The Learning Process for Construction and Development of the Network of Community Organization for Self-Reliance in Thailand

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Abstract: This study examine, the community organization enterprise network learning process leading to change, to fine components of community organization learning groups as factors affecting changes and to examine community organization enterprise models of knowledge management. Three community organization groups with the network design participatory action research. All the three groups' learning network connection models were originated by outside agencies for change, rather than by groups themselves. The components affecting learning were: efficient governance of community enterprise groups for self-development/reliance based on the goods type and organizations as factors affecting changes included: participatory working, building agreements, pushing plans to policy, various supporting activities and group leaders and research team emphasized the overall research. And the knowledge management models were congruent with the group context of the learning process rather than creating, storing or sharing/applying knowledge.

Key words: Learning process, construction and development, network of community organization, self-reliance, Northeastern Thailand

INTRODUCTION

The development of Thailand during the past four decades has emphasized the development in specific fields and not in totality of the needs of the country. The development projects and planning was conducted by copying Western countries regardless of congruence with the local conditions of Thailand. Rapid industrialization in Thailand has led to acute farm labor shortages, rising labor costs and upward pressure on the overall costs of agricultural production (David and Megan, 1998). Past development projects have created many problems and complications. The level of social violence is too much to bear for individuals, community, state and private sector. It must rely on the public sector or the civic society sector to cooperate in seeking means of solving the nation's crisis. It must begin with action together with the state and examining the state performance purposefully. There must be civic society operation because the community in all such aspects as beliefs, moves, thinking systems, consumption, exchanges, politics and government and wisdoms. Self-reliance in local indigenous knowledge that people used to have concerning the four necessities for maintaining the living of humans, namely food, clothing, shelter and medicines, used to be created by the community in the past. But, now other people in other communities create them and manage them for people in the community. Evidence gathered from international

assessments indicates that the shortage of resources for learning in Thai schools is generally perceived as a constraint to higher student achievement (Birger and Jee-Peng, 2008). The goal of the country is to reduce the dependency on external development inputs among rural communities, which will eventually create self reliance (Jorge and Tadao, 2002). Therefore, in the future we must recreate the community to have confidence, community relations, ability in self-reliance in accordance with local conditions. We must release capitalism system and turn to the community economic system or community enterprises. We must create by ourselves the body of knowledge that is meaningful and identical. And we must be able to manage the resources to have value-added resources. The focus is identifying what the community needs are, how local leadership will respond and whether all segments of the community can be reached equitably (Robert and George, 1987). The development of human potentials by directing toward people as the center of management is possible because the people have knowledge, ability and positive attitudes toward the community as a whole. People have skills in living together, love and help each other, rely on one another, rely on themselves and know the thoughts of outsiders.

They can make priority, work together as groups of community organizations, originate network of work cooperation to achieve the established goals based on the issues and learning network and extend the outcomes

from the community level to sub-district, district, province and country levels. There are channels of communication for appropriate changes. Community people can learn and know themselves in the aspects of incomes, expenses, decrement of expenses, increment of incomes and learning about resources such as humans, mobilization of fund and natural raw materials. Then, these resources are managed by making the community master plan. The concept is used to lead to meaningful activity performance, emergence of the body of knowledge eased on types of interest, with self-confidence and emergence of network on learning cooperation, research and accessing educational, political and sustainable economic policies. These can by conducted in many different forms. This study has passed the leaning process and knowledge management of the groups of community organization network in terms of community enterprises.

The purpose of this research include: to examine the learning process of the network of community organizations leading to changes in society. To find out the elements of learning, thinking methods, problem-solving, situations, resources; learning process of people, groups and community organizations as factors with effects on changes. And to examine the models of knowledge management of the network of community organizations that upgrade the body of knowledge based on the issues or needs of the community organizations.

MATERIALS AND METHODS

The areas of study are: the village community of *Ban Nam Kliang*, Sub-district Na Kha, District Wapi Pathum, Province Mahasarakham; issue to study: Community Enterprises, Increment of Values of Fruits and Mulberry. They are fruit juice, wine and community Industrial mulberry leaf tea. The village community of *Ban Wang Chan* in Sub-district Na Kha, District Wapi Prathum, Province Mahasarakham; issue to study: Matmi-Patterned Silk Weaving and Community Industrid Lai-Khit-Patterned Weaving. The village community of *Ban Lao Ratsadon* in Sub-district Pracha Phatthana, District Wapi Pathum, Province Mahasarakham; issue to study: Increment of Rice Values, Medicinal Herbs. The community people produce Tai noodles from rice and herbs. Populations, focus groups and areas used in this research are key informants.

