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Healthy public policy process in ethnic groups: A qualitative study

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Abstract

This was a qualitative research whose objectives were to study public policy processes among ethnic groups in dimension with the public policy development process; investigating the conditions that affect the success and threaten the drive of public policy processes**.** Data were collected from case studies conducted among the ethnic community leaders who drive public policy issues at the local level through protocol in-depth interviews. The sample of the study was composed of 39 participants; leaders, network members, and stakeholders. Data were analyzed by content analysis techniques. The result of this study showed that the public policy of the ethnic groups consisted of four steps; policy formulation, policy process, policy implementation and policy evaluation, while policy process steps consisted of seven steps; grouping, problem identification and guideline developing, network building, public communications, a policy proposal through state apparatus, policy implementation, termination of policy development. The study found that leader characteristics, networks, policy-driven techniques, state policies, political stability, community cultures, capitalism, and globalization are factors that contributed to the success of a healthy public policy. Moreover, the changes which arose from the policy process could be classified into two groups; individual changes and social structures changes. The public policy development of the ethnic groups should raise awareness concerning civil rights as well as strengthen the capacity building among the leader groups. The results suggested that the governmental and private sectors should work collaboratively to develop public policy of the ethnic groups.

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Introduction

The development of health promotion to guarantee a given population's health security will succeed depending on clearly established decisions, implemented policies or activities of the government, private and civil sectors that exhibit responsibility and concern for health called,

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"Healthy public policy".(World Health Organization [WHO], 1988) defined "Healthy public policy" as characterized by an explicit concern for health and equity in all areas of policy and by an accountability for health impact, creating a supportive environment to enable people to achieve healthy living (Ketsomboon & Sujariyakul, 2002). The National Health Parliament Act gave the definitions in terms of developing guidelines that lead to construct the social and physical environments that achieve health, and being concerned with health impacts such as peace, dwelling place, education, food, income, ecology and rich environments, sustainable resources, equality, and social equity to participate in healthy public policy formulation from the national, state, and local governments, communities and each individual.

The development of public policy has changed the model of policy process due to technology, democracy, and social movements. Public policy made and implemented by the state or government sectors produced a negative impact on population lifestyle and quality of life because of a lack of participatory process. Decentralized local government and civil sectors can manage the role of specifying the direction of public policy development. That is the bottom-up model involving the participation process of local organizations and community sectors. It motivates community members to protect their rights and community resources for sustainable development (Wannabowon, 2009). A community based public policy model provides strengthened policies with a significant base of sustainable developments.

The study of Healthy Public Policy in ethnic groups was a public policy based on the development of public policy from communities that will reflect the mainstream developmental process of public policy that can create learning and awareness of health rights. This was considered one of the learning processes resulting from the partner network. When the ethnic communities are in the learning process to determine the direction of the development of health, then it can be integrated into other development of the community such as the economy, society, and culture of the ethnic community. Developments arising from the learning process of the ethnic groups will be an important and secure cornerstone for the development of the community and the ethnic group. It will strengthen the development of the community and not cause an impact on the lives of people as in the cases of mainstream public policy that the government has set up and affected communities and people as mentioned above. The policy process linked the learning process to ensure the health rights of ethnic groups to have rights and equality as with other populations and created a development network and movement process for healthy public policy in a society where cultural identity is the cohesive force for the society, reflecting social norms and values of the people of ethnic groups to connect to bargain with the power of the state. This reflected the ideological shaping of policy under culture-making ethnic groups able to determine their social position. The objectives of this study were;(1) to study the developmental steps of healthy public policy for ethnic groups and (2) to study the condition of process in developing healthy public policy for ethnic groups.

Literature Review

The Development of Public Policy

The mainstream assumption of political and administrative science usually defines public policy as a government announcement for presentation to the parliament or the implementation by the state. The policy shall be followed by the public, or the policy shall be determined by the state for the public. The main emphasis in analyzing the public policy will then be with the state and its decisions on whether or not to implement the measures. It also emphasizes creating technical analysis personnel or "gurus" in the hope that these "technical experts" will be able to find the best policy. This line of thought looks at public policy with a limited view in the sense that it is formulated and exists only in the normal political area, such as, in parliament, the cabinet, political institutions, etc. As for the decision-making process, it is believed that the technical experts will be able to analyze and find the best way that will lead to a good public lifestyle for people in society. The foundation for this thought process shows that the center of implementation lies with the state, the political institutions, and the official political processes, or one could say that this gives complete authority in managing the public lifestyle to the state.

