

## Public-Mindedness: University Social Engagement with Societies Sustainable Development of Quality of Life and Volunteer Work

จิตสาธารณะ: พันธกิจสัมพันธ์มหาวิทยาลัยกับสังคมเพื่อการพัฒนา  
คุณภาพชีวิตและงานอาสาสมัครอย่างยั่งยืน

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### บทคัดย่อ

การวิจัยนี้มีวัตถุประสงค์เพื่อ 1. มุ่งศึกษาเกี่ยวกับจิตสาธารณะและงานอาสาสมัครในชุมชนและจัดทำโครงการจำนวน 10 โครงการร่วมกับชุมชนเพื่อแก้ไขปัญหาในชุมชน 2. บูรณาการองค์ความรู้ ตลอดจนแนวคิดทฤษฎีทางด้านรัฐประศาสนศาสตร์กับอาสาสมัครนักศึกษาและคนที่ให้ข้อมูลหลัก 3. เชื่อมโยงจิตสาธารณะของนักศึกษาและผู้ให้ข้อมูลหลักกับ 4 พันธกิจหลักของมหาวิทยาลัย ซึ่งการศึกษานี้ใช้รูปแบบการวิจัยเชิงปฏิบัติการเพื่อสร้างชุมชนแห่งการเรียนรู้ ส่วนหนึ่งในรายวิชาการประเมินผลโครงการ และรายวิชานวัตกรรมการจัดการ อาสาสมัครที่เข้าร่วมโครงการ คือ นักศึกษาสาขาวิชารัฐประศาสนศาสตร์ มหาวิทยาลัยราชภัฏสุราษฎร์ธานี และนักศึกษามหาวิทยาลัยสงขลานครินทร์ วิทยาเขตสุราษฎร์ธานี จำนวน 150 คน และผู้ให้ข้อมูลหลัก จำนวน 2 คน ดำเนินการช่วง พ.ศ. 2560-2562 เก็บข้อมูลโดยการศึกษาปัญหาในชุมชน พื้นที่ตำบลมะขามเตี้ยและตำบลขุนทะเล อำเภอเมืองจังหวัดสุราษฎร์ธานี จากนั้นพัฒนาเป็นโครงการเพื่อแก้ไขปัญหาร่วมกับชุมชน

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ตามด้วยการนำไปปฏิบัติโดยการจัดทำโครงการและประเมินผลโครงการ (ก่อนทำ-ขณะทำ-หลังทำ) จึงนำมาสู่การถอดบทเรียนในชั้นเรียนเกี่ยวกับสิ่งที่ได้เรียนรู้จากการทำโครงการต่างๆ เชื่อมโยงกับแนวคิดทฤษฎีทางรัฐประศาสนศาสตร์ และสัมภาษณ์เชิงลึกผู้ให้ข้อมูลหลัก สุดท้าย นำข้อมูลที่ได้อาวิเคราะห์และสังเคราะห์เชิงเนื้อหาเชื่อมโยงกับวัตถุประสงค์ทั้ง 3 ข้อ ภายใต้ 4 พันธกิจสัมพันธ์ของมหาวิทยาลัย

ผลการศึกษาพบว่า 1. แต่ละชุมชนมีปัญหาที่แตกต่างกันส่วนใหญ่ คือ ปัญหาพื้นฐาน เช่น ปัญหาขยะ ปัญหาสิ่งแวดล้อม ปัญหาคุณภาพชีวิต และปัญหาสุขอนามัย 2. พบว่านักศึกษานิยมนำเทคนิคการบริหาร PDCA, POCCC และ ทฤษฎีระบบ มาใช้กับการบริหารโครงการในชุมชน และ 3. พบว่าการบริหารโครงการเหล่านี้ล้วนส่งเสริมกระบวนการมีส่วนร่วมของผู้มีส่วนได้ส่วนเสียทั้งภาครัฐและภาคเอกชน ซึ่งนอกจากนักศึกษาจะได้ฝึกฝนทักษะต่างๆ เพื่อบ่มเพาะอัตลักษณ์ของบัณฑิต I-WISE แล้วยังสามารถบรรลุพันธกิจสัมพันธ์มหาวิทยาลัยกับชุมชนเพื่อการพัฒนาคุณภาพชีวิตและงานอาสาสมัครที่ยั่งยืนสอดคล้องกับพระราชปณิธานของกรมหลวงสงขลานครินทร์ที่ว่า “ประโยชน์ของเพื่อนมนุษย์เป็นกิจที่หนึ่ง”

