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Promoting youth civic engagement using a multi-sector partnership approach: A case study of provincial Thailand

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Article Info

Abstract

Youth civic engagement (YCE) is a positive development method for fostering skill sets and social mindsets among young people. Previous research has indicated that supporting YCE requires multisector cooperation to create a youth development ecosystem. However, little is known of how to effectively manage such an ecosystem, specifically, in terms of identifying a lead organization and understanding its role. This study addresses a significant gap in the literature by examining collaborative models, mechanisms, and processes of YCE and synthesizing a YCE model. It used a case study design and took a qualitative research approach. In all, 60 participants were selected, including youths, government officials, representatives of nongovernmental organizations, members of local administration associations, community leaders, and parents through purposive sampling methods. Data were collected from project reports, participatory observation, in-depth interviews, and focus group discussions and were analyzed using thematic analysis. A systematic model to support YCE consists of both social and learning processes. The social process involves supporting and actualizing youth learning experiences. The lead organization fulfills three main functions: (1) engagement management, (2) capital management, and (3) knowledge management. Furthermore, the learning processes aimed at supporting youth experiences include studying community issues, creating community development projects, and reflecting on the learning experience. The results of this research indicate changing perspectives on supporting youth development from one-off activities to the connectivity of all sectors to jointly develop youth in a systematic fashion. It helps the policy sector formulate youth development policies valuing all provincial-level participants.

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Introduction

Study of youth development has seen a shift from addressing risk behavior problems to promoting positive youth development (Larson, 2000; Lerner et al., 2005; Parker, 2009; Rich, 2003). Youth civic engagement (YCE) is considered a positive method of youth development because it includes activities that allow youths to express their public-spirited commitment to fostering social conscience, such as in volunteering work, learning through community service, community management, social movements, youth councils, and media production. Participating in such activities confers the capacity to cultivate a community-oriented mindset (Barnason et al., 2022; Chan et al., 2014; Dolan & Brennan, 2016; Zaff et al., 2008).

Democratic regimes that promote individual and societal rights, freedom, and justice support youth development as part of overall social development. Three factors significantly impact these youth citizenship approaches: (1) ecological assets include people, family, community, civil society, organizations and social networks; (2) youth's strength: the unique characteristics of young people aiming to reach their full potential; and (3) procedures for positive youth development (Lerner et al., 2014). Ideally, environmental development would incorporate varied stakeholders in the youth development ecosystem (Benson, 2007; Benson et al., 2011; Flanagan & Levien, 2010).

This corresponds to previous research indicating that the factors associated with YCE include available capital in the social ecosystem, notably the educational system (Torney-Purta, 2002), participation in peer and school activities (Niemi & Junn, 1998), inclusion in youth development programs (Larson, 2000); involvement in community service projects (Walker, 2002), and the political commitment and participation shown by the family (Canavan et al., 2016). Factors involving social capital, culture, and social context are also included (Zaff et al., 2008), but the way that these factors operate remains unresolved, as is who is to handle management mechanisms and how interactions among these factors affect youth civic engagement.

Previous research on YCE explores its positive impacts on youth development, and while studies have examined aspects of societal support mechanisms, they primarily relied on theoretical frameworks (Coleman, 2021; McGregor & Dolan, 2021). However, empirical evidence from case studies remains lacking. Consequently, there is insufficient visibility into actual collaborations between organizations and stakeholders at the local level, including limited examination of management mechanisms, learning processes, and influence dynamics (Li, 2020).

This current study addresses the identified gap by focusing on model development through case studies. These case studies offer valuable insights into the roles, components, management mechanisms, and evolution of collaborative efforts among relevant sectors. The findings of this research will inform policy recommendations and provide valuable lessons for academic work related to YCE.

The objective of this study is (1) to examine collaborative models, mechanisms, and processes of youth civic engagement (YCE) within multisector partnerships in provincial Thailand, and (2) to synthesize a comprehensive YCE model based on insights gained from three case studies.

Literature Review

Multisector Partnership

To address the aforementioned knowledge gap in supporting youth civic engagement (YCE), a clear mechanism is required. This study utilizes the concept of multisector partnerships to elucidate this mechanism. Multisector partnerships gather individuals and organizations from various sectors of the community to collaborate on innovative projects or policy changes. Cooperation within these partnerships involves uniting local, community, provincial, and/or national residents to create systemic change (Backer & Norman, 2000). Partnerships may be temporary or permanent, formally or informally structured, and involve nonprofit organizations, communities, foundations, public or private funds, policy agencies, businesses, educational institutions, and professionals.

