

STRATEGIC FRAMEWORK FOR FORMULATING THE SMEs PROMOTION PLAN

Rujira Paesai

School of Public Administration, National Institute of Development Administration

Abstract

This research aimed to analyze small and medium enterprises (SMEs) policy in the SMEs promotion plans, evaluate the outcomes of Thai SMEs policy implementation, and propose a strategic framework for formulating the SMEs promotion plan.

The key informants in the public sector were composed of the top and middle administrators from the Office of SMEs Promotion, the Ministry of Industry, the Ministry of Commerce, the SME Bank, and the EXIM Bank, while key informants in the private sector were the SME entrepreneurs who had received the SMEs National Award and general SME entrepreneurs in the food industry. This qualitative research included documentary study, in-depth interviews, and focus groups. The results showed that the public sector recognized the importance of the need for development and promotion of SMEs; however, the main focus was only the manufacturing sector. The SMEs promotion policy thus could not be accomplished due to the limited budget and the lack of promotion direction, and unsystematic coordination and cooperation.

Keywords: policy, evaluation, small and medium enterprises

บทคัดย่อ

การวิจัยเรื่องกรอบยุทธศาสตร์ในการจัดทำแผนการส่งเสริมวิสาหกิจขนาดกลางและขนาดย่อม มีวัตถุประสงค์ของการวิจัย ดังนี้ 1. เพื่อวิเคราะห์สภาพแวดล้อมของนโยบายการส่งเสริมวิสาหกิจขนาดกลางและขนาดย่อมในระยะแผนการส่งเสริมวิสาหกิจขนาดกลางและขนาดย่อม 2. เพื่อประเมินผลลัพธ์จากการดำเนินนโยบายการส่งเสริมวิสาหกิจขนาดกลางและขนาดย่อมของไทย และ 3. เพื่อเสนอกรอบยุทธศาสตร์ในการจัดทำแผนการส่งเสริมวิสาหกิจขนาดกลางและขนาดย่อม

กลุ่มผู้ให้ข้อมูลสำคัญ ดังนี้ ภาครัฐ ได้แก่ ผู้บริหารระดับสูงและระดับกลางของสำนักงานส่งเสริมวิสาหกิจขนาดกลางและขนาดย่อม กระทรวงอุตสาหกรรม กระทรวงพาณิชย์ ธนาคารพัฒนาวิสาหกิจ ขนาดกลางและขนาดย่อมแห่งประเทศไทย และธนาคารเพื่อการส่งออก และนำเข้าแห่งประเทศไทย ภาคเอกชน ได้แก่ ผู้ประกอบการวิสาหกิจขนาดกลางและขนาดย่อม ในกลุ่มอุตสาหกรรมอาหารที่เป็นนิติบุคคล และได้รับรางวัลสุดยอด SMEs แห่งชาติ และผู้ประกอบการวิสาหกิจขนาดกลางและขนาดย่อมทั่วไป การวิจัยใช้ระเบียบวิธีวิจัยเชิงคุณภาพ การศึกษาเอกสารทางวิชาการ การสัมภาษณ์เชิงลึกและการสนทนากลุ่ม ผลการวิจัยพบว่า การส่งเสริมของภาครัฐได้ให้ความสำคัญต่อการพัฒนาและส่งเสริมวิสาหกิจขนาดกลางและขนาดย่อมเพิ่มขึ้น แต่ยังคงกระจุกตัวอยู่ในภาคการผลิตเป็นส่วนใหญ่ มีข้อจำกัด ดังนี้ ด้านงบประมาณ ด้านการกำหนดทิศทางการส่งเสริม และด้านการประสานงานในการทำงานร่วมกันอย่างเป็นทางการเป็นระบบอย่างแท้จริง ทำให้นโยบายการส่งเสริมวิสาหกิจขนาดกลางและขนาดย่อมไม่ประสบความสำเร็จ

คำสำคัญ: นโยบาย การประเมิน วิสาหกิจขนาดกลางและขนาดย่อม

INTRODUCTION

SMEs have played a vital role in creating prod-

ucts and generating income and employment. SMEs account for approximately 99% of businesses and are the main production units that gen-

erate income accounting for 39% of the National Gross Domestic Product and employment (77% of employment) and approximately 29% of export value (The Office of SMEs Promotion, 2007).

