Models for Improving the Management of Indigo Weaving Groups under the Concept of Social Enterprise[1]

Uthumporn Lordko[a] and Wipawee Grisanaputi[a*]

[a]*Faculty of Humanities and Social Sciences, Khon Kaen University, Khon Kaen, Thailand*
[*]*Corresponding Author. Email: wipgri@kku.ac.th*

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Abstract

The purpose of this article is to present models for improving the management of indigo weaving groups under the concept of social enterprise. The study used mixed-method research (MMR) conducted in three phases. The first phase used the participatory action research (PAR) approach of the qualitative research method. Key informants consisted of 29 representatives from district community development offices and indigo weaving groups. The second phase was mixed-method research (MMR) with an exploratory sequential design. The sample group consisted of 400 cases from indigo weaving groups. The third phase employed mixed method research with explanatory sequential design. The key informants were 57 cases from indigo weaving groups and experts from relevant organizations, as well as a simple random sample of 486 cases who were members of natural indigo-dyed weaving groups in Sakon Nakhon province. The results were the creation of four models for improving the management of these groups under the concept of social enterprise. The names and goals of the four models are the following: (1) Start Up: to establish social enterprise, (2) Stand Up: to grow social enterprise, (3) Step Up: to strengthen social enterprise, and (4) Sustain: to continuously and sustainably to become a model of social enterprise.

Keywords: social enterprise, community enterprise, indigo weaving group

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Introduction

Social enterprise as a concept was initiated in the United Kingdom in 1978 (Spreckley, 1981). Since then, it has been developed and received attention from many countries around the world in their efforts to reach the goal of sustainable development (Defourny and Nyssens, 2008). Social enterprise is a new concept for business administration, applying business strategy while minimizing the financial mission and maximizing the social mission of solving social problems and taking care of environmental issues (Dart, 2004). Eventually, the expected outcome of the application of the crucial concept will lead to sustainable development helping to balance the dimensions of the economy, society, and the environment. This will assist in solving social problems and creating social equality and closing the gap between the economically privileged and the underprivileged, as well as other kinds of social gaps (Lertkulprayet, 2012). Elkington (1997) provided a means to social enterprise through the triple bottom line (TBL), which is a new way to measure attainment of goals in business by valuing people and the planet, and not only profit.

In Thailand, the concept of social enterprise was recognized and formally introduced in 2009 after the subprime mortgage crisis, which affected the economy and social conditions of many nations around the world, including Thailand. In its wake, sectors in Thailand attempted to cope with the adverse effects by using social enterprise as a tool for recovery to stabilize the economic and social conditions of the country as other countries had done (Kerlin, 2010). In 2010, the Thai government established the Office of Social Enterprise Promotion (OSEP) to support the operation under the Master Plan of Social Enterprise Promotion during the years 2010-2014 (Mali, 2014). The major target of the plan was promoting cooperation in order to launch and develop a network of social enterprises throughout the country and to mitigate the problems of the economy, society, culture and environment, which might be caused by business operations. Therefore, corporations should be concerned about social responsibility in their operations.

The Thai Social Enterprise Office (TSEO) (2012) clearly defined the concept of social enterprise to suit the context of Thailand. Social enterprise uses a general business model with the primary goal of solving social and environmental problems while also developing and benefitting the community, society, and the environment in producing goods and services. The goal is not solely to make a profit, but to share some of the profit with society in terms of social responsibility, acting to solve social and environmental problems, and adding value to further progress toward societal goals. The Master Plan of Social Enterprise Promotion 2010-2014 categorized social enterprise into six types according to how each was established, which was useful in planning the development of social enterprise. The types included the following: 1) social enterprises formed by networks and community organizations (community enterprise and savings groups), 2) those set up by non-profit organizations, 3) those founded by governmental organizations, 4) those established by new entrepreneurs, 5) those set up by private businesses, and 6) those formed by others such as temples or educational institutions (Thai Social Enterprise Office (TSEO), 2014).