คำสำคัญ: จิตสาธารณะ, งานอาสาสมัคร, พันธกิจมหาวิทยาลัยเพื่อสังคม, การพัฒนาคุณภาพชีวิต

## Abstract

This research study aimed to 1. explore the public-mindedness and volunteer work in communities and organize ten projects to solve problems in the communities, 2. integrate the bodies of knowledge, concepts, and theories of Public Administration from volunteer students and key persons, and 3. connect students' and key persons' public-mindedness and volunteer work with the four main missions

of the university. This study used a Community Action Research (CAR) model to build a learning community and it was part of the courses: Project Evaluation, and Management Innovation. The subjects in the project were 150 students majoring in Public Administration from Suratthani Rajabhat University and Prince of Songkla University, Surat Thani Campus, and two key informants joined this research study from 2017 to 2019 in the communities of Makham Tia Sub-district and Khun Thale Sub-district, Surat Thani Province. Subsequently, community-based projects were established to solve the problems of the communities, followed by the implementation and evaluation of the projects (before, during and after). A lessons-learned session from the projects was conducted to connect the concepts of Public Administration, with the data from the in-depth interviews with key persons. Finally, the data was analyzed and synthesized using content analysis in relation to the three objectives of this study under the four missions of university social engagement.

The results revealed that 1. each community has different problems, most of which are fundamental problems such as waste, environment, quality of life, and health, 2. PDCA, POCCC, and system theory are popular techniques used in the project management in the communities, and 3. the management of all these projects promoted the participation of stakeholders from both the public and private sectors. The researchers gained an opportunity to practice various skills to nurture the I-WISE graduate identity and to pave the way for the achievement of the university social engagement for the development of quality of life and sustainable

volunteer work that echoes the claim and aspiration of His Royal Highness Prince Mahidol of Songkla, that "Our Soul is for the Benefit of Mankind".

*Keywords:* Public-mindedness, Volunteer work, University social engagement, Development of quality of life

### Introduction

Over the past ten years, social change, economic depression, and political instability have brought many issues to many communities. People on low incomes were hit the hardest and have had a low quality of life. However, crises have brought out great merit in people's hearts, particularly in form of volunteering. In an era of capitalism and globalization nowadays, the complexity of political, economic, social, and cultural dimensions has led to various social problems: poverty, refugee crisis, terrorism, and disasters. The way people live their lives has been transformed. Societies began to shift towards individualism resulting in wider social and economic disparity. To narrow the gap in inequality, people in many regions call for unity and collaboration. In the ASEAN community, for example, a vision of "*One Vision, One Community, One Identity*" (ASEAN.org) was proposed, whereby public-mindedness is considered a key to achieving unity and collaboration for a peaceful society.

Public-mindedness is associated with "governance" in the 6<sup>th</sup> Henry's Paradigms (Henry, 2010, p.27-43), and the principle of charity in Buddhism. Thailand's old agricultural tradition of "long-

khaek- kio- khao” or a communal harvesting ceremony that reflected collaboration and living in harmony was valued by the community in the past. It was also a common practice in Thailand to hand out food to the poor. These practices can rarely be seen in individualistic societies nowadays.

During 2017-2018, the Thai government initiated the “Jit-Asa 904” program, which was a national volunteer training mega project to honor and celebrate King Rama X (H.M. King Maha Vajiralongkorn Bodindradebayavarangkun). The training contributed 6 subjects for 6 weeks as cited on the Matichon online (28 March 2018). The program highlighted the power of hope, belief, faith, and inspiration in the public-mindedness.

