



Creating Social Resolutions through Participatory Processes to Solve Local Problems: A Case Study of Beuangkrajub Sub-district, Wichianburi District, Phetchaboon Province

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Abstract

The central objective of this study is to create social resolutions through a participatory process in order to solve local problems in the Beuangkrajub Sub-district of Wichian Buri District in Phetchabun province. This study is an action research which focuses greatly on the participation of several sectors in the community. The methodology of the research process is determined as an action process. Four crucial tools were employed in the process of the research; 1) Governance snapshot assessments; 2) People scorecards 3) Budget literacy; and 4) Concrete action to resolve local problems. By processing the research's tools, this study creates resolutions in solving the land ownership management problems of Khokprue pasture in the Bungkrajub Sub-district: 1) A land ownership management agreement; 2) Establishment of a land management committee; 3) Establishment of a land management fund; and 4) A grant approval system for new landlords in the Khokprue pasture. This will result in the community to solve the problem of its own sustainably, and support the government to provide public services more efficiently. In addition, it is found that using research tools can benefit the principle of democracy. This study suggests that the aforementioned research approaches need to be used in other areas to make people in other areas to use this experience in managing community problems. More importantly, it can result in stronger Thai democratic governance.

Keywords: Social Resolution, Participatory Processes, Public Participation, Local Problem Solving, Thailand

Introduction

The main objective of this study is to create social resolutions through a participatory process in order to solve local problems in the Beuangkrajub Sub-district of Wichian Buri District in Phetchabun province. It is important to note that this is an action research study which focuses greatly on the participation of various sectors in the community. The participants include researchers, leaders and staff within the local government, government agencies, and the civilian population/villagers in the community. Examining these various groups in relation to another help achieve the objectives of the research, involves all stakeholders participating in the process of finding the problems, problem identification, discussions for solutions and creating social resolutions to solve local problems. The questions why social resolutions are important and why this study needs to create them can be raised. It needs to be noted that the social resolutions are able to contextualize its means of application targets with concrete actions and reaffirm the strong public commitment to highlight and solve the challenge local problems in the spirit of local corporation and harmony.

The main reason for choosing the Beuangkrajub Sub-district of the Wichian Buri District in Phetchabun province as an area of study is that the Chief Executive of the Beuangkrajub Sub-district Administrative Organization (SAO) sent a letter to the research team to discuss various problems that occurred in the local area.



The Chief Executive also asked for the research team to conduct a study in the area to solve the local problems. Consequently, in order to follow Thai educational beliefs in helping the community, the research team agreed. It is worth noting from the literature that the Beuangkrajub Sub-district has a lot environment diversity. The area is composed of plains and high plains mountains, with only one river that flows through the area. The majority of the population works in the agriculture sector. In addition, it is found that the people in this area receive insufficient public service from the government, and participate in risky, inappropriate behavior that affects their health (Pramanmuang & Teravecharoenchai, 2013). More interestingly, it is found that land ownership is one of the most serious concerns in the area. With these issues in mind, the Beuangkrajub Sub-district has many issues that need be resolved, and the research team is willing to help solve these problems, in which this research is then initiated.

It should be noted that this research follows the principle of Contextual Action Research (CAR), which emphasizes the important of meaning and the challenge of realistic action (McNair & Harris, 2014). This is to encourage relevant stakeholders to have a clear understanding of the overall local problem. Moreover, it is hoped that the principle of CAR would enable stakeholders to be able to create specific solutions to these local problems, and participate in practical actions in accordance with local conditions (Jones et al., 2013). By following the principle of CAR, this study believes that the stakeholders have an important role in the local solution equally (Nhamo, 2012).

