

GURU SPEAK: EDUCATION KEY TO CARRYING THE DAY IN FRAMING POLICY

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Public-policy students have been indoctrinated that policy success depends crucially on building coalitions. In this regard, two key components of coalition-building are effective two-way communication and productive relationships with policy stakeholders. The more stakeholders understand why a particular policy is necessary, the more comfortable they will be lending support, especially when there is trust and a track record of good decision making in the eyes of stakeholders and the general public.

Surely, issues, agenda and stakeholders relating to a public policy evolve over time, hence managing communications and relationships need to be forward-looking. Even though governance and transparency can to some extent ensure success in building new and strengthening existing coalitions amidst changes, the real key to success lies in educating future policy stakeholders.

Education in new policy and its underlying concepts takes a long time to bear fruit and once stakeholders and the public are knowledgeable about the issues concerned, they will adjust their behavior in parallel with a policy change. Moreover, they can anticipate a change in policy in advance once pre-announced triggers of policy change are close to being breached. The concept of fiscal sustainability and inflation targeting are some well know examples of this. In this regard, I should say that the Bank of Thailand has been earnestly providing education since the introduction of inflation targeting framework to all parts of society, including students in universities throughout Thailand.

Mindful that education is the key to better and deeper understanding of monetary and financial-institution policies, the Bank of Thailand has since 2004 undertaken several annual projects to educate teachers, students and journalists about economics and economic policies and related roles and responsibilities of the central bank. Last week, a new project, called Sethathat in Thai, which can be translated as "Economic vision", was launched by Governor Tarisa Watanagase in connection with six Thai universities.

This new project aims to foster the interest and capacity of undergraduate and postgraduate students in writing research papers about various issues relating to the Thai economy. It is hoped that as these students enter the workforce and climb their career ladders their better understanding of the

central bank's roles will mean wider public support for monetary and financial-institution policies designed for the benefits of society at large.

Over the years, in addition to these educational projects, the central bank has welcomed representatives from various professions under the program called BOT visits. On these occasions, our visitors heard firsthand from BOT top executives on the latest economic, financial and policy developments. Together with frank exchanges of views, better understanding of the thinking of the central bank and various stakeholders has been achieved. Communications and relationships are two sides of the same coin when it comes to coalition-building for successful policy-making and implementation. Thus you can look forward to new progress on these fronts from the Bank of Thailand in the year ahead.

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