Previous research on multisector partnerships for the promotion of YCE highlights the importance of collaboration across sectors to create inclusive and sustainable opportunities. These partnerships leverage the resources and expertise of each sector to develop effective youth development programs, build social capital, promote participatory democracy, empower young people, and promote social justice (Bustos, 2020; Cooper, 2005; Perkins et al., 2001). Conditions necessary for successful youth development processes within multisector partnerships include learning and capacity-building processes, meeting platforms or social activities to motivate collaboration, effective communication channels, leadership recognition

of the process's significance, and mutual awareness of issues between stakeholders.

Multisector partnership approaches provide opportunities for stakeholders to increase involvement by collecting empirical data collectively before using data to establish youth development plans. By establishing collaboration at the initial stage, these approaches enable joint efforts in youth development. (Chantaramanee et al., 2012; Chantatueng, 2011; Kaewtima, 2012; Suwanngam, 2015; Thitachote, 2014).

YCE in Thailand

YCE has seen progress throughout Thailand, influenced by the National Child and Youth Development Promotion Act, B.E. 2560 (Department of Child and Youth Affairs, Ministry of Social Development and Human Security, 2017), which empowered youth councils. However, challenges persist in youth development due to the fragmented approach and ingrained mindset among stakeholders (Benson, 2007).

Reviewing youth development policies and processes in Thailand reveals efforts to unify national development for children and youth with provincial and local initiatives. Despite the implementation of plans and monitoring by relevant sectors (National Child and Youth Development Promotion Committee, (2018); Office of the National Youth Promotion and Coordination Committee, Office of the Prime Minister, 1987), challenges remain. The involvement of government, private, and civil society sectors in macro-level implementation has been intensive. However, a lack of coordination and common goals has hindered progress (Ayutthaya, 1971). Furthermore, unclear operating structures and inefficient information systems have limited the effectiveness of public relations efforts and staff competence (Department of child and youth affairs, Ministry of Social Development and Human Security, 2017).

Theoretical Framework

Ecology studies systems of organisms interacting with one another in natural environments. Ecological theory has been adopted by developmental psychologists to explore human development from a contextual or environmental perspective. Research in this area (April et al., 2023; Bronfenbrenner, 1992; Gal, 2017) finds that socio-ecological system relationships involve a four-layered system of microsystems, mesosystems, exosystems, and macrosystems. Ecological systems theory (EST) provides a framework to examine individual existence and relationships across diverse spaces, ranging from the individual to his or her environment, including family, workplace, and society (Bronfenbrenner, 1992; Duerden & Witt, 2010).

This research adopted EST to explore YCE by identifying individuals and organizations involved in youth development at the provincial level in Thailand, enumerating division levels, and analyzing their role in youth development, as well as the models and mechanisms used to organize the collaboration of a range of organizations and stakeholders, developing multisector partnerships.

Methodology

This qualitative study was conducted using a case study research (CSR) design with multiple case studies, involving the in-depth analysis of several cases to obtain a comprehensive understanding of the phenomenon.

Recruitment and Sampling

This study focuses on Thailand, as it has recently begun developing policies for YCE. However, in most provinces of the country, these initiatives are typically being carried out only by government agencies. The researchers were interested in learning how a transition from state-run programs to multisector partnerships can be achieved. The cases were selected using purposive sampling, favoring those that seemed likeliest to provide meaningful data (Patton, 2015).

For this study, 3 out of the 76 provinces in Thailand were chosen as data sources. This selection was based on the fact that youth development in Thailand functions at a policy level down to the provincial and local levels. The researchers established criteria for selecting provinces with complete data based on several factors, including organizational structure, management mechanisms, and lead organizations to gain a clearer understanding of the phenomena under study. Additionally, these selected provinces have a background mindset in YCE, holding that youth development should involve collaborative effort among various government agencies and align with ecological theories that require related organizations to function at both the macro- and the exosystem levels.

Three case studies were examined: (1) Samut Songkhram Province Community-based Research Center (NGO); (2) Nonthaburi Provincial Social Development and Human Security Office; and (3) Ubon Ratchathani University in Ubon Ratchathani Province.

Participants

The criteria for participant selection were as follows: (1) the lead organization staff had at least 3 years of experience supporting youth development work; (2) all internal and external stakeholders had experience of working with or in the lead organization to support YCE of at least 1 year, including (2.1) those who attended meetings and seminars and participated in YCE upon request as well as (2.2) those participating in implementing YCE by offering resources, knowledge, and other related opportunities; and (2.3) those for which behavioral or attitudinal changes were produced following interacting with children or youth; (3) representatives from government and the private sector, CSOs, and the community had decision-making authority and involvement in support of provincial YCE; (4) workers with children and youth groups were at least 18 years old, having participated in lead organization activities and conducted public projects or activities for at least 1 year; and (5) participants were willing to provide data.