To start, the researcher team traveled into the research area to conduct a preliminary meeting (kick off meeting). The team invited the administrators and staff of the Beuangkrajub SAO, along with representatives from government agencies, academic institutions, and representatives of the local community to attend the meeting. The main purpose is to explain the background, the importance, and the objectives and processes of the study to all participants. From the meeting it is found that the participants realized the importance of the study and expressed their intention to participate in the project. In addition, the researchers also proposed four main tools to all participants. It is expected that the tools could enhance the learning process and support the study to achieve its' goals. It is clear that all participants agreed to use all four tools in the research process. The following parts below explain the tools in more detail.

As noted earlier, the tools of this study were: 1) Governance snapshot assessments (GSA); 2) People scorecards; 3) Budget literacy; and 4) Concrete action to resolve local problems. Each tool is equally important and has different uses.

Tool 1: Governance Snapshot Assessment: This tool is used in the first stage. It works under the principle that public services are of paramount importance to the necessities of living in society (Miller, 2004). In this regard, the provision of public services must be in accordance with the principles of public response, fairness, equality and the highest efficiency (Masiya et al., 2019; McKenzie & Pinger, 2015). Assessing dissatisfaction in public services is an important opportunity for people in the community to assess whether they are dissatisfied with the services of government agencies or not. It is hoped that by using this tool, the public will be able to express their opinions that they are not satisfied in any matter freely.

To demonstrate this tools effectiveness, the research team set up a local work group responsible for creating a simple questionnaire assessment form under the advice and supervision of the researchers. Then the work group did data collection and summarized the collected data according to the quantitative research principles. Next, the local work group examined whether the people were dissatisfied with public services or not, and if so, the team



needed to specify what the issues were and ordered them by public opinion. Issues that the public considered serious were presented. The results of this evaluation enabled researchers and the work group to gain reliable information that clearly reflected public opinion. This information will be presented and processed in the next stage of the study.

Tool 2: People Scorecards: This tool was used in Stage 2 and processed into three steps below.

1) A public meeting was organized to bring the most serious problems to the forefront. The participants were people in the local area who were interested in their local issues.

2) The work team presented the results and asked the attendees to choose only one issue that they deemed the most urgent and likely to be solved, by putting a sticker on the board.

3) The work team summarized the results of the People Scorecards and presented the results to the public.

4) The research and the work team planned to invite relevant government agencies in relation to the selected issues to the next meeting.

It can be argued that People Scorecards made it easy for the executives of government sectors to be informed of the public's grievances in a more reliable manner. It also encourages the government to realize the importance of the issues to the people and will lead to faster solutions (Hand & Adams, 2014). Public opinion can be used for performance reviews and performance appraisals to contribute to the development or evaluation of their organization more effectively (Rosenbloom, 2007).

Tool 3: Budget Literacy: Budget literacy was one of the crucial tools in this study. It can be considered one of the vital forms of education because it plays an important part in decision making in everyday life (Leumann et al., 2016; Mihalčová et al., 2014). It is believed that knowledge and understanding of government finance and policy, and its implication on citizens, is important to help people see the limitations (if any) of certain government agencies. More importantly, the ability of citizen to critically reflect service providers can be promoted by budget education.

This tool was used in Stage 3 of the study. It follows the logic that, although Thailand's budgetary system has continuously developed by decentralizing more financial power and authority to various government agencies, it is difficult in practice for the public to have knowledge about government budgeting (Lorsuwannarat, 2003). Therefore, in order to help local people be informed, this is an opportunity for such agencies in relation to the selected issues, explain budget details and allow the public to ask questions about procedures, details, limitations, and other important issues directly in public meetings. Hopefully, the more that local people are informed, the more they likely they are to understand and trust the performance of government agencies. Budget literacy is an important communication process that allows local people and agencies involved with issues to understand the situation and budget constraints clearly (Caernarven-Smith, 1990). As a result, it can enhance people's opportunity to truly participate in solving community problems more effectively (Thomson et al., 2003).

After the budget details had been presented and the Q&A and the discussion had been completed, the research and work teams asked the participants to make a final decision on what problems they considered as the most serious, and the most likely to be solved by their collaboration. The final answer was then highlighted and processed in the next stage of the study.