The types of social enterprise in Thailand mentioned above indicate that the concept of social enterprise had been applied in Thailand in different formats for quite a while. Social enterprise, in terms of community enterprise, was well accepted and widely applied by various organs of the Thai government to drive the grassroots economy and increase self-reliance and sustainable development in communities (Sangayotin, 2017; Kungwansupaphan, 2021; Intaraphuek, Kraichan and Roopsing, 2021; Kerdpitak, 2022). Community enterprise helps to strengthen the community by achieving its potential, especially with unique community capital pertaining to each specific area. This key capital supports the community economy, which is the grassroots economy of Thailand, by focusing on the development of social and economic dimensions at the same time. It creates incomes from economic activities derived from applying the community enterprise concept to develop and promote the villagers' participation in terms of management and groups. Community capital consists of biological, social, and cultural capital (Grisanaputi, 2016). These different kinds of capital were used to produce many kinds of goods and services, bring income to the villagers, and encourage the community to be self-reliant at the levels of family, community, and beyond (Grisanaputi, 2010). Community enterprise is a crucial tool for strengthening a community's economic system, raising awareness of the value of local wisdom, and prioritizing self-reliance in order to reduce dependence on aid from outside the community (Steger and James, 2019). Thailand has driven economic community systems via the operation of the well-known One Tambon One Product Project (OTOP) since 2001 (Community Development Department, 2018). As a result, every province in Thailand has implemented this project widely and has become successful in developing economic community systems generating supplemental income or primary income for villagers. In addition, it helps to support the national economy.

Sakon Nakhon province is located in northeastern Thailand and is well known for its Phu Thai ethnic group and its cultural heritage, especially indigo-dyed fabric. Local wisdom around indigo-dyed weaving was used to drive the concept of community enterprise and support the community economic system successfully. Indigo-dyed fabric products generated 1,137,788,903 baht of income for the community (Sakon Nakhon Provincial Statistical Office, 2017). At present, there are around 600 indigo-dyed weaving groups scattered among 18 cities in the province (Provincial Community Development Office of Sakon Nakhon, 2018). Their fabric is very famous at the national and international levels, Sakon Nakhon was named a World Craft City for Natural Indigo in 2017 by the World Crafts Council-Asia Pacific Region (WCC APR) (Matichon Online, 2018). With the benefits derived from indigo-dyed businesses to enhance the community economy, Sakon Nakhon province sets up strategies, provides budgets, and organizes projects and activities relating to improvement of the indigo-dyed products in terms of quality, standards, and customers' needs or desires. Seminars and training courses on indigo-dyed patterns as well as packaging design, and different kinds of product transformation were

provided to indigo weaving groups. Research studies on indigo-dyed weaving fabric have been conducted by many scholars (at local, national and/or international levels) to help improve the indigo fabric community enterprise (Mondal and Khan, 2014; Lordko and Grisanaputi, 2020; Kammoolkon, Taneepanichskul and Taneepanichskul, 2021; Tinnakorn and Suksirisopon, 2021; Kuikaew and Panichkul, 2022).

However, the indigo-dyed weaving groups in Sakon Nakhon province are facing various problems related to their group management, such as marketing (having few channels of distribution, having little knowledge of how to calculate fixed costs or set prices), production and transformation or products (lack of group identity, designing products that do not match customers' desires), accounting (having little knowledge of proper receiving and expense records), and finance (lack of revolving funds and limited access to financial sources) (Kositkanin, Deesukanan, and Treewichit, 2017). Nevertheless, these problems can be solved and even prevented if a community enterprise is driven in the right direction and suited to the definition, crucial characteristics, or criteria of a social enterprise. This is because social enterprise will be a means of solving problems caused by traditional business models while aiming to solve social problems by initiating social innovation from a modern business model focused on minimizing financial profits and maximizing social and environmental profits simultaneously (Spreckley, 1981).

Unfortunately, few studies on the management of indigo-dyed weaving groups in Sakon Nakhon province under the concept of social enterprise have been found. As a result, a study on models for improving the management of these groups under the concept of social enterprise should be conducted to fill the information gap. In this way, it can help to drive community enterprise management successfully under this crucial concept and strengthen the community's economy.

Objective

To present models for improving the management of indigo weaving groups under the concept of social enterprise.

Methods

The study employed mixed method research (MMR) with multi-phase design conducted in three phases. They are as follows.

Phase one: Examining the conditions, problems, and problem-solving of indigo weaving group management

This phase applied participatory action research (PAR) using qualitative research methods. Key informants consisted of 29 representatives from district community development offices and indigo weaving groups. In-depth interviews were used to collect information on the conditions, problems, and problem-solving of indigo weaving group management. The results were used to design a questionnaire for the second phase.