As SMEs were regarded as a crucial mechanism for sustainable development in both micro and macro-economic levels, the Thai government passed the Small and Medium Enterprises Promotion Act of 2000 and established the Office of SMEs Promotion in the following year. The Office is responsible for promoting SMEs in the country. With the approval of the Cabinet, the SMEs Promotion Committee was established and was assigned to formulate policies and plans to support SMEs. So far, three plans have been proposed: the SMEs Promotion Plan No.1 (2002-2006), SMEs Promotion Plan No.2 (2007-2011), and SMEs Promotion Plan No.3 (2012-2016). Many public and private organizations are also assisting in promoting SMEs in many areas (the Office of SMEs Promotion, 2007).

The dynamic changes in economy, society, population, culture, and environment has resulted in high competition among countries in the world partly due to scarcity of resources, and natural disasters which have affected many nations, and Thailand is no exception. Thailand experienced an economic crisis in 1997, which affected entrepreneurs in terms of rising expenses. The Office of SMEs Promotion reported that the total number of SMEs was 2,924,912 in 2010 and 2,652,854 in 2011, a decrease of 272,058 SMEs or 9.3%. From 2007 to 2011, the GDP of SMEs continued decreasing from 38.7% to 38.1, 37.8, 37.1 and 36.6, respectively (the Office of SMEs Promotion, 2012). However, because of the small business size, the scarcity of funds, and limited access to information, SMEs' ability to adjust to changes was lower than large-sized enterprises (Grimm, Lee & Smith, 2006.) Although the Thai government emphasizes SMEs promotion, it has experienced several challenges such as limited budget, manpower, and providing accessibility to services and helpful information. Many agencies in Thailand, both in the public and the private sectors, are assigned with the responsibility of promoting SMEs in various areas, but they are unable to meet the needs of the vast number of SMEs all over the country.

The official establishment of the ASEAN Economic Community (AEC) in 2015 will allow each ASEAN country to encounter an open economic

environment in which all AEC countries can trade freely. This condition will bring about both advantages and disadvantages to SMEs which will need to adjust themselves to the changes. Therefore, if the Thai government wishes to strengthen SMEs and improve their potential and growth, formulation of SMEs plans is very vital. Also, policy evaluation can be made by studying the roles of key stakeholders in both the public and the private sectors in order to know the outcomes of the SMEs promotion (Guba & Lincoln, 1981). The result of such evaluation will influence SMEs in Thailand. Therefore this research on policy evaluation is significant because its findings will be used for formulating a strategic framework for setting SMEs promotion plans in Thailand.

Objectives of the Study

1. To analyze the macro-environment of the SMEs policy in the SMEs promotion plans.
2. To evaluate the outcomes of Thai SMEs policy implementation.
3. To propose a strategic framework for formulating the SMEs promotion plan.

Research Questions

1. What was the macro-environment of Thailand's SMEs promotion policy during the implementation of the SMEs promotion plans?
2. What were the outcomes of the policies and why were they so?
3. What is a suitable strategic framework for formulating the SMEs promotion plan?

LITERATURE REVIEW

A study by Wennekers (2006) found that SMEs were established in the Middle Ages, or the 5th century. After the 16th century when trade expanded, these new emerging enterprises helped European economies to become successful. Later, after the agricultural and industrial revolution, many innovative products were launched in a short period of time. However, in the 19th century, there was an economic downfall because entrepreneurs at that time lacked creativity, innovation, and ability to adapt to changes in their businesses (Landes, 1969). After the worldwide economic downfall or great

depression in the beginning of the 20th century, many large companies or businesses collapsed. It was only after the 20th century or after the WW II (Wenneker, 2006), that SMEs have been the focus of many governments around the world. Recently, SMEs have been seen as essential to the world and the national economy (the Office of SMEs Promotion, 2007).

The Thai government became more interested in SMEs after the economic crisis in 1997. It passed the Small and Medium Enterprises Promotion Act of 2000, which was an important step in promoting SMEs. Later on, the Office of SMEs Promotion was established in 2001 to set up policies and plans to support SMEs (Ministry of Industry, 2000). So far, Thailand has had 3 SMEs promotion plans: the SMEs Promotion Plan No.1 (2002-2006), SMEs Promotion Plan No.2 (2007-2011), and SMEs Promotion Plan No.3 (2012-2016), in order to promote SMEs in Thailand, in line with the National Economic and Social Development plan and the government policy (the Office of SMEs Promotion, 2011). The SMEs Promotion Plan No.1 focused on the revitalization and strengthening of SMEs, the SMEs Promotion Plan No.2 on enabling SMEs in the area to adjust themselves in terms of business efficiency and responsibility for society and environment, and the SMEs Promotion Plan No.3 on sustainable growth and competitiveness in the changing world.