Tool 4: Concrete Action to Resolve Local Problems: This is the step in solving the problems chosen by the people to achieve the study's goal. Concrete action is created by relying on knowledge, ability, experience, and the resources of each sector in each step of the problem-solving process. It is an important tool in creating



motivation for all sectors, and to promote mutual cooperation for the benefit of the public (Haines, 2017). This study argues that these tools have the ability to ensure that every single participant will realize they are important in the process of development, and the building of a society that consists of trust and support in the local area.

Methods and Materials

Since this research is participatory action research, the research team therefore determined the methodology of the research process as an action process. The following table briefly presents the details.

Table 1 Details of Activities in the Research Process

Step	Tool	Relevant Parties	Objective / Details	Outcome
1. Entering into an Agreement to Define the Project's Activities Process	Preliminary Meeting (Kick off Meeting)	Research team and representatives from SAO, government sectors, and people from the local community	To 1) understand the importance and the process of the research shared by all parties and 2) to determine the target area for conducting research activities by considering the potential, appropriateness and readiness for participation in the activities	1) The concerned parties are aware of the importance of the research and 2) have the target area of the research
2. Training of Work Groups	Training	Research team and work group	To provide training for the work group in the use of research tools which are 1) Assessing dissatisfaction in public services 2) People scorecards and 3) Budget literacy	The work group has knowledge and skills in research tools
3. Creating Questionnaires for the GSA, Data Collection and Analysis	Tool 1: Questionnaire	Research team and local work group	1) To create a questionnaire for the GSA through the coordination of the research team and the local work group 2) To conduct data collection and data analysis 3) To prepare to present the dissatisfaction data	Have a questionnaire and data that shows public dissatisfaction
4. Organizing a Public Meeting	Tool 2: People Scorecards	Research team, local work group and people in the local community	1) To present the results from the data collection according to the public satisfaction assessment 2) To explain the importance and methodology of using People Scorecards to the participants 3) To ask the participants to use the People Scorecards 4) To summarize the most problematic issues by picking the three most important	The issues that need to be resolved are highlighted



Table 1 (Cont.)

Step	Tool	Relevant Parties	Objective / Details	Outcome
5. Organizing a Meeting with Government Agencies	Tool 3: Budget Literacy	Research team, representatives from SAO, government sectors, the local populace, and Government agencies related to the issue	1) To invite government agencies related to those three selected issues attend a meeting to be informed of the evaluation results 2) To give the government agencies the opportunity to explain the facts and details related to budgets, laws, and regulations that may have caused dissatisfaction 3) To finalize a decision 4) To jointly form solutions for the selected problems	The final issues that need to be resolved are highlighted
6. Action	Tool 4: Concrete Action to Resolve Local Problems	Research team, representatives from SAO, government sectors, the local populace, and Government agencies related to the issue	To help every sector use their knowledge, experience, and resources to solve their local problems	The selected issue is finally resolved through the cooperation of all parties

Results

In order to describe the results of the study, the next session will present the results of each step respectively.

The Research Results from Steps 1: Entering into an agreement to define the project's activities process

Since the research team had not had any research experience or worked in the Beuangkrajub Sub-district, it was very essential for the researchers to set the kick off meeting. This meeting aims to present and explain the information regarding the background, objectives, process and tools of the study to the Beuangkrajub SAO and local community representatives (see Figure 1).



Figure 1 The research team presented and explained information regarding the background, objectives, process and tools of the study to the participants

Additionally, the participants agreed to use the four research tools in conducting research to find solutions. It is clear that all participants realized the significance of this study and they were more than ready to take part in

every step of the study. There was a suggestion that the study needed to set up the local work group to play an important role in conducting the research. The work group should consist of the representatives from the Beuangkrajub SAO and local community.

The Research Results from Step 2: Training of the work group in the area

In order for the work group to have knowledge, understanding, and realize the importance and benefits of using the three research tools which are 1) GSA 2) People scorecard and 3) Budget literacy, the research team organized training for them. The training was done by lectures / discussions on simple questionnaire techniques, processes for collecting data, basic techniques for interviews, basic statistics techniques, and techniques for presenting evaluation results (see Figure 2).