Phase Two: Examining the similarities and differences of the conditions, problems, and problem-solving methods of indigo weaving group management and categorizing them into groups

This phase used mixed method research (MMR) with exploratory sequential design. The sample group consisted of 400 individual members of indigo weaving groups. A set of questionnaires was distributed to inquire about their perception of conditions, problems, and problem-solving of their group's management. Results were analyzed by the Kruskal Wallis Test and the Mann-Whitney U test to compare similarities and differences. Next, a hierarchical cluster analysis was applied in order to categorize results into six groups according to their similarities and differences on those issues. Results were used further in the third phase to design a focus group and in-depth interview guidelines to explain those similarities and differences.

Phase Three: Discovering models for improving the management of indigo weaving groups under the concept of social enterprise

The third phase used mixed method research (MMR) with explanatory sequential design. There were two groups, totaling 57 key informants. Fifty cases were from indigo weaving groups and seven experts were from relevant organizations. The 50 indigo weaving-group

members attended a training course on social enterprise. Pre- and post-tests were distributed to measure their understanding of the concept. The paired samples T-Test was employed to analyze their understanding (the statistical significance between pre- and post-test). Then, the 50 cases were divided into five focus groups (ten cases per group) to assist in drafting models to improve the management of indigo weaving groups under the concept of social enterprise. This phase ended with comments from the seven experts from relevant organizations to finalize the models, which were called "the 4S: Start Up, Stand Up, Step Up, and Sustain."

A summary of this mixed method research (MMR) with multi-phase design was conducted in three phases as shown in Figure 1.

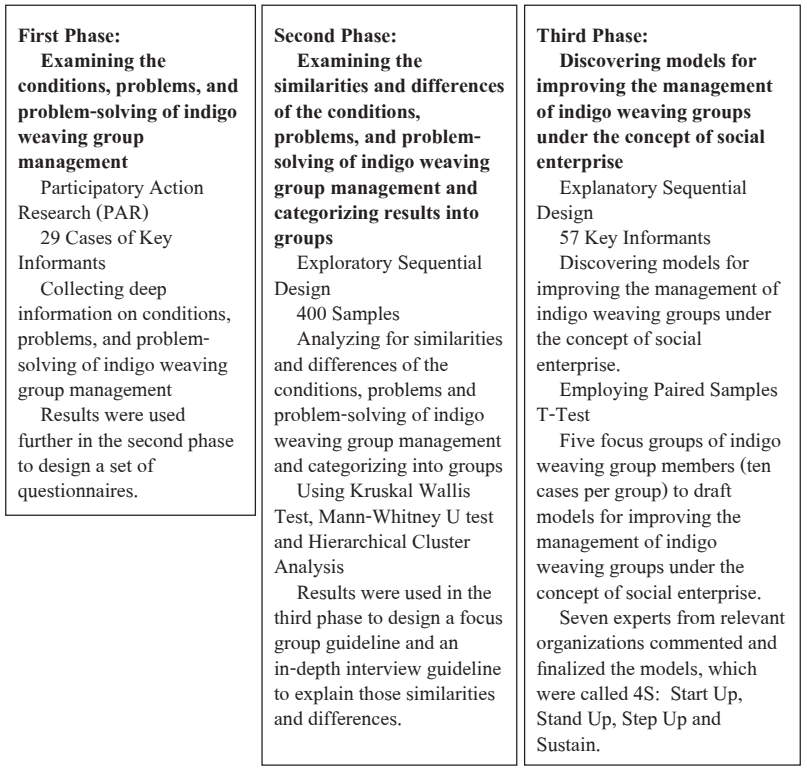


Figure 1 Mixed method research (MMR) with multi-phase design

Results

In order to develop models for improving the management of indigo weaving groups under the concept of social enterprise, the conditions, problems, and problem solving of the indigo weaving groups' management were examined. An analysis of the similarities and differences among the management of indigo weaving groups was also conducted as the second phase of this research. Data gained from the second phase were categorized into the major characteristics of the social enterprise concept: aiming at the social mission, financial sustainability, socially- and environmentally-friendly processes, reinvesting (some) profits, and operating with transparency. Data from the results were categorized into six groups:

Group 1: Had poor group management and problems of public relations.

