

Efficient Leadership and Strong Group Work: How Do the Leaders of Kokmueng Community Incorporate Sufficiency Economy's Experiences into their People's Everyday Practices?

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Abstract

This paper examines determinants that help the Kokmueng community, Songkhla province and how they contribute to the incorporation of Philosophy of Sufficiency Economy (PSE) into people's everyday practices. Using three groups of key informants to contribute to community development selected by snowball and purposive sampling, the research analysed the data through inductive interpretation and found community insights into some important issues that helped to make the community successful in being a Community of Sufficiency Economy (CSE). The first was that the Kokmueng community had an efficient leader or Phuuyaibaan who built better community human capital. The second was that the community had a committee member that created a tool for development communication. The third was that the community incorporated PSE-related group work as a means to shape people's mentality, contributing to the incorporation of PSE experiences into people's everyday practices. This made the community into a CSE.

Keyword: Philosophy of Sufficiency Economy (PSE), Sufficiency Economy's Experiences, Community of Sufficiency Economy (CSE), Leadership, Group Work

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Introduction

After the Office of the National Economics and Social Development Board (NESDB) adopted the Philosophy of Sufficiency Economy (PSE), it formed a committee to run PSE for society as a whole in 2003. One of the purposes of the committee was to impart PSE and make it understood across all social units: families, communities, private and state sections and the global community. As a result, PSE has become popular with many PSE-related projects at all levels of Thai society. More Thai people have accepted and applied PSE in their everyday lives and there has been a growing demand for knowledge of the application of PSE, so much so that NESDB has formed a sub-committee to empower the mobilisation of PSE covering four areas: youth groups, educational issues, local governance and the private sector (NESDB, 2018; Public Policy Strategy Office (PPSO), 2011)

As a consequence, putting the PSE into practice has improved the lives of 312 communities. They have created visceral reciprocity and connections with others in social protection, making changes and PSEs learning exchanges (Songphasuk and Pitdamrong, 2011). This shows that existing family and social institutions weakened by capitalism have been revived. PSE's contributions have given rise to stronger local communities, decreasing their unintellectual dependence.

NESDB, in collaboration with the Faculty of Economics of Kasetsart University, found evidence from PSE from researching 40 communities around Thailand in 2008. The research found that the PSE has made changes to these communities through a balance between economic and social capital, together with natural resources. Many more communities may not have as good conditions as those studied and may be less successful in the application of the PSE. There have also been wider opportunities for scholars to discover different community characteristics than those of the 40 studied communities (NESDB, 2018; Jitsanguan, 2006). Distinct local wisdom and social landscapes determined whether a particular community was successful in applying PSE and the 40 cases studied may not generalise the other 70,000 communities around Thailand (Jitsanguan, 2006). Therefore, there is a need for greater study of the application of PSE.

This research on Kokmueng's application of PSE constitutes one such study. Kokmueng Community in Songkhla Province applied the knowledge and practice of PSE as an approach to community development and thereby empowered itself, resulting in community reciprocity, social networks in the forms of social protections, changes and PSE learning exchanges (Songphasuk and Pitdamrong, 2011). One of the important core values of this PSE's applications was that the Kokmueng community learned to acculturate between local cultures across modern global cultures very well. The community stressed acting locally but simultaneously learned to think globally by initially recognising itself and at the same time understanding the world. This led to a good adaptation that caused this community to organise limited natural resources and economic and social capital.

Ultimately, the Kokmueng community has been accepted as one of the best examples of PSE, evidenced by the many awards received including such as the award for being a provincial PSE model, being a dream community, having an efficient Phuuyaibaan (community leader), for having a leader who effectively conserved natural resources, and the Green Globe Award. These awards were a product of putting PSE knowledge into practice and making the Kokmueng community somewhere where lessons can be drawn. This study set out to discover how the community became a Community of Sufficiency Economy (CSE) and how supportive determinants made this community successful.

Objective

This paper illustrates what determinants helped the Kokmueng community and how they contributed to the incorporation of PSE experiences into everyday practices of the people and made the community successful in being a CSE.

