



Transformative Learning Facilitation for Synergistic Community and City Development

Akara Metasuk^{a*} and Aksara Silksuk^b

^aFaculty of Learning Sciences and Education, Thammasat University, Khlong Luang District, Pathum Thani 12120, Thailand

^bSomdulchevit Homeschool, Lampang 52100, Thailand

*Corresponding author. E-Mail address: metasuk.a@gmail.com

Received: 20 October 2020; Revised: 2 December 2020; Accepted: 18 December 2020

Abstract

Citizen and organizational participation in community and city development have been increasingly important. This is especially true in the context that social, cultural, economic, and environmental situations are complex and cannot be managed through the power of centralization. This study utilized the action research and grounded theory research methodologies to synthesize the principles of transformative learning facilitation for community and city development. It discovered: four basic steps of learning facilitation management; four steps of personal transformative learning facilitation; five steps of transformative learning group facilitation; three layers of learning facilitation for community and city development; six steps of learning facilitation for synergistic community and city development; and three competences of learning facilitator. This study suggested that, by having engagement in mind, learning facilitation in personal, group, community and city levels are comparable, related, and can be applied with one another. These findings may assist the process of community and city development, whether in formal and informal education contexts, to be more systematic, sustainable, and beneficial for the community with collaborative participation of all sectors in both planning and action stages.

Keywords: Learning Facilitation, Transformative Learning, Community Development, City Development, Synergy

Introduction

The ongoing city expansion and city development may have positive and negative impacts (Chen et al., 2020) on the environment, food security, human living, and how the relationship in the community is maintained. Many cities around the globe encountered dense residential areas, slums, and the limitation in the access to public health services. These incidents broadly leave drawbacks to the wellbeing of the people (Moore et al., 2003); therefore, community and city development cannot be responsible by the nation or the governance body alone. The shifting view from the centralized governance to synergism or collaborative planning is suggested to better support economic, social, and environmental sustainability (Xing et al., 2013). It is known as the new paradigm of planning (Purbani, 2017). To achieve that state, the learning or the utilization of information which is critical for making changes may be the essential component to foster awareness and lead to the collaboration in the community.

Learning and education in the late 20th century and early 21st century have been focusing on the human potential in creating personal knowledge. This concept is known as active construction (Kulikovskikh et al., 2020; Tait-McCutcheon et al., 2011). It is believed that the experience of each individual is an important element for the early schema to be connected with new knowledge, and creating a new schema (Alvarez, 1990). This mode of learning has to be addressed through the structure that supports reflection, connection, and generation of knowledge of oneself (OECD, 2018). This is how learning facilitation assists and connects the learners with social activities and environment.

Social constructivism paradigm advocates the notion of knowledge construction by illustrating that social interactions can lead to learning and change (Berger & Luckmann, 1991). It transcends the imagery of teacher as a knowledgeable person and the personal interactions derived from authoritarianism, which can often be found in formal education and some settings of informal education. To nurture constructive learning, the learning facilitation



process must cultivate the feelings of safety, relaxing, and loving. It should stimulate the use of various senses, support social interactions, and distribute power equally in the learning space (Bond, 2020; McDaniel, 2014) which then bring about self-learning and self-transformation. In the aspects of community and city, the application of learning facilitation to foster the engagement of the community members for policy development is not only the mechanism of information exchange, but it is also the process that triggers new ideas and helps reveal the neglected problematic issues. This is the first step when learning facilitation may bring to the change and transformation of the individuals and the organizations.

Learning facilitation for personal transformation may be performed by many processes. One of the effective process is the contemplative education approach which is grounded on trust and empowerment. It is done through contemplation and focusing on the development of the soul in personal level. It can change the perception about the self, the world, and other people. With contemplation, it aims at creating kindness among people and all existence, respecting the nature, being responsible for the society, being genuinely aware of the worthiness of things, and being able to harmoniously apply knowledge for the living (Wamsler, 2020). Apart from benefiting the growth and transformation of the self, it can also bring wellbeing and increase social competence, especially in education where contemplative education also have positive effect on academic achievement (Johannes, 2012; Waters et al., 2015). The holism principle in contemplative education brings to the practice of the cultivation of the self from within; including cognition, mindfulness, awareness of the drives and yearnings, letting go, preparation of the mind for contemplation, opening to possibilities, relaxation, and trust. With this perspective, contemplative education has become widely applied under the terms as the practice of transformative learning and transformative education (Morgan, 2015).

