



HUMAN CAPITAL: A LEARNING PROCESS ON ENVIRONMENTAL COMMUNITY BY USING THE APPRECIATION INFLUENCE CONTROL TECHNIQUE

Abstract

This study focuses on the learning process by applying the Appreciation Influence Control (AIC) process to the environmental projects in a community (Define problem, articulate the goals and objectives, analyze and evaluate, implement action plans, measure results). The study utilized a participatory Action Research (PAR) methodology, leading to the development of a bottom up for the environmental projects for the community. The research had three significant outcomes: the development of a strategy for developing effective learning process at the individual level; demonstrating the effectiveness of the AIC process in the development of a regional environmental policy that might be applied, generally, in Thailand; highlighting key elements that are required for changes in the development of effective learning process both at individual and community levels.

Keywords – Learning Process, Appreciation Influence Control, Human Capital in Community

INTRODUCTION

The development of the Thai nation can be achieved only when the quality of life of all of its people is improved to such an extent that the community – in all sectors in its society (private, governmental, and non-profit) – can join together in new movements that are of mutual benefit. Cajete (1994) suggests that active learning is essential if nurturing, life-improving experiences – consisting of guiding stories of their collective journeys through life – are to be shared effectively across the generations of people in a community.

¹ Dr., Professional Development Victoria University, Australia, Faculty of Education, Naresuan University

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The advance in information technology, education development, the move to a knowledge based society and political development especially in the community are major variables that impel Thai society to become a modern democratic society. Government policies for modernizing public services emphasize the importance of promoting both voice and choice of user and the community. People, currently, pay more attention to the decision making process and the build up of public policy which can affect them directly and indirectly. They need governance that is transparent, and which provides more opportunities for people participation. As a consequence: public governance under a democracy needs to have amended rules and regulations; public system administration should be developed; the interaction system between the government and people should be adjusted. The move to sub-district administration organization enhancing public participation can be effective in bringing about both system and management process adjustment. Such a move should create public confidence in setting policies, decision making and public administration. Besides, it should enable sub-district administration organization to accurately and effectively understand and acquire knowledge and skills favourable to participatory people governance.

The changes in politics and governance, the trends of the public sector's political development and the intentions of the Constitution of Thailand B.E. 2540 (Thai Government, 1997, accessed at <http://www.ocsc.co.th>; English) all emphasize more direct participation in public administration. Therefore, it is necessary to open the public system to democratization by allowing people to express opinions, participate more, and inspect public performance. Decision making process and the setting up of public policy must be prudent, transparent, just and acknowledged by the people. This concept is called *participative democracy*; it provides the opportunity for every person to show their acknowledgement or disapproval and to freely express their opinions in particular issues. The Constitution of Thailand B.E. 2550 (Thai Government, 2007, English version accessed at http://www.senate.go.th/th_senate/English/-constitution2007.pdf) has specified that public agencies shall have a duty to provide the

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opportunity for participation in public administration especially by receiving news and information, expressing their opinions, participating in the setting-up of policy, project planning, and working with public sector officials. Most importantly, they can monitor and evaluate every government agencies' work performance.

The concept of *learning process*, for the purpose of this study, encompasses more than the acquisition of facts and knowledge. Sims (1993) suggests that learning is also a dynamic social process occurring within a social context, and that it varies in meaning and understanding for each participant. David Kolb (1984) has argued that individual learning is a transactional process between personal knowledge and external environment. He develops the learning model as a cycle that are polar opposites: active and reflective, concrete and abstract. Therefore, learning is contextualized as occurring within the process of planned change (a 'blueprint for change') by the way of a community change policy, and within the lived experience of participants as they endeavour to learn and implement their new learning.

AIC – Appreciation, Influence and Control – is a self-organizing process and an approach to collective planning and action that recognizes the complexity of communities and importance of power relationships. AIC is a philosophy and a process that was translated into a model for organizing development work in the late 1970s and early 1980s by Dr. William Smith, who currently directs the Overseas Development. (Smith, 1997). Every purpose creates a power field.

The AIC process is a procedure that makes people learn effectively and provides opportunity for them to participate. According to Sobchokchai (1994), AIC encourages sharing, learning, and actual practice to encourage creative power in problems solving.