Literature Review

PSE is a form of appropriate conduct for living in every level of Thai social institutions, from family to state. Most of its aim is to socialise Thai people to be moderate in mainstream development and globalisation (Ministry of Natural Resources and

Environment, 2013). Sufficiency in this sense means not doing too little or too much at the expense of oneself or others and being reasonable in productivity. This means being rational with consideration for the factors involved and careful anticipation of the outcomes that may be expected from such productivity and considering the notion of risk management and preparing for the likely effects and changes. Decisions on productivity must be carried out level depending on two conditions. The first is knowledge of the relevant fields and prudence in using this knowledge to understand them to help in planning. The second is virtue. This includes honesty, patience, perseverance and intelligence in leading one's life (NESDB, 2018; PPSO, 2011).

PSE could be applied at every level from individuals, families and communities to the state. This research bears heavily on the community level. Sufficient communities are ones where individuals and families move their productivity and well-being forward in an appropriate way. There is a need to work through groups according to their sociocultural resources and contexts and use resources at an optimal point through reciprocity and active participation. The group should take advantage of knowledge exchange with experts to build up good communities' benefits knowledgeably and rationally. Efficient group work, wise resource use, reciprocity, full participation, knowledge and virtue will give life-long immunity to communities that then become self-sufficient. It is expected that one sufficient community can help as a learning example for others, leading to PSE learning networks (NESDB, 2018; Noy, 2011; Piboolsravut, 2004; Wanasilp and Tangvitoontham, 2015).

Strong group work is the capital needed to move communities forward efficiently. The notion of group work has many forms including folk groups, community organisations and social societies. Group work needs collaboration in planning, performing, evaluating and following up on all aspects of a community's development practices. Group work, thus, stems from the concepts of active participation and reciprocity (Walaisatien, 2003).

Sanderson coined the notion of group work as a social forming that has been built up of more than two members (Walaisatien, 2003). Group work has its own psychological-behavioural patterns and is commonly accepted by one another. Boonyarattapan defines

group work as having more than two people with a common purpose (Walaisatien, 2003). This empowers groups and drives the group work towards its aim. Group work can influence other people, mobilising more and more potential members. Finally, the folk groups, informal groups and the like are annexed to these and the powerful group work to foster the weaker groups. This also helps to socialise potential members and can solve their communities' issues. Thus, strong group work is indispensable for community development. The power of strong group work helps to relieve the communities' problems as an individual cannot solve issues alone. This is the reason why, in community development, empowering group work is important.

Having reciprocity plus active participation leading to strong group work is vital. Their combination becomes part of how communities are successful in running development because the power from their synergy will move development projects forward. This paper cannot run a lack of bodies of knowledge regarding those three key points while looking at the journey of the Kokmueng community towards the achievement of being a CSE.

A committee member and efficient leadership are necessary to run the Kokmueng community towards a CSE. According to Napattalung and Wuttimethi (2012), there are six characteristics of charismatic leadership affecting PSE communities. From eight characteristics of leadership, including strong vision, management ability, social skill, making their workers feel capable, goal-oriented working style, model property, model behaviour and model mentality, four leadership characteristics which are strong vision, management skill, goal-oriented working style and model mentality, were significantly related to the efficiency of development based on the PSE. Moreover, strong vision, management skills, goal-oriented working style, and model mentality were major leadership characteristics affecting the efficiency of development based on the PSE. Social skill and model behaviour, however, were deemed to be minor leadership characteristics affecting the efficiency of development based on the PSE.

Community development requires efficient change agents to connect resources. They are part of extracting community members' potential to efficiently organise their

own community resources. Good change agents contribute to bringing the outside world into the community in a proper manner through liaising with outside development networks. Therefore, communities that have many good change agents tend to have good development environments supporting development work (Napattalung and Wuttimethi, 2012; PhuangNgam, 2010; Walaisatien, 2003).

Research Methods

This is a qualitative study performed to learn lessons on community development from the Kokmueng community. Three groups of key informants were asked to contribute to community development lessons. The first was the Phuuyaibaen and his committee. The second was community development practitioners. The final group was members of community development groups. The research employed snowball sampling mixed with purposive sampling. It first started with generic conversations with the Phuuyaibaen, then extended to approach other potential key informants according to referrals made by the Phuuyaibaen. This led to nine key informants.

