CHAPTER 1
INTRODUCTION

1.1 Background and Rationale

The Constitution of the Kingdom of Thailand, B.E. 2540 (1997) has been the first state law giving precedence to territorial decentralization as identified in (1) Section 78 which says that the state shall decentralize powers to localities for the purpose of self-reliance and structural development entirely and equally, (2) Section 282 which mandates the state to give autonomy to localities in accordance with the principle of self-government according to the will of the people, and (3) Section 283 which stipulates that those localities exhibiting the ability to govern themselves have the right to be established as local government organizations according to the provisions of the law. The following Section 284 determines that there must be provisions of the law that contain a plan and a step-by-step procedure for territorial decentralization. Following from what is stipulated in the Constitution, Determining Plans and Process of Decentralization to Local Government Organization Act B.E. 2542 has been enacted. The Act covers six areas leading to main responsibilities which are transferred to local authorities as follows: infrastructure, quality of life, communal and social order/keeping peace and order, planning/ investment promotion/commerce and tourism, management/protection of natural resources and the environment, and art, culture and tradition, local wisdom (the Decentralization to Local Government Organization Committee, 2001: 11-12). This helps in decreasing problems of public service delivery formerly caused by centralization. Apart from this, the centralization can cause the lack in unity of command, quality control systems, public participation, steady public policy development, and connection between local administrative organization and private sectors. The determination in giving a certain degree of autonomy to local governments in managing public service delivery enables the local governments to have the same number of duties as those of the central government (Kovit Puang-ngam, 2003: 21-22)

Decentralization in education to local areas is one of public services determined in the plans and process of decentralization to local government organization and Section 43 of the 1997 Constitution which stipulates that the state shall provide equal right to give the education thoroughly, up to the quality, and without charge. Section 289 also states the participation of all stakeholders. The National Education Act of 1999 and Amendments which are influenced by Section 81

of the 1997 Constitution mandates the state to provide and promote the private sector to provide education, including the promotion of conducting research for national development. This act determines the decentralization of powers from the state to educational service areas, schools, and local administrative organizations (Department of Curriculum and Instruction Development, 2 0 0 7 : online). Section 41 of the National Education Act of 1999 states that local administrative organizations shall provide education in accordance with readiness and requirements of the local areas. Section 42 stipulates that the Ministry of Education shall prescribe the criteria and procedure for assessing the readiness of the local administrative organizations to provide education. In other words, other acts concerning with establishing local administrative organizations, namely Subdistrict Administrative Organizations (SAO), municipalities, Provincial Administrative Organizations (PAO), Bangkok Metropolitan Administration, and Pattaya Metropolitan Administration, also determine the power and duty of the local administrative organizations in providing education and transferring schools from the Office of the Basic Education Commission to the local administrative organizations. This is in accordance with the Municipal Act B.E. 2496 and Amendments which determine municipalities to provide education to public and contagious disease prevention (The Municipality Act B.E. 2496 and Amendments)

Decentralizing education to local areas is being conducted by transferring schools from the Office of the Basic Education Commission to Local Administrative Organizations (LAO). Basically, the decentralization committee's implementation plan lists six points in transferring powers to the local administrative organizations in B.E. 2545 concerning with kindergarten, primary, and secondary education only after (1) the Education Ministry sets the standards devised to check on local authorities' readiness by including representatives from the local administrative organizations; (2) evaluation according to the standards; (3) after a local authority has passed the test, the ministry and the educational zone will transfer the schools to them; (4) the ministry and the educational zone will monitor and evaluate the provision of education; (5) the decentralization committee sets up area-level education boards at the level of the province; their duties will include policy-making, planning, educational standards, supervision of schools, and the allocation of resources to the schools; and (6) the local administrative organizations may jointly provide education, perhaps in the form of cooperative (Udon Tantisoonthorn, 2 0 0 4 : 15). In order to achieve all mentioned tasks, the Education Ministry has already issued its ministerial regulation in determining criteria and methods of assessing readiness in providing basic education of the local administrative organizations. The main contexts included

according the Cabinet Resolution on November 8, 2005, are the participation in providing education of the local administrative organizations, the formulation of readiness development in local areas, the methods in managing and administrating education, the income allocation in order to upgrade educational levels in the local areas, the agreement of the public or stakeholders, the conditions showing the willingness in transferring schools from the Office of the Basic Education Commission to the local administrative organizations (Udon Tantisoonthorn, ibid: 15; Office of the Decentralization to Local Government, et al., 2010: Introduction), the transfer levels, and the number of transferred schools that the local administrative organizations can receive.

