

Social Capital in the Development of Safe Rice Homnin Farmers School Enhancing the Quality Life.

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Abstract

The research had the objectives to: (1) study the historical background of the farmers school of the farmers of Ban Hinlad, TambonWangnang, Muang District, MahaSarakham Province; (2) study the emergence of the social capital in the development of safe rice Homnin of the farmers school of the farmers of Ban Hinlad; (3) synthesize the roles of the social Capital in the development of safe rice Homnin of the farmers school of the farmers of Ban Hinlad; (4) study the enhancement of the quality of life of farmers of Ban Hinlad that took place because of the social capital in the development of safe rice Homnin. The research methodology employed the mixed method of qualitative research and quantitative research. The target group comprised 20 farmers who were members of the farmers school. The setting was the farmers school of Ban Hinlad, Village No. 2, TambonWangnang, Muang District, MahaSarakham Province. The research instruments used consisted of a structured and unstructured interview form, a participatory and non-participatory observation form, guidelines for focus group and a focus group, an assessment form for quality of life of farmers, the report on the evaluation of the rice production system: GAP, the record of the rice quality management: GAP Rice of the plot for the farmer, and the form for basic assessment of the farmer's plot: GAP Rice for the assessor. The statistics used were basic statistics which comprised the mean and standard deviation. The presentation of the results employed a descriptive analysis and schedule.

The results are as follows:

1) Regarding the historical background of the farmers school of the farmers of Ban Hinlad, it was found that Ban Hinlad was a small village, about 100 years old, and had the same culture and traditions as other Esan communities in the Northeast. Its natural resources were the Kakang brook and a public pond. Regarding the villagers' economy, the villagers took up rice farming as their occupation and had some additional occupations after

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rice growing season. The farmers school was set up because of the following: (1) the mainstream community development that emphasized economy that resulted in Ban Hinlad farmers' rice growing for consumption and sale. It brought about high production cost, use of chemicals, chemical fertilizer and insecticides but the produce was low, so they were in debt and encountered poverty; (2) the village civil society tried to solve the low rice produce, debt and poverty by forming groups to set up the farmers school project in 2012 and the project was supported by the Ramajitti Institute and the Faculty of Education of Rajabhat MahaSarakham University, and the farmers school produced a 15-unit farmer's curriculum and had 1 common rice farming demonstration plot. But the step of development that followed phase 1 was to grow chemical-free Homnin royal rice, so they joined each other to set up the social capital in the development of safe rice Homnin of the farmers school of Ban Hinlad enhancing the quality of life.

2) The emergence of the social capital in the development of safe rice Homnin of the farmers school of Ban Hinlad was caused by: (1) the alternative national development in which the farmers of the farmers school changed their behavior of growing Homnin rice by reducing using chemical fertilizer, pesticides, and turned to local wisdom. They made dry compost and made liquid herbal pesticide for the rice plots; (2) regarding resource management, they provided a plot of land for a common rice growing demonstration plot and used the Homnin seeds that were available in the community. They used dry manure of cow and buffalo dung as fertilizer; and (3) the participatory work that included academics and community learned persons who transmitted the knowledge of Homnin rice growing with quality specified by rice quality management: GAP comprised 7 components: water source, growing plot, using agricultural dangerous materials, production process, harvesting, moving and storage, and data recording of the agricultural plot.

3) The synthesis of the roles of the social capital in the development of safe rice Homnin of the farmers school of Ban Hinlad revealed that the social capital had its roles relating to: (1) knowledge management on quality management system: GAP Rice, having social capital from both outside and inside the community transmit the knowledge of growing Homnin rice that meets the 7 GAP Standards: Rice; (2) organizations inside and outside the community formed several groups to develop the farmers school; and (3) the efficient work was caused by the farmers' behavior of good relationship, generosity, forgiveness, and doing their assigned roles properly.

