

## **THE ROLE OF THE PUBLIC BUREAUCRACY IN POLICY IMPLEMENTATION IN FIVE ASEAN COUNTRIES**

### **EXECUTIVE SUMMARY**

The public bureaucracy is a key institution in the ASEAN countries because it is usually the largest employer and is also responsible for the implementation of public policies. How effective are the public bureaucracies in the ASEAN countries in policy implementation? This book focuses on the public bureaucracies' role in policy implementation in Indonesia, Malaysia, Philippines, Singapore and Vietnam. Its purpose is twofold: (1) to analyse the role of the public bureaucracies in policy implementation in these five countries; and (2) to compare the performance of the five public bureaucracies in policy implementation and to explain their different levels of effectiveness.

There is great diversity in the policy contexts of the five ASEAN countries. First, the size of these countries in terms of land area and population ranging from the smallest (the city state of Singapore) to the largest (the world's largest archipelago of Indonesia) are two important aspects which influence greatly the public bureaucracy's effectiveness in policy implementation. Second, the colonial legacy is another significant factor as the legacy of former British colonies like Singapore and Malaysia appears to be more positive than the colonial legacies of the Dutch for Indonesia, the Spanish and United States for the Philippines, and the French for Vietnam. Third, there is a wide disparity in GDP per capita between Singapore's GDP per capita of US\$49,271 in 2011 and the other four ASEAN countries, with Vietnam having the lowest GDP per capita of US\$1,374 for the same year. Finally, except for Vietnam, which is a Communist state, the other four countries have democratic political systems as Indonesia and the Philippines are presidential democracies, Malaysia is a constitutional monarchy, and Singapore is a parliamentary democracy. In short, the policy contexts of the five ASEAN countries have a tremendous impact on their public bureaucracies' role in policy implementation as a favourable policy context will enhance their role while an unfavourable policy context will undermine it.

To ensure consistency and to facilitate comparative analysis, Van Meter and Van Horn's definition of policy implementation and their framework of analysis involving these five variables is adopted in the country chapters, namely: the clarity of the policy standards and objectives; their communication to the implementers; the availability of policy resources; the effectiveness of the implementing agencies; and the disposition of the implementers. Thus, effective policy implementation requires the proper communication of policy standards and objectives to the implementers, capable implementing agencies, and supportive implementers.

The following approach is employed for the five country chapters, beginning with an analysis of the country's policy context and a profile of its public bureaucracy before analysing the latter's role in policy implementation according to Van Meter and Van Horn's five variables. The implementation of two ASEAN policies—the ASEAN Cosmetic Directive (ACD) and the ASEAN Ministerial Meeting on Transnational Crime (AMMTC) and Senior Officers Meeting on Transnational Crime (SOMTC)—are analysed as case studies in the five countries to facilitate comparative analysis. This book is divided into six chapters, consisting

of the five country chapters on Indonesia, Malaysia, Philippines, Singapore and Vietnam, and the final chapter, which provides a comparative analysis of the role of the public bureaucracies in policy implementation in these five countries.

In Chapter 1, Agus Pramusinto contends that the Indonesian public bureaucracy's role in policy implementation has been adversely affected by the democratization of its political system, which has transformed the hegemonic party system into a multi-party system. During the New Order regime, the public bureaucracy formulated the laws, which were easily approved by the National Assembly because President Suharto relied on Presidential Instructions to expedite the policy formulation process. However, the policy formulation process during the post-Suharto period became less efficient and more time-consuming because of the need for public consultation, the representation of many political parties and the longer agenda in the National Assembly. More importantly, the implementing agencies in Indonesia are ineffective because of their incompetent staff, the disparity in span of control among ministries, and their vulnerability to political pressures from members of the National Assembly.

The role of the Malaysian public bureaucracy in policy implementation is analysed by Nik Rosnah Wan Abdullah in Chapter 2. She argues that while the public bureaucracy in Malaysia has been effective as reflected in the increase in its percentile rank on the World Bank's governance indicator on government effectiveness from 76.1 to 81 from 1996 to 2011, its role in policy implementation has been hindered by these two weaknesses: (1) its ethnic preference for Malay or *Bumiputra* candidates and discrimination towards the Chinese and Indians in recruitment and promotion in the civil service; and (2) corruption as manifested in Malaysia's increased level of perceived corruption on Transparency International's Corruption Perceptions Index in recent years.