Figure 2 Training of the working group by the research team

The Research Results from Step 3: Governance Snapshot Assessment (GSA)

The work group collected data from 4,869 people on their dissatisfaction in the community. The sample size was 400 which was calculated by using the formula of Taro Yamane with a 95% confidence level. The accidental sampling technique was employed as well. The sample was able to select the problematic local problems. The results of the GSA are shown in Table 2. In this regard, the researchers and the work group would present the results to the public meeting.

Table 2 Data of the GSA

Order	Issue	Point
1	The Transfer of Ownership of the Khokprue Pasture	320
2	State Extension of Land Use Permits	295
3	Period of Obtaining a Permit to Use the Hump Khokprue Pasture	249
4	Water Management	244
5	Health Service	240
6	Drugs	230
7	Public Information Assessment	191

The Research Results from Step 4: Organizing a public meeting

The public meeting began with the presentation of the results from the GSA (see Figure 3).



Figure 3 The GSA results presentation in the public meeting

As shown in table 3, there were seven issues that were highlighted as problematic by the respondents. The next step was that the team explained the significance and the process of the People Scorecard. The team also generated performance criteria for benchmarking the quality of services that can be used by community members for monitoring and evaluation the quality of public services. The criteria were 1) being the most critical and 2) can be solved by cooperation between the public sector and the local people in a few months.

After that, the participants were asked to participate in the process. They were asked to choose only one issue that they believed was an important issue which greatly affected the people and most likely possible to be solved under the current context. Each participant had an equal voice and their voice could be heard by putting a sticker on the board after the sentences showing problems in their community (see picture 4). It could be interpreted that number of stickers on each issue indicates performance/quality of public services.



Figure 4 Participants choose the problem they want to solve the most by putting a sticker on the board

From the people's decision, it can be concluded that the problems that affected people the most, and needed to have the most urgent solution was the problem of land ownership change in Khokprue pasture (85 points), followed by legal issues (67 points), and finally the period of time to obtain a license to use the Khokprue pasture (48 points). These top three most serious issues would be presented in the next public meeting. Afterward, the teams would invite the government agencies related to land ownership change which is the Beuangkrajub SAO to participate in the next meeting. Budget literacy would be processed in the meeting as well.

The Research Results from Step 5: A meeting with government agencies

This meeting is a joint meeting between researchers, administrators and staff of the Beuangkrajub SAO (as the administrator of Khokprue Pasture), the Village Headman, and the people who are interested in resolving the issue land ownership change in Khokprue pasture. The aims are to persuade the Beuangkrajub SAO to discuss, respond, and propose possible solutions to the problems. It is possible that the Beuangkrajub SAO may have negative reactions to the results of the snapshot assessment. The team, therefore, put in all attempts to create a friendly atmosphere and promote collective responsibility and partnerships from all stakeholders.

To practice budget literacy, the researcher team asked the Beuangkrajub SAO to clarify the budget received and the revenue that the government has collected and allocated to the Beuangkrajub SAO, the estimation of the SAO's income and expenditure, and the possibility of using the budget of the Beuangkrajub SAO to solve the problem of changing ownership of land. The Beuangkrajub SAO representative explained the budget received and allocated budget in various categories to the participants in detail (see Figure 5). This makes known that the issue does not occur from the budgeting. In contrast, it is likely that the problem arises from the laws itself.



Figure 5 The clarification of the budget by the beuangkrajub SAO

This study argues that by providing the opportunity for both the SAO and the public to communicate with each other, it is expected that trust among them can be developed, which in turn, may encourage mutual collaboration, cooperation and support within communities (Delhey & Newton, 2003; Suksawas et al., 2018; Uslaner, 2000). For example, unlike expected, the unfriendly atmosphere did not happen. It appeared to be that the more the local people talked with the SAO, the more they began to understand and trust the SAO. More importantly, it is clear that people are more interested in cooperating to solve problems.