In Thai education, public-mindedness and volunteer work were incorporated into various activities, projects, and curriculums in schools and higher education institutions. For example, the Faculty of Natural Resources and Agro-Industry, Kasetsart University included a “Public-mindedness for Community Development” course in the curriculum. Thammasat University launched a Graduate Diploma Program in volunteering in the Puey Ungphakorn School of Development Studies: PSDS). Prince of Songkla University (PSU) has adopted Prince of Songkla’s (King Bhumibol’s father) vision of “Our Soul is for the benefit of mankind”. Most recently, there has been a graduate project to fight the COVID-19 disaster, by accepting applications for graduates of Prince of Songkla University to participate in the project of 400 positions. The Graduate School has operated this type of project for more than 15 years. It is currently the 16<sup>th</sup> year, covering the southern region,

especially the provinces, which are home to 5 campuses of the university, and nearby provinces.

However, some content of the abstract from this research was published in the proceedings of the 11<sup>th</sup> Global Conference on Business and Social Sciences in 2020 (GCBSS, 2020). Importantly, the researcher has continued research on public-mindedness and volunteer work. In addition, the results of this research were applied to the teaching of the Benefit of Mankind course, in the 1<sup>st</sup> semester, of the academic year 2022 (PSUCONNECT, 2022). This illustrated public services towards mankind which showed great merit of public-mindedness without boundary. The study entitled “Public-Mindedness: University Social Engagement with Societies Sustainable Development of Quality of Life and Volunteer Work” aimed to answer two research questions: What are current community volunteer projects that university students have been involved in? and How can students and other people integrate the bodies of knowledge, concepts, and theories of Public Administration with authentic learning under the university engagement on community relations?

### **Research Objectives**

1. To explore the public-mindedness and volunteer work in the communities and organize ten community projects to resolve problems in the communities.
2. To integrate the bodies of knowledge, concepts, and theories of Public Administration with students and key persons.

3. To relate students' and key persons' public-mindedness and volunteer work with the four missions of university engagement.

### **Concepts and Theories**

Important theoretical concepts in Public Administration related to this research include New Public Governance (NPG) by Osborne (2010), in terms of network management, and Public Service Improvement (Downe, 2010) for the benefit of network cooperation among government agencies that take care of the community as well as to improve services in collaboration with educational institutions and villagers who may or may not have a form of community union/community board. The techniques of Public Administration such as PDCA and system theory were applied in this action research in the classroom as well as important concepts and principles related to volunteerism, including the context of Prince of Songkla University focusing on identity, I-WISE (Identity, Wisdom, Social Engagement). The missions of the university to the community relationship or "University Community Engagement" include 1. Collaboration with partners (Partnership), 2. Mutual benefit for all parties involved (Mutual benefit), 3. Using knowledge and resulting in mutual learning (Scholarship), 4. The impact on society can be assessed (Social impact). All of these missions are operated under the determination of His Royal Highness Prince Mahidol of Songkla "The benefit of mankind is the first activity".

## Literature Reviews

Oxford Learner's Dictionaries (n.d.) defined the term volunteer as 1. a person who freely offers to take part in an enterprise or undertake a task, and 2. a person who works for an organization without being paid. Cambridge online dictionary describes volunteer as 1. a person who does something, especially helping other people, willingly and without being forced or paid to do it, 2. a person who does something, especially, for other people or for an organization, willingly and without being forced or paid to do it, and 3. a person who does a job or some work without being paid or forced to do it. Meanwhile, the Business Times (2012) explains that volunteering is about giving, contributing, and helping other individuals and the community. Volunteering means working with others to make a meaningful contribution to a better community. To sum up, “Volunteer” or “Jit-Asa” (in the Thai language) means people who have public-mindedness in their hearts and devote their time to helping their communities and people who are in need such as the poor or people with disabilities. They offer help through various types of activities as shown in the following report by the Bangkok Post, that defines “volunteering spirit” as the feeling that you want to help without being paid for it.

Bangkok Post (2017) reported “The Public-mindedness” in Thailand giving examples in the event where more than two million Thais served in public activities during the royal funeral as honor of the late King. Some examples are as follows. Sumit Tharansi (nearly 75 years old), a security guard from Phayao province, gave people directions at the bus stop for more than 200 days. Pornsuree



Konanta, who was approximately 45 years old, volunteered at Sanam Luang during the royal cremation. She organized the queues for the tuk-tuk or buses services and provided information on the best routes for people to travel to the royal funeral. An image of Pornsuee with a walkie-talkie was well remembered by many people. Several groups and organizations also volunteered during the royal funeral. For example, “Khrua Thammasat Asa” or “Thammasat Kitchen” provided 20 volunteers to serve breakfasts and dinners for 300 people and lunches for 700-1000 people every day. Bangkok Post highlighted that "This is a once-in-a-lifetime opportunity for everyone, when they get to do things they've never done before, and it's all because of their love for King Bhumibol".