It can be seen that the main consideration on transferring schools to the local administrative organizations is based on the potential, the readiness in receiving educational decentralization, and the willingness of each local administrative organization. The result of the initial school transfer (B.E. 2544-2547) identified that there were 335 local administrative organizations requesting to receive approximately 1,457 transferred schools. This is equivalent to five percent of the total schools under the Office of the Basic Education Commission (OBEC). However, due to many problems in transferring schools, the delay of the transfer occurred in a short period according to the Cabinet Resolution during February 14-August 30, 2004, at the same time with the revision of the ministerial regulation (Office of the Education Council, 2006: 5-6). Later, the Office of the Decentralization to Local Government (et al., ibid: Introduction) reported that the Education Ministry had already transferred 454 schools to the local administrative organizations – 325 schools to Provincial Administrative Organizations, 78 schools to municipalities, 50 schools to Subdistrict Administrative Organizations, and one school to Bangkok Metropolitan Administration during Academic Year B.E. 2549-2552. This is equivalent to 1.41 percent of the total schools under the Office of the Basic Education Commission. However, it was found that some transferred schools requested to transfer back to be under OBEC which in fact could not be performed because the regulation did not allow to do so (*Manager Daily*, April 23, 2010: 10). However, the procedures of school transfer must be steadily performed. And, in Academic Year B.E. 2553, there were 45 local administrative organizations requesting to receive 63 schools transferred from 32 OBECs (*Thairath*, April 24, 2010: 12). Apart from this, the Decentralization to Local Government Organization Committee reported that there were 458 schools transferred from the Office of the Basic Education Commission to the local administrative organizations until Academic Year B.E. 2554 (Decentralization to Local Government Organization Committee, 2011: online). This

identified that there were few schools transferred to the local administrative organizations in transition period. With this small number, the problems in transferring schools in the initial periods could be seen reflecting the failure of the set objectives in each year. According to the schools, there were three problems in transferring as follows: (1) different policies at the organization level, (2) the resource management of the local administrative organizations, and (3) technical problems. Like schools, the local administrative organizations regarded them in detail as follows:

(1) At the organization level: the Decentralization to Local Government Organization Committee would like to decentralize powers as much as possible while the Education Ministry focused more on the quality and standard of the entire system of education management (*Matichon*, January 21, 2008: 26), (2) resource management of the local administrative organizations: the lack of experience in education administration of the local administrative organizations staff, insufficient budget, big differences in terms of organizational culture between the local administrative organizations and the Office of the Basic Education Commission (*Manager Daily*, July 31, 2008: 14; Chalerm Plubpleungphrai, 2007: Abstract), the lack of authentic understanding in managing education, too many administrators resulting in administrative bottlenecks, no unity of command due to the decision making only from an original affiliation, the Ministry of Interior, that contains distinctive forms of governing personnel from those of the Education Ministry, and the administration of the local administrative organizations belongs to only one leader, not a committee, resulting in having no counterbalance (LAO News, November 4, 2009: 2), and (3) technical problems: the school teachers voting for school transfer to the local administrative organizations did not want to be transferred actually, but they had to support the transfer due to their being under pressure from school administrators (*Khaosod*, January 21, 2008: 24); the sudden change of school willingness not to be transferred after being approved by the local administrative organizations for the transfer (*Khaosod*, January 17, 2008: 2 4) due to the fact that school personnel were not confident in their status and benefits after the transfer. Additionally, the personnel from both organizations still lack mutual understanding on school transfer (Office of the Education Council, 2006: 31). According to the local administrative organizations, it can be seen the transferred schools can develop in a rapid pace on the contrary to the unwillingness of the Education Ministry (*Matichon*, June 23, 2009: 8). From all three problems mentioned, they can reflect the former points of view of academicians who once stated that the school transfer to the local administrative organizations could not be reached due to the unreadiness of the local

