

A Model of Successful Local Governance in Ethnically Diverse Highland Communities: A Case Study of Ban Luang Subdistrict Municipality, Chom Thong District, Chiang Mai Province^{**}

Nattapong Kantaros^{1*}

Amarita Santivong²

Wit Settakorn³

Jirawat Metasuttirat⁴

(Received: 31 August 2025; Revised: 2 October 2025; Accepted: 7 October 2025)

Abstract

The objectives of this research article are: (1) To study and analyze the key success factors in local governance within ethnically diverse highland areas of Ban Luang Subdistrict Municipality, Chom Thong District, Chiang Mai Province, and (2) To propose a model of successful local governance in ethnically diverse highland areas of Ban Luang Subdistrict Municipality, Chom Thong District, Chiang Mai, The study employed a qualitative case study design, incorporating in-depth interviews and focus group discussions. Data were collected from 25 participants, including municipal executives, council members, municipal officials, stakeholders, and representatives from local networks. Semi-structured interview and focus group protocols were used as research instruments. The data were analyzed and interpreted using content analysis, and methodological triangulation was employed

¹ Assistant Professor Dr., Department of Politics and Government, Faculty of Humanities and Social Sciences, Lampang Rajabhat University

*Corresponding Author Email: nattapong@lpru.ac.th

² Assistant Professor, Department of Politics and Government, Faculty of Humanities and Social Sciences, Lampang Rajabhat University, Corresponding Author Email: amarita_s@hotmail.com

³ Assistant Professor Dr., Department of Policy implementation and public law, Faculty of Humanities and Social Sciences, Lampang Rajabhat University, Email: w.sattakorn@gmail.com

⁴ Associate Professor Dr., School of Management Science, Sukhothai Thammathirat Open University, Email: jirawatmeta@gmail.com

^{**} This article is part of the research title “Success Factors in Good Local Governance and Public Health Innovation Projects: A Case Study of Ban Luang Subdistrict Municipality, Chom Thong District, Chiang Mai Province.”

to ensure validity and reliability through comparisons of data from document analysis, interviews, and focus group discussions.

The findings reveal four key success factors for local governance in Ban Luang's ethnically diverse highland setting: (1) strong teamwork and collaborative operations; (2) a cohesive organizational culture; (3) active community and local authority participation; and (4) support from local and ethnic networks. Building on these results, the study proposes a model of successful local governance comprising: (1) leadership as a pivotal driver; (2) effective organization and administration; (3) robust networking; and (4) broad-based collaboration and public participation. However, persistent challenges remain, including legal and regulatory constraints, budgetary limitations, and shortages of human resources. The study recommends strengthening engagement with local agencies and advancing multi-sectoral partnerships to consolidate cooperative and participatory governance.

Keywords: Local Governance, Highland Communities, Ethnic Diversity, Model of Successful, Ban Luang Subdistrict Municipality

1. Introduction

Local governance is essential in public administration at the grassroots level. Local administrative organizations, as the governmental entities closest to the populace, possess a distinctive capacity to understand the contextual and cultural intricacies of the communities they serve. Efficient local government, based on decentralized administration, facilitates responsive public service delivery, community engagement, and the settlement of intricate local issues in accordance with the genuine requirements of local communities. The delegation of administrative power to local governments is a crucial element of democratic governance. It enables central governments to concentrate on critical national responsibilities while granting local governments the authority to oversee matters that directly impact individuals' everyday lives, including public health, social welfare, education, infrastructure, and local economic growth. Scholars such as Borwornsak Uwanno (2001) have stated that decentralization improves service delivery efficiency, encourages public participation, and cultivates a more equitable power dynamic between central and local authorities.

Good Local Governance emphasizes the significance of efficient and accountable administrative frameworks, bolstered by robust civil participation. Damrong Watthana (2001) asserts that effective decentralization enhances the resilience of local administrations and fosters collaboration with various social sectors. Patcharee Siroros (2015) further develops this concept by analyzing policy networks and governance mechanisms that facilitate local administrations in addressing citizens' demands more efficiently.