The process in determining the public policy and its implantation is characterized by communication with people in the affected communities and how they manage their lifestyles. They seek a better society and better lives, dynamics within the public domain, rather than having technical experts analyze the policies, or to mobilize groups of people to push the government to issue the policies and implement them with the reason that it is for the betterment of people in the society.

Public Policy and the Marginal Society

Public policies tend to take the direction that the society of that particular time prefers. The weight of the supporting data, resources within the society and negotiations usually do not end in black and white or end in

one clear direction, but is usually followed by rebuttals from different parties – whether directly or indirectly. For example, the government may not accept proposals by the opposition to annul the policy or the project, but it may accept to adopt secondary issues proposed to reduce the tension (Sookkamnerd, 2002)

In the dimension of wellbeing, a new paradigm in health reform has come into being and is expanding. This new paradigm is formulated within the social territory and not in the state territory; therefore, issues on community doctors, city doctors, sustainable agriculture/organic agriculture, conservation of the waterways that feed the communities, all become learning processes through questions that are being raised by small people living in communities against policies laid down by the state.

These processes have become one of the concrete examples in the changing processes on public policies through communication and exchange of information among the small people and their networks within society. Discussions are then raised to the higher levels to dispute the state on how to provide wellness to society, which leads to the move from top-down policies to policies that are formulated through discussions with society. Importance is given to realities that occur within the social territory, creating a broader network rather than pushing for public policies, to learn together, and to manage their lifestyles together.

The study on the process of formulating public policy for the ethnic groups is a study in the dimension of participation by the public sector or the societal participation. In other words, it starts from the people within the society, through knowledge-sharing and setting up networks among the ethnic groups, which leads to the formation of local public policy regulations. This process shows the strength of the ethnic groups who come together to push for public policies that will create a healthier community and wellness for all. This is the community's strength for sustainable development.

Methodology

The areas of this study were; (1) Network of Mae Tao lowland farmers, Mae Sot District, Tak Province. (2) Pgazk'nyau (Karen) network, Mae Wang, Chiang Mai (3) Lisu network Ban Sai Ngam, Pai district, Mae Hong Son Province. There are good case studies of community development and social movement by civil sectors that received an award in community development from the Department of Community Development, Ministry of Interior, Thailand since the year 2011, and had sustain development. This was a significant inclusion criterion for selecting the settings in this study.

Participants

The community leaders, villagers, and stakeholders at those areas whose purpose was to solve community problems and management were included in this study. The participants were divided into 5 groups: 9 movement leaders, 4 technicians or learning process workers in the local area, and from other regions with related interest, 11 private developer organizations, 9 people who lived in the affected area, and 6 stakeholders. A total of 39 participants were selected from the snowball technique to reveal the phenomenon, problems, experiences, and opinions related to the management process.

Data Collection

This qualitative research applied semi-structural interview to be the main method while non-participation observations was applied to observe participant behaviors and body language. The researcher was a participant in a group meeting at that time. Moreover, non-participation observations were used to study the community contexts, and all activities of the community were conducted where the researcher was the only observer while in field study and field note-taking for data collection. Data collection used qualitative approaches. The in-depth interview using semi-structure questions was conducted to explain community contexts, the development of public policy, the success factors of the public policy process, and the change from public policy. In this study, the researcher determined "Kummuang", or the northern native language, to be the main language for the interview of the participants with outsiders and to create more familiarity than the official Thai language. In the case of a participant who was unclear in communication when using "Kummuang", native translators were media in the data collection process (Nak-ai, Jiawiwatkul, Temsirikulchai, & Nontapattamadul, 2018).

