrying out the development programs, develop professional thinking and behavior in the public service, and increase the sense of interdependence among departments.

The functional organization of Civil Service Training Institute is presented in the following chart.

#### Civil Service Training Policy and Objectives

The training policy of the Civil Service Commission is basically to foster, support, conduct and coordinate in-service administrative and management training programs which are work related and designed to supplement formal education and self learning of government employees in order to aid them to better perform assigned official duties. Such

training will concentrate on the teaching of skills, knowledges and abilities that are identified as required in the performance of work within the Thai civil service. Work-related training has the objective of promoting efficiency and economy in the government operations and will provide a mean to help develop maximum proficiency in the performance of official duties by government employees. And, it will be integrated with other personnel management functions like manpower planning, recruitment and personnel development. Underlying this entire effort will be strong attempt to instill all trainees the importance of ethical behavior and positive attitudes toward the importance of government service including a heightening of consciousness about national security as well as political, economic and social-development. Consideration will be given also to the possibility of including training as a pre-promotion requirement for certain positions.



The training objectives of Civil Service Commission are to:

- assure that a focal point exists within government in the vital area of employee training;
- improve the management of the government's business through a planned systematic approach to the function of training;
- provide an atmosphere in the work environment which accepts the idea of change and where a willingness is fostered toward introduction of modern administrative methods and tools which will increase the efficiency and reduce the cost of government.

Training provided at the government expense is intended to supplement rather than supplant learning normally attained before entry into civil service. Centrally conducted training courses are intended to complement specialized learning provided by the ministries and their departments rather than compete with them. And it is both the policy and objective of the Office of the Civil Service Commission to make best uses of the scarce training resources available to the Thai government. This means that the Office of Civil Service Commission will encourage government organizations to share training courses, materials, and training equipment with each other and avoid duplicative training endeavors.

Generally speaking, it is expected that centralized and coordinated efforts have the best opportunity to provide efficient and economic training through short, compact courses which use a minimum of luxuries. And in summary, the Office of the Civil Service Commission will give major attention to:-

- promotion of training in all ministries and departments to assure that needed training is being done;
- coordination of training among ministries and departments to encourage use of scarce resources,
- encouragement of an organizational approach to training rather than as individualized approach. This means that effort will be made to address improvements organizationally wherein work teams will attend training for greater potential impact;
- delivery of training where needs are common to a large population in many governmental organizations;
- evaluation and operational research of training to assure that best value is received for resources expended.

#### Civil Service Training Goals and Strategies

As a matter of fact, the Office of the Civil Service Commission cannot and should not do all needed training within government itself. The Office must, therefore, exercise care in selecting its training

targets in order to provide optimum leadership with maximum impact. The following goals and strategies are intended to serve as a guideline for training of government employees. These are placed within the context of the policies and objectives set out in the previous section of this paper.

#### Training goals

The major training goals of the Office of the Civil Service Commission in the period of training plan (1980-1990) are as follows:

1. Create a central capacity that will focus on training leadership and coordination within the Thai Civil Service.
2. Encourage development of efficient training programs designed to enhance job related skills, knowledge and abilities of civil servants.
3. Organize training programs to meet government-wide needs in areas not in the responsibility of a ministry or department.
4. Foster and follow-up development of training within ministries and their departments to meet specialized needs.
5. Develop training materials and techniques that have wide application in government agencies.
6. Provide a forum and clearing house for the exchange of ideas and materials about training needs, methods and practices among government officials.
7. Serve as a source for training of trainers in training management, administration, counselling, consulting, methods and instructing.
8. Provide training consulting services that seek to identify major administrative problems that may be solved through training.
9. Serve as a focal point in training of top executives as well as managers and supervisors in the civil service.
10. Assume responsibility for training in areas that are the basic responsibility of the Civil Service Commission.
11. Engage in and encourage applied research which helps further understanding about problems of governmental administration and for use in enrichment of training programs and materials.
12. Develop linkages with related personnel functions such as competitive examination, placement, promotion and performance evaluation.