Key informants comprise 3 groups: formal local leaders consisting of 30 village headmen, assistant village headmen, members of sub-district administrative organization, village public health volunteers and village committee members, informal local leaders consisting of 60 leaders of different groups in the organizations from each village and local indigenous knowledge as resource

persons and 90 members and committees of groups in focus organization with 30 members from each of the three groups. Data were collected from February 2004 to October 2005. The study methodology was a participatory action research, i.e., planning, action, observation and reflection. The instruments used for collecting data were: a questionnaire with indicators of success of groups of community organizations and the network of community organizations, a camera, an audio-tape recorder and field notebooks. Data were analyzed by synthesizing in a triangulation form. The results were compiled by means of a descriptive analysis according to the data using percentage and mean as supplements.

Selection of issues and focus areas (project development):
- Enter the research areas to explain the project and select focus communities, built teams, seek issues to study; seek the basic body of knowledge to prepare project participants from network of community organizations, teachers developers and community leader; explain the project, select focus areas to operate the project and prepare research teamwork in the research areas. At this stage, actual data about network of community organizations and research teamwork to participate in the project can be obtained
- Create mechanisms for working together among the academic, representatives of networks of community organizations, teachers, developer and community leers. At this stage, the research team supports creation of agreements and process of operation together of the research team to originate mechanisms for working together of the research team to originate mechanisms for working together of the research team
- Improve and make operational plans together among the academic, representatives of networks of community organizations, teachers, developers and community leaders. The team supports and promotes the research team to make operational plans together to obtain actual project operational plans. A forum was hold for brainstorming at the meeting hall of *Ban Nong Lao* School in Sub-district Pracha Phatthana, District Wapi Pathum, Province Mahasarakham. At this stage, an actual project operational plan can be obtained and it can be actually put into practice

A study of the learning process, concluding knowledge and upgrading knowledge:
- Hold a meeting to review the project operational plan for the next phase to create relevant understanding of the research team and to stimulate this team to follow the project operational plan

- Study the process of learning the focus networks of community organizations to find the prominent body of knowledge that can conclude the lessons and improve and make the actual body of knowledge to transfer and extend the outcomes to the focus groups or the interested areas that need such knowledge. Then the learn finds out weak knowledge or absent knowledge needed for developing and upgrading it to be actual body of knowledge by training or experimenting the research
- Coincide the lessons on the issues, which the focus networks of community organizations are successful and hold a forum for improving and reviewing and making the actual body of knowledge
- Upgrade the lacked Knowledge or the knowledge that needs additional development by promoting the focus networks of community organizations to hold a forum for brainstorming the seek the body of knowledge needed for developing and upgrading and planning for upgrading each network's knowledge

Improving and developing the body of knowledge and seeking quitclaims for transference and extension of outcomes:
- Improve and develop the body of knowledge to be complete, seek appropriate guidelines for transferring and extending outcomes of knowledge and seek focus areas to transfer and extend knowledge outcomes. The method used is holding a workshop meeting and discussion
- Transference and extension outcomes of tie weak body of knowledge from the networks of community organizations can be operated by determining of community organizations can be operated by determining three processes of transference and extension of the knowledge to each focus group/community. These processes are: training, study visits to model community areas and holding a forum for exchanging and learning. The purpose is to transfer and extend the outcomes from the 3 model networks of community organizations to the focus groups and communities

RESULTS

The model of connection to the learning network of the three group of community organizations was originated by outside agencies for changes rather than by the groups themselves. These groups had different models of production activities and produced different goods: Thai herbal noodles, fruit wine, mulberry leaf tea, fruit juice and cloths. Therefore, the 2 activities in connection to the 3 groups network were knowledge transference and extension of activity learning outcomes from one community to the others rather than connection among them. They often held meetings for helping one another concerning resources, raw materials, activities for promoting the groups and making conclusions on the lessons learned conservation tourism is a good example of a marketing promotion activity. The connection among the group was not quite clear. Mostly they followed the plans in the project. However, these, groups learned more about the learning process, had more experiences in collaborative working in group and network and had more extensions of clear activity outcomes. They could develop their communities continually to be stronger and able to rely on themselves.