From 1950 to 1959, studies about public policy focused on the process of policy formulation and behaviors of stakeholders. Behavioral researchers and scholars suggested that the process of formulating a public policy should be elaborated step by step. Dye (1984, pp.23-24) suggested steps in the process of policy formulation starting with Policy Formation, Policy Alternative Development, Policy Decision Making, Policy Implementation, and Policy Evaluation. Dye (1976) followed these steps in his policy system. Dunn (1981 cited in Thamrongthanyawong, 2006, p.39) explained that the relationships between public policy, policy environment, and policy stakeholders impacted various factors in the policy system and these relationships are involved in policy formulation.

Although there are many policy evaluation models, this research evaluated the SMEs promotion and effectiveness of policy implementation based on the North American Stakeholder Model because it can be used for qualitative evaluation of

the policy and for studying the concerns and issues of the major stakeholders in the policy. The North American stakeholders model for policy evaluation follows Guba and Lincoln's evaluation framework. In the model, the evaluators are invited from outside. They can be advisors, freelance researchers, or the employees of a certain unit. These evaluators will collect the data about concerns and issues from the stakeholders. The evaluators will set up the criteria and standards for measurement. The stakeholders will not be responsible for the last step of the evaluation (Vedung 1991, pp.69-70). The current study interviewed stakeholders of the policy in order to know the results of the policy implementation as well as their concerns and issues which were the starting point of evaluation. Therefore, this research evaluated the outcomes of policy implementation based on stakeholders. The North American Stakeholder Model is deemed a suitable model for qualitative evaluation of SMEs promotion policy.

Because of the importance of SMEs in the national economic and social development, it is essential to formulate SMEs promotion plans to be carried out by the public and the private organizations in order to promote SMEs in the country.

RESEARCH FRAMEWORK

The framework of this research included the concepts and theories related to public policy and SMEs promotion as shown in Figure 1.

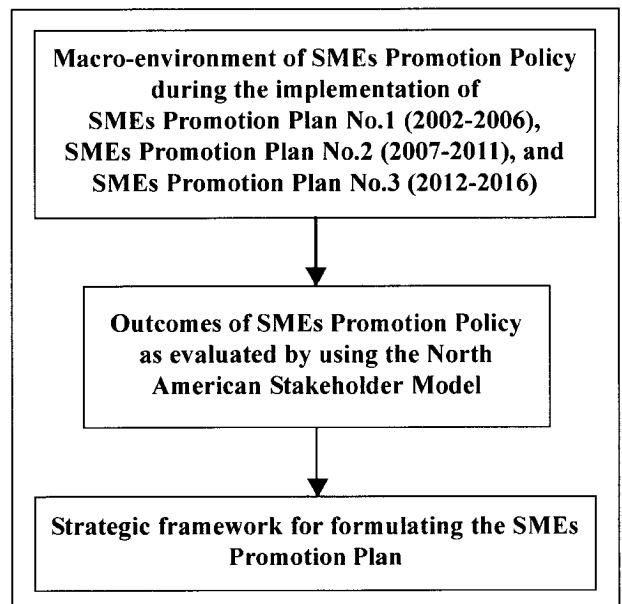


Figure 1: Conceptual Framework

This research began with the analysis of the macro-environment of SMEs promotion policy during the implementation of the SMEs Promotion Plan No.1 (2002-2006), the SMEs Promotion Plan No.2 (2007-2011), and the SMEs Promotion Plan No.3 (2012-2016). After that the outcomes of the implementation were evaluated by using the North American Stakeholder Model. Then the concerns of the stakeholders in the policy, including the relationship between the roles of the stakeholders in the private and the public sectors, were examined. The results were used to formulate the strategic framework for formulating the SMEs promotion plan.