Additionally, discussing the environment of the Beuangkrajub Sub-district area, it was found that most areas were characterized as lowland plains and there were not many water sources. This area is Khokprue pasture. The Phetchabun Land Office have allocated land in the Khokprue pasture to the public for use as housing and farming to a total of 570 people in Village 1, Village 2, Village 3, Village 9 and Village 10. The Beuangkrajub SAO is assigned as the agency that oversees the allocated land. However, there were regulations that people who live and use Khokprue pasture for agriculture cannot give permission to others. Also, in accordance with the regulations of the Ministry of Interior on permitting people to use the government land 2004, the rights of the holder for land benefits must renew the contract every 5 years. From these regulations, there were some practical problems for some people especially those who were living outside, or were working in foreign countries. Many of them cannot renew the holder rights contract for the benefits in time.



Furthermore, the representatives of the Beuangkrajub SAO further explained the problem of changing ownership of land in Khokprue pasture can be divided into 2 cases which are

1) In case of the landowner dying, the ownership can transfer to the rightful heirs, and the rightful heirs need to submit documents for land use to the community and related agencies.

2) In the case that land owners do not notify the respective bodies of their rights or renew the contract with the Beuangkrajub SAO, the Beuangkrajub SAO, will organize a village community committee to consider new land ownership and propose to the provincial committee for land allocation to other villagers.

The results of the meeting gave a final conclusion that the issue that needs to be examined is the utilization of Khokprue pasture.

There was a consistent opinion that the study needs to establish a work group to draft a land management agreement for Khokprue pasture. This is to control and prevent the land in the community from being changed to an owner outside the community. There was an agreement that the committee consists of local leaders, executives and staff of the Beuangkrajub SAO, local representative, scholars, and researchers. When the completion of the draft agreement is done, the research team must present it to the local people to vote and give a consensus about it. This is to show transparency and accountability in the drafting process. After that, the Beuangkrajub SAO will consider it as a guideline for further action. If the draft agreement is adopted as the guidelines for the Beuangkrajub SAO, it will enable communities to manage land ownership problems by the community rightfully.

The Research Results from Step 6: Action/Concrete action to resolve local problems

The processes were divided into three sub-steps as follows:

- 1) The work group drafted a land management agreement for Khokprue pasture.
- 2) The research team together with the work group presented the land management agreement draft to the meeting participants. The participants were asked to consider the draft agreement carefully.
- 3) The research team and the work group asked for the opinion of the meeting participants (see Figure 6).



Figure 6 The meeting to examine the land management agreement for khokprue pasture

From the meeting, it was clear that participants were interested in considering all aspects of the agreement. There was civil dialogue, suggestions, and questions on various issues appearing in the draft agreement. After the active discussion, the working group then revised the agreement according to the suggestion of the attendees. Next, the working group adopted a draft of the revised agreement and requested a consensus from the attendees. As expected, the draft agreement has received a consensus. From the consensus, the Beuangkrajub SAO will prepare the draft and process it to make a local ordinance to solve the land ownership problems in the community.



This study argues that this local ordinance can be regarded as a new social resolution in land ownership management. It is hoped that the ordinance will be able solve the land ownership problems efficiently and sustainably and will be able to successfully prevent local conflicts arising from land ownership problems in the future.

In addition, apart from the initiation of the local ordinance, and the genuine participation of all meeting attendees, the meeting also created three more social resolutions to solve the land ownership problems as follows:

1) Establishment of the Khokprue Pasture Land Management Committee of which the committee consists of executives and staff of the Beuangkrajub SAO, village headers, and public representatives: The main responsibility of this committee is to consider, proceed and resolve land ownership problems.