In the community enterprises, the groups worked in parties. Academics, developers and community organization groups had to create the collaborative learning process by beginning from studying problem situations, planning, actions, checking, improving, developing and concluding the lessons. They had to urge and follow up performance outcomes in continuity through monthly, half-yearly and yearly meeting media. The following eight activities could result in success:

- Creating participatory learning process through workshop meetings on the past, the present and the future communities. This originated to help assess the learning process
- Developing potentials of all the enterprise group members according to their interests and needs to have abilities to administer and manage themselves to have efficient skills in production, marketing, finance and accounting
- Promoting and supporting production, transformation and symbols based on each type of goods for community industrial enterprises
- Important instruments for developing the members' potentials included: training, meetings workshop seminars and study visits
- Raising funds for extending products and increasing potentials of goods standards
- Extending network of raw materials and production leading to competition regarding rehabilitation of environments for balance
- Marketing and sale promotion are an important center point of community enterprise groups
- Advertising goods in different forms (Chalard, 2004)

The target groups participating in this research project had developments in learning and models of

learning from their surroundings. They connected to the body of knowledge in various community enterprises. After organizing the learning process through meetings for exchanges, training, visits to model sites, these groups showed positive changes, more transparent management, better quality products, more customers and more acceptance of goods. Efficient governance of the community enterprises groups for self-development had the following significant components: internal components included group forming, fund raising, good governance principles, transparent work performance, teamwork and participatory planning; external components included public relations, communication, knowledge transference, community development, networks, techniques of food transformation, marketing, provision of natural resources and specific techniques, i.e. writing projects.

Important lessons from operation could be summarized as follows: Villagers in the target groups had to rely on the developer and academic as their mentors to give advice and organize learning models closely and continually. The developer still had several limitations in skills and processes of working to promote organization of learning. Academics in the research team, had limited time to participate in the process. Community leaders and local indigenous knowledge leaders had to play their roles and have participation in the project operation in driving project work at a high level.

The process of learning of all the three groups was the learning by accumulating the most knowledge from past local indigenous knowledge for application to the present. It was integration into the support of continual operation from different agencies, which helped push group activities to be in continuity and to originate the continuous learning process. They upgraded the body of knowledge according the issues or the needs of the network of community organizations. For this, the research team operated systematically according to the established plans. The knowledge management models were congruent with the group context of the learning process rather than creating, storing or sharing/applying knowledge. The *Nam Kliang Wiang Chai* cooperative group could organize the learning process leading to transference and extension of learning outcomes to other people in limited issues. The group had to rely on academics and developers as mentors to give advice and organize the learning model. The other two groups could not. However, all the three groups had key informants as resource persons to transfer knowledge. The developers and 2 field research assistants had limitations of research performance together with the community. They lacked skills in working process to promote knowledge

management and lacked potential development for the developers in continuity. Academics had their roles in urging and promoting the operation to originate continuity and in conformity with the plans. The community consisted of community leaders and teachers. The community leaders played their important roles in driving the work at a high level. Local teachers participated in the process at a low level. As a result, the learning process could not provide the best operational outcomes.

All the three groups cooperatively sold their products. Mostly, they organized goods fairs selling OTOP (one Sub-district one product) goods, or fairs organized by the government agencies. The three groups exchanged raw materials. *Ban Wang Chan* cloth weaving group sold mulberry leaves to *Ban Nam Kliang* fruit juice group and the cloth weaving group bought wine and fruit juice for consumption on some special occasions. They informally exchanged problems and problem solutions, while participating in activities. They exchanged knowledge and learned from one another in the meetings with the project organizers, among their groups and with other groups. If there was a fair or a meeting, they would help each other in organizing and attending the meetings and selling goods. These groups learned about production from each other to increase choices of different groups careers. However, the groups still viewed that they had different aptitudes, particularly not any other group wanted to have an additional cloth weaving group. But *Ban Nam Kliang* group wanted to make Herbal Thai noodles.

Model

Learning: In the learning process there were components of people from various parts. Each part originated different learning processes based on their roles and participation in the project and the three groups and knowledge management, distributed accordingly to Fig. 1-3.