Group 2: Had less effective management in terms of group management, production planning, production, marketing, finance, and accounting. Problem solving was poor in the areas of group establishment, production management, production development, marketing, public relations, finance, and accounting. More problems of product development, marketing, and accounting.

Group 3: Had less effective management of group establishment, but few problems in production planning.

Group 4: Good management of group establishment, production management, and marketing. Provided good solutions for product development but was less effective in group management and production planning. More problems in group establishment, group management, production management, and finance. Fewer problems in public relations and accounting.

Group 5: Good management of production development, public relations, and finance. Provided good solutions for marketing, public relations, and accounting.

Group 6: Good management in terms of production planning and accounting. Good solutions for group establishment, group

management, planning and financing. Few problems in group establishment, group management, production development, marketing, and finance.

Table 1 The management of indigo-dyed weaving groups in Sakon Nakhon province under the concept of social enterprise

Groups	Social mission	Financial sustainability	Socially and environmentally-friendly process	Reinvesting (some) profits	Operating with transparency
1	×	×	×	×	×
2	×	×	×	×	×
3	×	×	✓	×	×
4	✓	×	✓	×	×
5	×	✓	✓	×	✓
6	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓

Remarks:

(✓) indicates the groups were managed under the concept of social enterprise

(×) indicates the groups did not operate under the concept of social enterprise

Later, the training regarding social enterprise in terms of the principles and management was provided to the indigo group members. The training helped the members learn about the concept's application to their group management and understand their management conditions under the concept of social enterprise, which were categorized into the six groups mentioned above. In the meantime, a focus group of seven experts in the field was formed to consider and critique the six groups described above. The results from the focus group indicated that the management groups should be categorized into only five groups because two of the groups completely lacked the characteristics of group management under the social enterprise concept. The in-depth interview approach with the same seven experts was used to reconfirm the categories of management under the concept, which were collapsed into five groups. The results from the in-depth interviews showed that the management of indigo weaving groups under the concept of social enterprise should be further reduced to four groups because two of them

lacked sustainable finance, reinvestment of partial profits, and transparency in management. As a result, the groups become models for improving the management of indigo weaving groups under the concept of social enterprise. They were called the "4S": Start Up, Stand Up, Step Up and Sustain. Explanations are as follows.

1. Start Up

This model is intended to strengthen the management of community enterprise groups under the concept of social enterprise to establish social enterprise. The characteristics of these indigo-dyed weaving groups did not meet any of the five crucial characteristics of the social enterprise concept. In other words, they were the weakest group in terms of application of the social enterprise concept. However, when the nine management aspects under the concept of community enterprise were taken into account, the results indicated that these groups had all management problems, which were group establishment ($\bar{x}$=3.31), group management ($\bar{x}$=2.98), production planning ($\bar{x}$=2.55), planning ($\bar{x}$=3.46), product development ($\bar{x}$=3.43), marketing ($\bar{x}$= 3.70), public relations ($\bar{x}$=2.64), finance ($\bar{x}$=1.45), and accounting ($\bar{x}$=1.13). Furthermore, these groups were considered to be rated high in terms of management problems in terms of public relations ($\bar{x}$=2.55), product development ($\bar{x}$=1.61), marketing ($\bar{x}$=1.71), and accounting ($\bar{x}$=2.20). Moreover, they did not solve management problems adequately in seven aspects, which were group establishment ($\bar{x}$=2.93), production planning ($\bar{x}$=3.29), product development ($\bar{x}$=3.99), marketing ($\bar{x}$=3.36), public relations ($\bar{x}$=3.69), finance ($\bar{x}$=1.45), and accounting ($\bar{x}$=1.89).

2. Stand Up

This model is intended to strengthen the management of community enterprise groups under the concept of social enterprise to grow social enterprise. These indigo-dyed weaving groups managed their groups under two major characteristics of the social enterprise concept – having a socially- and environmentally-friendly process, and operating with transparency. The reason was that these groups provided fair compensation and benefits to their group members and networks. When their group management under the community enterprise concepts

was considered, the results show that they managed their groups well in the following three aspects: product development ($\bar{x}$=3.43), public relations ($\bar{x}$=3.45), and finance ($\bar{x}$=3.57). They had no problems in group management. They solved problems quite well in the following three aspects: marketing ($\bar{x}$=3.84), public relations ($\bar{x}$=3.37), and accounting ($\bar{x}$=3.77).