The study used semi-structured interviews to gain a key set of data from the key informants. There were four areas of questioning. The first regarded persuasion and awareness to take part in community development groups. The second was strengthening the efficiency of such groups. The third aimed to build better human capital and cultivated knowledge and practice of PSE. The final one distilled PSE-related lessons for everyone to learn from, including establishing a PSE learning centre.

The research analysed a set of data through an inductive interpretation. To begin with, data classification was needed to define possible themes. Then, these themes at the same time were theoretically discussed throughout. This research presented its findings in the form of a theme-based presentation and then separated the data findings from the discussions. Thus, this research had no separate clear chapters of findings and theoretical discussions. Instead, it outlined its chapters by reporting and disseminating corresponding to these matters.

Table 1 List of key informants after employing snowball sampling mixed with purposive sampling.

Groups of key informants	Key informants	Research question asked
One – the Phuuyaibaan and his committee member	1. Mr. Udom Hinseng 2. Mr. Thanin Kaewrattana 3. Mrs. Lamom Promsen	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • How do the leaders of Kokmueng Community incorporate Sufficiency Economy's Experiences into their everyday practices of people? • How important is it to build better human capital in the community?
Two – the community development practitioners	1. Mr. Chian Yangthong 2. Mrs. Yindee Hinseng	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • How do the community development practitioners work their community? • How do they create a tool for development communication?
Three – members of community development groups	1. Mr. Wichit Intaro 2. Miss Patcharaporn Paungkaew 3. Mr. Somnuek 4. Mrs. Somjai	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • How do the members of community development groups work the <i>hundreds of food-hundreds of tiffin carriers</i> event? • How do they work the <i>Baan Tuu Yen Project</i>?

How Do the Leaders of Kokmueng Community Incorporate Sufficiency Economy's Experiences into their Everyday Practices of People?

In this section, the research found community insights comprising issues that helped to run such a community towards the achievement of being a CSE. The first community insight was that the Kokmueng community had efficient leadership. The second and third insights were that this community had a good PSE-related projection as a means to shape people through the incorporation of experiences of PSE into their everyday practices.

- Efficient leadership: The importance of building better human capital

The transformation of human capital into good change agents relied on group-based activities, working on two levels. The first was among the Phuuyaibaan and his committee. The second was among the extended community's members. The Phuuyaibaan and his committee helped to empower their community-inside development groups. Without these good leaders, the development groups would have not been so powerful. This situation showed that an efficient Phuuyaibaan and committee first needed to be strong in their leading roles so that they could lead others credibly.

In the Kokmueng community, Phuuyaibaan Udom Hinseng was an important key person who stressed using group work to cultivate shared awareness of sacrificing for the community. Udom believed that good group work could help group members to learn their proper statuses, roles and responsibilities. There were a few learning activities employed by Udom such as field trips, seminars and knowledge management. For example, he took working groups on field trips, learning similar issues from others in neighbouring provinces. Such learning outcomes would then be extracted and disseminated by distributing awnings around the community learning centre.

Transforming human capital into good change agents was extended from the level of Phuuyaibaan and his committee to the extended community's members, who were grouped according to their potential. Group work, together with the role of leaders as facilitators cultivates a sense of public mind in members. It seems to be one of these

community's insights, especially at the initiation of the leaders, to employ group work to socialise members as they help members to learn their status, roles and responsibilities. Group work also helped members to sacrifice their time coming to take part in community work. Group work also produced experienced members to inculcate less experienced ones, allowing the less experienced to better themselves while working with others.



Figure 1 Udom Hinseng – a Phuuyaibaan of Kokmueng community – leading community's seminar and knowledge management

To the Kokmueng community, having good human capital and change agents is indispensable. These groups of people were enthusiastic to help the community tackle problematic issues. What can be learned from this community was that good human capital and change agents may be as simple as having people who realise their status, roles and responsibilities, including having a sense of public mind. Once this community was ready and filled by these potential people, it was easier for the community to continue larger tasks.

- The good committee member : ones who created a tool for development communication

Following building and having better human capital aforesaid, this rendered an efficient committee member to accelerate the achievement of being a CSE. This committee member was a creator of a good PSE climate, drawing and facilitating community members to take part in PSE-related projects.