Vicente Chua Reyes Jr. shows in Chapter 3 that the public bureaucracy in the Philippines is dysfunctional and ineffective in policy implementation because it suffers from systemic corruption and operates in an environment characterised by weak rule of law. Among the five ASEAN countries, the Philippines is perceived to be the most corrupt, according to five indicators of corruption. Similarly, in terms of the World Bank's rule of law governance indicator, the Philippines' percentile rank has decreased significantly from 51.2 in 1996 to 34.7 in 2011.

As Singapore has the most stable and least corrupt political system with the highest degree of rule of law among the five ASEAN countries, it is not surprising that its public bureaucracy is also the most effective in policy implementation as reflected in the World Bank's governance indicator on government effectiveness from 1996-2011 and the Political and Economic Risk's (PERC's) assessment of the effectiveness of the five ASEAN public bureaucracies from 1998-2010. In Chapter 4, David S. Jones attributes the effectiveness of Singapore's public bureaucracy in policy implementation to these factors: its policy of meritocracy with the retention of the Public Service Commission; the Corrupt Practices Investigation Bureau's effectiveness in curbing corruption; the availability of resources and funding to meet operational requirements; decentralisation in service delivery, budget allocations, personnel management and procurement; and inter-agency cooperation in implementing policies.

Chapter 5, which is written by Jairo Acuna-Alfaro and Tran Ngoc Anh, focuses on the public bureaucracy's role in policy implementation in Vietnam, a Communist state under the absolute control of the Communist Party of Vietnam (CPV), which is responsible for the development and implementation of personnel policies of the cadres and civil servants. This means that, unlike their politically neutral counterparts in Indonesia, Malaysia, Philippines and Singapore, most Vietnamese public officials and civil servants are CPV members who are trained by the CPV and are loyal to its goals and ideology. Indeed, Vietnam's public bureaucracy is ineffective in policy implementation because of these four problems: its general performance appraisal system does not assess actual staff performance; the difficulty in enforcing disciplinary action against incompetent civil servants; the limited capacity of its civil servants, which is reflected in their lack of training in state management and their low level of education; and the low salaries of civil servants, which not only encourages corruption but also leads to their brain drain to the private sector and their holding of several jobs to supplement their low wages.

In Chapter 6, Jon S.T. Quah compares the performance of the public bureaucracies in policy implementation in the five ASEAN countries and concludes that their effectiveness depends on (1) whether their policy contexts are favourable or unfavourable; and (2) whether their public bureaucracies are effective or ineffective. This means that a country with a favourable policy context and an effective public bureaucracy will be more effective in policy implementation than a country with an unfavourable policy context and an ineffective public bureaucracy. Singapore is the most effective in policy implementation because of its favourable policy context and its effective public bureaucracy. Conversely, Indonesia is the least effective in policy implementation because of its unfavourable policy context and its ineffective public bureaucracy. Malaysia, Vietnam and the Philippines occupy intermediate positions between Singapore and Indonesia and are ranked second, third and fourth respectively, depending on the nature of their policy contexts and the levels of effectiveness of their public bureaucracies.

Finally, the comparative analysis of the implementation of the ACD and the AMMTC and SOMTC in the five ASEAN countries shows that their public bureaucracies are more effective in implementing the ACD than the AMMTC and SOMTC for three reasons. First, the ACD focuses on a single issue while the AMMTC and SOMTC deal with eight types of transnational crimes. Second, the ACD's narrower scope means that fewer agencies are involved in its implementation in contrast to the implementation of the AMMTC and SOMTC, which requires more implementing agencies because of their wider scope. Third, while both policies have encountered problems in implementation, the problems in implementing the AMMTC and SOMTC are more serious than those faced in implementing the ACD. In sum, the five ASEAN countries have been more effective in implementing the ACD than the AMMTC and SOMTC because the former involves a single issue, involves fewer implementing agencies, and have fewer implementation problems.