4) The assessment of the quality of life of the farmers in the farmers school of Ban Hinlad employed an assessment form that comprised 6 aspects, 44 indicators. The total reliability was 0.83. The results revealed that the quality of life of the farmers on the 6

aspects as a whole was in the highest level, and when considered by aspect, the aspects in the highest level were: social, mental, resource management, and health; the aspects in the high level were: production factors, and economy. Regarding the lesson drawing on the quality of life of the farmers in the farmers school, it was found that the farmers had very good quality of life, as well as revealed by the indicators, in the following aspects: social, resource management, mental, and health.

Keywords : Social Capital, Farmer School, Enhancing the Quality Life

Introduction

1. The importance of the problem and to promote and support research activities.

The national development of Thailand has employed the concept of mainstream development. The concept appeared in the 1st to the 7th National Economic and Social Development Plans (1961 - 1996). It was a development that emphasized only economic development which resulted in an imbalanced social structure where as the rich bunched up in development of factories but in development of agriculture a great number of poor farmers scattered on every region of the country. The data from the interview with Mr. Pichit Ratanacharoen, a community leader of Ban Hinlad, Village No. 2, Tambon Wangnang, Muang District, Maha Sarakham Province may serve as an example. The village is over a hundred years old. There are 78 households with 318 people. The village carried out a development policy

given by the government, emphasizing economic development through chemical agriculture in growing rice, vegetables and cassava. The problems they encountered were as the following :

1. On the economic aspect, a value took place. The villagers believed that if they did not use chemical fertilizer, the produce would be only little. Therefore, the villagers bought chemical fertilizer at the price of 500 - 1,000 Baht per bag. Each household used 5 bags. So 78 households spent 390,000 Baht per year. On their rice field, rice field crabs, golden apple snails and brown plant hoppers bit their rice plants. So the villagers bought Lannate or Folidol at the price of 150 - 200 Bath a can. Each household bought 3 cans, so the cost of the chemicals was 44,800 Baht. Moreover, some farmers borrowed money from the moneylender in the village and from the Bank for Agriculture and Agricultural Cooperatives. It was found that each household had a debt of about 40,000 to 50,000 Baht. The villagers then became poor although they had income from selling their produce.

2. On the social aspect, problems came from poverty. Because of poverty, 5 - 10 families moved to industrialized cities such as Bangkok and Khon Kaen to work for hire. Their children and youths were under care of grandparents and they lacked warmth. They did not like schooling and tried to skip classes. They quarreled and fought among themselves in the community and in the neighboring villages. About 5 - 10 children and youths had this kind of behavior.

3. Regarding the health problems, there was no natural food security in Ban Hinlad because the farmers used chemical fertilizer and pesticide which contaminated natural food and vegetables in the rice field. When villagers ate these food they had diarrhea and vomited, and 5 people had itches between fingers and toes. This was because the chemicals got into their bodies.

Regarding the means of solving the problems, the leaders of Ban Hinlad set up the village council comprising 20 members to form the village civil society together with the villagers and seek ways to solve the poverty, social and health problems. They found a way by coordinating with the Faculty of Education, Rajabhat Maha Sarakham University. They established a farmers school to carry out community development together with the villagers

of Ban Hinlad to reduce the use of chemical in growing rice, and they grew organic rice instead. They used dry compost to improve the soil quality and used liquid herbal pesticide. They enrolled members of the farmers school and received a grant to support the project in phase 1 in 2012 from Ramajitti Institute and they had Dr. Amornwich Nakornthap as an advisor of the project. The project yielded a 15-unit farmer's curriculum and 3 learning models of growing organic rice: (1) hands-on learning, (2) learning by studying from the model farmer as a learning source, and (3) learning from learned persons in the community and trainers who imparted knowledge.