In the situations when the world, communities, and cities are changing rapidly, learning facilitation may accommodate knowledge management and prepare the fundamental learning experiences for effective utilization and application of knowledge in different scenarios. It drives the processes necessary for the people and the community to figure out or to continue to reach their goals and to react efficiently (Berta et al., 2015). Learning facilitation is an impelling base that supports effective self-learning of the groups and brings about participatory learning (Dismukes & Smith, 2017).

Transformative learning facilitation in personal level conforms with the transformation of the community and city especially on the development driven by grassroots innovation (Seyfang & Haxeltine, 2010). Since individual persons are the basic units that may prosper the development in the community and broader levels, the emphasis on the importance of citizenship becomes an important strategy for bottom-up management (Na Chiangmai, 2017), to respond to the issues that are necessary for the people in the area. It also facilitates efficient utilization of the grassroot resources in the community and city development process. At the present, transformative learning facilitation has popularly been applied for the transformation in individual level. Its benefits have been witnessed in group and organizational levels (Asdornnithee et al., 2020; Kwanmongkol & Rattana-Ubol, 2020). The academic studies about transformative learning facilitation, especially with the holistic approach in the driving of complex participatory community and city development, may lead to the creation of knowledge that benefits the community and city. The findings may support the decision making of policy developers, while also nurture the application of transformative learning facilitation in various contexts. It is also expected that this knowledge will drive the changes later on in the macro level.



To consciously develop the community and city in response to the needs of the community, the study of learning facilitation process that motivates participatory community development has come into play. It may nurture the development of the community's economy, social interaction, environment, and the quality of living of the people, bringing sustainable community and city development for the national and global population. Due to the fact that the societal structural changes may not effectively take place if the citizen in the community do not agree to cooperate, the design and implementation of the process for community and city development has become imperative in driving the development of the nations, remarkably in the developing countries. In this research, the studies were processed through the conception of grounded theory and the investigation of the activities in contemplative education and transformative learning. It aimed at the study of the transformative learning facilitation in individual and group levels, together with the learning facilitation for community and city development. It also focused on the development of the model of transformative learning facilitation for synergistic community and city development.

Methodology

This research adopted qualitative methods, namely action research and grounded theory research for the study of learning facilitation processes for community and city development in both formal (systematically managed settings) and informal settings (non-systematic/unmanaged way-of-life settings) of organizational and community spaces. The areas were selected by considering from the possibilities and the potentials of the cities and the stakeholders in the cities for their complete participation throughout the research period. The areas selected were in 5 provinces of Thailand; including Chiang Mai, Nan, Mae Hong Son, Udon Thani, and Rayong. All of them have unique characteristics for community and city development, and are the target areas accommodated by Thailand 4.0 policy. This research was operated on multiple case studies, and the synthesis of the general characteristics collected from all the cases were made with grounded theory approach to maintain the reliability and to reinforce a broader application of the research findings. This study collected the data from December 2018 to November 2019, and synthesized the models based on the real contexts happened in the fields.

The reliability of the information in this study was determined through data triangulation from many stakeholders; learning facilitators, learning participants (learners), and administrators from five provinces. All of the participants were the citizen in the selected provinces and do not have conflicts of interest with the researchers. They were men and women who were 18 years of age or older, and were conscious of their actions in participation. The number of people participated were more than 700 individuals, and 60 of them were engaged in in-depth interview and focus group discussions. The focuses of the data collection were about learning: 1) the characteristics of the learning facilitation for community and city development; 2) the characteristics of the learning facilitators that drives community and city development; and 3) the characteristics of the learning process that occurred on the individuals, groups, communities and cities as a result of the learning facilitation for community and city development. The data was collected from three methods; participant observation, in-depth interview, and focus group discussion. The data was comprehensively presented and discussed among the researchers and co-researchers throughout the process to ensure the validity of the data.

The data was documented as writings, drawings, photos, videos, and voice recordings. They underwent the process of theory synthesis following the grounded research methodologies; including the creation of codes, concepts, conceptual categories, and themes. The grounded theory synthesis was a long process that the models



encountered countless gradual changes with the data collected throughout the research period. The models were synthesized with thematic analysis across the cases to observe the conformity from every case.

Results

From the action research in five provinces, the researchers have applied the concepts of contemplative education and transformative learning using various tools and principles (Table 1) into the elaboration of the learning process for community and city development, shown as an example in Figure 1. The learning facilitation processes were vigorously adjusted from the multiple cases throughout the research period. The data and findings from the fields were collected for the synthesis about the characteristics of the learning facilitation processes for community and city development, the characteristics of the learning facilitators for community and city development, and the learning processes that occurred in individual, group, community, and city levels. The findings were synthesized as follows from the consensus in every area.