A target study population was duly selected from case studies across three provinces in 60 samples, including 29 from Ubon Ratchathani, 19 from Samut Songkhram, and 12 from Nonthaburi, all internal and external provincial stakeholders. The participants were divided into eight groups: (1) 8 lead organization staff members; (2) 12 community and local leaders; (3) 4 instructors at educational institutions; (4) 6 family members, including parents and guardians; (5) 6 local government officials involved in public health, educational, community, and social development; (6) 5 external parties, including supporting leaders and NGO staff; (7) 1 external party involved as policy-making agency representatives; and (8) 18 members of youth group.

Data Collection

Data collection in this study followed the principles of CSR, implementing multiple research methods over the course of various time periods to attain a more profound understanding of the subject (Denzin, 2006). Four primary methods of data collection were utilized: (1) project report analysis; (2) periodic participant observation of YCE activities by the lead organization, building collaboration with involved provincial stakeholders, and implementation of youth group activity; (3) in-depth, face-to-face interviews with 35 participants; and (4) group discussions with 25 participants.

The research employed a set of guiding questions for both in-depth interviews and focus group discussions. These questions were developed based on the research objectives. Validity was addressed through consultation with three experts, who reviewed the questions to confirm their alignment with the research objectives. Triangulation of data from interviews, focus groups, and observations further strengthened the credibility of the findings.

Data Analysis

Interview transcripts were analyzed using thematic analysis, with the identification and exploration of cross-thematic patterns and themes (Braun & Clarke, 2012). Thematic analysis can provide a structured approach to uncover insights, patterns, and relationships within qualitative data to contribute to model development through the identification of YCE from multisector partnerships with new concepts.

The analysis was conducted with the following predetermined tentative themes: (1) organizations and people involved in provincial youth development; (2) level of collaboration in multisector partnerships; (3) organizations' roles in youth development; (4) models and mechanisms for organizing the collaboration of different organizations and stakeholders; and (5) multisector partnership development manner, allowing new themes to emerge inductively. The data were coded, collated, and sorted into themes using Microsoft Excel, with each sheet representing one theme. Themes and subthemes were devised, refined, combined, divided, and discarded.

The models were reviewed in consultation with professionals and experts including a youth, a youth worker, an academic, a policy maker, and an executive of youth funder, who provided feedback for the improvements and adjustments to holistically meet current youth development contexts for application to all provincial contexts.

Ethical Considerations

This research received ethical approval from the Committee for Research Ethics (Social Sciences), Faculty of Social Sciences and Humanities, Mahidol University. Informed consent was obtained, and participant confidentiality was ensured through anonymized data. The study posed minimal risk, with participants free to withdraw or skip any questions if they felt uncomfortable. All steps were taken to protect participants and minimize harm.

Results

Case Study 1: Samut Songkhram Province

The study found that YCE in Samut Songkhram Province also employs a multi-sector partnership approach through two processes:

Social process
The Samut Songkhram Province Community-based Research Center, a civil society organization, serves as the lead organization, facilitating networking among stakeholders for policy formulation and youth development. Mechanisms include; (1) Provincial policy-level committee mechanism (Macro System): Connects various government agencies, with the lead organization participating as a committee member; (2) Learning and capacity development mechanism (Exosystem): Supports goal-setting, planning, knowledge exchange, and evaluation to promote YCE; and (3) Local researcher network mechanism (Exosystem): Provides a platform for local researchers and community leaders to exchange knowledge and develop youth civic consciousness through local community learning. One sample, an NGO staff member, stated:

"We aim to establish a youth network based on an area-based approach, using learning and knowledge as bridges to connect various youth issues."

(A male nongovernmental organization staff member, March 28, 2018)

Learning process
The focus is on enabling youth to study and analyze community problems, develop local development projects with adult collaboration, and foster a sense of local belonging. A strong mentorship system supports reflection on self and community improvement.