Data Analysis

Content analysis was the core method used to ascertain meaning, analysis and grouping of the same meaning for process format, and grouping a format for process correlation and policy movement process. To further increase the credibility and validity of the result, the researcher employed triangulation method using evidence from different types of data sources, such as primary and secondary data or interviews, documents, public records, photographs, and observations. Methodology triangulation combined multiple methods to gather data such as documents, interviews, and observations when conducting

the primary research at different times and places. (Nak-ai et al., 2018) Lastly, theory triangulation used more than one theoretical approach or more than one public policy model to interpret and support data. (Nontapattamadul, 2011)

The researcher had affirmed research ethical clearance from the Social Science and Humanities ethical committee, Mahidol University by COA no 2013/248.0209. The researcher used ethical consideration and followed with human ethical research by linking all participants voluntarily to this research without any indirect or direct force, pressure, persuasion, language usage, and showed verbal respect to all participants. The participants signed the informed consent form so that the researcher did not commit participant piracy and was careful about causing negative effects by protecting their privacy using pseudonym or job position as participant's real name.

Result

The Development Steps of Public Policy

This study was a study of the public policy process at the grassroots or the community. Thus, the steps in the process can become flexible and varied depending on the context of the problems, social capital, and factors that can affect the movement of the community. It can also be said that the public policy of the ethnic groups did not happen according to the sequence in the steps but could have occurred simultaneously or be developed together in several steps. Because of the findings in this study, it can be observed that the actor in the policy process had many roles in one person, especially of leader. If steps in the policy process of the 3 communities were made, it can be concluded that the public policy process of ethnic groups included 7 steps. This can be summarized into a flowchart of the steps in the public policy process of ethnic groups as follows in Figure 1.

The Conditions of the Policy Process

Conditions that affected the success of the public policy movement

The success of the network to drive public policy issues in addition to the selected tactics and techniques or procedures used to drive public policy to achieve a goal of driven public policy network requires social factors which also contribute to and reinforce a process-driven policy action of the network as a goal or by the guidelines as specified by the networks. Each network has a strength or a factor underpinning the success that makes the difference.

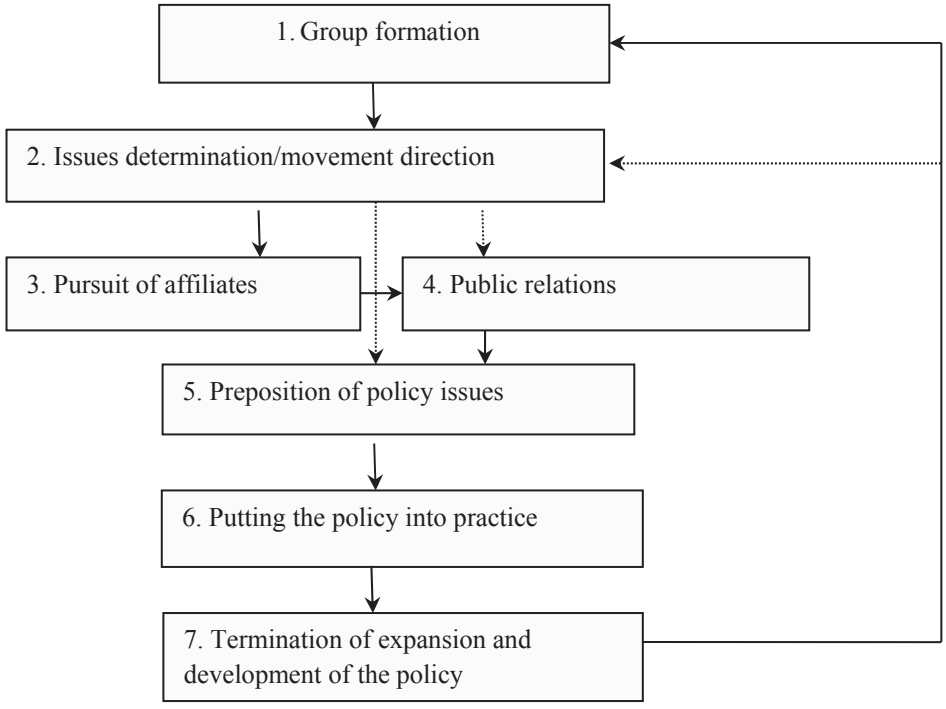


Figure 1 Steps in the Public Policy Process of Ethnic Groups

1. Social capital factors are considered the strengths and are significant to the network-driven process in this study. There are many social capital factors e.g.

