

# Integration of Organizational Cultural Components to Rehabilitate

## Offenders: Behaviour of the Probation Office in Isan

การบูรณาการองค์ประกอบวัฒนธรรมองค์กรเพื่อแก้ไขฟื้นฟูผู้ถูกคุมความประพฤติ  
ของสำนักงานคุมประพฤติในภาคอีสาน

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### Abstract

This was a qualitative investigation, which aimed to study the history of the use of culture to help rehabilitate offenders in Northeastern Thailand, to study the current use of culture to help rehabilitate offenders in Northeastern Thailand and to integrate organizational cultural components to rehabilitate offenders in Northeastern Thailand. Data were collected from September 2013 to December 2014 by survey, observation, interview and focus group discussion. The current conditions and problems with the probation program were examined in six areas: the rule of law, ethics, transparency, participation, responsibility and organization value. It was found that currently the probation office organises activities to help offenders develop their levels of morality, responsibility and social participation in order to allow the transition back into society. However, there are not enough staff members to work with the offenders. The integration of organizational cultural components to rehabilitate offenders can be achieved in three ways: 1) probation and examination; 2) care, correction and rehabilitation; 3) community activities. The organizational culture of the probation office helps generate respect and promote ethical behaviour in offenders.

**Keywords:** Culture, probation, rehabilitation, society

## บทคัดย่อ

การศึกษาวิจัยเรื่องนี้ มีความมุ่งหมาย 3 ประการ คือ 1) เพื่อศึกษาประวัติความเป็นมาของวัฒนธรรมองค์กร ในการแก้ไขฟื้นฟูผู้ถูกคุมความประพฤติของสำนักงานคุมประพฤติในภาคอีสาน 2) เพื่อศึกษาสภาพปัจจุบันและ ปัญหาของวัฒนธรรมองค์กรในการแก้ไขฟื้นฟูผู้ถูกคุมความ ประพฤติของสำนักงานคุมประพฤติในภาคอีสาน 3) เพื่อ บูรณาการองค์ประกอบวัฒนธรรมองค์กรเพื่อแก้ไขและ ฟื้นฟูผู้ถูกคุมความประพฤติของสำนักงานคุมประพฤติใน ภาคอีสาน ใช้ระเบียบวิธีวิจัยเชิงคุณภาพ เครื่องมือที่ใช้ใน การวิจัย ได้แก่ แบบสำรวจ แบบสังเกต แบบสัมภาษณ์ และ แนวทางสนทนากลุ่ม ผลการวิจัยพบว่า ปัจจุบันสำนักงาน คุมประพฤติในภาคอีสาน ได้แก่ สำนักงานคุมประพฤติ จังหวัดกาฬสินธุ์ ขอนแก่น และมหาสารคาม มีการจัด กิจกรรมแก้ไขฟื้นฟูผู้ถูกคุมความประพฤติ ได้น่าวัฒนธรรม องค์กร ประกอบด้วย นิติธรรม คุณธรรม ความโปร่งใส การ มีส่วนร่วม ความรับผิดชอบ และความคุ้มค่าขององค์กร โดยนำมาใช้ในการจัดกิจกรรมแก้ไขฟื้นฟู ผู้ถูกคุมความ ประพฤติ ประสพปัญหาสำคัญ คือ พนักงานคุมประพฤติ มีน้อยไม่เพียงพอกับปริมาณงาน ทำให้การควบคุมสอด ส่องทำได้ไม่ทั่วถึง สำนักงานคุมประพฤติแต่ละแห่งได้นำ วัฒนธรรมองค์กรมาบูรณาการ แต่ละงาน โดยนำมาบูรณา การในงานสืบเสาะและพินิจ และการควบคุมสอดส่อง และ งานกิจกรรมชุมชน เช่น ระเบียบห้ามพนักงานคุมประพฤติ รับทรัพย์สินเงินทองหรือเลี้ยงอาหารเครื่องดื่ม เป็นการนำ วัฒนธรรมองค์กรด้านนิติธรรมมาใช้ในเรื่องความซื่อสัตย์ สุจริต เพื่อให้ความเป็นธรรมแก่ผู้ถูกคุมความประพฤติทุก คนอย่างเท่าเทียมกัน

