FACTORS INFLUENCING PUBLIC SERVICE ACCOUNTABILITY:  
THE STUDY OF IMPLEMENTATION ON THE OFFICIAL  
INFORMATION ACT, B.E. 2540 IN THAILAND  

By  

Chit-rapee Subsandee  

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The Examining Committee Approved This Dissertation Submitted in 
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(Development Administration).

Pichit Pitra
Associate Professor........................................... Committee Chairperson
(Pichit Pitakthepsombat, Ph.D.)

Somkit Lertpaiithoon
Associate Professor........................................... Committee
(Somkit Lertpaiithoon, Ph.D.)

Parote P. Nararakul
................................................................. Committee
(Pairote Pathranarakul, Ph.D.)
ABSTRACT

Title of Dissertation: Factors Influencing Public Service Accountability: The Study of Implementation on the Official Information Act, B.E. 2540 in Thailand

Author: Mrs. Chit-rapee Subsandee

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Accountable government has relied on public accountability of public organizations and officials. Studies on public accountability in the past ten years are rich and diverse, but much of the richness is on the claim by scholars that accountability is linked with information. This study aims to investigate the concept of public accountability as it relates to the implementation of information policy. A systematical model on factors influencing public accountability in implementing the Official Information Act was developed from implementation models and organizational and management theories for more insightful understanding for implementation.

This is the first study of public service accountability in implementing the Official Information Act in Thailand. Four main objectives are: (1) to investigate public accountability on implementation of the Official Information Act in four Public Services, (2) to identify major factors and their relationships with public accountability, (3) to analyze the conditions supporting those major factors on public accountability, and (4) to recommend and propose appropriate measures for improving public accountability in implementing the Official Information Act in Thai public administration.

Based on a two phases design, the data were obtained from a purposive sample consisting of one hundred and seventy nine state officials from seventy six public service organizations, composed of educational, financial, public health, and social
welfare. These officials are administrators and managers who serve in central administration and assigned direct responsibility on the tasks following the Official Information Act, B.E. 2540 by their organizations. The statistical techniques employed in analyzing quantitative data for hypotheses testing of proposed model are percentage distribution, Chi-square test, reliability analysis, and path analysis.

The survey results reveal that among thirteen hypotheses proposed, eight of them were supported for the individual level, while only five were found supported at the organizational level. Interestingly, organizational management and discretionary capacity show strong and direct influences on public accountability, while the provision of law or legal factors have mild influence, unless accompanied by organizational management, organizational characteristics and discretionary capacity.

To validate the survey results, twenty nine key informants from six groups of stakeholders concerned were interviewed in depth, together with document examination as sources of stakeholder analysis. Content and thematic analysis were the techniques employed for the display of qualitative data. The results from stakeholder analysis also presented the essential conditions supporting factors under study, as well as identified unanticipated management problems for improving public accountability.

In conclusion, the research results show that public accountability in implementing The Official Information Act in Thai public services depend on both external and internal factors. Organizational management and characteristics, as well as discretionary capacity displayed direct influences on public accountability, while legal factors have indirect influence. Although the concept of public accountability in this study cannot cover and serve for all domains of public accountability, it is justifiable, given the prescription for regulatory policy and management in public services that emphasize the rule of law in public administration. Further, policy implications and recommendations from this research should not only contribute to implementation study for improving public accountability systems, but also provide the interesting directions for future research.
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Chit-rapee Subsandanee

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