Learning Facilitation Management

This study came up with a model for the management of learning facilitation, developed from the intended and unintended facilitations in the community (Figure 2). There are four steps in the learning facilitation management cycle:

1. Planning: This step comprises the identification of the goals, processes, resources, frameworks of the facilitation, and the revision of the learning processes. Brainstorming and discussion among the facilitators and the stakeholders are the essential scaffold for making an effective conclusion about the possibilities, opportunities, and threats that may affect the facilitation process. This is the step when the lessons from the past are discussed along with the present and future situation for the learning facilitators to prepare the critical elements crucial for the learning process. The major tools and processes were dialogue, brainstorming, contemplation, coaching with questioning, and visual facilitation.

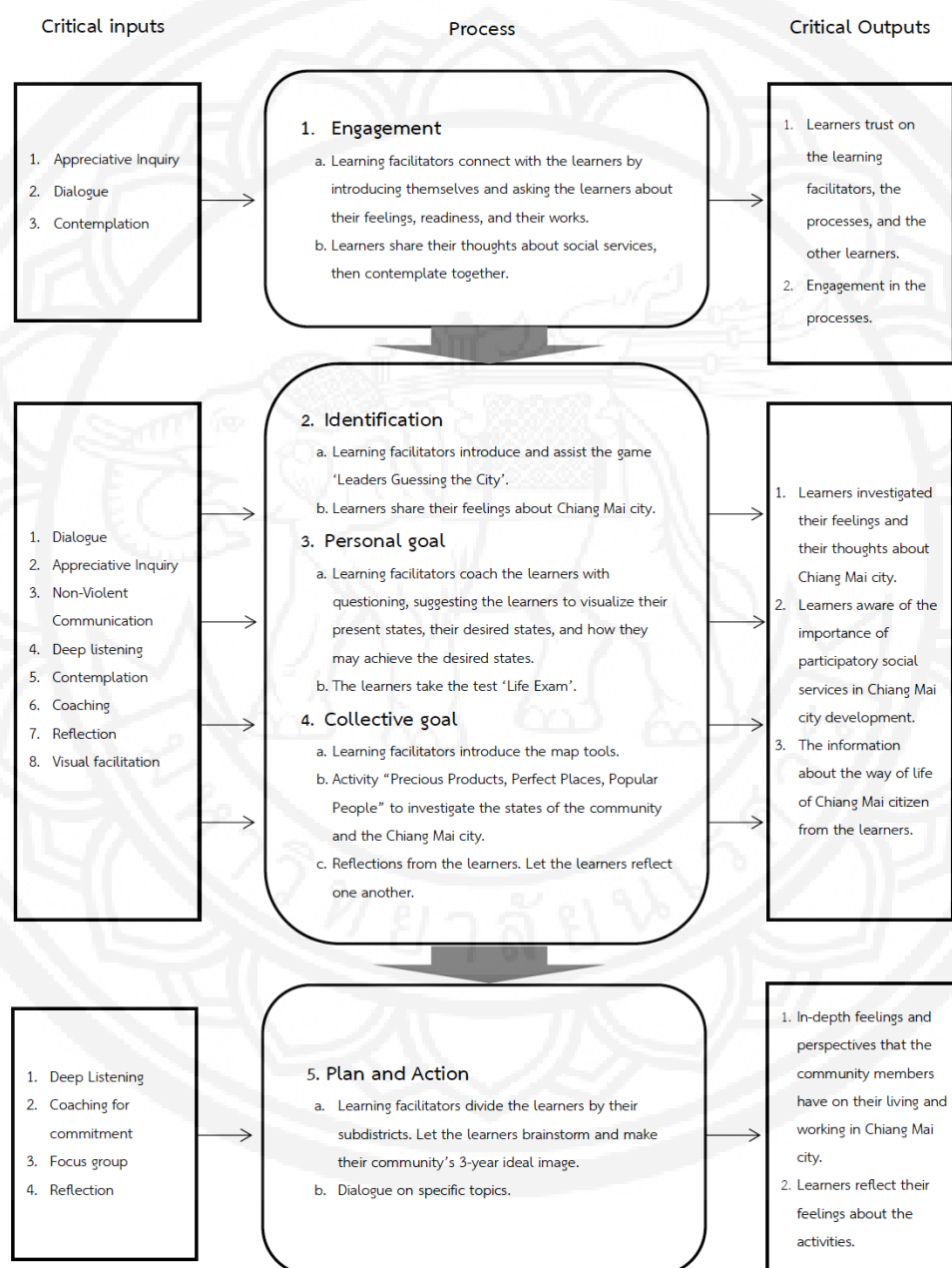
2. Before Action Review (BAR): The review of the plan is delivered by the learning facilitators. Its purpose is to strengthen the facilitation process by allowing the team to inspect any flaws in the plan and to examine the promptness of the resources. The plan may be revised for the most effective learning experience, and to attune with the real situations if there are any changes in the opportunities and threats. The main tools and processes were dialogue and non-violent communication.