From the above definitions, the researcher, therefore, concludes that public-mindedness is a mind that is aware of self-responsibility and social responsibility. It refers to people who have a mind to help society, fellow humans, generously care for one another, and respect social rules without violating the rights of others. In social sciences, such as public administration, which the era of public administration focusing on proactive public service in the form of Public Service Delivery under the principles of Good Governance, which appeared in Henry's work (2010).

In addition, a search for related research found that volunteerism is related to the Krathwohl's mind theory, which can measure mental behavior according to the personality traits consisting of five stages, which are the cognitive phase, response stage, value appreciation, value system, and the process of creating traits (Chairat, 2018: 108). As for the research of Kienggam & Mateewattanakul (2010:

101), it is found that two factors that are related to public-mindedness of university students are self-responsibility and social responsibility. Importantly, it was found that public-mindedness was cultivated by nursing students at Boromarajonani College of Nursing, Surat Thani in a life skills course (Phooriwiththayatheera, 2018: 1). This is consistent with the research of Ponkum, et al. (2013: p. 322) that researches and develops a curriculum to strengthen public-mindedness according to social education theory for elementary students at Son Mun school.

### **Research Methodologies**

Community Action Research (CAR) was used in the study to design 10 student volunteer projects in communities in Makham Tia and Khun Thale Sub Districts, Muang, Surat Thani Province during 2017-2019. Most projects were part of the Project Evaluation course and the management innovation course. More than 150 students from Prince of Songkla University and Suratthani Rajabhat University participated in the projects. Data were collected by conducting preliminary surveys and hands-on projects in the communities studied. Through the process of project implementation (Before - while doing - after), with the following steps. Students were asked to find out about issues and problems in the local communities. Then, ideas were shared and discussed to set up volunteer projects. After that, students planned and ran the projects. After the projects were completed, the researcher, volunteers, and community representatives had a meeting to discuss lessons learned in class to connect with the theory of Public Administration. This was followed by in-depth interviews with key persons who had more volunteer

experience to make the research more complete. Finally, data were analysed using content analysis in relation to the three objectives under the four missions of university social engagement.

### **Research Results**

**Objective 1: To survey issues about public-mindedness and volunteer work in the communities and organize ten community projects to resolve the issues.**

A trace of positive conscience was demonstrated among the students who participated in the project activities that were jointly designed with the community members in Makham Tia Sub-district and Khun Thale Sub-district. These activities provided the students with the opportunities to grow the spirit of volunteering and utilize the knowledge outside the classroom. Each community had different problems, most of which were fundamental problems such as waste, environment, well-being, and diseases. Therefore, the proposed project ideas included cleaning and developing areas around temples, getting rid of the mosquito larva parade campaign in collaboration with the Public Health District, sewing breast prostheses for cancer patients in Surathani Hospital, Hae-Pha-Hom-Phra-That (circumambulation of the pagoda), maintaining school grounds, improving the school library, mangrove planting, producing a digital accessible information system such as books or audiobooks for people with visual impairments, and maintaining a dam in Ban Khuan Yung Community Forest. The activities were illustrated in the following pictures.

In **Figures 1 and 2**, students were cleaning and developing areas around the temple and school.