2) Establishment of the Khokprue pasture land management fund: The central objective of the fund is to protect public land from falling into private and third-party ownership. This fund will be raised from community members who are willing to pay. This is to support the budget for members wishing to use the land for Khokprue pasture that they own. In addition, there is an important agreement that loans will be used only in investment in agriculture.

3) Establish a grant approval system for granting privileges to new landlords by considering the following steps

Step 1: Registering the eligibility for ownership of land in Khokprue pasture by specifying the main qualifications which are: 1) having no land for farming, 2) being relatives and / or acquaintances with the original possessory rights, and 3) must have passed the qualification examination and be certified by local leaders.

Step 2: When the original land owner has been revoked, the Khokprue Pasture Land Management Committee will consider those who have all the qualifications and will propose to the village community to certify the names of those who are entitled to own new land.

Step 3: The Land Management Committee for Khokprue Pasture Land will prepare a list to propose to the Bungkrajub SAO for further consideration as well.

Discussion

By following the principle of Contextual Action Research (CAR), which emphasizes the significant of meaning and the challenge of realistic action, this study encourages various stakeholders to be able to create specific solutions to these local problems, and contribute in practical actions in accordance with local situations. This research has found that using research tools to solve problems for the local area not only can solve local problems, but also benefit the principle of democracy. This can be explained as follows:

1. By processing the GSA, this study argues that the assessment is able to enhance the participation of people in the community by giving people the ability to propose problems, join in decision-making, and participate in the process of solving problems in the community (Beresford et al., 2011). This can help people understand and realize their rights and freedoms, which is an important principle for democratic governance.

2. People scorecards, as this study argues, allows all participants to exercise their rights and express their opinions equally without restrictions on gender, age, status, living, occupation, education level, or even their physical condition. This activity can build on equality in accordance with good governance (Franks et al., 2018), which is one of the vital blocks in democracy.

3. This study also claims that Budget literacy can promote the principles of transparent disclosure in the performance of government agencies. This tool gives government agencies the opportunity to clarify issues related to the budget for solving problems straightforward. This allows people to freely access information that is not prohibited by law. Additionally, it can be argued that this tool is able to promote and support the principles of



responsiveness from government agencies. The Beuangkrajub SAO responds to the dissatisfaction of the people on the issue of land ownership management for Khokprue pasture, and demonstrates their utmost effort in resolving the problem. This will make the people have more confidence and trust in government agencies. It is undeniable that high levels of confidence and trust of government officials can have a good effect on democracy.

4. By exercising the tool of Concrete action to resolve local problems, this can support the efficiency principle in solving land ownership problem in Khokprue pasture. The results of the study can be considered as techniques and/or a management tool that allows the SAO to use various resources to maximize benefits in the civil service, to solve problems and meet the needs of the stakeholders.

Therefore, it can be concluded that the four tools that the research team has used in this research are able to promote and support social resolutions for successfully solving local problems and can also promote democratic governance.

Conclusion and Suggestions

By processing the research's four main tools, this study was able to create a resolution in solving the land ownership management problems of Khokprue pasture in the Bungkrajub Sub-district. The tools were 1) GSA 2) People scorecards 3) Budget literacy and 4) Concrete action to resolve local problems. The created social resolutions are 1) A land ownership management agreement 2) Establishment of a land management committee 3) Establishment of a land management fund and 4) A grant approval system for new landlords in the Khokprue pasture.

As mentioned earlier, this research focused on creating social resolutions that can be used to solve local problems that rely on participation from many sectors. It employed the participatory research process through four research tools which were 1) GSA 2) People scorecards 3) Budget literacy and 4) Concrete action to resolve local problems. From the results of the research, it is found that the research processed through the specified tools can promote and support all stakeholders in society as equal opportunity citizens. Therefore, if the aforementioned research approaches are used in other areas which may have a different socio-economic and cultural context, this may make people in other areas be able to use this experience in managing community problems. This will result in the community being able to solve the problem of its own sustainably, and also support the government to be able to provide public services more efficiently. Moreover, and more importantly, it can result in stronger Thai democratic governance.

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