government organizations (Kovit Puang-ngarm, ibid: 176), the lack of autonomy and effectiveness of educational system, the impact on teachers' status and teaching profession security, and the conflicts in terms of the unreadiness of the local administrative organizations in educational management (Suraphon Nitikraiphot, 2001: online). Importantly, the transfer of duties is related with many offices in the levels of ministries and departments that lack coordination contributing to the success of the transfer, including other problems encountered while being transferred such as duties overlapping, different operation laws (Thammasat University Research and Consultancy Institute, 2009: 109-110). Several research also mentioned attitudes of the stakeholders, namely the organizations receiving the transfer – the local administrative organizations. Even though they agreed with the decentralization, they were not ready in working on educational management. Like the local administrative organizations, the transferred units, namely teachers and staff working for the Office of the Basic Education Commission, regarded that the policy of the education transfer was not appropriate with the current context of the nation. For the public who would receive the service, they agreed with the concept of education decentralization, but they lacked piety and confidence in the readiness of the local administrative organizations (Nittaya Ngarnprasertsee, 2003: 411-421; Somporn Soonthornyart, 2005: Abstract)

According to the information mentioned, it shows that the stakeholders in all parts still lack cooperation in promoting education decentralization. Their points of view are not in the same direction due to obvious obstacles such as several requirements and the problems in schools and the local administrative organizations, etc. (George Moyo, 2004: ii-iii) On the contrary, the education transfer to local areas in other countries usually derives from their economic conditions and the autonomy of local government organizations, such as the education decentralization in Argentina (Du, 2002: online) and in Spain (Merrouche, 2007: 3-4), respectively. However, it can be found that the education decentralization in several areas even in a particular country might gain different results (Peiro, 2006: x-xi). It is necessary to study relating factors thoroughly before performing the education transfer to local government organizations. Therefore, it is considered interesting in studying the failure of the education transfer to the local administrative organizations in Thailand when compared with the success in the same matter as that in Argentina and Spain. This leads to fact-finding for conditions or other relating factors. Chinsamy (2003: 4) has found that this matter is associated with four main conditions as follows: (1) the reformation design should be performed systematically in sync with determined perspectives and appropriate use of resources, (2) the reformation operation should begin from the stakeholders' requirements, (3) the relevance and the sense of

belonging of their homeland should be shared and understood thoroughly on what they really want, and (4) the reformation drive should be mainly based on learning and giving information in the manner of morality and ethics. Phasina Tangjuang, et al. (2009: Abstract) finds three key factors contributing to the success in school transfer as follows: (1) unsustainable and unsure education policies of local politicians in transition period, (2) the autonomy of schools going to be transferred to the local administrative organizations; they need to maintain juristic status in order for them to manage budget and staff and bureaucratic status rather than local staff one, and (3) social usefulness and education quality. In addition, Rangsan Injan (2010: 37-38) finds two key factors affecting a progress in school transfer to the local administrative organizations as follows: (1) leadership skill, especially a benevolent autocrat type and (2) the policies of transfer management, especially co-decision making in transfer operation.