Case Study 2: Nonthaburi Province

The study identified two processes for YCE in Nonthaburi Province using a multi-sector partnership approach:

Social process
Nonthaburi Provincial Social Development and Human Security Office, a government agency, serves as the lead organization, primarily supporting youth councils at the provincial and local levels under the National Child and Youth Development Promotion Act. Mechanisms include: (1) Provincial-level operating mechanism (Exosystem): Operates through government agencies, focusing on organizing youth councils, providing financial support, and overseeing activities; And (2) Youth and Child Network Coordination Center (Exosystem): Connects various local and external stakeholders, including civil society, academia, and private sectors, to support youth development initiatives. One sample, a government official, noted the following:

"The Youth and Child Network Coordination Center acts as a backup for youth councils, providing a space for mentoring and integrating youth with local government agencies."

(A male government official, May 15, 2018)

Learning process
The youth councils engage in project-based activities to develop their capacities but lack a structured mentorship system for pre- and post-project learning and reflection.

Case Study 3: Ubon Ratchathani Province

The study found that the YCE using a multi-sector partnership approach in Ubon Ratchathani Province operates through two main processes:

Social process
Ubon Ratchathani University serves as the lead organization, driving youth policy and connecting various stakeholders within the province to form a youth development mechanism. Five mechanisms were identified (1) Policy committee mechanism (Macro System): Develops youth and child policies and plans; (2) Provincial operational mechanism (Exosystem): Supports budget allocation and capacity building for local youth councils; (3) Learning and capacity development mechanism (Exosystem): An informal network involving local NGOs that facilitates youth capacity-building; (4) Academic mechanism (Exosystem): Led by university faculty, collecting data on the local youth situation to advise policy formulation; and (5) Local youth development mechanism (Microsystem): Involves community leaders, local government officials, educators, parents, and local administrative staff, supporting youth groups. One informant, a university lecturer, stated:

"In the past, youth development work had to restart every time there was a change in the provincial governor. This taught us the lesson that

we need a youth development plan supported by a mechanism so that we do not have to start over each time. There should be a provincial policy-level committee mechanism, a strong academic mechanism, a continuous local youth development mechanism, and a specifically designed youth coaching mechanism, so that these mechanisms can strengthen youth development efforts in the community."

<div align="right">(A male university lecturer, April 23, 2018)</div>

Learning process

Ubon Ratchathani University supports youth councils in engaging in self-improvement activities and community development through experiential learning, where youth actively participate and reflect on their experiences.

Multisector Partnership Model for Youth Civic Engagement

According to the research findings, the model of the YCE process from the multisector partnership at the provincial level has three components. Figure 1 illustrates the key components of the multi-sector partnership approach. These components, including the roles of various stakeholders and the mechanisms of collaboration, are presented as follows:
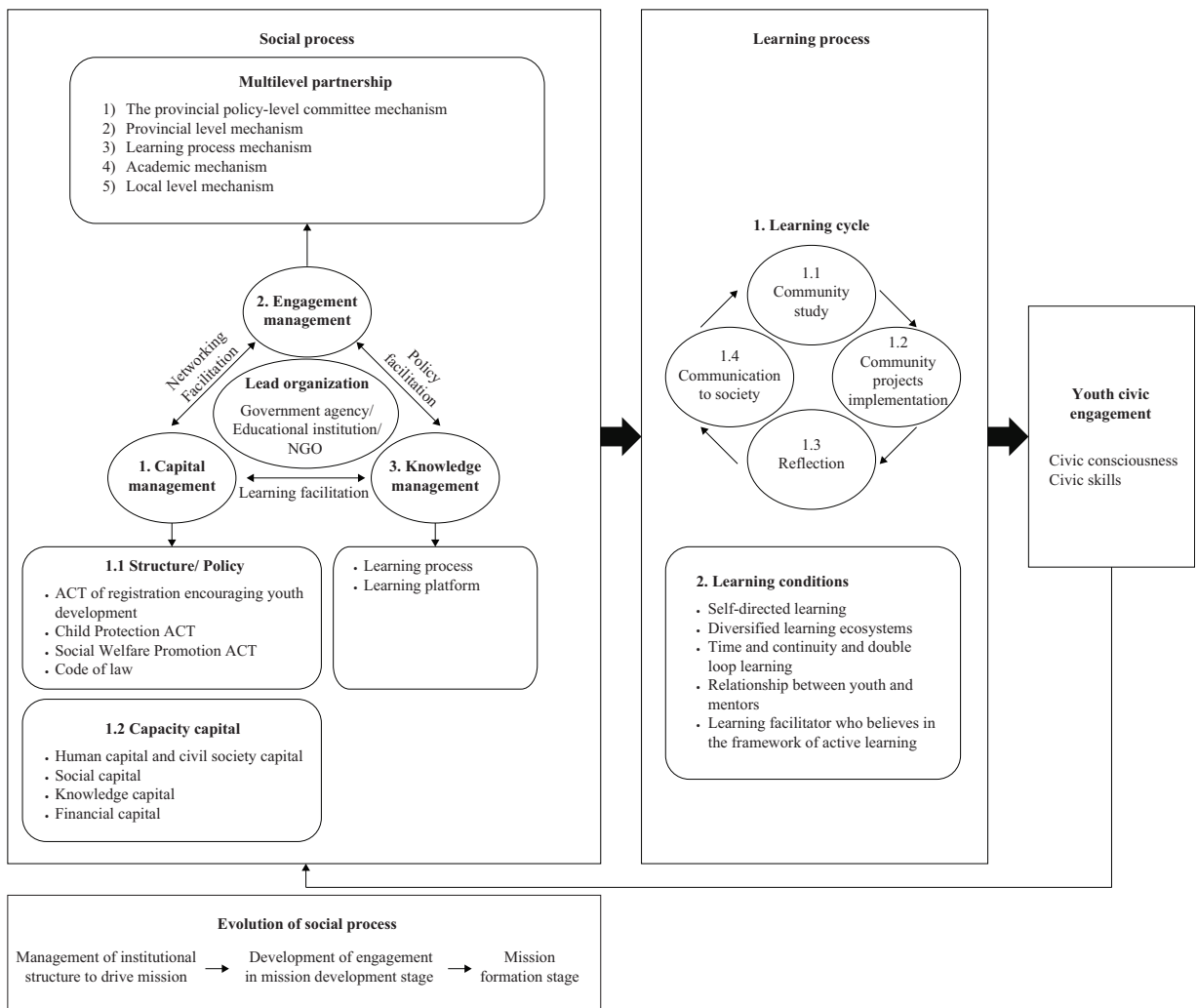