3. Facilitative Activity: The activities may be delivered as planned; however, the facilitative activities can be adjusted to serve better from moment to moment. Sometimes they may be changed completely, yet insisting on the learning purposes and the capability of the learners.

4. After Action Review (AAR): This step involves the examination of past learning activities and the realization of the lessons learned. It is performed mainly by the learning facilitators and the stakeholders. The main tools and processes were dialogue, reflection, deep listening, non-violent communication, contemplation, and systematic data collection.

**Table 1** Examples of Principles and Tools that were Integrated in the Learning Facilitation

Principles and Tools	References
Appreciative Inquiry	Cooperrider & Whitney, 2001
Dialogue	Bohm, 2013
Non-Violent Communication	Rosenberg & Chopra, 2015
Deep Listening	Chapman, 2012
Reflection	Gibbs, 1988
Visual Facilitation / Visualization	Sibbet, 2001

**Figure 1** An Example of the Application of the Principles and Tools in Contemplative Education and Transformative Learning for the Learning Facilitation (An Example Collected from this Research)

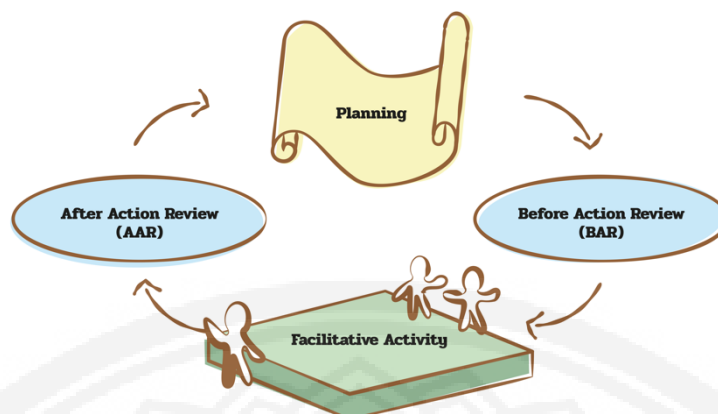


Figure 2 Learning Facilitation Management Cycle

The results from the AAR can be applied for the development of the learning facilitation in the future. The readjustment of the plans using the data from the reviews makes the facilitation process account for the learning of everyone, this also includes the learning of the facilitators.

Personal Transformative Learning Facilitation

Personal transformation may emerge as the changes in the worldview, thinking process, belief, and behavior of the person. These changes are the driving basis for the transformation in the group, organization, community, and city levels. The personal transformative learning facilitation is a 4-step process (Figure 3(a)):

1. Engagement: To have the learners engaged, the environment and the activities have to support the feeling of trust and safety. This also includes appropriate use of body languages, social environment, and physical spaces.

2. Identification: This step is the nurturing of the learners' awareness of their own mental status, their capabilities, strength characters, underdeveloped characters, opportunities, and threats that may happen. These components will lead to the learner's understanding about the structure of their situations in the past, present, and future.

3. Personal Goal: Once the learners are aware of their situation, this step will bring the individuals to set their desired goals. The goals should be clear and perceivable, for the learners to comprehend when the goals are reached.

4. Plan & Action: When the learners are at this step, their inner worldview and their understanding about themselves might have been partially changed or energized enough for the transformation. Planning and action will allow their new beliefs to be strengthened and continuously developed.

Transformative Learning Group Facilitation

Transformative learning group facilitation is basically similar to the personal transformative learning facilitation. The major differences are the *Collective Goal* identification step that follows the personal goal identification (Figure 3(b)), and the exchange of thoughts among the group members along the facilitative activities.

Collective Goal is the step that each individual can learn from the other people in the group. The learning is about their diversity and overlapping parts of their expectations. The group may draw the connections where the goals of the whole group can be met. This step can happen only if each person detached oneself from being self-centered and noticed that their own self can be found in others.