METHODOLOGY

This qualitative research included both the secondary data and the primary data. The secondary data were academic information taken from official documents that the policy formulators put together and other reliable sources related to the study, such as the SMEs Promotion Plan No.1 (2002-2006), the SMEs Promotion Plan No.2 (2007-2011), the SMEs Promotion Plan No.3 (2012-2016), the overview of Strategic Plan of 2012-2016 and the Action Plan of 2013, the SMEs situation reports in 2011 and 2012, and the SMEs situation report in 2013.

The primary data were collected from 37 key informants: 19 from the public sector and 18 from the private sector. The former were top- and middle-level administrators of the Office of SMEs Promotion, the Ministry of Industry, the Ministry of Commerce, the SME Bank, and the EXIM Bank. And the latter were entrepreneurs who received the SMEs National Award and general SMEs entrepreneurs in Thailand's food industry.

The primary data were gathered by conducting in-depth face-to-face interviews and focus groups using open-ended questions. The key informants from the public sector consisted of the deputy director general for the Office of SMEs Promotion; and the deputy director of the Strategic and Policy Department of the Office of SMEs Promotion; the director of strategy and planning of the Department of Industrial Promotion, Ministry of Industry; the deputy director of Food Institute, Ministry of Industry; the director of Trading Standard Office; the trade specialist in the Depart-

ment of Foreign Trade, Ministry of Commerce; the director of International Trade Strategy Office, Department of Export of Ministry of Commerce; the vice president of ICT Department of the SME bank; the manager of the Planning and Budgeting Department of the SME bank; the assistant manager of the Planning and Budgeting Department of the SME Bank, and the director of Business Research Department of the EXIM Bank.

The key informants in the private sector were the Chief Executive Officers of Pornthip (Phuket) Co., Ltd., Siam Southern Food Line Co., Ltd., Tia Ngee Hiang (Chao Sua) Co., Ltd., Sunshine International Co., Ltd., Fruit Tech Co., Ltd., J.M. Food Industry Co., Ltd., Xongdur Thai Organic Food Co., Ltd., and Nithi Foods Co., Ltd.

The key informants for focus group were the Chief Executive Officers of P.T. Foods Processing Co., Ltd., Chaicharoen Marine (2002) Co., Ltd., IBF Halal Foods Co., Ltd., Hitec bio (Thailand) Co., Ltd., and Thai Rich Foods Group Co., Ltd.

Research tools

The tools used to collect data were interview guides and focus groups of stakeholders in the public and the private sectors. The following data were collected for this study:

1. In-depth interview topics for the public sector were the environment of the policy, the stakeholders' roles, issues, problems, obstacles, concerns, and coordination among governmental agencies.

2. In-depth interview topics for the private sector were the environment of the policy, business type and activities, issues, problems, obstacles, concerns, and coordination with government agencies.

3. Focus group topics for the private sector were the environment of the policy, business type and activities, issues, problems, obstacles, concerns, ways to solve them, and coordination with government agencies.

Open-ended questions were used in the interview guide. The questions were different, depending on the roles and relations of the stakeholders in the SMEs promotion policy. Triangulation validation for the study was done by having stakeholders validate the accuracy.

RESEARCH FINDINGS

The research revealed that the contents of the master plan and the action plans in three SMEs promotion plans were very broad and were formulated by the Office of SMEs Promotion officers only. Therefore, when the plans were publicized and distributed to other related agencies in the meetings, these agencies did not care much about the plans since they were not involved in originating them. Although they had different ideas, nothing could be done to change the plans. The plans then were not carried out as efficiently as necessary because of the lack of enthusiasm and coordination among related public agencies.

The following are the outcomes of the SMEs promotion policy in Thailand during all three SMEs Promotion Plans:

It was found from the secondary data that the performance of the SMEs Promotion Plan No.1 (2002-2006) did not reach the set goals of increase in gross domestic product value, productivity, corporate registration and new businesses, even though the goals of more employment, more export, and more business career groups were reached (the Office of SMEs Promotion, 2002). Although some goals were reached, the achievement was lower than expected (Svasti-Xuto, 2013) due to the lack of unity and direction in promotion, development, and integrated implementation (Suwapanich, 2013; Vasinonta, 2013; Siriyanon, 2013; Apimonbut, 2013). Also, there was lack of the continuity in working with the private sector (Piamwiwatkul, 2014; Pholsin, 2014; Khoprasert, 2014), as well as lack of knowledge about business rules and regulations (Rojanasumapong, 2014; Chokesakulnimit, 2014).