There were 2,905 schools under the Office of Basic Education Commission in the upper northern region, but only 31 schools or 1.1 percent of the total number were transferred to the local government organizations (Office of the Decentralization to Local Government Organization Committee: November 2011). This was regarded as a very small number reflecting that it might take time in preparing the readiness of localities in school transfer. It was considered one of the problems in taking policies into practice because it was needed to prepare readiness in educational administration effectively and usefully for the sake of national education which needs supplementary guidelines in taking policies into practice. In doing so, this dealt with communications among relevant staff and resources, namely personnel, budget, equipment, and places. They all had to be ready in terms of possessing mutual value which was in the same direction as that of the policies. The procedures had to be sync with bureaucratic regulations, and importantly there had to be performance follow-ups in a frequent interval (Edwards and Sharkansky, 1978 : 34). This resulted from low interest from others towards the school transfer to the local government organizations in local and provincial levels at the present, as seen from the small number of transferred schools to Chiang Mai Local Government Organizations, even though the potential of Provincial Administrative Organizations, Urban Municipality, and Metropolitan in Chiang Mai was quite high. According to the relevant studied documents mentioned, the researcher regarded that the school transfer was not too difficult but not easy or rapid if done under readiness preparation. It relied on relevant procedures under proper factors and other contributing ones which were useful for readiness preparation of the local government organizations and schools, including the confidence in occupation security among staff. In order to prepare for

possible problems, the researcher requires the stakeholders, namely municipalities, educational personnel, schools under the Office of Basic Education Commission, and others in localities, to have a chance together to help explore factors or useful factors contributing and hindering the education decentralization to the local government organizations. Additionally, they should coordinate in planning strategies used as guidelines into practice and promoting the state policies concerning with education decentralization by transferring schools to the local government organizations. These strategies will enable the local government organizations and the Office of Basic Education Commission to be informed about problems and obstacles of school transfer in the former time and also see the chance and direction of organization management, including all the stakeholders, which will lead to practice in preparing readiness which fits targets of localities in transferring schools in the upper northern region. The research questions are as follows:

1. What are the methods of readiness preparation the local government organizations and transferred schools used like?

2. What are the conditions and problems both before and after the school transfer encountered by the local government organizations?

3. What are the contexts contributing to the success of school transfer?

4. What are the strategies contributing to the success development of school transfer?

5. What are the assessment results towards developed strategies?

1.2 Research Objectives

The research objectives are as follows:

1. To study the readiness preparation before the transfer of the local government organizations and transferred schools in the upper northern regions

2. To investigate conditions and problems before and after the school transfer of the local government organizations and transferred schools in the upper northern region

3. To study the contexts contributing to the success of school transfer in the upper northern region

4. To develop strategies contributing to the success of school transfer in the upper northern region

5. To examine the quality of strategies in contributing to the success of school transfer in the upper northern region

1.3 Scope of Study

    Scope of Content: The researcher determines the scope of study in accordance with the research objectives as follows:

    1. The methods of readiness preparation that the local government organizations and transferred schools employ in the upper northern region

    3.1   Readiness preparation of the local government organizations

    How the local government organizations prepare for their readiness both before and after the school transfer in terms of their policy determination, the length to receive the transfer, the number of transferred schools, the levels of education in transferred schools, the determination of those responsible parties in studying the steps, relevant documents used in readiness assessment, teachers and educational staff information, the number of students, and relevant regulations in human resource management, school management, guidelines in budget and other resources support, are taken into initial consideration as self-assessment.

    3.2 Readiness preparation of schools

    How the schools prepare for their readiness in being transferred to the local government organizations in terms of their policy and the length determination, the levels of transferred education, teachers and educational staff's attitudes, school committees, communities, data preparation on the number of transferred students, appointed responsible parties to study the relevant regulations and documents, steps in requesting readiness assessment, possible effects towards schools, teachers, and other staff, including the state policies involved in basic management in the present and in the future, are taken into consideration.

    2. The investigation on conditions and problems both before and after the school transfer of the local government organizations and schools covers educational policy determination, educational management, human resource management, academics and curriculum, budget support, education standards and quality examination, and relevant laws.

    3. The study of the contexts contributing to the success of school transfer is as follows:

    3.1 Internal context: this covers the readiness preparation by building mutual understanding in order to consider resources and capabilities within an organization, namely experience in educational management, readiness preparation plan, administrative methods, budget allocation for education, the levels and types of education associated with problems and needs of a community, opinions of the public and stakeholders in managing education of the local government organizations.