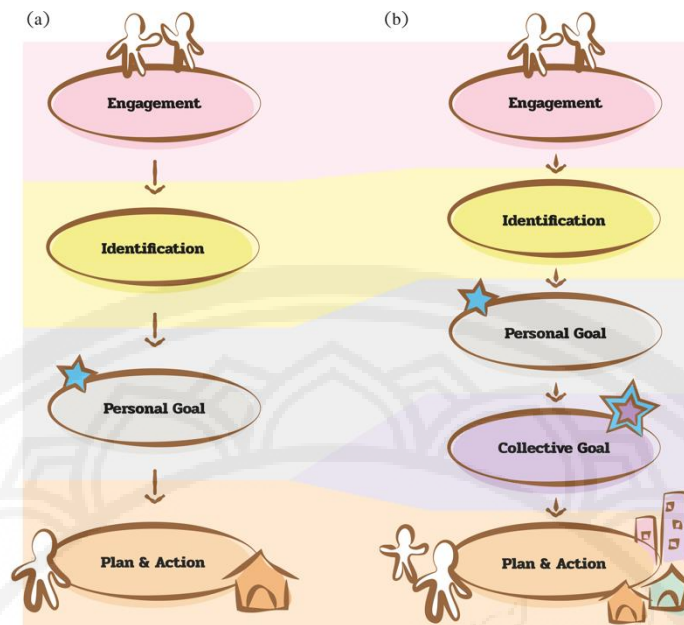


Figure 3 Personal Transformative Learning Facilitation (a) and Transformative Learning Group Facilitation (b)

Learning Facilitation for Community and City Development

Learning facilitation for community and city development is the operation with fundamental elements in three layers of the community (Figure 4):

1. Mental Layer: Learning facilitation aims to increase open-mindedness, eagerness to learn, embracing the diversity within the community, and respect of the voices of others. Personal transformative learning facilitation and transformative learning group facilitation are taken part in this layer.

2. Social Layer: Social layer is the communication mechanism that should be established thoroughly and vigorously. It is important for the formation of collective wisdom that leads to plan and action.

3. Knowledge, Skills, Tools and Physical Space Layer: Knowledge and skills help deliver the activities beyond past limitations, while the tools and physical space are the scaffold that endorses the interactions and connections.

In the context of community and city development, the knowledge, skills, and tools in the physical layer contain 3 components:

1. Local Knowledge/Tools: This component is the knowledge and tools for the understanding of the information that has been accumulated or studied in the contexts that are specific to the areas.

2. Global Knowledge/Tools: This component carries out the literacy to the changes that may affect the community and the city. Understanding about the systems can stimulate the thoughts about how to solve the community problems in the ways that never happen before.

3. Thinking & Planning Skills/Tools: Knowledge alone is not enough to make changes. Learning facilitation can come across to help with the tools and activities that reinforce the training of thinking and planning skills.

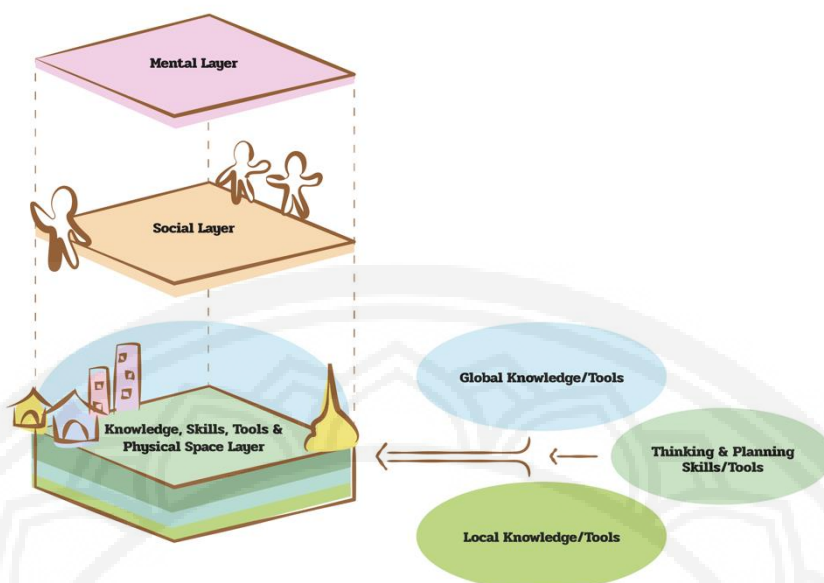


Figure 4 Learning Facilitation for Community and City Development

Learning Facilitation for Synergistic Community and City Development

To collaborate in community and city development with synergy, the facilitative structure may be constructed similarly to the transformative learning group facilitation, but have to be promoted in the community and city level (Figure 7(b)) which comprises 6 steps:

1. Community Building: This step is critically important to foster engagement. Apart from the trust that need to be created on each individual, the networks in the community also have to be strengthened so that the community members can manage on their own later on.