The evaluation of the implementation of the SMEs Promotion Plan No.2 (2007-2011) revealed that the goals of GDP, export value growth, and total factor productivity were not achieved. There should have had more support from the government (the Office of SMEs Promotion, 2007); however, the support was mostly given to the manufacturing sector (Svasti-Xuto, 2013; Suwaphanich, 2013). There were several limitations which included the lack of budgets, expertise, understanding about concerns and challenges of SMEs on the part of the government, and a lack of integration among private enterprises (Ahunai, 2013; Srimuangthon, 2013; Kedking, 2013). Moreover,

there was no integrated responsibility for SMEs promotion between private and the public organizations across the country (Udomsilp, 2014; Morin, 2014; Taweelertnithi, 2014). The government also lacked SMEs data at the local level (Subpot, 2014; Subpot, 2014; Ismael, 2014).

The evaluation of the implementation of the SMEs Promotion Plan No.3 (2012-2016) in 2012-2013 showed that exports had declined due to the world economic recession (Susomboon, 2013; Techasanskul, 2013; Kaewprakaisongkul, 2014) and the delay in the recovery in the manufacturing sector (the Office of SMEs Promotion, 2013). In addition, the political crisis in Thailand during 2013 caused a decline in the total revenue of the manufacturing, trading and service sectors (Piamwiwatkul, 2014; Liu, 2014; Jiwattanapaiboon, 2014). All of these have affected SMEs entrepreneurs and the image of the country (Wuttiyakornkul, 2014; Boonritlukana, 2014). The evaluation of the performance against the goals revealed that due to the current situation and crises, especially the political turmoil during 2012-2013, the set goals were not met (Svasti-Xuto, 2013).

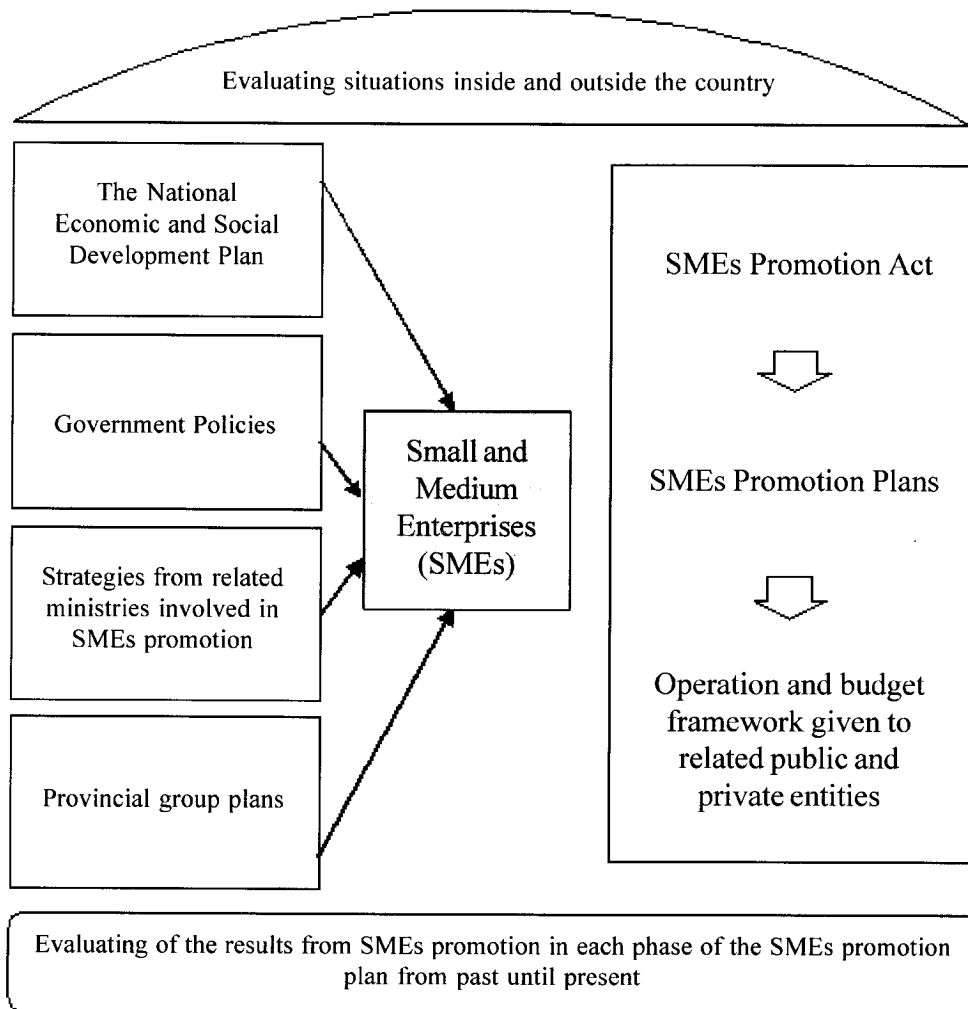
The analysis and evaluation of the outcomes of the SMEs promotion policy implementation in Thailand revealed that the promotion of SMEs by the public sector focused solely on the SMEs development in the manufacturing sector. However, there were limitations in budget, knowledge development, expertise, and the understanding of personnel in the public and private organizations about the needs of SMEs. In addition, management, promotion, and development were not in the same direction. The public and private sectors also lacked systematic coordination and cooperation to support SMEs in all areas, hence the SMEs promotion policy could not be accomplished.