- **Appreciation or A** means build to have knowledge and understand of the community development projects about working conditions and problem of environmental projects by doing activity called 'Self Learning

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- **Influence or I** means the opportunity to present opinion together in order to provide the method to develop the environmental projects in community by activity called 'What is it'
- **Control or C** means the members share the opinion in order to have an operational plan to reduce the factors of environmental problem by activity called 'Blueprint for Change'

In this study, I developed the AIC process in the blueprint for change in community, where participants are able to develop and extend their own understanding of a situation, and formulate actions that can have immediately applicable results of environmental policies in a community.

Human capital refers to the stock of competencies, knowledge and personality attributes embodied in the ability to perform labour so as to produce economic value. It reflects the attributes gained by a worker through their education and experience (Clark, 1990). Dipak (2010) suggests that the development of human capital in the 21st Century should be a dynamic process (vision, action, motivation, and inspiration) which compounds harmony, hand, heart, and health. Many extension learning process are designed to enhance the capacity of community leader to enable them to develop and sustain competitive advantage of their communities. Active learning, using the AIC process, has emerged as a critical issue. Measuring of changes in communities is problematic. Therefore, there is a need among professionals for a new set of simple and systematic learning process that are able to capture the impact of the learning process to bring about changes of environmental projects in a community.

The environmental projects that touches upon most sectors of development-related activity. It will include, for instance, water management, soil protection, agriculture development, livestock management, mineral activity, transport, energy generation and distribution, industrial development, forestry, fisheries, wildlife utilization of human settlements

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and other activities in community (Kaniaru & Karukulasiriya, 2002). Environmental management strategies are expected to establish a precedent for effective cross-sectoral coordination that includes the participation of all participants. This study has focused on the learning process of the environmental projects in a community and has focused on the process of planned change, implementation and evaluation in a particular area of action in community (Ling & Cotter, 2002).

The community means that the Tambon Administrative Organizations (TAO) has been recently founded in rural Thailand as the main organization of local management. Tambon Huadong, in Pichit Province, is generally viewed both as a step forward in the realization of a village self-management body as well as a milestone in the decentralization policy. This paper examines the actual operations of the community regarding the AIC approaches laid down in development planning and strategy for environmental projects further reflections on the problems of both the community and the participatory approach itself.

The objective of the research was to study the effective learning process of people in community by using AIC process to improve working conditions in the environmental projects in Tambon Huadong, Pichit Province.

METHODOLOGY

The methodological approach used in the study sought to assist in the analysis of the influences on the learning process in a specific community. A qualitative study was conducted within a naturalistic, interpretive paradigm, guided by Donabedian's (1992) conceptual framework of the AIC process as a strategy for establishing a blueprint for change in the community. The method was bounded within a case study at Tambon Huadong, Pichit Province. Participatory action research was used. This allowed data to be collected and analyzed using the AIC process on this particular environmental projects for the community in order to inform subsequent stages of the study.

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The qualitative study was conducted in three phases. The appreciation (A) phase that built to have knowledge and understand of the community development. This phase consisted of three qualitative steps about environmental projects for community vision that the direction to develop working process on environmental projects: the first, reviewing of situations; the second determining the actual state of situation in the community; and the third, setting goals. The influence (I) phase that provided the opportunity to present people' opinion together in order to provide the method to develop the environmental projects in community. This phase consisted of two qualitative steps: the first, seeking the ways to meet the goals from phase 1 step 3; and identifying the range of activities on environmental projects. The control (C) phase involved participants in planning and decision-making in order to produce a blueprint for change in the environmental projects for a community. Each of the three phases involved the use of focus groups and observation; in total, 32 members of the community were consulted. Finally, I undertook semi-structured interviews with each of four Heads of Public Sectors in the community in order to develop a 'blueprint for change'.

In relation to data analysis, I used the qualitative analysis technique of triangulation of sources (focus group, semi-structured interviews and observation) as there was no numeric translation of data beyond the calculation of percentage frequencies. I focused on the meaning of the information collected in two ways a content analysis that was descriptive, and an interpretation of the responses that reflected levels of complexity. This qualitative analysis process involved coding the information into categories or levels looking for similarities and differences among the data (Denzin & Lincoln, 2005; Miles, 1994, Miles & Huberman, 1994; Owen, 2006).