**คำสำคัญ:** วัฒนธรรม คุมความประพฤติ ฟื้นฟู สังคม

## Introduction

Honesty, dedication and personal development to accomplish objectives, create a united mentality, be generous and respect seniority. This is the culture of the Ministry of Justice in Thailand, which is one of the principle organisations for re-

habilitating prisoners in Thai society (The Probation Office, 2005). Offenders under the responsibility of the probation office, a subdivision of the Ministry of Justice in Thailand, are all minors and adults being processed by the courts who have been ordered to perform community service to amend their behavior instead of paying a financial penalty. Additionally those offenders who have visibly changed during a spell in prison and are given early release or those who have been given a suspended sentence are monitored by the probation office (Cohen and Gobert, 1999). The basic principles followed by Thai probation officers have been taken from the United Nations Standard Minimum Rules for Non-custodial Measures (The Tokyo Rules), along with the Standard Minimum Rules for the Treatment of Prisoners and the Body of Principles for the Protection of All Persons under Any Form of Detention or Imprisonment (Van Zyl Smit, 1993). For youth offenders, the principles of the United Nations Standard Minimum Rules for the Administration of Juvenile Justice (The Beijing Rules) are followed (Samuels, 1998).

Behavioral correction is a form of community based treatment and community justice. For this reason, participation of local community members, organizations and networks is essential (Huntington and Nelson, 1975). Local groups are best able to utilize resources, techniques and local knowledge to help the social rehabilitation of offenders. The use of local people as role-models is an important factor in the success of probation. Local probation centers for community service participants are important in this regard for helping manage resources and maximize the potential for success of the probationary period.

The probation system in Northeastern

Thailand (Isan) is similar to probation systems throughout Thailand and in other countries around the world. It is based on the work of the American Probation and Parole Association. The probation officers are particularly important and it is their responsibility to manage offender rehabilitation on a day to day basis. Offenders under the jurisdiction of three probation offices in Isan are charged with similar offences (Wanlu, 2009). Drug-related crimes were committed by 41.2% of offenders in Kalasin Province, 43.5% in Khon Kaen Province and 45.7% in Mahasarakham Province. Other common crimes include traffic offences, drink-driving, disorderly behavior and counterfeiting. The least common crimes were related to gambling. However, current probation projects are not always fully successful in these three Northeastern Provinces because the knowledge management systems adopted by the probation officers in their creation of work schemes does not adequately integrate local culture (Ponnammin, 2009). The primary reason for this is the lack of probation officer knowledge in local customs and minimal local participation in the probation period. Given these weaknesses, the research teams were interested in studying the integration of organizational cultural components to rehabilitate offenders in Northeastern Thailand.

### Research Aims

This is a qualitative investigation aimed at studying the history of the use of culture to help rehabilitate offenders in Northeastern Thailand, to study the current use of culture to help rehabilitate offenders in Northeastern Thailand and to integrate cultural components to rehabilitate offenders in Northeastern Thailand.

### Research Methodology

For this qualitative investigation data were collected by document analysis and field research from September 2013 to December 2014. The research area was chosen using four criteria:

1. The probation office was located in North-eastern Thailand.
2. The probation office had a continuous program of offender rehabilitation in the local community.
3. The probation office used local culture as part of its rehabilitation program for offenders.
4. The probation officers were responsible for organising activities that incorporated and integrated local culture.

Using these criteria, the research team identified three probation offices in Isan to comprise the research area. These were Kalasin Provincial Probation Office, Khon Kaen Provincial Probation Office and Mahasarakham Provincial Probation Office. The research population were the local people of the three provinces and the research sample was purposively selected and divided into three groups: key informants, casual informants and general informants. The key informant group was composed of 10 management staff from the probation offices and 5 local community leaders. The casual informant group was composed of probation officers, community members and current or former offenders, totalling 60 individuals. The general informant group was composed of members of the offenders' families and owners of probation training centres, totalling 15 individuals. Data collection tools used in the field were survey, observation, interview and focus group discussion. All collected data was categorised according to the three research aims and tested for validity using

a triangulation method. The data was then analysed inductively using a typological analysis technique.

## Results

Crime and punishment have always been present in Thai society. In the past, reform and behavior correction was achieved by punishment and suffering, which often included violence. Over time, as society became more prosperous and advanced, behavior correction moved away from sentiments of revenge to the higher objective of social rehabilitation. In Thailand, as in other countries worldwide, governments and policy-makers began to reduce the amount of time people were incarcerated in prisons for fear that exposure to other offenders may enhance their own personal weaknesses. The establishment thus turned to more remedial measures, such as probation of minors, as early as 1957, although an officially responsible body was not yet established.