Orathai Kokpol (2016) suggested a paradigm for urban government, asserting that urban expansion is unavoidable and that local administrative entities are essential in providing public services, including waste management, urban planning, and local economic development. She noted that urban growth in Thailand often lacks systematic planning, leading to problems such as congestion and socioeconomic disparity. Researchers such as Akarawin Sasanapitak and Noppon Akahat (2016) advocated the integration of New Public Management (NPM) principles into local governance to promote economic, social, and cultural development through stakeholder collaboration.

In Thailand, the decentralization effort that started in 1997 led to both empirical and conceptual work that linked efficient local governance to strong local authorities and a strong civil society (Wattana, 2001; Charoenmuang, 2008). Recent studies underscore networked management and cross-sector collaboration as catalysts for multidimensional local development, while synchronizing municipal practices with people-centered principles of good governance (Siroros, 2015; Sasanapitak & Akahat, 2016; Panyaruno & Yaso, 2018; Boonratmaitree & Nonthachit, 2016; Ngammeeesri, 2016; Panyasiri, 2017).

The challenges are particularly pronounced in highland areas with diverse ethnic groups. Linguistic and cultural diversity, unequal access to services, state-community interactions, and conflicts over natural resources make everyday administration more complex. Evidence underscores the necessity for culturally sensitive, inclusive strategies that ensure meaningful engagement of ethnic communities, tailor communication to local languages and customs, and harmonize traditional institutions with formal structures; bilingual and multi-cultural “intermediary” leaders are particularly crucial for fostering trust and legitimacy (Cornwall, 2008; Putnam, Leonardi, & Nonetti, 1993).

Ban Luang Subdistrict Municipality in Chom Thong District, Chiang Mai, exemplifies effective governance in a mountainous, ethnically diverse area of 19 communities and 13,715 residents. Its population includes Thai lowlanders, Karen, and Hmong groups, posing unique challenges for equitable service delivery and inclusive engagement. The municipality faces pressing health issues, particularly inadequate care for the elderly, bedridden, and disabled, along with suicide rates above the national average. Nevertheless, Ban Luang Subdistrict Municipality has distinguished itself through innovative health initiatives aligned with community needs and has gained national recognition for excellence in local governance.

Consequently, Ban Luang leverages local resources and community assets to foster fair income distribution, infrastructure enhancement, and sustained advancements in quality of life. Ban Luang Subdistrict Municipality in Chom Thong District, Chiang Mai Province, exemplifies good local administration by striving to provide high-quality public services that cater to the demands of its ethnically diverse highland people. The municipality has two urgent challenges: (1) public health

concerns, particularly with the elderly, bedridden individuals, and people with disabilities who receive insufficient care, and (2) an escalating suicide rates in the subdistrict. Due to its intricate ethnic diversity, physical isolation, and administrative achievements, Ban Luang is a significant case study for examining how local governments in highland ethnic groups might attain administrative success. This paper aims to uncover the essential success elements and offer a model of efficient local government applicable to comparable highland communities across Thailand and beyond.

2. Research Objectives

2.1 To study and analyze the key success factors in local governance within ethnically diverse highland areas of Ban Luang Subdistrict Municipality, Chom Thong District, Chiang Mai

2.2 To propose a model of successful local governance in ethnically diverse highland areas of Ban Luang Subdistrict Municipality, Chom Thong District, Chiang Mai

3. Research Methods

3.1 Population and Sampling

This qualitative case study allowed an in-depth understanding of local governance dynamics in ethnically diverse highland areas. (Yin, 2018) The research was conducted in Ban Luang Subdistrict Municipality, Chom Thong District, Chiang Mai Province. Data were gathered via in-depth interviews and focus group discussions with 25 purposively selected key informants, divided into three categories: (1) municipal executives and council members, consisting of 10 participants; (2) representatives from subdistrict government officials and staff, comprising 8 participants; and (3) representatives from local networks and community leaders, totaling 7 participants.

Participants were selected using purposive sampling to ensure relevance. Municipal executives and council members were chosen for their policy and leadership roles, while government officials and staff were included for their operational experience. Local network representatives and community leaders were selected for their cultural knowledge and involvement with local government.