- *Kinships*, the Lisu community at Baan Tsai Ngam is a good example. The culture feature has respect for elders of the *"Clan"*. Therefore, the cultural practices and customs of the community have been influenced by the elder group, thus, the community has only a few clans. The relatives' community has caused a strong network and influence-driven process like with the Pgazk'nyau network, that mainly acts through the kinship ties in the village, although living in other villages. The way ofthe Pgazk'nyau, with the respect for elders and sage in a community, is a factor underpinning that the network is strengthened.

- *Leader capacity and the community philosophers* are the main factors that influence the movement of networks and could be observed from the leaders of the three networks in their capacity and ability. They have a role as the process leader, the coordinator, the concept leader and analyze the practical planning resulting in the driven approach of the network. The leader has the potential in dimensional ideas, is the knowledge creator and the communicator. Most leaders have the experience and pass the learning process for development and movement of the public policy directly from the education system, working and work experience in the NGO, and having partners that support such.

- *The strengthened culture and traditions*, the communities have a strong cultural identity and a goal for culture conservation, which will be a factor-driven enhancement of the public policy because the community would like to show the community's identity or the existence of a community. The driving of the three networks are cultural dimensions involved in the operation. The strong cultural ties with the lifestyle of the network, both in agriculture and environmental respect as practice, are the traditional iconography, so this is a faith center and a common network to conservation to power the public policy.

2. The network collaboration, the associate networks are indicated for the importance of public policy issues to social change. Affiliate networks are the academic mentors or sponsors and the created learning to driven process. Meanwhile the close relation of the partners will change the role from supporter to become coworkers of the driven process. Strong partners have greater effect on the aims and developing guidelines as per the agency's mission as follows;

- *Academic networks* are both private enterprise and government in the development with stability, having the goal of community development and quality of the people's lives according to a clear mission, and cooperative movement of the regular network , such as the IMPECT agency as a developer of the public policy of Lisu network, Northern Development Foundation, the movement of Pgazk'nyau network and the volunteer attorney along with the legal-driven process of Tao river basin farming network.

- *The ethnic networks*, the Lisu ethnic group has a counseling role finding a way to reduce conflict and the creating of legitimacy for the community in case of a dispute between the community and the forestry agency. Lisu Networks have collaborated in northern areas and have established corporation in many levels that will support and co-develop their ethnicity.

- *Local administrative organization*, direction, and vision of Local Administrative Organization Leader have a profound effect on the public policy-driven process of Pgazk'nyau network. The vision of the corporate leader affects performance and collaboration of the community, which influence the policy-driven processes to reach the target and guidelines.

The factors threatening the operation of the network and affecting the drive of the public policy processes

There are the similar features as following;

1. Governmental policies are the main threatening factor to the development and the powered network of the three networks. The supporting policies for economic development with the renewal of the mining concession from the government has resulted in increased problems and severity from the contamination of cadmium, and also the controversial issues with the network-driven members who fight for a solution from the contamination of cadmium in the environment.

Encouraging economic crops, such as corn, and the guaranteed prices for agricultural products that have increased in popularity, have intensified capitalist behavior as the capitalist is the investor who buys the products in the area. As a result, Pgazk'nyau network group and Lisu network group have more forest encroachment in the community. Also, the approach to healing agriculture product damaged from natural disasters should be calculated by those cultivating such areas.

Legal conflict between the community rights by the constitution to managing natural resources and community forests and the declaration of the forest area and the national park of the Forestry Department are controversial issues in the natural resource management of community or the community deed preparation and is a possibility in some areas. Also, in the outside conflict areas, the government agency's procedure for the community deed involves a lot of documents and can delay the process.