On the 7th August 1979, the Ministry of Justice employed probation as a corrective measure for the first time with an adult offender, in doing so creating the central probation body in Bangkok. From these origins, the Ministry expanded their policy of probation to the Thai provinces and agreed to open probation centres across the country. This was officially stated in a policy

announcement on 28th March 1980 with the objectives of protecting Thai society from crime and watching over offenders. The probation program was expanded in the fifth national economic and social development plan (1982-86). Due to budget deficits, the objectives could not be immediately carried out as stated but provisions were made to complete the establishment of probation centres in every province as part of the sixth (1987-1991) and seventh (1992-1996) development plans. By 1992, there were 46 probation centres and the probation system had become developed enough to merit the establishment of an independent Probation Office under the jurisdiction of the Ministry of Justice. In 1993, the newly founded Probation Office was granted permission to open a further 10 probation centres across the country: Saraburi, Chachoengsao, Roi-Et, Kalasin, Petchaboon, Ratchaburi, Ranong, Pattalung, Yala and Narathiwat.

Following interviews with respondents, the current state and problems with the probationary system in the three provinces studied could be divided into six major categories: the rule of law, ethics, transparency, participation, responsibility and organization value. The current state and problems in each of these categories are detailed below in table 1.

**Table 1** The current state and problems of the probation system in Kalasin, Khon Kaen and Mahasarakham Provinces

Category	Current State	Problems
Rule of Law	Probation officers create activities to rehabilitate and train offenders but must do so within the bounds of the agreed laws. For example, the 2002 royal act for rehabilitation of drug abusers stated that rehabilitation must include regular checks and gathering of proof that the offender remains clean throughout the probation period. The steps the officer must take during the probation period of a drug abuser include 1) accepting the role for gathering proof of discontinued drug use; 2) gathering evidence; 3) compiling and analysing evidence; 4) reporting findings. This procedure has now been adopted for all probation cases.	There are a large number of offenders and comparatively few probation officers. This means the evaluation of each offender must be done quickly, perhaps causing the quality and accuracy of each individual report to suffer.
Ethics	The probation officers are trained to teach offenders how to act morally and behave appropriately in society. The officers must also display these characteristics and act as role-models for the offenders. Offenders are required to attend ethics camps and seminars to develop their understanding of ethical principles and demonstrate their honest adoption of ethical behavior.	There are a large number of offenders and comparatively few probation officers. Offenders must be trained in groups rather than receiving specific or personally targeted instruction.
Transparency	The probation offices of Northeastern Thailand place great emphasis on transparency and all work and procedures are logged and easily verifiable. All mistakes, intended or accidental, can easily be traced.	Occasionally the spoken word of the offenders is (unintentionally) incorrectly recorded. This is due to the large numbers of offenders and the need for probation officers to work at speed.

Category	Current State	Problems
Participation	Local people are encouraged to volunteer their participation in the probationary program. This may include provision of a location for group activities or organization of seminars. Educational and religious institutions are particularly encouraged to participate, as well as the families of the offenders.	The offenders actively participate in activities but there is a lack of understanding of the objectives and laws because probation officers do not explain them clearly enough.
Responsibility	The Probation Office takes responsibility for provision of activities and the officers take responsibility for the organization of these activities. There is substantial evidence of honesty at work, teamwork and impartial evaluation.	The offenders occasionally fail to report to the probation officer at the agreed time, date and place. As it is the responsibility of the probation officers to take care of offenders during field trips, the officers are occasionally forced to use their own money to cover expenses. As there are a large number of offenders and the income of the officers is quite low, the officers cannot afford to meet unforeseen costs.
Organization Value	There are three types of work conducted by the probation offices: 1) probation and examination; 2) care, correction and rehabilitation; 3) community activities.	There are a large number of offenders and comparatively few probation officers. This results in the officers not dedicating themselves fully to their work, not completing work according to recommended standards and not clearly recording information about offenders.

The integration of cultural components to rehabilitate offenders can be achieved in three ways: 1) probation and examination; 2) care, correction and rehabilitation; 3) community activities.

### Probation and examination

Probation and examination is intended to filter or screen offenders and determine their readiness for rehabilitation into society properly. This is achieved by the probation officer, who collects evidence

according to the wishes of the court based on the experiences and background of the offender. The basic system to determine readiness is according to seven indicators: 1) Honest work and labour; 2) Discrepancy; 3) Neutrality; 4) Acceptance of human dignity; 5) Acceptance of potential to return to normal society; 6) Presentation of reasonable and accurate evidence; 7) Systematic work practice. In order for the offender to be accepted by the courts, the probation officer must also perform their duties with honesty and diligence to ensure that an accurate representation of the offenders' nature is provided in any reports.