2. Issue Identification: The components under this step include the discovery of the community's pain points and high points, the realization of the ideal status of the community, and the identification of the goal that is agreed to be urgently established.

3. Community Research: The information from the community research can be applied for the inspection of the community development issues. The community 'research' is not the activities that focus on the publication of academic articles, but it is rather the rigorous exploration and learning about the community.

4. Co-Learning: This step can further the local wisdom and the knowledge in the community by integrating with the new knowledge, innovation, and technology which may be labor-saving and accelerate the community development.

5. Community Consensus: The community members may conclude their developmental issues, methods of development, and the possible ways to manage the issues.

6. Plan & Action: Once the plan is applied into action, each activity may have impacts on many sectors both inside and outside the community. Therefore; deep listening is the critically necessary skill during the development of the community and city plans.

Learning Facilitator

This study found a model of 3 facilitator competences (Figure 5) that are necessary for the learning facilitation of the person, group, and community/city:



1. Being: Learning facilitators should have the quality of openness to new possibilities, ready to serve and to move forward. These mental states of being prepare the facilitators for their sensitivity to the learners' feelings and yearnings.

2. Relationship: This component is for the learning facilitators to connect with learners and their own past and present selves. It requires kindness, compassion, non-judgmental, positive-oriented, self-less, and attentiveness to the learners.

3. Process: This layer of competence is composed of the skills and tools for the learning facilitators. They also need to trust their selves, co-facilitators, learners, tools, knowledge, and learning process for the suitable application of the skills, tools, and knowledge.

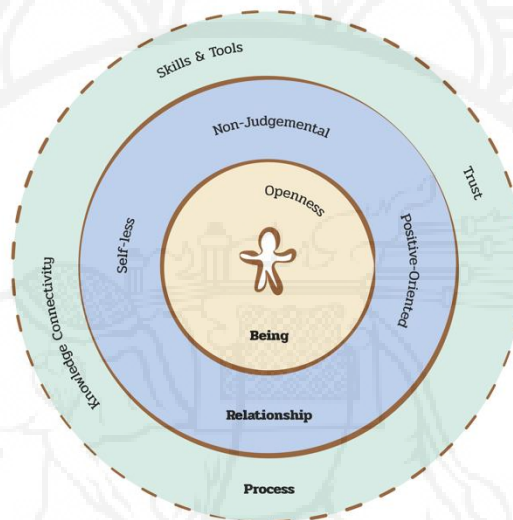


Figure 5 Facilitator Competences

Discussion and Conclusion

Following the comparison with other working structures and processes, it was noticeable that the structure of the learning facilitation management discovered in this study is partly similar to some structures of other governmental working. However, the governmental structures were not previously applied for the community and city development, but rather was demonstrated for the benefits of the military (Darling & Parry, 2003). The review after the facilitation process by comparing the learning results and the expected outcomes is complementary to the Action Review Cycle (ARC) (DeGrosky & Parry, 2011). Nevertheless; the exploration in this study focused on the results on learning. It aimed at the transformation within each individual which was proposed to drive the changes in the group and the society. It combined the views of contemplative education and transformative learning, allowing the learners to reflect their own qualities and yearnings through the process of identification and personal goal setting. It engaged participatory learning, representing the principle of social learning theory by believing that the individuals may transform themselves through social interactions (von Schönfeld et al., 2020).

The learning facilitation processes were in line with the human needs which are the basics for team development as found in the Fundamental Interpersonal Relations Orientation (FIRO) (Danes et al., 2002; Griffin, 2006). Considering the roles of the learning facilitators in each step in this research, the learning facilitators may need to be

able to increase or decrease their participation levels appropriately (Table 2); adapted from the concept about group dynamics and the management of the focus on the individuals and the group (Fierro, 2016). In the early stage, the facilitators may need to become the trusted point of attention for the group (Facilitator-dependent); while at the middle stage, they may act in the opposite direction by removing themselves from the point of attention, and move the point of attention to each learner or to the group (Facilitator counter-dependent). In the final stage, the facilitators may become neutral by not penetrating and not escaping, but becoming harmonized with the group (Facilitator-independent).