The results of the operation of the project from 2012 to 2013 were summarized in order to find the strengths of the farmers school. It was found that there were human capitals, strong leaders and the knowledge of making dry compost and liquid fertilizer and the knowledge of making liquid herbal pesticide. Moreover, 3 households had Homnin rice seeds. The seeds were black and had scented smell. They sprouted and had many ears. The plant could resist pests well. Regarding the weaknesses of the project, the project lacked a small-sized rice mill and a vacuum sealer to be used in the farmers school to increase the price of the rice by

turning unhusked rice to brown rice. Therefore, in the 2nd phase the farmers school proposed the project of social capital in development safe rice Homnin of the farmers school to enhance the quality of life. This phase was also supported by the National Research Council of Thailand together with the Agricultural Research Development Agency (ARDA) in the fiscal year 2014. The details are as follows:

2. Research Objectives

1. To study the history of the farmers school of Ban Hinlad, Tambon Wangnang, Muang District, Maha Sarakham Province.

2. To study the emergence of the social capital in development of safe rice Homnin of the farmers school of Ban Hinlad.

3. To synthesize the roles of the social capital in development of safe rice Homnin of the farmers school of Ban Hinlad.

4. To study enhancement of the quality of life the farmers of Ban Hinlad that was caused by the social capital in development of safe rice Homnin.

3. Methodology

The research employed the Mixed Methodology Research by collecting data from related documents and research works and data from the research setting which was the farmers school of Ban Hinlad, Village No. 2, Tambon Wangnang, muang District, Maha Sarakham Province.

The collection of data from the field was conducted through surveys, inquiry, in-depth interviews, focus group discussion, and participatory and non-participatory observation. The informants were farmers from the farmers school, community leaders, learned villagers, and other concerned individuals. The instruments were constructed by the researchers basing on the concepts, theories and instruments from the Rice Department, Ministry of Agriculture and Agricultural Cooperatives. The instruments were: (1) a structured and unstructured interview form, (2) guidelines on questions for organizing the focus group and a record for focus group, (3) a participatory observation form and a non-participatory observation form, (4) an evaluation form for the quality of life the farmers school of Ban Hinlad, (5) a record of the quality management system: GAP Rice for the plot of the farmer, (6) a basic assessment form of the plot of the farmer: GAP Rice by the assessment agent, (7) a checklist of items to be assessed according to the rice production system: GAP by the assessment agent, and (8) the roster of the farmers of the farmers school of Ban Hinlad.

4. Research Results

The results are as' follows:

1) Regarding the historical background of the farmers school of Ban Hinlad, it was found that Ban Hinlad was a

small village, about over 100 years old, and had the same culture and traditions as other Esan communities in the Northeast. Its natural resources were the Kakang brook and a public pond. Regarding the villagers' economy, the villagers took up rice farming as their occupation and had some additional occupations after rice growing season. The farmers school was set up because of the following: (1) the mainstream community development that emphasized economy that resulted in Ban Hinlad farmers' rice growing for consumption and sale. It brought about high production cost, use of chemicals, chemical fertilizer and pesticides but the produce was low, so they were in debt and encountered poverty, social problems and health problems; (2) the village civil society tried to solve the low rice produce, poverty, social and health problems by forming groups to set up the farmers school project in 2012 and the project was supported by the Ramajitti Institute and the Faculty of Education of Rajabhat Maha Sarakham University, and the farmers school produced a 15-unit farmer's curriculum and had 1 common rice farming demonstration plot. But the step of development that followed phase 1 was to grow chemical-free Homnin royal rice, so they joined each other to set up the social capital in the development of

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3) The synthesis of the roles of the social capital in the development of safe rice Homnin of the farmers school of Ban Hinlad revealed that the social capital had its roles relating to: (1) knowledge management on quality management

system: GAP Rice, having social capital from both outside and inside the community to transmit the knowledge of growing Homnin rice that meets the 7 GAP Standards: Rice; (2) organizations inside and outside the community formed several groups to develop the farmers school; and (3) the efficient work was caused by the farmers' behavior of good relationship, generosity, forgiveness, and doing their assigned roles properly.

4) The assessment of the quality of life of the farmers in the farmers school of Ban Hinlad employed an assessment form that comprised 6 aspects, 44 indicators. The total reliability was 0.83. The results revealed that the quality of life of the farmers on the 6 aspects as a whole was in the highest level, and when considered by aspect, the aspects in the highest level were: social, mental, resource management, and health; the aspects in the high level were: production factors, and economy. Regarding the lesson drawing on the quality of life of the farmers in the farmers school, it was found that the farmers had very good quality of life, as well as revealed by the indicators, in the following aspects: social, resource management, mental, and health.