The body of knowledge: From the past and present learning processes, all these three group have had the body of knowledge in various aspects in production techniques and governance (Table 1).

Organizational governance: For the body of knowledge in terms of organizational governance, all the three groups had both similar and different strengths. The Herbal Thai noodle transformation group had a strength in terms good accounting and various document keeping, which could be a model of learning. At the same time, the cloth weaving group had the body of knowledge in term of
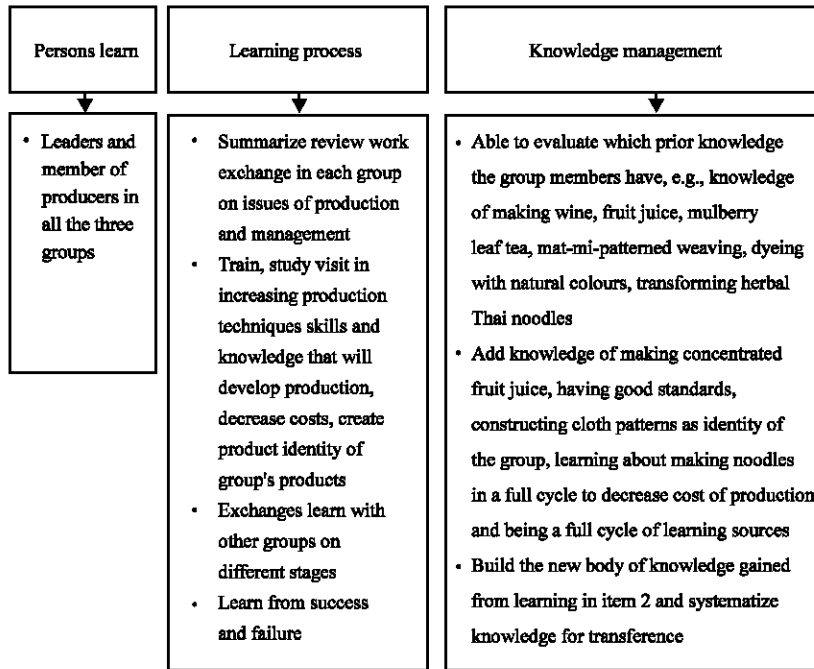
Persons learn	Learning process	Knowledge management
• Leaders and member of producers in all the three groups	• Summarize review work exchange in each group on issues of production and management • Train, study visit in increasing production techniques skills and knowledge that will develop production, decrease costs, create product identity of group's products • Exchanges learn with other groups on different stages • Learn from success and failure	• Able to evaluate which prior knowledge the group members have, e.g., knowledge of making wine, fruit juice, mulberry leaf tea, mat-mi-patterned weaving, dyeing with natural colours, transforming herbal Thai noodles • Add knowledge of making concentrated fruit juice, having good standards, constructing cloth patterns as identity of the group, learning about making noodles in a full cycle to decrease cost of production and being a full cycle of learning sources • Build the new body of knowledge gained from learning in item 2 and systematize knowledge for transference

Fig. 1: Learning for leaders and members

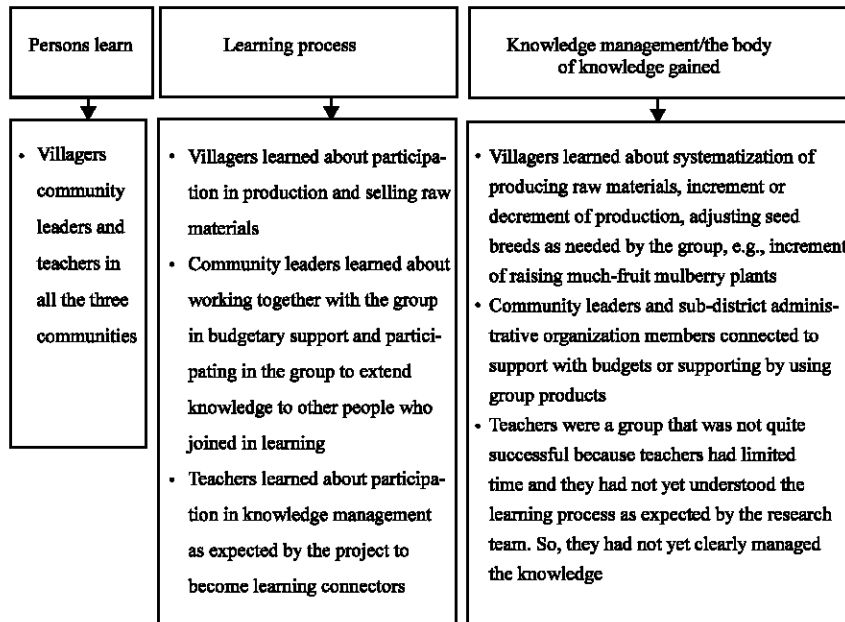| Persons learn	Learning process	Knowledge management/the body of knowledge gained
• Villagers community leaders and teachers in all the three communities	• Villagers learned about participation in production and selling raw materials • Community leaders learned about working together with the group in budgetary support and participating in the group to extend knowledge to other people who joined in learning • Teachers learned about participation in knowledge management as expected by the project to become learning connectors	• Villagers learned about systematization of producing raw materials, increment or decrement of production, adjusting seed breeds as needed by the group, e.g., increment of raising much-fruit mulberry plants • Community leaders and sub-district administrative organization members connected to support with budgets or supporting by using group products • Teachers were a group that was not quite successful because teachers had limited time and they had not yet understood the learning process as expected by the research team. So, they had not yet clearly managed the knowledge