3. Step Up

This model is intended to strengthen the management of community enterprise groups under the concept of social enterprise to strengthen social enterprise. These groups managed their groups under the concepts of social enterprise, which were having a social mission, having a socially- and environmentally-friendly process, and operating with transparency. When considering the nine crucial management means of the groups under the community enterprise concept, the results show that groups managed their groups quite well in three aspects, including group establishment ($\bar{x}$=3.51), production management ($\bar{x}$=3.31), and marketing ($\bar{x}$=3.93). They faced the following four problems of management: group establishment ($\bar{x}$=1.38), group management ($\bar{x}$=1.22), production management ($\bar{x}$=1.14), and financial management ($\bar{x}$=1.13). However, they had fewer management problems in public relations ($\bar{x}$=2.88) and accounting ($\bar{x}$=1.52). They also provided good solutions for product development ($\bar{x}$=2.37). However, they did not do well in solving management problems of group management ($\bar{x}$=4.71) and production planning ($\bar{x}$=4.56).

4. Sustain

This model is intended to strengthen the management of community enterprise groups under the concept of social enterprise continuously and sustainably to become a model of social enterprise. The results found that these indigo-dyed weaving groups fully managed their groups under the concept of social enterprise. When considering the nine crucial management means of the groups under the community enterprise concept, the results show that the groups managed their groups well in terms of group management ($\bar{x}$=4.84), production planning ($\bar{x}$=4.72), and accounting ($\bar{x}$=4.92). They had fewer management problems, which were

group establishment ($\bar{x}$=1.94), group management ($\bar{x}$=1.05), production management ($\bar{x}$=1.53), production development ($\bar{x}$=1.78), marketing ($\bar{x}$=2.44), and finance ($\bar{x}$=1.11). They also solved problems of group establishment ($\bar{x}$=3.65), group management ($\bar{x}$=4.71), production planning ($\bar{x}$=4.56), production management ($\bar{x}$=3.61), and finance ($\bar{x}$=2.90).

The summary of means of the Operation of Community Enterprise Categorized by the 4S Model is in Table 2.

Table 2 Mean ($\bar{x}$) of the operation of community enterprise categorized by the 4S Models

The operation of community enterprise	4S Model			
	Start Up	Stand Up	Step Up	Sustain
1. Management ($\bar{x}$)				
- Group establishment	3.31	2.30	3.51	4.00
- Group management	2.98	2.27	3.27	4.84
- Production planning	2.55	2.29	3.31	4.72
- Planning	3.46	2.87	3.85	3.30
- Product development	3.43	3.43	2.98	3.93
- Marketing	3.70	2.07	3.93	3.64
- Public relations	2.64	3.45	3.19	2.73
- Finance	1.45	3.57	3.13	4.19
- Accounting	1.13	3.00	2.13	4.92
2. Problem ($\bar{x}$)				
- Group establishment	1.20	1.05	1.38	1.94
- Group management	1.17	1.09	1.22	1.05
- Production planning	1.33	1.70	1.10	1.53
- Planning	1.10	1.14	1.06	1.10
- Product development	1.61	1.26	1.14	1.78
- Marketing	1.71	1.00	1.11	2.44
- Public relations	2.55	1.00	2.88	1.52
- Finance	1.07	1.58	1.13	1.11
- Accounting	2.20	1.49	1.52	1.00
3. Problem Solving ($\bar{x}$)				
- Group establishment	2.93	2.00	2.44	3.65
- Group management	2.44	2.39	4.71	4.71
- Production planning	3.29	3.00	4.56	4.56
- Planning	3.00	3.21	2.00	2.65
- Product development	3.99	3.07	2.37	3.61
- Marketing	3.36	3.84	3.55	3.71
- Public relations	3.69	3.37	3.24	3.25
- Finance	1.45	2.17	1.60	2.90
- Accounting	1.89	3.77	1.83	2.41

The summary of the origin of the 4S models for improving the management of indigo weaving groups is in Table 3. It started with six groups ranging from poor to good management under the concept. Then, the groups were reorganized into four groups starting with those having all five characteristics to those having none of the five, which later were named 4S models, which were described above.