**Figure 1**

*Cleaning and developing areas around Wat Som Wang.*



**Figures 2**

*Cleaning and developing areas around Ban Soi Song School.*



The volunteers were organizing activities for school children as shown in **Figures 3, 4, 5 and 6**

**Figure 3**

*Organizing activities for students in Ban Soi Song School.*



**Figure 4**

*Maintaining school grounds.*



Figure 5

*Improving the school library.*



Figure 6

*Producing a digital accessible information system such as books or audiobooks for people with visual impairments.*



Collaborative work with Public Health District and Hospital in Surat Thani Province as shown in Figures 7 and 8

**Figure 7**

*Running a campaign to get rid of mosquito larvae in collaboration with the Public Health District.*



**Figure 8**

*Sewing breast prosthesis for cancer patients in Suratthani Hospital.*



The Hae-Pha-Hom-Phra-That ceremony or the circumambulation of the pagoda is organized between 26-27 March of every year in Suratthani Province to support a Buddhist tradition as demonstrated in Figure 9 Conservation activities as illustrated in Figure 10

**Figure 9**

*Hae-Pha-Hom-Phra-That.*





**Figure 10**

*Mangrove planting, Figure 12 Maintaining the dam in Ban Khuan Yung Community Forest by 50 senior students of Public Administration, Prince of Songkla University, Thailand, on 5 February 2019*



Sources: <https://bit.ly/2D1efiq>.

**Objective 2: To integrate the bodies of knowledge, concepts, and theories of Public Administration with students' and key persons' public-mindedness and volunteer work.**

Student volunteers were interviewed after they completed the projects. **Student A**, who took part in the dam maintenance project, said that she used Human Resource Theory, especially putting the right man on the right job, in organizing the project. As there were many kinds of volunteer activities, the leaders needed to assign tasks to suitable people for efficiency and safety. **Student B**, a senior student who was a volunteer leader of the Jit-Asa Club,

said that “PDCA” was an effective theory of Public Administration that he used when he organized these activities. **Student C**, a sophomore who took part in the school painting activity, also commented that she used the PDCA (Plan, Do, Check, Act) of Public Administration theory to manage this. Similarly, **Student D**, a senior student, also used PDCA. **Student E**, a junior student who participated in Hae-Pha-Hom-Phra-That at Khao-Tha-Phet in 2016 and 2019, pointed out that he applied paradigm four (public administration is management) of Public Administration to planning and implementing volunteer activities. In addition, **Student F**, a sophomore in the Public Administration Department, Prince of Songkla University (PSU) used POCCE in Public Administration Theory, which consists of Planning, Organizing, Commanding, Coordinating, and Controlling on a big cleaning day at PSU. **Student G**, a first-year student of the Public Administration Department, Prince of Songkla University explained that human relations are the major theory in Public Administration to make the project successful. **Student H**, a senior student, also commented that she integrated several Public Administration theories in different situations, especially the leadership skills to manage three volunteer projects: Panyachon Khon Rak PSU camp, Tapee-Sritrang camp, and love sending smile sending activity.

**Objective 3: To relate students’ and key persons’ public-mindedness and volunteer work with the four missions of university engagement.**

For the last objective, the study found that the stakeholders (e.g., members of the temples; communities; hospitals; local

administrative organizations; public agencies; and private bodies) were given a space to take part and contribute to this project. It was evident that the project could fulfill the university's mission of community relations as well as strengthen and sustain the communities' foundations.

The ten projects demonstrated a trace of positive conscience among the students who participated in the project's activities with authentic learning that were jointly designed with the community members. These volunteer projects not only nurtured the students' spirit of volunteering for the university's surrounding communities, but also allowed them to integrate the bodies of knowledge, concepts, and theories of Public Administration in off-class applications, and fulfill the university's mission on community relations. These activities provided the students with the opportunities to grow the spirit of volunteering and utilize the knowledge outside the classroom. Valuable lessons learned from the projects have been shared by the student volunteers as follows.

### **The lessons learned about learning from the volunteer projects**

Students shared their learning as follows;

1. Harmony, caring and problem-solving.
2. Coordination with friends, time management, and feeling proud of the local community.
3. Volunteering helps people from their misfortunes.

4. Friendship among students from different year groups and learning to endure hardship like eating from a canteen tray or bathing without a shower.

5. Hospitality of people who joined the project and that goodness is more important than everything.

6. Giving makes you feel good.

7. Good relations with people in communities and how to behave appropriately in society.

8. Management system.

### **The lessons learned about problems while doing volunteer projects**

Students shared their learning as follows;

1. Most people were willing to help. However, some people did not take volunteering seriously and did not contribute much.

2. April was not the best month to run volunteering activities outdoors as it was the hottest month of the year and volunteers found the temperature extremely uncomfortable.