For focus group discussions, participants were grouped to promote diverse perspectives across gender, age, ethnicity, and responsibilities, with priority given to individuals with at least three years of involvement in local governance or community activities to enhance the reliability and richness of the findings.

3.2 Research Tools

The research utilized two main tools: (1) semi-structured interview protocols designed to engage key informants and (2) focus group discussion frameworks aimed at stimulating dialogue among the three groups on various relevant topics.

3.3 Data Collection

Data were collected using a qualitative case study design focused on Ban Luang Subdistrict Municipality, Chom Thong District, Chiang Mai Province. Participants were purposively selected to reflect diverse roles and experiences in local governance, yielding a sample of 25 key informants. Using semi-structured interview protocols and focus group discussion guides, the research team conducted in-depth, one-to-one interviews and facilitated focus groups to elicit collective views within and across stakeholder categories.

3.4 Data Analysis

The data were analyzed using content analysis aligned with the study objectives. Data triangulation was applied in two forms: data triangulation, which drew on multiple sources including interviews, focus groups, and document analysis, and methodological triangulation, which involved cross-validation between individual interviews and group discussions. These approaches were employed to ensure data accuracy and enhance the reliability of the results through clear summaries and conclusions. (Creswell & Creswell, 2018)

The research categorized coding into three groups, each represented by an acronym for interviews and data summarization, as shown in Table 1.

Table 1 coding, scheme used for interviews and focus group participants

Key informants	Total	Code
Municipal executives and council members	10	A1-10
Representatives from Subdistrict government officials and staff	8	B1-8
Representatives from local networks and community leaders	7	C1-7
Total	25	

4. Research Results

Context of Ban Luang Subdistrict Municipality: Ethnically Diverse Highland Areas. Ban Luang Subdistrict Municipality is in Chom Thong District, Chiang Mai Province, covering an area of approximately 364 square kilometers, making it the largest local administrative unit within the district. The terrain is predominantly highland, characterized by mountainous and foothill areas, with parts extending into Doi Inthanon National Park. These geographic characteristics present considerable challenges to land use, infrastructural development, and accessibility to public services. Furthermore, the municipality is ethnically diverse, encompassing many villages composed of lowland native Thai communities, Karen (Pga K'nyau), Hmong, and other ethnic groups. This multi-ethnic composition necessitates culturally sensitive governance approaches that address differences in language, belief systems, customs, and socio-economic conditions, making inclusive participation and equitable access to public services a critical responsibility of the local government.

In summary, Ban Luang Subdistrict Municipality presents a complex and compelling governance context marked by geographic remoteness, infrastructural limitations, and rich ethnic diversity. These factors demand a local governance model that is participatory, culturally responsive, and adaptable to the highland environment. The municipality's experience offers valuable insights into the challenges and potential of effective local administration in ethnically diverse highland communities of Thailand.

Results of the study according to Objective 1) To study and analyze the key success factors in local governance within ethnically diverse highland areas of Ban Luang Subdistrict Municipality, Chom Thong District, Chiang Mai Province.

The study found that the key success factors in local governance in the ethnically diverse highland of Ban Luang Subdistrict Municipality are as follows:

1) Strong Teamwork and Collaborative Operations: The success of Ban Luang Subdistrict Municipality's governance is significantly driven by strong teamwork and organizational commitment. The administrators and permanent civil servants work collaboratively with clearly defined shared goals. A participatory working environment is promoted, where all members contribute

actively, and a culture of collaboration is deeply embedded within the organization. This can be evident from the information obtained from the interview as follows.

“The success of our municipality comes from strong teamwork. Everyone understands their roles and works together to achieve our common goals.” (A1, November 29, 2023)

“Leaders give importance to participation from staff at every level, whether in public services or community development projects.” (B4, November 29, 2023)

“The success of many projects is a result of collective efforts. It’s not only the municipality but also the community working hand in hand.” (C6, November 29, 2023)

These quotations demonstrate that Ban Luang Subdistrict Municipality’s governance is strongly rooted in teamwork and collaborative operations. Administrators, civil servants, and community representatives share clearly defined goals and work collectively to achieve them.