5. Successes and being Worthwhile

1) The successes of the research project were: (1) the body of knowledge of social capital in the development of

safe rice Homnin of the farmers school and in Ban Hinlad community development so as to make it strong; (2) the farmer members of the farmers school changed their method of thinking. They changed from using chemical fertilizer and using chemicals as pesticides to using compost and liquid fertilizer; (3) a learning center was obtained. The center has been used as the venue of meetings on rice with other organizations continuously and sustainably; (4) the model farmers were obtained. The model farmers had knowledge and understanding of rice production according to the quality management process: GAP Rice to be used in their own household rice growing so as to be certified by the Rice Department in the future; and (5) a demonstration plot was arranged for rice growing. It was also used for growing other crops after the rice growing season. Therefore, the produce was chemical-free.

2) The worth of the project is as follows: (1) a small-size rice mill and a vacuum sealer were obtained. They added value to the capital of the farmers school of Ban Hinlad. With these two things, the school earned an amount of income by milling brown rice charging 30 Baht a bag; and (2) the research was published in the form of academic article entitled "Social Capital in the Development of Safe Rice Homnin" in the

data base of Thai Journal Index Group 1 which was the journal of the Faculty of Education, Rajabhat Maha Sarakham University. It can be used as a body of knowledge on social capital and can be used as an indicator of quality assurance of the organizations that supported the research, under the component entitled research and application of the results.

6. The target Group and Benefits Received

The target group comprised 20 farmers. The benefits: qualitative benefits: the farmers who participated in the project carried out their participatory work with the people in the community and worked together with the community development network. The farmer members of the farmers school had desirable characteristics as identified by Thai society. Such characteristics are: honesty, tolerance, eager to know and learn, having communication skill - dare to think and dare to express themselves, and having harmony and pride of being professional farmers; quantitative benefits: the farmer members joined training on quality management process: GAP Rice. Their activities were learning from the model organic agriculture source of learned persons in the community, studied organic agriculture in Yasothorn Province, drawing lessons and evaluation of quality of life, 6 times altogether. They obtained 2,000 kilograms of seeds, and

from 1,500 kilograms of unhusked rice, 840 kilograms of brown rice was obtained. The price of the brown rice was 70 Baht per kilogram, so they earned 58,800 Baht. The rice could be sold throughout the year; and (3) 6 social networks gave support to community development of Ban Hinlad. The social networks were: Rajabhat Maha Sarakham University, community learned persons, Maha Sarakham Provincial Agricultural Office, Chiangyeun District Agricultural Office, Maha Sarakham Province, Skyline Cable TV - a local TV network in Maha Sarakham Province, and agricultural officers of Tambon Wangnang, Muang District, Maha Sarakham Province.

7. Application of the Results

The results of the research can be used academically by using the body of knowledge of social capital in the development of many different occupations as needed, in the levels of family, community, institution, and organization to enable self-reliance in all these levels. The social capital can also be used commercially as it can be used in the development of safe rice Homnin business and local farmer networks in Maha Sarakham Province. In addition, it can be used to develop organic agricultural tourism in Ban Hinlad. Furthermore, at the policy level, social capital concept can be placed in the operational plan of Tambon Wangnang

Administration Organization, Muang District, Maha Sarakham Province for the purpose of analyzing social capitals that exist and finding ways to promote them in order to build a civil society and empower the community.

8. Recommendations Gained from Carrying out Research Promoting and Supporting Activities

1) Policy-related recommendation: the concept of social capital should be integrated with the concept of Sufficiency Economy to form the policy of community development. This should be written on the development plan of the village level and the level of Tambon

Wangnang Administration Organization, Muang District, Maha Sarakham Province.

2) Academic recommendation : training on operating the brown rice mill should be given to the farmer group and individuals who are interested before the operation, in order for them to get perfect brown grains and to know how to maintain the machine correctly.

3) The recommendation for consumption: the brown rice is tender, scented and tastes good if it is cooked correctly. That is, it must be soaked in hot water and left until it cools down. Then pour out the water and steam and finally cook the rice.

References

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