3. Some people did not sincerely want to help the community. Therefore, they did not stay until the project was completed.

4. Some people did not work as a team.

5. Volunteers were from different provinces and it was difficult to coordinate and manage.

6. Budget was not sufficient to buy equipment such as paints. Therefore, volunteers had to donate money.

### **In-depth interviews with key persons who have public-mindedness and are recognized in society**

The researcher interviewed people with public-mindedness and recognized in society, and therefore, would like to bring sample persons to highlight in this research article as follows.

**Interviewee 1:** Asst. Prof. Supot Kowittaya, Vice President for Student Development and Alumni Relations of Prince of Songkhla University

**Question 1: When did you begin to participate in public-minded activities? Why did you decide to participate in this type of activity?**

Supot said that he thought that the cultivation of mother and family that teaches children to do good is an important factor. When he was studying in the second year of university, he had to make an important decision about his life, which was to choose a program between business administration and public administration.

Supot thought that if he chose business administration, he would work for the business sector and would be rich but if he chose public administration, he would become a bailiff, then a sheriff who would help save the house. He said he was a resident of Raman District in Yala province. He sees less difficult education. It was difficult for him to see his own education in the future. When he was young, he had to help his mother taking care of his younger siblings. He saw people with coconut groves or rambutan groves had no trading tools, etc. So, finally, he decided to study Public Administration in order to help the villagers. In addition, when he

was studying at university from year one to year four, he participated in volunteer camps and activities that made him like helping people or the community.

**Question 2: What are some of your public-minded activities?**

Supot said that he would do anything that could be done to help the poor, poor students, give ideas, and suggestions to solve problems, and encourage students to get scholarships. He did all these together with helping victims of various disasters such as floods, house fires, and the flooding COVID-19 period, helping to raise funds, raising materials, making masks, cloths, hand gel, donating food and money to people. Some relatives of the people with financial difficulty would also periodically provide money, dry food, masks, etc.

**Question 3: What have you learned / What benefit have you gained from working with the public-mindedness?**

Supot said that the things that makes him feel happy is helping. He does not lose anything, or regret losing property, or money. He said the money we have may not be much, but people with financial difficulty have only a hundred baht or two hundred baht when they are unable to work and have no income. If we don't help, they may do something bad to get money. Those who have a regular salary will be paid the next salary for sure. Our lives are valuable if we help others or society. If you still have energy to do good things, do it and be happy about it. Go to bed and sleep. I had been seriously ill, and almost died. After being seriously ill, I became

determined that this was the second life and I would try to do only good to anyone whether that person is good or not. As for being a teacher and being an administrator, it is considered that you have a volunteering spirit to work. So, you are responsible for promoting the development of good people and good people would lay the foundation for the future of the family, community, society, and nation. They would create a good future for the nation.

From the above interview, it can be concluded that Supot Kowittaya sees that volunteerism arises from family cultivating to help others in small matters to helping fellow human beings in larger matters when they grow up. The decision to study public administration is considered to be a self-training for volunteer work because after graduation, they will help the villagers in their respective fields. In particular, government service, will help villagers more than other occupations. For example, when there are various disasters ( floods, epidemics) , they will join with students in volunteer projects to help as much as they can to alleviate the suffering of the victims. Certainly, it is important to help others according to the strength you have and what you can do. However, do not overdo helping others so much that you are in trouble. Helping others must be done with sincerity, not expecting anything in return. If there is an opportunity to help others, it is best to take that opportunity.

**Interviewee 2:** Thanakorn Wongthep, a Public Administration graduate

**Question 1: When did you begin to participate in public-minded activities? Why did you decide to participate in this type of activity?**

At the time of the interview, Thanakorn was graduating and joining the COVID-19 Volunteer Disaster Volunteer Project. Thanakorn said that he started public-minded work as a child of about 8 years old by following his grandmother to volunteer with the school and the district because she was a teacher. At the school, there were projects related to the public regularly. So, Thanakorn also followed her to participate in the projects.

**Question 2: What are some of your public-minded activities?**

When attending classes, Thanakorn was also a teacher assistant in coordinating and facilitating in class all the time. Even after entering university education, he went on to help with public-minded work with older students who work at student organizations in the position of student relations followed by being Vice President of the External Affairs Organization and receiving the Outstanding Student Award for Academic Year 2018.