Table 2 Roles of Learning Facilitators in Transformative Learning Group Facilitation

Steps in Transformative Learning Group Facilitation	Human Needs in FIRO Model	Facilitator Roles
1. Engagement	Inclusion	Facilitator-Dependent
2. Identification	Control	Facilitator Counter-Dependent
3. Personal Goal	Affection	
4. Collective Goal	Integration	Facilitator-Independent

With the addition of design thinking, the learning facilitation processes for community and city development may be collectively applicable (Razzouk & Shute, 2012) by targeting on the data re-visiting process for the learners to experience the problematic issues by themselves until they feel empathized. The learning facilitators may challenge the learners to test their plans in pilot areas, evaluate the results, and collect the data for the development of the plans for the actual community areas. When combined the design thinking concept with the learning facilitation processes in this study, it was founded that they are based on the learning process ecology which is empowering and engaging in equality. These qualities are important for the production of safe space through empowering and engaging (Figure 6). The learning facilitators may challenge the learners to higher levels of learning by using Socratic method of questioning (Delić & Bećirović, 2016) and maintaining clear goals. The learners may also be provided with enriched knowledge, the connectivity between the knowledge and life stories, and the visualization of information.

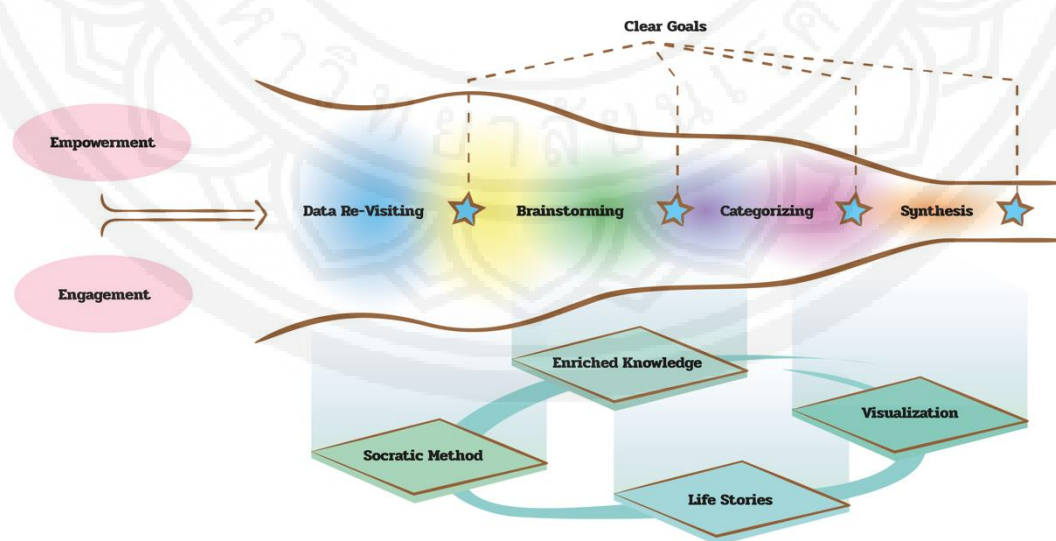


Figure 6 Ecology of Learning Process



Synergistic community and city development is relevant to participatory learning and action (PLA) (O'Reilly-de Brún et al., 2015). In this study, it was founded that learning facilitation for synergistic community and city development is fabricated similarly to transformative learning group facilitation (Figure 7). Therefore; it may be assumed that learning facilitation in different levels; group, organization, community, and city, may have comparable core structures of facilitation. Metaphorically, community and city are the systems of constructed subsystems that work synergistically and result as the characteristics and potentials of the community or city; similar to living organism that is composed of organs and sub-units that synergistically work and construct the expression and the characteristics of the organism. Effective learning facilitation for community and city development; therefore, may originate from the grounded understanding and engagement, in the same way as the personal transformative learning facilitation that is triggered from the understanding about the self and the engagement of the person. The trust in the potential of each individual in learning facilitation for synergistic community and city development motivates the construction of Legal State or the Rule of Law which accentuates the distribution of power, rights and liberty in every planes and directions, and is the foundation of democratic society.