The committee member was considered one of the key determinants. One of the most important features that each member of the committee member had was the skill of critical thinking while making sense of one specific issue in community development. Having field trips and projections on a trial-and-error basis increased such skills, leading to lessons learned. The committee member comprised an official community committee, members from each zone of the community and leaders of existing PSE-related projects. It included Udom Hinseng, who was an efficient leader of the community.

Having the skill in critical thinking allowed the community to be able to design tools for community development. There are a few examples to address. Firstly, the *hundreds of food-hundreds of tiffin carriers* event, which was a potluck party, was held at the community's PSE learning centre. This took place with outside guests coming and learning lessons from the community's achievements. This potluck party functioned in two aspects. First, it drew people into the public sphere. Second, it acted as a means of community communication for development. Such the event of a potluck party would make informal manners towards key informants. People around a buffet enjoyed discussions and eating. There were lots of issues such as how to cook, how to grow vegetables and how to feed a herd of cattle. This would help them to discuss with the host and the guests. The potluck party mainly functioned as a tool for development communication.



Figures 2 and 3. The potluck party and its atmosphere

The team which created the potluck event sought to help key informants to contribute their experiences. The committee member critically believed that a formal seminar would give authority in sharing experiences only to the formal committees sitting in front of their audiences. Within the formal circumstance, there would be a lack of confidence among experiential laypeople to share their experiences. For this reason, the committee member created the potluck party to mitigate this. Without the criticality of the committee member, there would have not been the capacity to create this tool for development communication.

- Baan Tuu Yen project: An importance of creating a good PSE-related projection as a means to incorporate experiences of PSE into their everyday practices.

The criticality of the committee member brought about an efficient PSE-related projection called *Baan Tuu Yen*. This constitutes an analogy between *Baan Tuu Yen* and refrigerators in households. There was a belief that wealthy households should be ready with basic raw materials and resources that made a living for household members. So far, there had been eight of these houses in *Baan Tuu Yen*. Each had plots of local vegetables, catfish ponds, and small chicken and cattle farms for household consumption. There was

also an extended site for the production of cooking gas from dung. Each of the houses of *Baan Tuu Yen* charcoaled the rubber trees found around the house into charcoal and distilled oil. The oil was used for dropping into dump locations and the catfish ponds to reduce the bad smell. Some were used as a pesticide in the vegetable plots. Some were used as a herb to reduce toothache. Some even said that this oil helped with dandruff. Each of the *Baan Tuu Yen* produced a form of bio-extract from fermenting either fruit peels or food waste. This form of bio-extract helped to reduce bad smell in a dump location and also functioned as a pesticide.

The activities and resources of each *Baan Tuu Yen* helped to reduce costs and promoted self-reliance. This was not only having self-grown vegetables and meat to consume, but there was also self-produced cooking gas. These activities gave the members of each *Baan Tuu Yen* many opportunities to learn about being economical. This was considered the direct approach to the achievement of being a CSE.

This reiterates the importance of criticality in the committee member . The team created a scheme of *Baan Tuu Yen* to help to incorporate being sufficient into the villagers' everyday lives. It also created the learning network of *Baan Tuu Yen* within the community. To this extent, the owners of each *Baan Tuu Yen* learned good production and the use of own-grown resources to reduce some costs of commercial commodities which each *Baan Tuu Yen* could not achieve alone. There was a need for neighbour collaboration to build some of the technical production and the learning network helped to exchange experiences on the production of cooking gas. How each *Baan Tuu Yen* produced the bio-extract from fermenting either fruit peel or food waste also needed learning experiences from the neighbours. The creation of *Baan Tuu Yen* thus incorporated a sufficient way into the mental structures of the key informants.



Figures 4 and 5. The awning to learn from in front of one of *Baan Tuu Yen* and the production site of cooking gas.

There are two issues regarding the functions and contributions of *Baan Tuu Yen* to address. First, the network pulled people into a learning network of the PSE which functioned as a means of community communication for development. People engaging with such a network may be opportunistic to discuss how to reduce costs of everyday expenses, how to grow vegetables efficiently and how to produce homemade cooking gas safely. These discussions would gradually incorporate a sufficient way of life into people's everyday practices. Thus, the network of *Baan Tuu Yen* worked as an apparatus for development communication.