The SMEs promotion plans were set based on the policy formulated by the SME committees and the SMEs Promotion Act. In addition, the needs of the stakeholders in provincial areas need to be considered so that the plan covers all dimensions and all related needs. Therefore, the researcher has outlined a strategic framework for formulating the SMEs promotion plans as shown in Figure 2.

Based on Figure 2, the steps for formulating the SMEs promotion plan are as follows:

1. Consider the development plans at different levels (i.e., the National Economic and Social Development Plan, the government's policies, the

Figure 2: Strategic framework for formulating the SMEs promotion plan



Source: Adapted from the Office of SMEs Promotion, 2011.

strategic plans of each ministry to promote SMEs as well as the Provincial group plan) to ensure the plan is set in accordance with them.

2. Review the results of the implementation of the SMEs promotion plans from the past until present.

3. Evaluate the situation inside and outside the country which can impact the performance of SMEs over the next 5 years, including problems that can occur from SMEs themselves. Thereafter, there should be brainstorming among related parties in the public and private sectors.

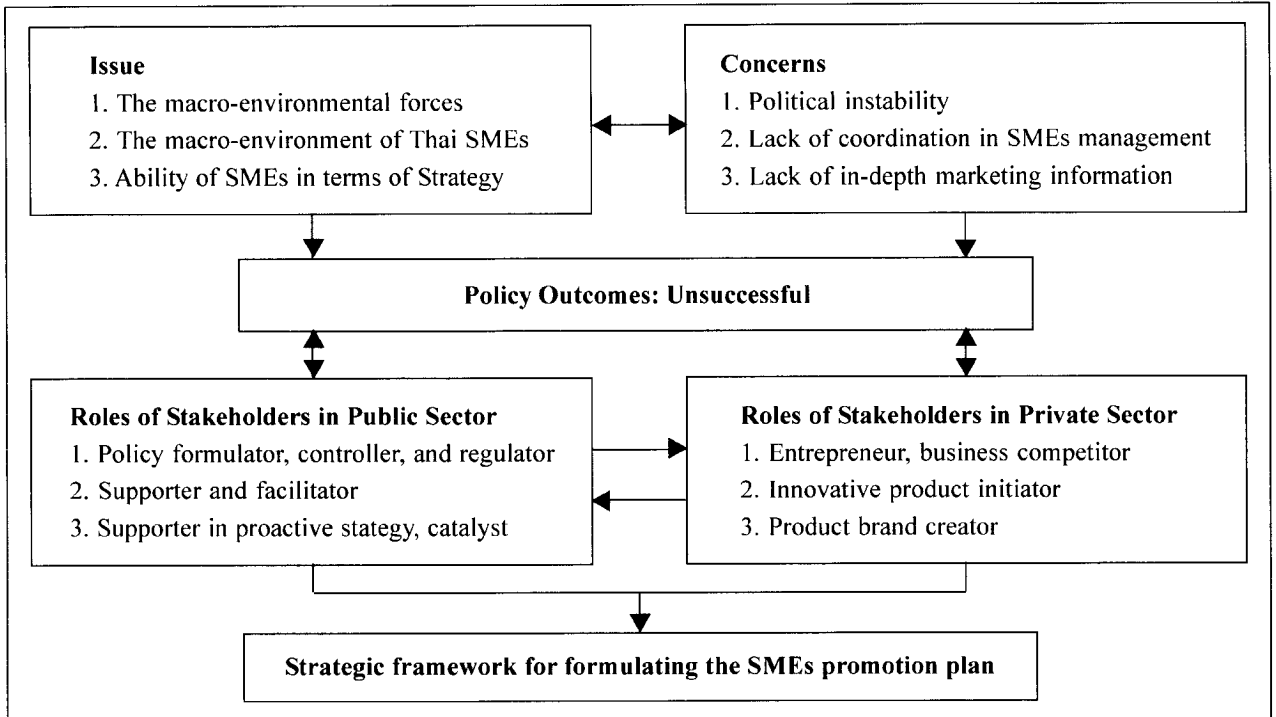
The formulated SMEs promotion plans must abide by the SMEs Promotion Act. The government will allocate a budget and send the operation framework to related public and private entities. Next, the related parties in all areas will implement the plan, ensuring that they work in harmony to develop SMEs in line with the national development plan.