2) Organizational Culture: The municipality has fostered a strong organizational culture based on shared values and a spirit of unity. Team members work flexibly and harmoniously, with high levels of dedication and mutual support. This culture emphasizes teamwork, commitment, and alignment with the municipality’s shared goals. Effective leadership, strong staff morale, and a unified mission have played crucial roles in achieving outstanding outcomes. This can be evident from the information obtained from the interview as follows.

“Our municipality has built a culture of unity. Both executives and staff are committed to working together for the benefit of the community.” (A3, November 29, 2023)

“We support each other and feel like part of the same family. This makes us more dedicated to our work.” (B2, November 29, 2023)

“The municipality’s culture of cooperation makes collaboration with the community smoother and more effective.” (C6, November 29, 2023)

Ban Luang's effective governance is strongly influenced by its organizational culture, grounded in unity, shared values, and mutual support. Executives, staff, and community members alike embrace a spirit of belonging and collaboration. This culture not only enhances dedication and responsibility within the organization but also strengthens cooperation with the community, resulting in more effective governance and sustainable outcomes.

3) Community and Local Authority Participation: Ban Luang Subdistrict Municipality actively encourages citizen engagement in local governance. Community members are involved as stakeholders who support municipal operations, disseminate information, and help build public understanding. They also offer feedback and suggestions directly to municipal leaders. A participatory process is in place to involve local citizens in planning and implementation. Furthermore, local authorities such as village heads and subdistrict chiefs work closely and continuously with the municipality, reinforcing trust and cooperation. This can be evident from the information obtained from the interview as follows.

"We always open channels for local citizens to share their feedback and suggestions directly with municipal leaders. This helps us adjust our plans to match the real needs of the people." (A4, November 29, 2023)

"We encourage community participation in planning and implementation. Citizens are not only informed but also actively join in activities and decision-making." (B2, November 29, 2023)

"We are invited to be part of municipal planning. Our suggestions are listened to, and we feel like partners rather than outsiders." (C3, November 29, 2023)

From the interview, it is evident that citizens are actively encouraged to provide feedback and participate in planning and implementation processes alongside municipal staff. This inclusive engagement fosters trust, strengthens partnerships, and contributes to more effective and sustainable local governance.

4) Support from Local and Ethnic Networks: Given the highland geography and ethnic diversity of Ban Luang, successful governance and project implementation depend on strong support from local networks. These networks often have close access to remote villages and can communicate effectively with ethnic communities using local languages. The strength of community networks in Ban Luang is instrumental in helping the municipality reach its goals, particularly in executing innovative programs that require deep cultural understanding and logistical cooperation in hard-to-access areas. This can be evident from the information obtained from the interview as follows.

“When implementing projects in ethnic communities, we rely on local leaders who know the culture and language, which makes cooperation much smoother.” (A6 and A8, November 29, 2023)

“We work closely with ethnic leaders who can explain municipal policies in local dialects. This helps reduce misunderstandings and increases participation.” (B1 and B7, November 29, 2023)

“As community leaders, we help the municipality coordinate with villagers in remote areas. People trust us because we share the same culture and background.” (Focus Group C, November 29, 2023)

From the interview, Local leaders and ethnic representatives act as cultural and linguistic bridges, helping connect the municipality with remote communities. This trust-based cooperation enhances communication, increases participation, and ensures effective project implementation.

The success of local governance in Ban Luang Subdistrict Municipality can be attributed to four key factors. First, strong teamwork and organizational commitment among administrators and civil servants ensure effective coordination toward shared goals. Second, the municipality has fostered an organizational culture characterized by unity, flexibility, and dedication, with leadership playing a pivotal role in sustaining collective motivation. Third, active participation from local people and authorities enhances transparency, responsiveness, and shared ownership of development initiatives. Finally, the municipality benefits from robust local and ethnic support networks, which are essential for addressing the challenges of highland geography and cultural

diversity particularly in reaching remote areas and implementing inclusive, community driven innovations.