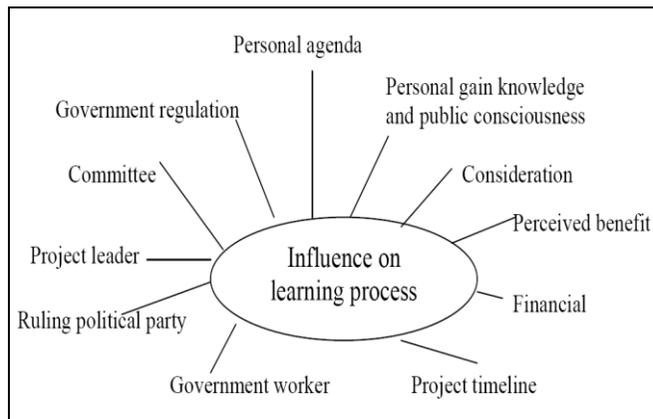
RESULTS

The findings of the study were derived from content analysis and interpretation in order to answer the following research question: What factors have influenced the learning process of this particular environmental projects for a community? A number of factors were



found to have influenced the learning process in the design of this particular blueprint for change. These factors – understandings, community, government, and participants in the learning process – are summarized in Figure 1.

Figure 1: Influences on the blueprint for change in the environmental policies for community



The factors show the divergent elements that affected the process and outcomes of the blueprint for change of the environmental projects for the community. Analysis explored the dilemmas and disjuncture that arose when the AIC controlled planning process sought to include government, community and participants' interest. First, there were different perceptions of how collaboration impacted on blueprint for change of environmental projects for a community in the *appreciation* phase. Second, variability was seen in the capacity building potential of environmental projects in the *influence* phase. Third, there were competing agendas to maintain power and control over the planning process and implementation in the *control* phase. Each of these influences is dealt with separately, below.

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The impact of the AIC process on the learning process

Central to participants' understanding of their learning process facilitation was their ability to conceptualize their experience. Moreover, conceptualization of the total experience was gained from knowledge and consciousness. Participants used their own feelings, their perceptions of the feeling of others, their value systems, intuitions, previous experiences, feedback, observations and their learning journals to help them understand their experience. Thus, conceptualizing their learning experience was seen as being a subjective process that encompassed participants' perception of, and critical reflection on, events in the AIC process that occurred in their learning on the environmental project and, on occasions, in their prior or later events. In light of the conceptualized experience, participants then made judgments about what they could do differently.

Community participation in planning

For participants in the study of the concept of environmental projects policies for a community showed varied levels of understanding and of importance. During observation at AIC phases, a number of community members, non government organization representatives and government staff indicated the need for partnerships to be developed to ensure the success of proposed environmental projects. For example, logging and encroachment into upland river has motivated people to take action to protect the watersheds that feed their fields. Opportunities for input into the planning process by government workers were extensive and regular. While slow at first, improvement in community involvement was noted following the appointment of locally-based coordinators, enabling local *ownership*. In summary, different understandings of the responsibilities of participant were found to impact on achieving a satisfactory community outcomes for environmental projects. For example, people can share water to feed their fields and to build a dam in the community.



Understanding of factors would be success

Consensus was found between all respondents in the focus groups and in observation. It was also found that improving community development opportunities during the influence phase was a priority area of interest for environmental policies for community. This was found to significantly influence the personal agenda, personal gain of knowledge, and consciousness of all participants.

Completing planning agendas

The analysis of the control phase – the focus group and semi-structure interviews with participants, and the interviews with government staff – indicated competing interests in project planning. This was found to significantly influence the financial, project timeline and government regulation elements in the AIC process.

Power and control issues

The issue of power and control was found to significantly influence the AIC process and its outcomes. It was found that a number of community representatives and their advocates were not provided an opportunity to have input into environmental planning. Participant reporting and community involvement decreased as the planning progressed. Environmental planning input was predominantly derived from the government and sub-district administration organization. Management control, project leadership, and the influence of the ruling political party were additional themes to arise from the interviews.

Conflicting expectation of success

The conflict between community needs and government expectations created a problem for environmental planning: there was a difference between the governments' policy and the blueprint of environmental planning. This difference between the plans formulated at the local community and the existing agendas of sub-district administration organization, and state levels created an incompatibility between the two groups. It was a reflection of different



understandings of environments and resulted in conflicting expectations of success for the environmental project.

Professional education, training, and support

It was found that participants considered local issues as having a higher priority. In particular, participants wanted a more flexible delivery of education programs to include all small villages within the region; this was identified as the way to support a team approach in the villages.