**Question 3: What have you learned / What benefit have you gained ... from working with the public-mindedness?**

After graduation Thanakorn joined the COVID-19 Volunteer Graduate Project, where he learned that "communication" is very important in volunteering because it is needed to communicate with people at all levels in order to understand them. Communication



with the heart is especially important to reach people who work together. Finally, Thanakon shared the insights from his work with the public that he had adopted the Prince of Songkla's motto "Our Soul is for the Benefit of Mankind" as a guideline for social work.

From the above interview, it can be concluded that Thanakorn Wongthep started volunteering in his childhood both in school and at the temple. If there was a volunteer activity, he would attend it regularly as well as volunteering as a teacher assistant growing up, and his voluntary mission was huge too. He has worked as a student leader in the university and has continuous volunteer work both within the university and outside the university. He even received an award for the good deeds that have been done to help others. After graduating from higher education, he continued to work on volunteerism until now. It can be considered that Thanakorn Wongthep is a role model for young volunteers.

### **Discussions**

New Public Governance is a 21<sup>st</sup> century concept of Public Administration and Stephen P. Osborne is a prominent theorist who discussed the concept that has been studied by scholars around the world and those who cited his work (Osborne, 2006) and (Osborne, 2010). It corresponds to the governance paradigm of modern Public Administration as shown in Henry's academic work (2010). However, the focus of New Public Governance is on the implementation of the policy. This is consistent with this research study because it is research that focuses on allowing students to visit the community

near the university and create projects that respond to problems and community development by the community for the community leading to sustainable development with the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) (United Nations, n.d.).

Importantly, it can be seen that the New Public Governance concept focuses on local management. Through the cooperation of various sectors as shown in the academic conference papers of Naratippakorn, et al., (2019). These sectors are the government, the private sector, civil society, and the media, as well as the people. They work together to manage the problem and jointly develop the residential community according to the capacity of each sector, in the same way as the tenet, "put the right man on the right job". Therefore, it can be concluded that New Public Governance is a potent thought tool for today's executives to understand the complexities and repercussions of the reality they have to deal with in today's workforce (Chamaram, et al., 2017).

However, this research can also be explained through the concepts and theories of Public Service Improvement (Downe, 2010) which are related to Public Service Governance and Delivery, which focuses on proactive work in the area. Andrews (2014) outlines several key principles focusing on performance management for efficiency, such as cost reduction and effectiveness. Outcomes and consequences are taken into account as well as the consequence that innovation should occur. In practice, the idea also influences other factors such as organizational culture, leadership and the cooperation of different sectors should allow for mutual learning

between different organizations to improve performance indicators. This is consistent with the work of (Downe, 2010) using performance audits as a tool to improve both federal and local public services to achieve operational effectiveness where all sectors must work in relation to each other. The afore mentioned data illustrate that this present study is in line with the theories on New Public Governance and Public Service Improvement. Both of these theories focus on performance appraisal of systematic improvement and development of work operations monitored for efficiency and effectiveness. Especially, local authorities close to the people, there is a follow-up on the consequences of their operations. Therefore, there is a great need for the cooperation and participation of network partners including the government sector, private sector, civil society, educational institutions, temples, etc.

Public-mindedness was initiated in Thailand in 2015 when Srinakharinwirot University was the leader in collaborating with other Thai universities in the Engagement Thailand Initiation as mentioned in the study by Thongcharoen (2017, pp. 303-314). The 6<sup>th</sup> Engagement Thailand Annual Conference 2019 was held at Uttaradit Rajabhat University. Engagement Thailand proposed four core values: Measurable social impact, Partnership, Scholarship, and Mutual benefits. In the same way, Saisorn (2015) pointed out that the four dimensions of public-mindedness to help others in integrated manners are 1) the physical, 2) the mental, 3) the intellectual, and 4) the social dimensions which are based on the donations of both goods and Dhamma in order to get rid of sufferings. By this approach, mundane

and supermundane happiness for volunteers, sufferers, and societies can be observed as “expected results.”