The findings related to objective 2 are as follows: 2) To propose a success model of local governance in ethnically diverse highland areas of Ban Luang Subdistrict Municipality, Chom Thong District, Chiang Mai Province.

We can present the finding as follows:

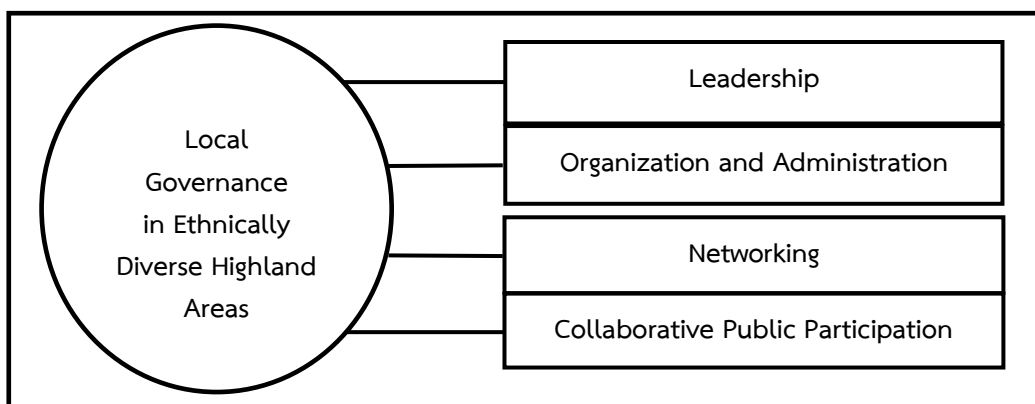


Figure 1 A Model of Successful Local Governance in Ethnically Diverse Highland Areas
Source: From the research

According to Figure 1, an analysis of the key success factors in local governance in the ethnically diverse highland of Ban Luang Subdistrict Municipality reveals a model of successful local governance comprising four essential components. These components collectively reflect the distinctive factors that contribute to effective governance in multi-ethnic highland communities. The four key components are as follows:

1) Leadership is a pivotal element affecting the efficacy of local governance in ethnically diverse highland areas. Within the theoretical frameworks of governance and New Public Management, leadership is crucial for addressing intricate and evolving local concerns through participatory and community-oriented systems. Leaders in communities with significant ethnic, linguistic, and cultural diversity need to be well-integrated, culturally aware, and able to bring disparate groups together. These leaders serve as vital connectors

between governmental bodies and ethnic populations, building trust, enabling clear communication, and facilitating prompt and context-sensitive decision-making. These leadership techniques reflect governance philosophies that support decentralized power and an engaged citizenry. Therefore, strong leadership is not only a managerial strength but also a strategic means of ensuring legitimacy, fostering civic involvement, and supporting long-term, inclusive development. This is evident from the following interviews, as follows:

“Strong leadership here means being a connector linking the government and diverse communities, solving conflicts, and making timely decisions that fit our situation.” (Focus Group A, November 29, 2023)

“In our highland context, leaders must understand local cultures and traditions. Without that sensitivity, policies cannot be accepted by the people.” (Focus Group B, November 29, 2023)

2) Organization and Administration Ban Luang Subdistrict Municipality has established a strong organizational culture and shared values that prioritize collective work, flexibility, and unity. Administrators and civil servants operate with clearly defined common goals and a team-based ethos, underpinned by effective leadership and high staff commitment. These arrangements yield robust internal coordination and consistently strong performance in service delivery across a challenging highland environment. This is evident from the information obtained through the interviews, as follows:

“We support each other and feel like part of the same family. This makes us more dedicated to our work.” (Focus Group B, November 29, 2023)

“Our municipality has built a culture of unity. Both executives and staff are committed to working together for the benefit of the community.” (Focus Group A, November 29, 2023)

3) Networking Given its mountainous geography and multi-ethnic. The municipality’s success depends on dense, place-based networks. Partnerships with highland community organizations and ethnic leaders—many of whom serve as bilingual cultural brokers—extend the municipality’s reach into remote villages, enable culturally appropriate communication, and facilitate

access to diverse groups. These networks are pivotal for implementing innovative programs and mobilizing resources where formal channels are limited. This is evident from the information obtained through the interviews, as follows:

“Local and ethnic networks are very important for us. They help connect the municipality with remote villages and ensure that information reaches people effectively.” (Focus Group A, November 29, 2023)

“We work closely with ethnic leaders who can explain municipal policies in local dialects. This helps reduce misunderstandings and increases participation.” (Focus Group B, November 29, 2023)

“As community leaders, we help the municipality coordinate with villagers in remote areas. People trust us because we share the same culture and background.” (Focus Group C, November 29, 2023)

4) Collaboration Public participation is institutionalized as co-production. engaged as stakeholders, disseminate information, build peer understanding, and provide direct feedback to municipal executives; participatory processes invite them to co-plan and co-implement municipal activities on an ongoing basis. Territorial authorities collaborate closely and continuously with the municipality, reinforcing trust, legitimacy, and continuity of joint action. This is evident from interviews data as follows:

“We always open channels for local citizens to share their feedback and suggestions directly with municipal leaders. This helps us adjust our plans to match the real needs of the people.” (Focus Group A, November 29, 2023)

“We encourage community participation in planning and implementation. Citizens are not only informed but also actively join in activities and decision-making.” (Focus Group B, November 29, 2023)

“We are invited to be part of municipal planning. Our suggestions are listened to, and we feel like partners rather than outsiders.” (Focus Group C, November 29, 2023)

According to the study, a model of successful local governance in ethnically diverse highland areas consists of four key success factors, which are leadership, organization and administration, networking, and collaboration. Strong

leadership ensures cultural sensitivity and legitimacy, while effective organizational systems reinforce unity and performance. Dense community and ethnic networks bridge cultural divides and extend municipal reach, and institutionalized collaboration fosters inclusive participation and trust.

5. Conclusion and Discussion

5.1 Conclusion

This study has two objectives: (1) to study and analyze the key success factors in local governance within ethnically diverse highland areas of Ban Luang Subdistrict Municipality, and (2) to propose a success model of local governance suited to such contexts.

With respect to Objective 1, the findings identify four interrelated success factors that underpin effective governance in Ban Luang. First, strong teamwork and collaborative operations ensure administrators, civil servants, and community representatives work toward clearly defined shared goals. Second, a robust organizational culture—rooted in unity, flexibility, and commitment—fosters internal dedication and strengthens external cooperation. Third, community and local authority participation institutionalizes inclusivity, transparency, and responsiveness, reinforcing mutual trust between citizens and municipal executives. Fourth, the municipality's ability to leverage support from local and ethnic networks enables effective communication across linguistic and cultural divides, while facilitating program implementation in hard-to-reach areas. Collectively, these factors demonstrate that governance in ethnically diverse highland areas depends on building trust, inclusivity, and cultural responsiveness through active collaboration.

Addressing Objective 2, the study proposes a model of successful local governance in ethnically diverse highland areas comprising four essential components: leadership, organization and administration, networking, and collaboration. Leadership plays a pivotal role in linking government institutions with multi-ethnic communities, fostering legitimacy and cultural sensitivity. Organization and administration reinforce performance through unity and a shared sense of mission. Networking with community-based and ethnic leaders

extends the municipality's reach, ensuring policies are communicated effectively and accepted locally. Finally, collaboration institutionalizes co-production, empowering citizens and territorial authorities to jointly design and implement development initiatives. The model underscores that sustainable and inclusive governance in ethnically diverse highland areas requires not only managerial capacity but also relational and cultural competencies that bridge state structures with diverse communities.

5.2 Discussion

The findings of this study underscore the centrality of collaborative integration with diverse network partners—both citizen groups and civil society organizations—in advancing local governance and innovation initiatives. This outcome aligns with the principles of good governance, which emphasize fairness, transparency, accountability, and long-term stability in public administration. As noted by the King Prajadhipok's Institute (2023), good governance in Thailand is operationalized through building linkages and cooperation across government and non-governmental actors to achieve more efficient and responsive management. The results of the present study reaffirm this perspective: integrated collaboration is a critical mechanism through which local agencies mobilize shared resources and collective capacities to achieve their missions effectively.