Table 3 The 4S Models for improving the management of indigo weaving groups in Sakon Nakhon province under the concept of social enterprise

Groups	Social mission	Financial sustainability	Socially and environmentally-friendly process	Reinvesting (some) profits	Operating with transparency	Characteristics of social enterprise	4S Models
1	×	×	×	×	×	- None of the five characteristics	**Start Up** (To establish social enterprise)
2	×	×	×	×	×		
3	×	×	✓	×	×	- Having socially and environmentally friendly process - Operating with transparency	**Stand Up** (To grow social enterprise)
4	✓	×	✓	×	×		
5	×	✓	✓	×	✓	- Social mission - Having socially and environmentally friendly process - Operating with transparency	**Step Up** (To strengthen social enterprise)
6	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	- Having all five characteristics	**Sustain** (To become a model of social enterprise)

However, in order to fully manage their group under the concept of social enterprise, the management process should be followed step by step. The six steps are the following: identifying the social problem/mission, building networks and cooperation, designing social innovations to solve the problem(s), testing and evaluating the designed social innovation, exchange and sharing, evaluating and following up. Importantly, to shift the groups' management under the concept of social enterprise from one model to another, the context of individual groups should be taken into account carefully.

Discussion and Conclusion

As Thailand has categorized community enterprises under the concept of social enterprise, improving their management under the concept of social enterprise necessitates analyzing the differences among them. They were assumed to be the same or to have similar characteristics; in fact, they were different in several ways. For example, community enterprise was used nationwide under the One Tambon One Product (OTOP) policy or the community enterprise policy. But the present research found that the OTOP groups had their own styles of group management depending on their contexts, which were unique. When the five major characteristics of social enterprise (which are social mission, financial sustainability, friendly social and environmental processes, reinvesting (some) profits, and operating with transparency) were used as lenses to categorize the indigo weaving groups' management under social enterprise, the results indicate that they had different characteristics. These could be categorized into four groups. The first group did not have any of the five crucial characteristics of social enterprise. The second group had characteristics of having socially- and environmentally-friendly processes, as well as operating with transparency. The third group had social missions, socially- and environmentally-friendly processes, and was also operated with transparency. The last group fulfilled all the characteristics. To properly improve their management under the concept of social enterprise, models should be designed. Four models, called 4S: Start Up, Stand Up, Step Up and Sustain, were described in detail above.

Recommendations

Recommendations for Policy Makers

The research found that each weaving group had its own management methods, which were quite unique and became the groups' identities. Interestingly, when the groups were analyzed under the five key characteristics of social enterprise, the results revealed a wide range from those lacking any aspect of social enterprise to those fully emersed in the concept. Later, this became the model for improving the management of indigo weaving groups under the concept of social enterprise that came to be called 4S consisting of Start Up, Stand Up, Step Up and Sustain (relating to the shade of characteristics from empty to full). The groups' positions on this continuum will allow the correct model to be selected for each. For example, the group completely lacking any of the five crucial characteristics of social enterprise (empty shade of characteristics) will use the Start Up model to strengthen its management. The groups with characteristics of having socially- and environmentally-friendly processes, as well as operating with transparency will use the Stand Up model to strengthen the management. The group with characteristics of social mission, socially- and environmentally-friendly processes, as well as operating with transparency will be improved using the Step Up model to strengthen the management to strengthen social enterprise. Finally, the groups with all five characteristics (fully shaded) will use the Sustain model to strengthen the management continuously and sustainably to become a model of social enterprise. Unfortunately, these new models have not been implemented in the management of those indigo weaving groups. In order to properly apply the concept to improve the groups' management, the relevant organizations should provide training courses for officers and members of the groups to help them to understand the concepts and determine the applicable model. Then, the process of improving the groups under the concept should follow step by step, starting from identifying problems, creating networks, designing social innovations to solve problems, experimenting with and evaluating

innovations, exchanging and sharing societal innovations, as well as following up and evaluating.

Recommendations for Future Research

This study discovered models for improving the management of indigo weaving groups under the concept of social enterprise. These models, however, should be tested through evaluation research to evaluate the application of the models. Moreover, each model should use participatory action research (PAR) to collect information on its application among scholars, researchers, and group members in order to help improve the models for improving the groups. The Master Plan of Social Enterprise Promotion 2010-2014 categorized social enterprise in Thailand into six types. Future research should focus on each type in order to build models to improve management under the concept.

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