The joint volunteering programs between Suratthani Rajabhat University (SRU) and Prince of Songkla University (PSU), whereby 150 students took part in 10 volunteering projects has proved to be a promising future for volunteer work in Thailand, particularly volunteer activities conducted by staff and students in higher education institutions under the mission of "university engagement" to empower the community and strengthen a partnership between universities and their local communities.

In February 2019, 50 senior students from the Public Administration Department, Faculty of Liberal Arts and Management Sciences, Prince of Songkla University, Surat Thani Campus conducted fieldwork together with community leaders, and an abbot to fix the check dam at Santimitree temple in Khunthalaе district, Muang, Surat Thani province. Moreover, nearly 90 first year students from the Public Administration Department enrolled in the “Sat-Phra-Ra-Cha” (The King’s Principles) course, which focused on the principles of "Sufficiency Economy", a philosophy conceived and developed by His Majesty King Bhumibol Adulyadej, who integrated the principles into more than 4,000 projects that he initiated. In this course, students conducted fieldwork in different areas in Southern Thailand, especially their hometowns which were the main locations for their volunteer projects. The activities provided students with knowledge and experience in volunteering and met

the mission of social engagement under I-WISE (Integrity, Wisdom, Social Engagement) of Prince of Songkla University.

Finally, researchers have discovered that this research can fulfill the four missions of the university in community engagement:

- 1) Partnership: Students have collaborated with the villagers to design the project, especially, community leaders in order to plan the project together for a period of 1 month, resulting in the project that was smooth and well-supported by villagers and related parties.
- 2) Mutual benefits: both the students and the villagers benefit mutually, that is, the students have learned to do the project and project evaluation in full achieving course objectives. They also have learned about the problems of the community from the area and participate with the villagers and people involved in every part of every step until the project is completed. People in communities and various sectors all benefit from the project because they have been involved in collaborative thinking from the beginning.
- 3) Scholarship; various sectors in the community such as temples, schools, medical institutions, government agencies local government organizations involved also share knowledge and provide information for students as well as join the project until completed, and are able to solve problems for the community as planned.
- 4) Measurable Social Impact: the impact is to solve community problems according to the objectives of the project including physical impacts such as cleanliness in the project area; the community has a beautiful and pleasant landscape. Moreover, the community gains psychological effects such as love and unity of people in the community on participation, thinking, designing,

planning, executing, and participating in the benefits. In addition, academics also exchange knowledge and transfer knowledge from villagers and academics to students.

### **Implications of the study**

The lessons learned from students volunteer projects showed the following:

1. Volunteering helps develop leadership skills and other qualities such as being thrifty, patient, punctual, and responsible for the public, which are vital to the theory or concept of Public Administration.

2. Students have an opportunity to learn how to solve problems in the real world, this is also in line with the theory or concept of Public Administration.

3. The stakeholders (e.g., members of the temples; communities; hospitals; local administrative organizations; public agencies; and private bodies) were given a space to take part in and contribute to this project as “co-creation”.

4. Community networks between school and school, university and university, university and school, university and public organizations, and university and community have been built. They can learn and share the body of knowledge with each other. Local wisdom has also been shared with students and scholars in the universities.

5. The success of the projects suggests that the community voluntary service can fulfill the university’s mission on community

relations as well as strengthen and sustain the communities' foundations.

### **Conclusion**

Complex capitalist societies and globalization lead to a variety of social problems. In addition, societies began to shift towards individualism resulting in wider social and economic inequality. Volunteer activities by students in higher education institutions can bring people together and allow them to share their knowledge and experience to empower the community and forge a positive and mutually beneficial partnership with each other. These stressed a need for more collaboration in modern complex societies. Moreover, the student volunteers had positive conscience towards participating in designing and arranging the project as well as other activities that support the communities. These activities provided the students with more opportunities to grow the spirit of volunteering and apply practical knowledge to outside education. Therefore, the researcher concluded that public-mindedness involves civil citizens in the condition or to remind that students who would be the active citizen in the future would maintain their voluntary mind as part of their working lives, not only devotion but also support to the public by means of money, objects, wisdom, and physical and mental energy to engage in public activities for no financial gain. The challenge is how voluntary work and public-mindedness can be integrated for accomplishing public needs.

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