Fig. 2: Learning for villagers community leaders and teachers

building participation among the group members and the group could bring the community to play roles in the group. For example, the group gave the importance to the village headman for participation in different training events. The leaders were interested more in the group. Several other extensions of activities that some villagers could not weave cloths could draw them to join the group, e.g., production of nontoxic rice, milled but unpolished rice, or rice mill of the group. The *Nam Kliang wiang Chai* group was the most progressed group because, it could develop itself to be registered as a juristic person (Butsabong, 2001).

Table 1: Production techniques

Nam Kliang Wiang Chai cooperative group	Ban Wang Chan cloth weaving group	Herbal Thai Noodles transformation group
Production of green mulberry leaf tea and mulberry-fruit rice slices	Mat-mi patterned and lakhit patterned silk/cotton cloth weaving with their patterns being invented by the group member themselves according to weavers imaginations and they built the pattern as the group identity: parichat-flower (dok chan) pattern	Produced folk Thai noodles in full cycle, beginning from selecting rice, fermenting flour to producing Thai noodles
Production of instant fruit juice and concentrated fruit juice from local raw materials	Dyeing with natural colors and chemical colors with a certain technique of making permanent colors	Herbal Thai noodles with screw pine leaves, butterfly pea leaves, black gatingale roots, carrots, turmerics, pumpkins using milted but unpolished rice and brown rice
Producing fruit wine, Java plums, wild grapes		Making soups for eating with noodles by using different recipes for all the four parts of Thailand
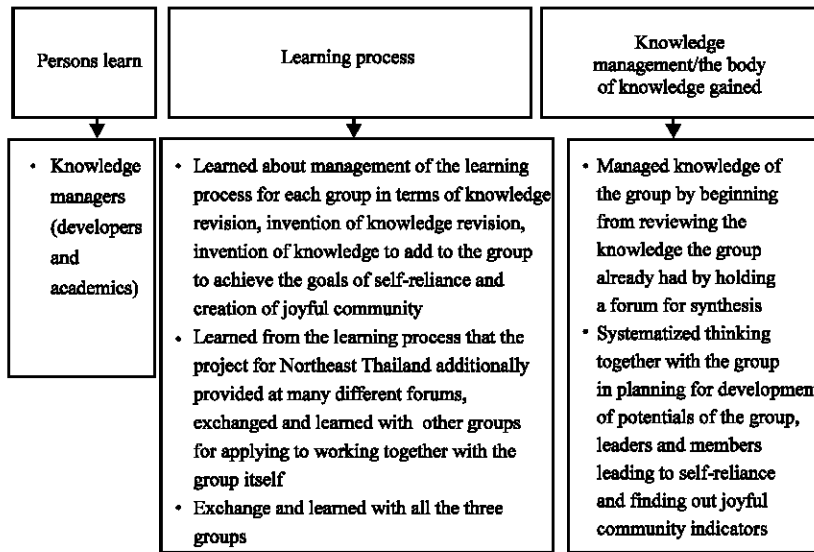
Fig. 3: Learning for knowledge managers