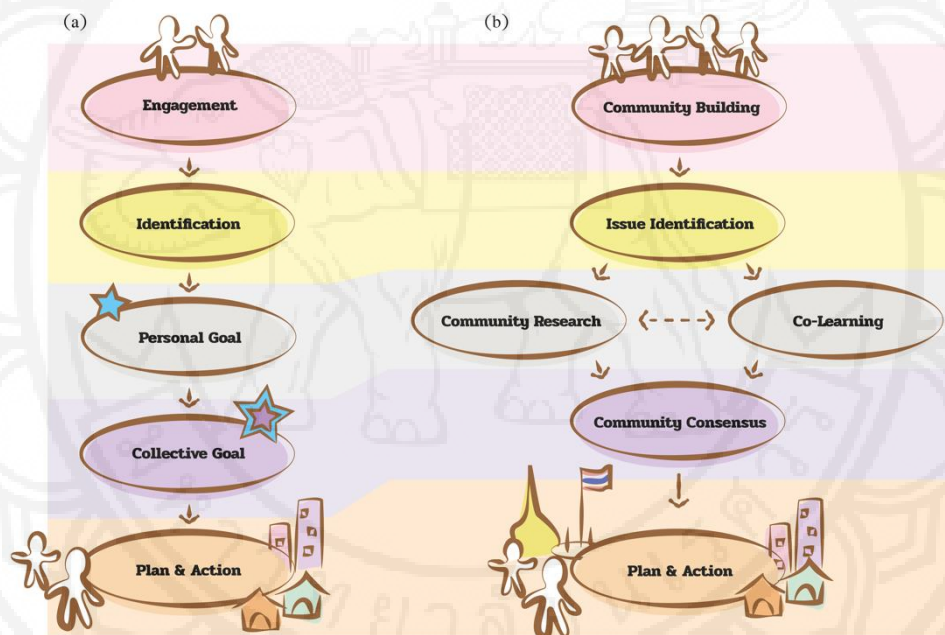


Figure 7 Comparison of Components in Transformative Learning Group Facilitation (a) and Learning Facilitation for Synergistic Community and City Development (b)

From all of the findings about learning facilitation in this research, it is noticeable that the transformative learning facilitation in personal or individual level is fundamental to the transformation in group, organization, community, and city levels. Due to the fact that learning facilitation for synergistic community and city development cannot happen if the community members do not open-mindedly listen to one another or be absorbed deeply in community and city development; therefore, the processes that foster collective learning and support equality of all individuals are the priorities in community and city development. The components of the learning processes may include the learning facilitation, learners, and learning facilitators. The learners and the learning facilitators may not be exclusively separated; on the other hand, the learning facilitators should be able to take



roles as learners, while the learners can also take roles as learning facilitators for themselves and for others, dynamically.

When compared to the competences of facilitators in this study with the model from the International Association of Facilitators (IAF) (Pierce et al., 2000), it is partly agreeable to the IAF guidelines. Nevertheless, the competency about the openness that was found in the being component in this study was suggested to be the origin and the base for the maintenance and application of other competences. Therefore, the development of the openness quality of the community members and the facilitators may be the critical foundation for effective community and city development.

This research was from the studies in 5 provinces in Thailand; Chiang Mai, Nan, Mae Hong Son, Rayong, and Udon Thani. It utilized grounded theory research to study the connected findings about the learning facilitation in community and city level. Its reliability was examined and was aimed for the findings to be able to be widely transferred for the use in other areas. However, with the factors about the different contexts of other communities, the models synthesized from this study may have some limitations that cannot be directly applied in some areas. They may need to be modified corresponding to the contexts in the areas in use. Rigorous studies about the contexts in the areas and the analysis about the possibilities to use the learning facilitation in the areas may be the initiating steps before the applications. The researchers suggested that the findings from this research may be the initial resource that can be used as the prototypes for community and city development in other areas, just before the adjustment to comply with the specificities in the target areas.

Acknowledgments

This study was funded by Thailand Science Research and Innovation (TSRI) grant number TRP62A0001. The authors express deepest appreciation to Assoc. Prof. Dr. Poon Thiengburanathum for his assistance and support of knowledge about plan making and city development. The authors are grateful for the generosity of providing space and convenience in Chiang Mai, Nan, and Mae Hong Son given by Permanent Provost Anont Wisuttho (Phra Khru Palad Anont Wisuttho), Mr. Mongkol Lakkhanaloet M.D., and Mr. Karn Paneetsin, respectively. Advice about contemplative education given by Asst. Prof. Montha Keiwsard has been a great help. Special thanks to Mr. Jittapol Kaewnil for his guidance about landscape architecture and the support for residence in Chiang Mai. Without the persistent help from the citizen and the organizations in the studied provinces, this research would not have been possible. Greatest thanks are given to the citizen in Lam Chang. Any benefits driven from this research are devoted as a collective success of everyone who participated, whether were named or unnamed, in this study.

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