Figure 1 Multisector partnership model for youth civic engagement

Social process

The social process involves managing capital, engagement, and the knowledge of the lead organization that is actively participating in youth development. Local collaborative networks are essential for youth development initiatives, particularly within the context of a holistic paradigm adopted by the lead organization, which values the interconnections among stakeholders. Therefore, mechanisms are initiated at different levels of collaborative youth development, forming mechanisms to establish the engagement and participation of involved stakeholders; manage capital capacity in diverse regional fields; and guide learning and knowledge among stakeholders at different levels to establish engagement and the exchange of knowledge regarding youth development.

The multi-sector partnership approach is crucial in Thailand for fostering YCE by integrating efforts from various stakeholders, including government agencies, educational institutions, and civil society organizations. This collaborative approach allows for pooling resources and expertise, which is necessary for addressing the diverse needs of youth development in the country. In Thailand, initiatives such as the National Child and Youth Development Promotion Act emphasize the importance of multiple sectors working together to create a supportive environment for youth (Department of Child and Youth Affairs, Ministry of Social Development and Human Security, 2017).

Lead organization mechanism

This is a structural mechanism for a government agency, nongovernmental organization, educational institution, or any other lead organization. Lead organizations must serve as central coordinators, facilitating points among diverse agents to establish support systems of youth development. This is achieved by focusing on participation in terms of knowledge exchange, learning processes, and mutual management of youth development work. One informant, a university lecturer, stated:

> *"As the lead organization, our four mechanisms focused on policy, research, community engagement, and database management. For policy, we pursued municipal laws at the subdistrict level to support children and youth. These mechanisms filled gaps in government efforts where no agency had previously taken comprehensive responsibility."*
> (A male university lecturer, April 23, 2018)

The role of the lead organization in managing the social process enabled the establishment of provincial youth development support structures with diverse stakeholder groups at diverse levels. The findings from case studies of youth development implementation yielded a summary of mechanisms at different levels, as well as identifying their roles in YCE:

1. Provincial policy-level committee mechanism

This youth development ecosystem incorporates all stakeholders, including the government, the private sector, civil society, social development funds, and educational institutions. Those who are involved at this level share views on adhering to location-based initiatives that promote holistic approaches with the inputs from all stakeholders to gather resources while monitoring and evaluating outcomes. Resource sharing was also required, both regarding knowledge and financial and human capital in local youth development; the lead organization was the central agency that linked policy committee mechanisms and other mechanisms at different levels. One sample, a government official, noted the following:

> *"For children and youth, we utilize the Child Protection Fund, the Social Welfare Fund, and the Social Welfare Promotion Committee, chaired by the governor. We meet twice a year to discuss these issues. Previously, there were no opportunities for collaboration among children and youth groups. After engaging with the Samut Songkhram community-based research center, we established a mechanism for mutual recognition, where NGOs, public sector groups, or any supportive group can become partners. Money isn't the key factor; it's the willingness to collaborate and use these mechanisms that make partnership possible."*
> (A female government official, April 26, 2018)