Connection of the learning process leading to the self-reliance concept: From the learning process and the body of knowledge mentioned above, it can seen that these three groups received lessons to be used as guidelines to upgrade learning activities leading to future-reliance. *Nam Kliang Wiang Chai* civic cooperative group for agriculture could be operated for a longer time than the other 2 groups. Thus, this group had clear operational plans and goals. The group realized the importance of product quality and marketing management of the group. At the beginning, the group had problems of inconstant product quality (e.g., mulberry leaf tea went bad in a short time and it had bacteria; fruit wine bottles exploded). After that the group members learned together and could solve these problems. Also, the group provided opportunities for group members and community members to sell local raw materials needed by the group such as mulberry leaves, mulberry fruits, wild grapes, *Robalan* fruits and *Kusana* fruits. Formerly nobody used these fruit for consumption.

Ban Wang Chan community cloth weaving group received interesting lessons and experiences in work operation. This group was formed for adhering to local indigenous knowledge of women. At present, students go to school. They leave their parents' careers behind, particularly cloth weaving. From past learning experience, the group could analyze itself and it was found that production focusing on responding to the market needs could not make the group survive. A major problem for community groups is marketing (Yujiro, 1998). So, the group members turned to the learning process and adhering to local indigenous knowledge and adequacy of labor force, which would enable the community to rely on itself. Adequacy of local labor and raw materials and technology can cause self-reliance. In addition, the group adjusted high production costs from buying expensive silk threads and high-priced chemical colors to raising silk by community members themselves and by using natural colors available in the community forest. They could add values of local raw materials, could create jobs and incomes for community people. This is a good example of self-reliance.

Herbal Thai noodles transformation group was formed after the other two groups. Efforts, sacrifice, unity

and participation of group and community leaders and group members could bring the group to self-reliance at a certain level. For the production process, the group focused on production in a full cycle, beginning from growing rice appropriate for making Thai noodles, producing fermented dough and to Thai noodles. All the mentioned above are learning from the fundamental of thinking needed for self-reliance based on potentials and what are available in each community itself.

The model of connection to the leaning network of all the three groups of community organizations went on in the form being originated by outside agencies for changes rather than by the operation of the groups themselves and they worked in the form of parties. Academics, developers and groups of community organizations had to create the collaborative learning process by beginning from studying problem situations, planning, action, checking, improving, developing and concluding the lessons. Efficient governance of groups of community enterprises for self-development according to the type of goods of community enterprises, which were concrete had these significant components: governance within the organization or so-called internal components including forming group, fund raising, good principles of governance, transparent work performance, teamwork and participatory planning. External components included: public relations, communication, transference, community development and networks, techniques of transformation, marketing, provision of natural resources and environment, sustainable economy and specific techniques, i.e., writing projects.

Important lessons from operation could be summarized as follows: villagers in the target groups of community organizations were unable to organize the learning process leading to transference and extension of outcomes to other people. They had to rely on the developer and academic as their mentors to give advice and organize learning models closely and continually. In addition, the villagers themselves still lacked organization of sequences of events that occurred in their operation because they did not take notes and collect data systematically. The developer still had several limitations in work performance in cooperation with the community such as skills and processes of working to promote organization of learning because it was new to the developer and lack of continual development of the developer's potentialities. Academics in the research team, e.g., local teacher officials had limited time to participate in the process so the lacked a medium to coordinate in organization of the baring process between villagers and the chief research team. And community leaders and local indigenous knowledge leaders had to

play their roles and have participation in the project operation to play their role in driving project research at a high level.

Five factors and conditions, which could bring about success in operation: participatory working, operation by providing opportunities for people from all walks of life to participate in the process according to their interests such as villagers, construction of agreements, conditions of working together and working together among people from various agencies and parties was extremely necessary. Plans for performing activities had to be cooperatively determined and appointments for organizing activities had to be made clearly, pushing work plans to policy such as the community master plan would cause community people to see public issues in urgently improving them, which would cause operation to be successful in a shorter time as clearly seen in these 3 target groups of community organizations, there were a variety of supporting activities, the research team tried to coordinate with development agency parties in the state and private sectors to originate activities to support the leaning process such as conservative tourism, projects for model strong community villages and the leaders of groups of community organizations and the research team looked at the work as a whole and governance of the groups of organizations as efficiency (Parichat, 2000).