Second, the fact that each successful *Baan Tuu Yen* could be an inspiration for the other neighbours empowers the network even more. Each *Baan Tuu Yen* reflected that each owner realised how to efficiently organise both their social life and home space with PSE. In this sense, the most important success of building *Baan Tuu Yen* was the owner's ability to organise socioeconomic life and spatiality. The success of *Baan Tuu Yen* also signified how intelligent each owner was as many activities needed technical skills. For example, the production of cooking gas may need technical capabilities to make it safe and the making of bio-extract may require technical expertise. These told the stories of how intelligent people engaged in building *Baan Tuu Yen* were. All in all, the efficient

leadership, the committee member, the projects of the potluck event and *Baan Tuu Yen* were an efficient combination. These all helped to lead the Kokmueng community to the achievement of being a CSE.

Conclusion and Discussion

This paper examines determinants that help the Kokmueng community and how they contribute to the incorporation of PSE into people's everyday practices. Using three groups of key informants to contribute to community development selected by snowball and purposive sampling, the research analysed the data through inductive interpretation and found community insights into some important issues that helped to make the community successful in being a CSE. The first was that the Kokmueng community had an efficient leader or Phuuyaibaan who built better community human capital. The second was that the community had a committee member that created a tool for development communication. The third was that the community incorporated PSE-related group work as a means to shape people's mentality, contributing to the incorporation of PSE experiences into people's everyday practices. This made the community into a CSE.

The efficient leadership of Udom Hinseng and his team was indispensable for moving the Kokmueng community forward to being a CSE. Udom and his committee seemed to be good examples of group work, especially in being a good personal medium for their members. These findings conform with those of Napattalung and Wuttimethi (2012), who studied six characteristics of charismatic leadership in affecting the PSE. They conceptualised that the charismatic leadership community leaders possess was effective in mobilising communities to achieve being a CSE. Udom Hinseng possessed this charismatic leadership.

The committee member had a wide vision for community development and trust in the followers. What could be learned from this leadership was that the team could perform both formal, charismatic, and authentic informal leadership. Some of them had gained trust from more than 15 years of incumbency and were officially democratically voted in. Some had charismatic leadership and had gained trust as potential successors

through their trustworthy lineage. Some of them also informally influenced their fellows. These three kinds of leadership could be found in the committee member. Following Napattalung and Wuttimethi (2012), the three types of leadership were studied, and the findings were that such leadership contributed to the good mobilisation of the community approaching the achievement of being a CSE. These studies support this issue of the research very well.

Secondly, this research discusses that, in this community, a sense of public mind was cultivated in members' mental structure through group work. Although the community tasks changed through time, it seems however that such a sense of public mind tended to stick with members who passed the process of socialisation through group work. This situation means that regardless of how members' statuses, roles and responsibilities changed, their sense of public mind seemingly lasted long (PhuangNgam, 2010; Walaisatien, 2003).

Thirdly, this study discussed that preparing human capital and good change agents before continuing any further PSE-related projects was indispensable. This issue is compatible with the knowledge contributed by the PPSO (2011) that good conditions for successfully mobilising PSE need morality and knowledge without which communities find it extremely hard to achieve being a CSE. This research found that realising proper statuses, roles, responsibilities and a sense of public mind was considered having morality. On the other hand, experiences gained from field trips, seminars and knowledge management were deemed as knowing. The mobilising Kokmueng community towards the achievement of being a CSE is theoretically correct.

However, there are two primary concepts to consider: good leadership and criticality among the leaders plus efficient community communication for development. One community development that could be successfully undergone should need good criticality in leadership. This would render the making of a tool and means for community development based on existing potentials and contexts. In the case of the Kokmueng community, the potluck event and *Bann Tuu Yen* project went beyond just physically meaningless activities. These events and projects became part of efficient community

communication for development, stemming from criticality among the committee member and helping to incorporate a sufficient way into engaged people's mentality and everyday practices. These all caused the Kokmueng community to become a CSE (PhuangNgam, 2010; Walaisatien, 2003).

Last but not least in terms of importance, the proposals that this paper offers have implications for policymakers. Crafting efficient community development policies in relation to PSE should be performed while paying careful attention to the notions of efficient leadership and strong group work in certain CSEs.

Conflicts of Interest Statement

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