2. Provincial-level operating mechanism

This is a provincial-level operating mechanism in the youth development ecosystem, consisting of government officials, including the Provincial Social Development and Human Security Office, and the Provincial Child and Youth Council. Both are essential for managing the budget for subdistrict youth council implementation under local administrations. For the capacity development of staff members and the Child and Youth Council working group, the provincial council acts as a mentor to ensure that projects are planned and executed according to plan and that the results are summarized. The provincial council offers directions for strategic policies about children and youth. One informant, a university lecturer, reported the following:

"Provincial collaborative mechanisms rely on the Social Development and Human Security Office to connect with the governor and coordinate government stakeholders. Provincial child and youth committees take on policy responsibilities by holding meetings, monitoring projects, and coordinating with 60 partner agencies. These meetings cover successful and unsuccessful projects, databases, research, and fieldwork, which provide essential data for provincial policy-making."

(A male university lecturer, April 23, 2018)

3. Learning and capacity development mechanism

This mechanism, based on provincial networks for youth development, is formed using individuals who are interested in the organization of regional learning: government officials, representatives of NGOs, and former youth leaders. These groups play an active role as learning-based directors who design processes for the development of subdistrict youth capacity; such as providing community study instruments, planning for project proposal development, monitoring operations, and/or offering learning summaries following each activity. One respondent, a community-based researcher, noted:

"Participating in research forums and provincial meetings allows us to share experiences and observe diverse youth development challenges, processes, and mentoring approaches across different areas. If we lack experience with certain issues, we learn from others' insights."

(A female community-based researcher, April 13, 2018)

4. Academic mechanism

This consists of university lecturers and/or independent scholars who have expertise in diverse areas supporting academics who work in youth development systems, making youth development recommendations. One informant, a university lecturer, observed the following:

"The university's mission includes producing graduates, conducting research, providing academic services, and fostering art and cultural heritage. As part of its academic service, the university supports other sectors by offering comprehensive knowledge across various fields, including youth civic engagement, and making youth development recommendations at the policy level."

(A male university lecturer, April 23, 2018)

5. Local youth development mechanism

This community-level mechanism involves micro-level participants in the ecosystem including community leaders, administrators, local administration organizational staff, teachers, educators, parents, youth mentors, and youth leaders. All of these stakeholders can participate in developing a system to support youth development through holding periodic meetings to establish a working group mechanism (such as a core team) for the development of policies to support youth development through relevant budget-support ordinances, resources, locations, and projects, improving the learning process through the monitoring of measures and the facilitating of learning before, during, and after youth self-development programs. One informant, a government official, asserted:

"The advancement of the YCE mechanism this time focuses on two levels of collaboration: provincial and subdistrict. At the subdistrict level, the key mechanisms are having mentors and administrators who understand and create opportunities for youth participation. Ultimately, we hope to see local ordinances at the subdistrict level that mandate support for children and youth, including funding, workspaces, and projects that interest them. Youth mentors should play the role of communicators to clarify the goals and processes of youth development so that parents and community leaders can adjust their mindsets and participate in youth development."

(A female government official, April 26, 2018)

Evolution of social processes

Youth development work has been structurally evolving into a multisector YCE partnership that continuously sustains self-management across three stages: mission formulation, mechanism development to enable mission formulation engagement, and the establishment of a mission-motivational institutional structure.

The three-stage evolution of the structure of youth development enabled the transfer of a YCE framework and methodology from lead organizations to community mentors. These include executives and organizational staff of local administrations, as well as educational institutions. This increased the number of change agents who can enhance the capacity of youth development. Youth leaders who succeed in this learning process have raised the bar and become change agents returning to work on social development in their communities

and enabling YCE dynamism and adaptivity through feedback loops. This evolutionary cycle formed the foundation for change agents to become human capital in the ecosystem themselves as a condition for the social management process to progress to the next phase.

The Learning Process

A key principle for the YCE learning process model is the certainty that this process can encourage young people to follow out self-directed learning until civic characteristics emerge and methods of thinking and behaviors transform. In this process, youths have independently rediscovered their potential and community roots as well as civic qualities. The learning process gradually upholds the ideology of citizenship, incorporating love for the community, functioning until behaviors change through active learning to create knowledge and skills that reflect experiences, focusing on the content, processes, and inherent value of actions until awareness transforms community membership.

