

## Abstract

Success or failure of policy formation to legalized casinos in Thai society is a fine indicator for the status of casino in Thai society. The governments under the parliamentary democratic monarchy of which the head of state is the king decided to change the casino control policy, initiated in the reign of King Rama V who realized the social disadvantages over the advantaged caused gambling, to legalized casino policy by promulgating the Gambling Act (BE 2473) and the Gambling Act (BE 2478). After that, many governments have tried to form the legalized casinos policy, claiming reasons of tourism, crime, and social welfare, in order to create legitimacy for the legalized casinos policy. Being a controversial issue over Thai social integrity, the policy formation caused a conflict of notions in the society. The conflict is a social phenomenon that the social administrator should present their positions and recommendations to the government so that they would make decision on the casino policy that leads to sustainable harmony in total society.

This policy research studied the status of the casino in Thai society through many approaches. The study employed a case study of casinos in order to find factors that caused the governments to decide to form the legalized casinos policy, the Institutional Approach to identify the institutions that shared roles in the policy formation, the Cause-Effect Approach to study the effects arising from the policy formation, and process that the governments had prepared for legitimacy. The study included the analysis of documents which were related to the governments' legalized casino policy formation after the Gambling Act, BE 2478, particularly policy declaration, keynotes, and radio speeches, belonging to the governments. The findings are as follows.

The influence government was the main institute that pushed the legalized casino policy with the budget shortage and the notion that casino was acceptable as the main reasons, while other reasons were just peripheral. The impact arising from legalized casino policy formation was the conflict of ideas in Thai society caused by the policy in the perspective of the functional casino gambling. Moreover, promoting two-

three digit lotteries as legal gambling in the Government of Thaksin Shinawatra, which led to the allocation of income to the disadvantaged in society, was used as a tool to create legitimacy for the legalized casino policy formation. Many schemes were employed to reduce opposing forces from the Thai society, including bureaucracy mechanisms, particularly the House of Representatives and the Board of the National Economic and Social Development, who supported the government for the legalized casinos. The government also employed their charisma to create discourses, claiming the failure of the controlled casino policy. All were done to propose the concept of legalized gambling while the law was employed as a tool to strengthen the legitimacy of legalized casino policy in a form of the referendum, instead of the public hearing.

The findings in this study proved that the legalized casino policy formation of the governments was just a survival strategy. The government perceived gambling in the economic dimension only. That why the government needed "Tax Commission", a significant amount of money, from legalized casinos, and overlooked the social dimension, in spite of realizing that the Thai society would be damaged in the long term. The government had necessity to create legitimacy in order to prep Thai society to accept the policy, through a referendum as soon as possible, without any measure to compensate possible social damages.