The findings highlight that Ban Luang's governance success stems from both structural coordination and a culture of shared values and collaboration. This resonates with Thai discourses on good governance, which emphasize fostering a culture of ethical conduct and shared values in public agencies. In Ban Luang, teamwork, mutual support, and effective communication form the cultural foundation of both administrative management and innovation projects. These elements demonstrate how organizational culture functions as a core operating mechanism that enhances efficiency and drives successful outcomes.

A distinctive strength of Ban Luang Subdistrict Municipality lies in its integrated collaboration with relevant network partners across both citizen and civil society sectors. This strategy accords with Damrong Watthana's (2001) principles of local administration, which stress decentralization, the strengthening

of local administrative systems, and the empowerment of civil society. As such, the municipality's approach illustrates how sound management, decentralization, and civic engagement interact to reinforce local capacities and maximize project effectiveness. The case of Ban Luang thus provides empirical evidence that participatory and collaborative approaches are indispensable for local development and for advancing inclusive governance.

The discussion can also be situated within the theoretical framework of New Public Management (NPM). As articulated by Hood (1991), Osborne and Gaebler (1992), Pollitt & Bouckaert (2011), and Peters (1998), New Public Management (NPM) promotes efficiency, value for money, and managerial innovations in public administration. The findings from Ban Luang reveal several points of convergence with New Public Management (NPM). First, in terms of human resource management, the municipality's innovative projects benefited significantly from competent staff who worked collectively in teams, demonstrating that organizational capacity and skill development are crucial to effective performance. Second, the integration of information and communication technologies (ICT) in service delivery particularly in public health illustrates how digital tools expand operational capabilities and enhance transparency. Together, these elements illustrate how New Public Management (NPM) principles can be contextualized and adapted to highland municipalities with diverse populations. Importantly, these findings support the success model developed in this study. (As show in Figure 1)

The model comprises four interrelated components—leadership, organization and administration, networking, and collaboration—that collectively capture the distinctive dynamics of governance in multi-ethnic highland areas. Each element reflects both theoretical underpinnings and practical mechanisms observed in Ban Luang. Leadership ensures cultural sensitivity and legitimacy; organization and administration reinforce unity and performance; networking bridges linguistic and cultural divides; and collaboration institutionalizes participatory processes. Together, these findings are consistent with the study of Laoluecha (2023). Collectively, these factors provide a comprehensive framework for understanding and enhancing local governance in ethnically diverse contexts.

Finally, the theoretical implications of this study demonstrate how concepts of good governance and New Public Management (NPM) can be contextualized within multi-ethnic, highland environments, offering an enriched understanding of governance in culturally diverse settings. Practically, the Ban Luang model provides a transferable framework for other local government organizations seeking to strengthen governance capacity, improve service delivery, and foster inclusive development through leadership, organizational culture, network engagement, and collaborative co-production.

6. Suggestions

6.1 Suggestions

First, insights from the Ban Luang case can inform Local Administrative Organization management planning, for example, by using the findings to design capacity-building activities and projects that match each agency's context

Second, LAOs elsewhere can treat these success factors as a practical playbook for strengthening operations and managerial performance, adapting them to local conditions.

Third, since the study focuses on one subdistrict municipality, transfer and modeling should consider fit with the receiving organization's type and size.

6.2 Suggestions for Future Research

First, as a case specific analysis of Ban Luang, the findings may not generalize across contexts, but the case provides a useful anchor for cross-site comparison and theory building.

Second, to advance theory on Local Organization management, subsequent studies should sample a broader mix of organizational sizes and forms.

Third, methodologically, future research should not only design robust tools and purposively select knowledgeable informants to capture holistic determinants of managerial success but also adopt more strategic approaches such as comparative case studies or mixed methods designs.