There are four main steps in executing a learning process: (1) community study, including gathering information and learning about local issues; (2) implementing community projects through the advancement of community development projects and implementation; (3) reviewing and reflecting on the learning experience; and (4) societal communication to create a learning process with the community and society. This continuous learning cycle develops YCE, enabling youths to become good citizens with specific characteristics. There is a sense of belonging to the learning process, a diverse learning ecosystem including actual community learning resources for community members to use as they face actual problems in the form of finding learning time and continuity, and interactions between youth and mentors in a safe space or environment where they are listened to, and learning experiences are valued. A learning facilitator who believes in a hands-on learning framework and in designing experiential learning step-by-step is armed with thought-provoking questions to encourage youth to think and reflect. This leads to perceptional transformations in action and redefines the learning experience. One sample, an NGO staff member, commented as follows:

> *"The learning process is designed around field visits and community learning, such as understanding the Mae Klong River's environment. Youths explore upstream and downstream areas to learn how activities affect water quality and how locals live by the river and sea.*

> *Real experiences like these create lasting memories...Reflection is critical for summarizing lessons learned and evaluating outcomes. Throughout the project, especially during the learning festival, participants reflect on their experiences, learn from mistakes, and recognize successes in addressing past errors."*
> (A male nongovernmental organization staff member, March 28, 2018)

Youth Citizenship Characteristics

Youth development involves using the above model to allow youth to develop YCE across two dimensions: civic consciousness and civic skills.

Civic consciousness

This recognition of self-worth with respect to the public and society consists of individual consciousness that is connected with the community that is inhabited, together with appreciation and love for it and the recognition of its value and capital through the creation of a sense of ownership of local wisdom and public assets and resources. In addition, the sense of responsibility to themselves and their families that is developed includes recognizing community and societal rights, taking responsibility, and the value of participating in challenges.

Civic skills

The external characteristic of civic skills reflects the ability to act with citizenship consciousness. Their key elements include having systematic thinking skills, information, knowledge, and understanding the mechanisms and interrelationships of the local environment and the communities inhabited, their civic problems and mechanisms causing such problems, as well as how they are multidimensionally connected to the social ecosystem. These skills enable the creation, planning, and conducting of problem-solving activities in civic responsibility while connecting with peers and adults in community development group activities.

Discussion

The multi-sector partnership approach is crucial in Thailand for fostering YCE by integrating efforts from various stakeholders, including government agencies, educational institutions, and civil society organizations.

This collaborative approach allows for pooling resources and expertise, which is necessary for addressing the diverse needs of youth development in the country. In Thailand, initiatives such as the National Child and Youth Development Promotion Act emphasize the importance of multiple sectors working together to create a supportive environment for youth (Department of Child and Youth Affairs, Ministry of Social Development and Human Security, 2017).

It was found that elements of multisector stakeholders are involved in the process of youth development at various levels, including actors in government agencies, educational institutions, CSOs, and subdistrict entities, as well as in villages that are administered by local administrative organizations and by the development workforce from nongovernmental organizations that encourage youth development work. These elements include (1) policy-level committee mechanisms, (2) provincial mechanisms, (3) learning mechanisms, (4) academic mechanisms, and (5) local youth development mechanisms, consisting of stakeholders who are involved in the youth development ecosystem as the smallest individual units, such as community leaders, administrators and staff members of local administrative organizations, administrators and teachers in educational institutions, parents, youth mentors, and youth leaders. These people directly impact YCE. However, this study did not find clear evidence on the role of families or guardians in creating learning for youth. Nevertheless, the family and parents may originate learning for youth, as implied in research about youth development with civic identity beginning from the family (Jennings & Niemi, 1974).

The elements of stakeholders involved in diverse youth development procedures at different levels of the youth development ecosystem can be understood through the theory of Bronfenbrenner (1992), examining individual development as it occurs through interaction with the physical environment, in association with diverse environments. In a social ecosystem, a networked and interconnected relationship interacts socially with diverse stakeholders, both directly and indirectly. The system may be divided into five levels: (1) microsystem, (2) mesosystem, (3) exosystem, (4) macrosystem, and (5) chronosystem. This corresponds to previous research (Duerden & Witt, 2010) showing that the progress of the civic identity of youth is a process of direct and indirect interaction between individuals and their environment.