2. Stability and Political consistency, the driving of

public policy in terms of the public having to rely on the state apparatus to force the policy issue or policy proposals, effective enforcement of the public. Thus, lack of Stability and Political consistency at local and national levels have affected the network-driven process of Lisu network "… *After they changed the Sub-district Administrative Organization team to manage the proposal, it has not been carried out*". However, the proposal of the Pgazk'nyau network was continuing even though the leaders had changed, but this could affect the policy issues, which could cause more delay.

3. Capitalism, the direction of economic development is mainstream in current society and may bring economic prosperity as measured by gross income giving a better quality of life for some people, especially capitalist group, but the results of the development based on the capitalism concept has created the problems and impact on the community. Monopoly capitalism has created a profit-focused thinking, which also causes communities to lack the awareness of social participation and responsibility, taking advantage of friends and society and the exploitation of natural resources for the group benefits.

Discussion

Political ecology is a concept that believes political process, economic, and social structure are related in the utilization of resources and degradation of the environment from the research of Nueman (1992). It was summarized that the establishment of national parks was a process in allocating new resources. The state was authorized to control access to the resource and denied access to traditional resources of the indigenous people and farmers in the area. Sometimes there was enforcement in the change of land use. In the case study of the three networks, the areas were affected by the declaration of a national park and various other policies from the government. This also included changes in economic society. Therefore, in this study it can be concluded that ethnic groups in 3 areas were groups of people deprived of access to resources in the area all along which were the effects of various government policies.

The policy process in this study can be discussed using the concept of hegemony in which it is clear that the government was in a state of hegemony and created a situation of complete hegemony through the seizure of ideas by going through various public agencies to control and create consent in the upper structure through the mechanisms of the state to various agencies and created complete homogeny through the political system at both local and national levels, calling it "political society. (Khanjanapan, 2004)" The mechanisms of the state were laws by using the authority of the courts. This study reflected the image of the proclamation of conservation areas and local political mechanisms in collecting taxes as in the case of one participant who said, *"Because they were afraid of not getting taxes, Private mines would pay taxes."* This emphasized the image of the network movement in being a group that claimed compensation for itself and created understanding in the community for such information. In the case of Num Tao agricultural group, the process of creating homogeny by the state became clearer when private mines were supporting government expenditure for the compensation to people affected by cadmium or establishing compensation funds for the sick and gave authority to the local health agency in the management of the funds. Even though the image of the funds to the network looked negative in view that it was only partial assistance from SCR organization, in the view of the government it was positive for the private mines in the support and compensations. This emphasized more clearly the negative conflict of the network group.

Factors relating to policy process meant factors that impacted the success or failure of public policy movement for ethnic groups. The factors relating to policy process movement can be divided into two major groups. The internal factors within the network that had a positive effect or supported the success of the movement process, which were community social capital factor or the strength of the community, the ability of the leaders, the characteristic of the network and the party network, life plan, belief, culture, traditions, rituals that affected the awareness of individuals and members in the policy developmental network in deciding to support or participate in the public health policy process movement, and the technique for the movement.

Conclusion and Recommendation

The steps in the policy process of the 3 communities were made. It can be concluded that the public policy process of ethnic groups included 7 steps, while the condition of healthy public policy in the ethnic groups was controlled through the social capitals and network collaborations. In other ways, the threatening conditions for policy driving were government policy and stability and political consistency. A public policy based on the community not only reduced the impact of the policy on the community but also supported the strengthening of the community in solving the problem on quality of life. A public policy process should have directions from societal roots or the community which have a part in setting the direction of development.

This study was a study on policy with a descriptive approach that focused on origin of the policy, the process and the result of the policy. In the next study of the public policy of ethnic group, there should be a research study conducted on the following:

1. The study in terms of recommendations or in policy analysis to provide information to policy decision makers and to support the policy process;

2. The study of the impact assessment of state policy on the movement of public policy issues of ethnic groups.

The Limitation of This Study

This study was a study of ethnic groups with cultural identities, therefore, the results of the study cannot all be applied to other communities with different contexts in terms of public policy for ethnic groups. However, it can be used as a guideline for communities with the context and problem issues from the effect of state policies in a framework and developmental direction that relied on social capital of that community as a base for development.

Conflict of Interest

There is no conflict of interest.

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