DISCUSSION

The researcher evaluated the outcomes of the SMEs promotion policy in Thailand. The data were collected from the stakeholders in the public and the private sectors who could influence SMEs promotion in Thailand. The North American Stakeholder Model was employed to study issues and concerns of the stakeholders in the SMEs promotion policy as well as the relationships of the roles of stakeholders in both the public and the private sectors in the SMEs promotion policy. The analysis of issues and concerns in the policy outcomes revealed that the policy was not achieved due to the lack of collaboration, coordination, and continued support from the government. No specific agency was assigned to be responsible for management and coordination to support the policy at all levels.

The results of the analysis and evaluation of

Figure 3: Findings from the analysis and evaluation of SMEs promotion policy outcome and potential of Thai SMEs: A summary of the issues and concerns of stakeholders



Source: Adapted from the in-depth interviews and the focus group discussion of the stakeholders between November, 2013 and February, 2014.

the SMEs promotion policy outcomes, issues and concerns of stakeholders in both the public and the private sectors are summarized in Figure 3.

The issues that the stakeholders mentioned can be summarized as follows: 1) the macro-environmental forces, 2) macro-environment of Thai SME's competition, and 3) ability of SMEs in terms of strategic management. The concerns of the stakeholders in SMEs promotion policy during the implementation of all SMEs promotion plans were as follows: 1) political instability, 2) lack of coordination in SMEs management, and 3) lack of in-depth marketing information. The roles of stakeholders in the public sector in the SMEs promotion policy were 1) policy formulator, controller, and regulator, 2) supporter and facilitator, 3) supporter in proactive strategy, catalyst, challenger, and 4) coordinator among all agencies. The roles of stakeholders in the private sector were 1) entrepreneur, business competitor, 2) innovative product initiator, 3) product brand creator, 4) network creator and 5) coordinator with the public sector.

Therefore, the public and the private sectors whose roles are to promote SMEs can apply the strategic framework as a guideline to formulate

and implement the policy under the SMEs promotion plans. The public and the private sectors must coordinate to improve SMEs in the same direction as the national and social development and to adapt to changing situations.

RECOMMENDATIONS

1. The government should recognize the importance of the macro-environment in terms of economic conditions in running SMEs businesses because it can positively or negatively affect the development of SMEs. It should develop a national SMEs database or centralized SMEs database to serve as the SMEs center. This center will provide data vital to the SMEs promotion policy formulation and will help in setting plans to promote SMEs. The center also serves as the databank for the private sector. It should provide one stop service for all data related to SMEs.

2. To promote SMEs successfully, the government should improve the work of government agencies by having the top administrator of each agency seriously exercise power to urge the personnel to promote SMEs by helping to create policy

network coordination of the strategic partners who have roles in implementing strategies inside and outside the country. It should also set up the main coordinative agency and the coordination committee that consists of those who are representatives from both the public and private sectors. The representatives need to be experts, knowledgeable, experienced, and can be coordinators to promote SMEs in all aspects.

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About the Author:

Rujira Paesai earned a doctorate in Public Administration from the School of Public Administration, National Institute of Development Administration in 2014. She can be reached at dr.rujirapaesai@gmail.com.