These mechanisms involve relationships among multisector stakeholders in youth development ecosystems for diverse stakeholder groups who have varied macro (macrosystems) and provincial-level (exosystems) youth development roles that are not directly related to youth. However, there is interaction that occurs between change agent leaders (mesosystems) in learning about mindsets and methods for youth development by collaboratively determining resource vision, mission, and mobilization, as well as engagement in managing youth development according to the roles played at different supra-community levels. The microsystem is directly related to youth mentorship, linking community adults and supporting the learning process (mesosystems). Stakeholders at each level of the provincial youth development ecosystem must depend on each other (interdependence) while interacting in the learning system and self-organizing to create youth development work and self-improvement until it reaches the state of being a sustainable system.

Previous research has indicated that social support plays a role in the development of YCE (Dolan, 2022). In addition, it has explored the management of local organizations in promoting YCE and the role of organizations in shaping policies for YCE development, as well as fostering collaboration among relevant entities (Li, 2020). Key factors that promote YCE include social support and the development of social capital, as noted by Dolan & Brennan (2016). These factors are strengthened through partnerships that provide opportunities for youth to engage in community service, mentoring, and leadership programs, all of which are integral to building civic responsibility and long-term engagement. However, robust examples from studies showcasing the collaboration of various sectors at different levels in YCE development are still lacking. This study identified models, roles, and collaboration among different sectors that can be utilized to promote cooperation among the relevant organizations in the advancement of YCE.

Other key YCE processes were established due to the roles played by the lead organization, which was not evident in the theoretical framework of previous research studies (Coleman, 2021; Lerner et al., 2014; Li, 2020; McGregor & Dolan, 2021). Government agencies alone may not effectively manage provincial youth development through a top-down approach; coordination with other leading provincial-level agencies is essential. In Thailand, these agencies include NGOs, educational institutions, government agencies in collaboration with the Youth and Child Network Coordination Center, along with leading provincial youth groups that have development experience. As a result, lead organizations that have diversified organizational characteristics differentiate individual and organizational relationships within the connected network.

Regardless of the form that the lead organization takes in each province, its key roles should be understood in a three-pronged relationship system: (1) facilitating networking by acting as a medium to connect those involved and coordinating mechanisms at all levels to participate in planning and implementation while sharing knowledge and benefiting from collaboration; (2) facilitating local policy formulation through the provision of a platform for participants in determining the vision, goals, and mission of youth development as well as by fundraising resources to support the work through formal and informal provincial committee mechanisms while planning and implementing them; and (3) facilitating the learning process for cross-group stakeholders in establishing networking processes through interactions and exchanges of philosophy while supporting youth development work in a context of mutual learning.

This study underscores the lessons learned in developing YCE from the stakeholders involved in this development. These lessons can be valuable for shaping youth development policies prioritizing collaboration among all relevant sectors. Such collaboration can maximize the benefits of YCE for young people, contributing to building a body of knowledge in youth development shifting the perspective from segmented development to a more holistic and integrated approach.

This research possesses strengths from synthesizing a comprehensive YCE model based on insights gained from three distinct case studies of YCE development. The case study data clearly illustrate the role of leading agencies in facilitating connections with multisector partnerships, providing new knowledge for youth development initiatives. However, further validation of the YCE model would enhance the completeness of this research. It remains to be determined how the capabilities of lead organizations can be developed to effectively fulfill this role.

Conclusion and Recommendations

This study explored collaborative models, mechanisms, and processes of YCE from multisector partnerships to synthesize a YCE model in provincial Thailand. It used a case study design and a qualitative research approach. The results of the research indicated changing perspectives on the support provided to youth development from relying on one-off activities to connecting all sectors and jointly developing youth systematically.

This study demonstrates that all three provincial case studies share key principles in terms of YCE social and learning processes. Both are interconnected through lead organizations in a key mechanism ensuring progress and continuity in the youth development ecosystem by participation in managing capital, stakeholder relationships, and learning platforms.

The findings suggest that government agencies involved in provincial youth development should clearly define the roles of lead organizations and encourage participation through providing opportunities for agencies and staff with knowledge and experience in youth development to engage with the system. This would heighten system diversity and self-management, altering the youth development paradigm at systematic and operational levels.

The research findings in this study differ from those of previous studies, as this study involves the development of a YCE model using a case studies approach. This approach emphasizes transforming the youth development perspective, moving away from a sole reliance on the actions of government agencies and the formulation of youth development policies. It highlights the importance of the involvement of actors from all relevant sectors. This model demonstrates the potential for the YCE development at the provincial or local government level through the participation of stakeholders from various sectors, a concept that could be adapted and applied in the context of other countries. Further research should be conducted to develop a YCE process model involving multisector subdistrict partnerships and enhancing the role of the family unit in YCE.

Conflict of Interest

The authors declare that there is no conflict of interest.

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