3.2 External context: this covers context determination, the assessment of context characteristics, the analysis of competitive structures, the analysis of competitive positions, the analysis of opportunity and threat, the consideration of politics, economic, social and culture, and technology advancement situations (Kotler and Murphy, 1981: 470-489)

4. The development of strategies contributing to the success of school transfer: this covers internal factor analysis (weaknesses and strengths) and external factor analysis (opportunities and threats) and their presentation gained from idea and relevant research synthesis which consists of nine strategies of the local government organizations as follows: strength development for organizations, knowledge and understanding development for staff, acceptance for change, readiness development for organizations, knowledge management among organizations in order to build overall confidence, improvement of administrative management to be in the form of committees, the study of relevant regulations and laws, the study of stakeholders' requirements, and the development of local curriculum and strategies for schools.

5. The study of effects after strategy application in contributing to the success of school transfer by employing four assessments which are probability, appropriateness, sufficiency, and utilization.

Scope of Population

The scope of population for this research is determined as follows:

1. The local government organizations which consist of 12 Provincial Administrative Organizations, Subdistrict Municipalities, and Subdistrict Administrative Organizations in the upper northern region

2. 12 schools under the Office of the Basic Education Commission located in the local government organizations in Item 1

1.4 Definitions

1. **Upper Northern Provinces** are the areas in eight provinces, namely Chiang Mai, Chiang Rai, Lamphun, Lampang, Phrae, Nan, Mae Hong Son, and Phayao.

2. **Schools** are the schools under the Office of the Basic Education Commission (OBEC) in the Upper Northern Region that have already been transferred to the local government organizations or the schools that wish to be transferred but have not yet passed the transfer procedure.

3. **Local Government Organizations** are Provincial Administrative Organizations (PAO), Subdistrict Administrative Organizations (SAO), and

Subdistrict Municipalities (SM) in the upper northern region that have already received transferred schools from the Office of Basic Education Commission and the other organizations requesting to be assessed on their readiness but not yet passed the assessment.

4. **Readiness preparation before school transfer** is the readiness preparation in administration of the local government organizations and the schools in terms of providing relevant documents according to forms and conditions determined by the Office of Basic Education Commission in order to request for the readiness assessment.

5. **Success in school transfer** is the procedures that the local government organizations use in receiving transferred schools to be under their affiliation. The organizations are also able to manage education in quality. The schools are able to perform relevant matters until they are able to be transferred to the local government organizations and administrate education properly.

6. **Educational personnel** are school administrators, educational administrators, and educational sponsors who serve and operate teaching and studying management, supervision, and educational administration in educational organizations.

7. **Strategies** are the methods considered and selected as good and proper steps in performing the transfer until it reaches the set objectives under several changes and unstable circumstances. Strategies are not only plans but also a bridge connecting all parts of the organizations to be in unity. They can take the outstanding features of each part to be merged together effectively. The data used in developing the strategies are gained from SWOT analysis and SWOT Matrix. The important elements of the strategies consist of major strategies, minor ones, and key performance indicators of each minor strategy that are developed in order to get ready in school transfer of both the local government organizations and the schools.

8. **Strategy management** is the steps of administrating determined in order to achieve the results as identified, association structures between the organizations that are designed in accordance with the context and those who receive benefits from the organizations. These are important factors affecting decision making. Good strategy management should gain participation from all sections involved.

9. **Quality Examination of Strategies** is the assessment of the developed strategies after being used in order to assess their practicality and helpfulness by evaluating from a focus group among the local government organizations and schools.

1.5 Research Benefit and Application

1 .   The schools requiring to be transferred to the local government organizations and the local government organizations requiring to receive transferred schools could acknowledge the steps and procedures in rapidly performing this matter to success.

2 .   Both schools and local government organizations are informed about problems and obstacles emerging before, during, and even after the transfer. Therefore, they are able to prepare for problem solving in advance.

3.   The offices that are in charge of the transfer are able to apply the model of situational analysis of the local government organizations and schools into other areas and employ the data gained for future planning.