

The purpose of this research project is to improve the effectiveness of the National Research Council (NRC) and its Secretariat. This is done by carefully analysing their functions, authorities, structures and processes. The ultimate aim of the study is to provide information and recommendations to the National Research Council and the Government so as the NRC can be a more effective organization in furtherance the research activities in Thailand both in the public and private sectors, so that research results will be utilized for the development of Thailand.

A Research Team was appointed by the Secretary of the NRC as a working group to conduct this research. The research methodologies applied are documentary research through legal instruments, NRC records and proceedings; and field research through interviews of individuals and groups, consultations, and field observations. Three members of the team are experienced officers of the NRC themselves. The main concerns of the study are the NRC, its executive committee, and its technical committees. The management of the secretariat is also a main concern. Here major tasks are analysed to find better management procedures. Structural-functional analysis is kept in mind.

Major findings and recommendations are as follows:

- 1) Status of NRC and Its Secretariat. It is found that they are serving many useful functions. Potentially they can be even more useful for the country if some changes can be made by adding and deleting some functions.
- 2) The Allocation of NRC. There are debates whether NRC should return to the Office of the Prime Minister or to remain with the Ministry of Science, Technology and Energy (MSTE). There are some advantages and disadvantages in both options. However, MSTE has been a more attentive host, therefore NRC should remain with MSTE.
- 3) The Role of The MSTE Minister and Permanent Secretary. Presently, the Minister is merely an NRC advisor along with other ministers while the Prime Minister is President. It is recommended that the P.M. should delegate routine authority to the Minister, and that both the Minister and the Permanent Secretary should

be appointed as its executive committee members. These are compatible with the existing legislation.

4) The Role of NRC. NRC has rarely been called to a plenary meeting, though its functions are busily carried out by the Executive Committee. It is recommended NRC should hold a plenary meeting at least once a year, prior to the budget ceiling determination of the Council of Ministers. The meeting should cover essential matters such as status of research in the previous year, the current research activities, the proposed research projects and budget requests, a recommended research budget ceiling for the coming F.Y., the areas of research needed for the future, and other important matters that NRC should bring to the attention of the cabinet.

5) The Role of the NRC's Technical Committees.

NRC has been divided into 10 Technical Committees since 1959. It is proposed that it should now be divided into 22 committees and subcommittees, quite similar to those recommended by the UNESCO's proposed International Standard Nomenclature for Fields of Science or Technology which suggests 24 fields. More members should be appointed to new those committees. They are requested to devote more time to NRC's activities.

6) The Role of the NRC Executive Committee.

Currently, the Ex. Com. is performing too many routine functions. The Research Team recommends that it should spend more time on policy matters and less on routine matters as they can be delegated to the Technical Committees and the Secretariat. Many functions assigned

to NRC by the Council of Ministers should be reviewed. Some may be dropped, reconsidered, or reassigned to Technical Committees.

7) Management Processes of the NRC Secretariat.

The Secretariat's seven major activities are studied and analysed: approval of research funds, research fund in cooperation with foreign countries, checking of requested research project from government agencies and public enterprises, data collection, translation, research policy making and presentation to the Council of Ministers. The Research Team finds that all these processes are cumbersome, slow and grapevining through several sections of several divisions. It is recommended NRC Secretariat should be reorganized along functional lines, therefore most functions could be done within a section of a division.

8) Budgetary allocation. Currently the Thai

Government spends over 2,500 million Bahts on research, of these only 230 millions go through some screening by NRC, and only 30 millions are distributed by NRC as research funds. Though it is not possible or even desirable for NRC to check and approve all requested research projects, it is highly necessary that it should be able to keep track where these funds go, in order to have a complete general picture of research activities in the country. This knowledge is essential for development of a research policy and for allocation of research funding.

9) The Organization of NRC Secretariat.

The Research Team made a study of NRC Secretariat in term of its organization and methods, its subdivisions and assignments. It is found that the present organization

structure is rather complex and confusing. It is recommended that the eight existing divisions should be reorganized into eight new divisions, namely: the Departmental Secretary, Policy and Planning Division, Foreign Relations and Technological Exchange Division, Division for Promotion of Scientific Research, Division for Promotion of Social Science Research, Division for Promotion of Agricultural Research, Center for Research Information and Services, and Division of Remote Sensing. The latter division should in the future be made a public enterprise. The reorganization must be legalized by a royal decree, however. After the royal decree is announced, then the new assignment of functions, personnel and new procedures should be attempted.