The process of learning of all the three groups of community organizations was the learning by accumulating knowledge from local indigenous knowledge from the past for application to the present the most. It was integration into the support of continual operation from different agencies, which helped push group activities to be in continuity and to originate the continuous learning process. The groups were able to create the body of knowledge very well for themselves. For the model of managing knowledge of the network of community organizations, they upgraded the body of knowledge according the issues or the needs of the network of community organizations. For this, the research team operated systematically according to the established plans. Knowledge was managed in accordance with the context of the groups of community organizations.

CONCLUSION

In creating the body of knowledge, the groups were able to create the body of knowledge for the groups form the original body of knowledge and the one that needed to be developed until there was the new body of knowledge by using the original one to apply to what the groups received from training continually. The groups

were able to use it in operating activities efficiently, for example, production of fried Thai noodles, fermenting flour, making concentrated. Fruit juice, weaving breast cloths with newly designed patterns and making stable production bases for the groups. These were all the processes, which the groups integrated the knowledge into newly received knowledge.

In classifying the body of knowledge, when the groups created the new body of knowledge from the original one and the one, which needed development, the group classified the knowledge by creating new body of knowledge and classified it into the body of knowledge, which could be used to create production bases to increase diversities and quality of products of the groups.

In storing knowledge, the groups transcribed the body of knowledge from documents and reports on results of project operation in all target groups of community organizations. Projects and local curricula were operated in the group of agricultural cooperative at the civic community of *Nam Kliang Wiang Chai* and in the group of transformed Herbal Thai noodles. The projects and curricula were constructed by cooperation of local teachers at the basic education level and master of education program students of the Faculty of Education, Mahasarakham University. There were no storage of knowledge with database in the SPSS/PC+ and making Internet web sites.

In the application of knowledge, the groups had the model of application of knowledge mostly through the production process of the groups and most importantly, the groups were able to transfer the gained knowledge and extend the outcomes to be beneficial to the nearby communities. And those communities were able to apply the knowledge gained from these groups to their own communities in actuality. For example, transference and extension of outcomes of Thai noodle production of the transformed Thai noodles group to community group members at *Ban Nam Kliang Wiang* Chai. Currently, *Nam Kliang Wiang Chai* community applied this knowledge to actual benefits.

For sharing and exchanging knowledge, the groups transferred their available knowledge to communities and interested people in general for their benefits. There was a community leaning center for people to exchanging knowledge and leaning together continually. These people were members inside and outside the community, interested people in general and different agencies.

For evaluation and improvement, the fact that the groups of community organizations exchanged their ideas and learned together continually could cause them to be accepted widely by the community. Efficient community operation made the organizations strong in the community. There was clear coordination in cooperation with involved parties. There was concrete cooperative work performance among academics, developers, local indigenous knowledge informants, community leaders and different agencies. Their research could achieve their goals. Due to continual cooperation from different parties, indicators of the groups of community organizations and indicators of joyful community were used in supplement to evaluation and development of research operation continuously.

SUGGESTIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

In learning of the groups of community organizations to promote local people to become local researchers at the grass-root level, each person still had problems of recording information for discussion and lesson conclusion. Therefore, a course of study should be constructed for the focus groups to become local researchers who can realize the importance of work development to have marketing network at a larger level and to build a strong community. The academic institution as the counselor of these community organizations should promote the community learning centers to be able the develop products and systematic transference the body of knowledge to have good quality that can compete in marketing, while maintaining valuable local cultures. The academic institution, private organizations and sub-district administrative organizations should develop the community learning centers or community laboratories to become centers of transferring new techniques. The centers should also be utilized in the transferring new techniques of production like the village research rooms and sub-district laboratories for experimenting, until the products can become the models for alter communities in other sub-district or nearby sub-districts.

A series of projects for strengthening the community and grass root economy that aerated lessons and learning between the university and the community should be undertaken. Past projects only included the preparation of the project. Therefore, these should be an addition to the research project and participatory a development in the focus areas to cover all the other types of industries. There should also be extended research to the study of social economic and cultural changes of civic groups members involving transformed products from mulberry sleeves at the village of *Ban Nam Kliang Wiang Chai* and its networks. There should be a research study of roles of the agencies, which have related effects on the process of operation of the groups of community organizations and the network's in terms of community industries and community learning centers.

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