#### Training strategies

According to the Civil Service Act of 1975 and its amendments, the Office of the Civil Service Commission is responsible for coordinating and conducting activities concerning the development and training of civil servants. While the Civil Service Commission has been assigned



sweeping training responsibilities throughout the career service under its jurisdiction, it would be inappropriate to try to provide all needed training from a central source. The main reasons are, first, much of the work in which employees need training is directly related to many details of their day to day work. Training intended to improve performance in those details is best accomplished through supervisory effort at the work site or in training courses adjacent to the work site and under the direction of persons well acquainted with immediate job requirements. Secondly, much of the work in which employees need training is of a technical nature such as engineering, forestry, health care, science service, etc. This kind of training when needed to bring employees abreast of advances in their field of technology is best taught by experts in those technical fields or by sending employees to refresher courses at universities or technical institutes. Thirdly, much of the work in which employees need training is specialized to the ministry or department where the employees are assigned. This includes immigration, customs tax collection, law enforcement, etc. Training in these areas should be the direct responsibility of the employing organization. And finally, the work force is too large, too diversified and too dispersed for the Office of the Civil Service Commission to provide needed training for all civil servants.

Yet, to fulfill its legal responsibilities the Civil Service Commission must accomplish the training goals. Thus, training strategies, that will assure accomplishment of civil service training are needed. The major training strategies set by the Civil Service Commission are to:

1. Develop and deliver training curricula, courses, techniques and material in areas of work common to employees in several ministries and their departments including areas identified by the National Economic and Social Development Board and by the Civil Service Sub-Commissions.
2. Conduct courses repetitively in subject area that are the responsibility of the Civil Service Commission and for organizations that do not have internal training capacity.
3. Conduct pilot courses for large ministries and their departments and then help those organization prepare themselves to conduct such courses to meet internal repetitive training needs.
4. Develop participant selection criteria to maximize the potential training benefit.
5. Develop training objectives to assure identifiable outputs and against which training effectiveness may be evaluated.
6. Endeavor to get other government training organization to share their resource with those having limited capability. This include

sharing training courses, materials, techniques, equipment, space and instructors.

7. Serve as a primary source in personnel administration and for training of trainers. The Civil Service Commission will undertake to serve as a primary learning resource for persons engaged in the training function throughout government, and to train them in the training programs conducted by the training center. Such multiplier effects will be a goal in all of its training activities. Thus, the Civil Service Commission will not only undertake to train trainers, but also will develop courses, materials, and technique for use by others. Additionally, it will gather training information for internal and external use.

8. Capitalize on use of new teaching methods that reduce labor intensity of teaching and classroom time of participants. This will include such matters as use of film, video equipment, programmed learning and increased use of participants themselves as group leaders.

9. Use available government resources rather than rely on external expertise.

10. Seek to have people associated at work attend training together in order to increase the likelihood that learning will be practiced when participants return to do their job.

#### Civil Service Training Priorities

As mentioned earlier, the Office of the Civil Service Commission has limits on the amount of training it will deliver. Thus, by its strategies, will seek to concentrate on those areas of greatest possible multiplier effect. Great care must be taken then in the establishment of training priorities to best meet stated goals. This will require high discipline to carefully stated programs and course objectives, identify training audiences, establish course participant criteria, prepare training courses and materials that meet the most significant needs and evaluate outputs against realistic objectives.

The training priorities are as follows:

##### 1. Develop and conduct executive, managerial and supervisory training courses.

Executives, managers, and supervisors are probably the most influential people in day-to-day government operations. They are the ones who make the decisions, give the direction and set the tone that determines the degree of efficiency and effectiveness of Government work. For these reasons the Office of the Civil Service Commission will undertake to be a focal point for the development and training of

employees holding executive posts and will assume prime leadership to see that needed training and opportunities for professional development are sponsored for persons in executive, management and supervisory posts.

2. Develop and conduct training in specially identified areas by the Prime Minister, his office, or the Council of Ministers

From time to time the very highest level officials of government will identify areas needing special training attention throughout government.

In such cases it is logical that the Office of the Civil Service Commission provide leadership in meeting such an identified need. For example, the Council of Ministers recently identified problems in handling employee disciplinary cases. The Office of the Civil Service Commission has been directed to undertake a specialized effort to promptly provide training to personnel engaged in handling discipline cases and to train in positive action for reduction in frequency of discipline cases.

3. Develop and conduct training in areas of the Commission's main responsibilities.

The Civil Service Training Institute will serve as the main deliverer of training in the field of personnel management for all organizations of the Civil Service. Major attention will be given to provision of needed training to persons holding personnel officer posts at departmental level.

4. Develop and conduct induction training for new entrants into the Civil Service.

It is generally agreed that the period of entry into government service is extremely important. It is at this time that employees gain lasting impression about what is or is not expected of them in the world of work. They also develop lasting attitudes about the importance or unimportance of their role as a civil servant, they identify with government development objectives and they learn work habits that influence their behavior patterns as employees for their career ahead.