7. New Knowledge

This study developed a model of successful local governance for ethnically diverse highland areas. The findings indicate that, in addition to “decentralization,” the success of local government organizations in such contexts can be achieved through four key mechanisms: (1) culturally responsive leadership that acts as an intermediary to build trust between the state and diverse communities; (2) a standardized, team-based organizational culture that aligns goals while enabling flexible and context-sensitive decision-making; (3) spatially embedded networks—particularly those grounded in local culture—combined with effective communication between local government organizations and community networks; and (4) collaborative partnerships that harness the capacities of both public and other sectors.

The contribution of this study lies in contextualizing governance models within ethnically diverse highland areas, a domain that has received limited scholarly attention. While previous research has emphasized decentralization, good governance, and participatory models in general, this study extends those frameworks by demonstrating how ethnic diversity and highland socio-cultural dynamics uniquely shape the mechanisms of local governance. The model therefore not only contributes to theoretical debates on governance by integrating cultural and spatial dimensions but also offers practical guidance for local authorities in multi-ethnic and geographically complex areas.

References

- Boonratmaitree, A., Nonthachit, W., & Ngammesri, T. (2016). New paradigms in local administration. *Thai Journal of Public Administration*, 14(2), 111–127. [in Thai]
- Charoenmuang, T. (2008). *Theory and concepts: Local government and local administration (Part I)*. Kobfai Publishing Project. [in Thai]
- Cornwall, A. (2008). Unpacking ‘participation’: Models, meanings and practices. *Community Development Journal*, 43(3), 269–283.
- Creswell, J. W., & Creswell, J. D. (2018). *Research design: Qualitative, Quantitative, and Mixed Methods Approaches* (5th ed.). SAGE Publications.
- Hood, C. (1991). A public management for all seasons? *Public Administration*, 69(1), 3–19.
- King Prajadhipok’s Institute. (2023). *Good governance*. Retrieved June 11, 2025, from <http://wiki.kpi.ac.th/index.php?title=ธรรมาภิบาล> [in Thai]
- Kokpol, O. (2016). *Urbanization: When “the city” becomes the central challenge of modern local governance*. King Prajadhipok’s Institute. [in Thai]
- Laoluecha, T. (2023). Components of Integrated Management. *Journal of Public Administration Chiang Rai Rajabhat University*, 6(2), 17–32.
- Osborne, D., & Gaebler, T. (1992). *Reinventing government: How the entrepreneurial spirit is transforming the public sector*. Plume.
- Panyaruno, A., & Yaso, N. (2018). Thai local administration under the Thailand 4.0 context: Opportunities and challenges. *Journal of Social Sciences, Mahamakut Buddhist University*, 1(1), 9–18. [in Thai]
- Panyasiri, C. (2017). Paradigms of Thai public sector management: A comparison between New Public Management (NPM) and New Public Service (NPS). *Siam Academic Journal*, 18(1), 1–20. [in Thai]
- Putnam, R. D., Leonardi, R., & Nonetti, R. Y. (1993). *Making Democracy Work: Civic Traditions in Modern Italy*. Princeton University Press.
- Peters, B. G. (1998). *Managing horizontal government: The politics of coordination*. Canadian Centre for Management Development.

- Pollitt, C., & Bouckaert, G. (2011). *Public management reform: A comparative analysis—New public management, governance, and the neo-Weberian state*. Oxford University Press.
- Sasanapitak, A., & Akahat, N. (2016). Governance: Concept and Development to Local Government. *ARU Research Journal Humanities and Social Sciences*, 3(3), 63–70. [in Thai]
- Siroros, P. (2015). [Policy networks and governance management]. In K. Tejapira (Ed.), *Opening the public policy box: Multiple perspectives on the study of contemporary public policy*. Faculty of Political Science, Thammasat University Textbook and Publications Project. [in Thai]
- Uwanno, B. (2001). *Building good governance in Thai society*. Winyuchon. [in Thai]
- Wattana, D. (2001). Local governance. *Damrong Rajanubhab Journal*, 1(2), 37–56. [in Thai]
- Yin, R. K. (2018). *Case study research and applications: Design and methods* (6th ed.). SAGE Publications.