### Care, correction and rehabilitation

There are six steps for care, correction and rehabilitation in the probation program. These are: 1) Preparation before the probationary period; 2) Entry onto the probation program; 3) Evidence and data collection; 4) Analysis and planning; 5) Behaviour correction; 6) Creation of a report.

### Community activities

Community activities refer to all activities within and outside the probation office. These include rehabilitation (seminars, training or camps), community service, aid work, volunteering, ethics networking, public relations and planning. Each activity will be the responsibility of the probation officer and is aimed at developing the rehabilitation potential of the offender. These are overseen by the community activities and social service division, which is the institution to liaise between all parties concerned with the activities and the community leaders. In this way, community leaders are constantly informed of probation activities and their role in and impact on the local community. The objectives of these activities are to make the rehabilitation process more efficient and to inte-

grate community culture into the rehabilitation process for offenders. There are seven types of community activities organized by the probation office: 1) Rehabilitative activities; 2) social service activities; 3) aid work; 4) restoration of drug abuser competence; 5) volunteering; 6) community ethics networking; 7) community and public services. Some examples of rehabilitation activities are pictured in Figures 1-3:

**Figure 1.** Probation activity to encourage offenders to spend time with the elderly in the local community.



**Figure 2.** Probation activity to raise environmental awareness and plant trees for Father's Day in the name of King Bhumibol Adulyadej.





**Figure 3.** Probation activity to teach ethics to offenders at a Dharma camp led by local monks.



## Discussion

The probation offices of Northeastern Thailand have an honest and moral working culture that promotes ethical behavior in criminals and offenders. The probation officers work as a team to provide opportunities for disadvantaged people to return to society. The work of the probation officers is well-planned, systematic and consistent. These findings agree with the research results of Satayasomboon (2005), which show that responsibility and a clear work ethic in public service institutions help generate a level of respect from the local community and people involved with the institution.

The probation office was a product of human and social need. This is an example of the functionalism of Bronislaw Malinowski, a Polish anthropologist. Malinowski (1944) believed that cultural developments and changes were always a product of human need and demand in society at any given place or time. The development of the probation system in Thailand in the twentieth century was a response to the ineffectiveness of previous punitive measures and a greater sense

of humanitarianism in general worldwide culture (Wilson and Brown, 2009).

There should be a variety of activities made available for the offenders on probation and the probation officers should be heavily and whole-heartedly involved with their organization and implementation. This argument is also based on the findings of Gevedon (2004), which indicate that leaders and organizers must have a vision for their activities in order for those activities to succeed. Importantly, organizers and leaders must show enthusiasm to encourage participants, which is especially important on a probation program. Transparency is also one of the important reasons for the current success of the Northeastern Thai probation offices and this must be continued for ongoing development and trust in the program (Rueantong, 1992).

It is important for the probation offices to embrace the participation of local people and organisations alike (Pattarasongwon, 2005). This participation ensures that the opinions of all related parties are heard and, in the case of the probation program, could highlight concerns in the local community that may have been overlooked by the Ministry of Justice and the probation officers.

## Conclusion and recommendations

To sum up, this was a qualitative investigation aimed at studying the integration of cultural components to rehabilitate offenders in Northeastern Thailand. Data were collected from September 2013 to December 2014 by survey, observation, interview and focus group discussion. The current conditions and problems with the probation program were examined in six areas: the rule of law, ethics, transparency, participation, re-



sponsibility and organization value. Results showed that the probation office organises activities to help offenders develop their levels of morality, responsibility and social participation in order to allow the transition back into society. However, there are not enough staff members to work with the offenders. The integration of cultural components to rehabilitate offenders can be achieved in three ways: 1) probation and examination; 2) care, correction and rehabilitation; 3) community activities. The organizational culture of the probation office helps generate respect and promote ethical behaviour in offenders.

Based on the results of this investigation, the research team wishes to make the following suggestions:

1. The Ministry of Justice should consider increasing its employment of probation officers to relax the strain placed on the current system and improve the quality of the probation project.

2. Further investigation should be conducted to consider the success of the probation program in Northeastern Thailand.

3. Further investigation should be conducted to consider the satisfaction of offenders, probation officers and local community members in the work of the probation office in Northeastern Thailand.

4. Probation offices in other provinces throughout Thailand should be investigated and the results of those investigations subsequently compared with the results of this study.

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