5. Serve as the focal point about the subject of training for Government trainers

As part of its training leadership and coordinative role the Civil Service Commission will undertake to be a major provider of training to people employed as trainers throughout government and will also serve as a focal point for assistance in government on the subject of training technology. This will involve gathering information about training and training technology.

6. Develop and conduct training in functional areas that have application in several ministries and their departments where no one else has prime responsibility

Training of general officers and of management analysts are two good examples here. Centralized training for such work fields will permit others to concentrate on the provision of training unique to their organizations, will provide economies and will make centralized use of resources.

7. Provide special assistance to governmental organizations that are too small to warrant development of internal training expertise

The Office of the Civil Service Commission will serve as a major provider of training programs to a relatively small organization which cannot conduct training alone.

8. Provide training assistance to organizations outside Bangkok

The office of the Civil Service Commission will concentrate its resources, first, to course development, conduct and assistance to organizations in Bangkok. But, in the long range a major need exists to provide similar help to the large number of organizational units located outside Bangkok.

9. Develop training materials and technology that has relevance to Thailand

Much of the literature and most of the training materials now available have been produced outside Thailand. Realism in the training context demands that materials to be used should have relationship to the world of the Thai Government worker. While some materials will be developed by internal training staff of the Civil Service Commission, more help will also be sought from national and international experts as well as from professionals of other training and academic institutions like the National Institute of Development Administration (NIDA) the Academy for Local Government Administration (ALGA) and Chulalongkorn University.

10. Evaluate the effectiveness of training

The Civil Service Commission will seek to determine the impact both of its training and that provided by others in order to find out whether the training is meeting defined needs and established objectives and whether or not it is valuable. Such evaluative effort will also help identify areas for needed post training consulting and for training research work.

Training Programs of the Civil Service Training Institute in 1983

For the purpose of illustration, the training activities of the institute are used as an example. The training programs are included:

1. Executives, Managers and Supervisors Training Courses
  - 1.1 Executive Development Seminar

- 1.2 Seminar on Management Improvement (for Managers)
- 1.3 Supervisory Training
- 1.4 Specialized courses
  - Management by Objectives
  - Time Management
  - Team Building
  - Interpersonal Relations
  - Project Planning
  - Leadership
  - Communication
2. Personnel and Office Management Courses
  - 2.1 Basic Personnel Management
  - 2.2 Personnel Management for Senior Personnel Officers
  - 2.3 Personnel Management for Provincial Personnel Officers
  - 2.4 Organization & Position Analysis Workshop
  - 2.5 Disciplinary Action and Process
  - 2.6 Executive Secretary Training
  - 2.7 Personnel Officer Role in Disciplinary Actions
  - 2.8 Post Training Seminar for Personnel Officer
3. Training for Trainers Course
  - 3.1 Training for Trainers
  - 3.2 Instructor Training
  - 3.3 Training Manager Seminar
  - 3.4 Refresher Course : Training for Trainers
  - 3.5 Show Case
    - Facilitation
    - Evaluation
  - 3.6 Audio-Visual Techniques
  - 3.7 Training Forum

#### Training techniques

It is no doubt that formal lecture and group discussion are the basic training techniques use in the civil service training programs. However, the efforts to develop the more practical training techniques have been made in the recent years. A wide variety of training techniques have been applied on the experiment basis in various training programs, especially Training for Trainers and Management Training. Preliminary evaluation results show tremendously positive response on the part of trainees to these techniques. In brief, some of these techniques are as follows; conference, symposium, workshop, case study, brainstorming, in-basket technique, role playing, management games, laboratory training, slide-tape presentation, instructional film,

instructional television, and syndicate.

Concluding remarks

The importance of training as a process of personnel development is self-evident. Proper training programs will enable the civil servants not only to avail of new management techniques, but also of new orientation concerning their role in national development. It is true that "the achievement of people, whatever their purposes or tasks, depend not only their innate qualities, but also upon the character and extent for their education and training. Knowledge and skills are not innate qualities; they are attributes of education and training." For the purposes of improving administrative capabilities which will contribute to national development, training activities are being carried out in the Thai civil service starting from the highest career officials down to the lowest level. They are being carried out both by educational institutes and by training institutes within the bureaucracy. Together they provide both professional and technical training geared to the urgent needs of the country.