In addition, a triangulation of the findings from the three sources – focus groups, interviews, and observation – resulted in the recognition of three significant factors affecting outcomes: people, community and government.. The people were concerned with the following: perceived benefits; personal agenda; personal gain of knowledge and consciousness. The community was concerned with the following: committees; project leaders; projects timelines; and financial. The government was concerned with the following: government regulation; ruling political party; government managers; and consideration.

CONCLUSION

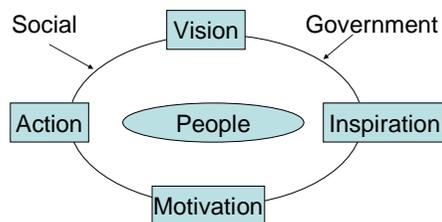
The purpose of this study was to examine influences on the learning process involving environment projects in a community by using AIC process. The critically reflective process emerged as being an important part of the learning process for the participants in this study. To better understand that process, its purpose is presented in Figure 2 which shows participants' experience as 'tipping points' in their lives. Gladwell (2006) looks at a tipping point as a moment of 'critical mass', when a trend, idea, or concept becomes a juggernaut, and he has some very specific theories about how a tipping point is created.

It is when they are faced with a major change or tipping point in their lives that they come to a greater understanding of life that can be serves as a cycle most participants



learning and implementing experiences. Each turning point may have been seen as necessarily unique, complex, and exquisite, as it developed within the context of each participants' dynamic and create in vision, inspiration, motivation, and action both of government and social milieu.

Figure 2: People productivity process and the AIC process



Tipping point 1: Vision

The *vision* is expressed in a concept map in which creative activity occurred for each participant. It has been seen as the learning process on environmental goal for community, the work environment or any other place of significance in which the participant has cause to implement some aspect of his or her learning. The participants have construed those places as somewhat safe so that they were able to learn and implement their new learning. In this place their guiding thoughts, ideas, orientations, expectations, explanations, hopes and dreams may have been formulated and implemented. The participants held of themselves and others as a result of their learning and implementing experiences.

Tipping point 2: Inspiration

The *inspiration* is that time in which learning, implementing, critically reflecting, adapting, and experimenting combined to construct a new reality for each participant. It was

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seen that the participants were able to contextualized their experience, to critically reflect on and integrate those experiences into the new way of thinking and feeling about themselves and significant others, and to create new understanding. These new understandings enabled them to connect to a new space, and to undertake new actions.

Tipping point 3: Motivation

The *motivation* space is that domain belief in themselves and others in the work context operate at the level of an individual, and are composed of two parallel components: the extent to which people will adopt their learning experience and the extent to which people effectively mobilize their personal resources to achieve joint with others. The political, and social-cultural environment in which those experiences occurred both individual level and community. It is informed by the support and encouragement received from leader of community and government staff.

Tipping point 4: Action

The *action* space contained skills and abilities through which the participants implemented their new learning and understanding, ether during the learning AIC process, in the community, or in their wider social milieu. Action helped those participants to transform their learning and implementing experiences to create new realities for themselves. Actions formed a primary part of the learning process because it enabled the internal process of learning to be externalized.

Milieux

The *Government and Social Milieux* are contained the external responses and experiences that most of participants perceived as a result of their learning and implementing. It was holistic space in which they were able to transform their experiences, their realities to the historical, political and cultural activities with which they were familiar, in further informing their understanding of their experiences.

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DISCUSSION

When I was working with participants during the course of this research, an approach that I found particularly useful was that of concept mapping. I used concept maps to ensure that all participants' ideas were heard and considered as key needs issues. The first step was to identify the key ideas from the data that I had collected. This involved me in grouping similar words and phrases used in the discussion of each question. In this way all suggestions were heard without regard to status. The emerging ideas were similarly grouped to create emerging issues; these, in turn were grouped to create key issues and then key concepts of human capital development, that focuses on the learning process by applying the Appreciation Influence Control (AIC) as is shown in Figure 3.

This analysis of the learning process involved in an environmental planning exercise using AIC process provides the core of a strategic plan that the community should implement in order to achieve its aims. I have formulated such a strategic plan by constructing the strategic map (Kaplan & Norton, 2004) as is shown in Figure 3. The learning process will serve as a blueprint for change in environmental policies for community that will be implemented effectively are in harmony. The desired output of each of the elements will be the achievement of the objectives for which learning process has been designed. Implementation is the way activities are grouped into units for management and control purposes, and the various levels of management that are deemed to be required for system change for the development of human capital both at individual and community levels.

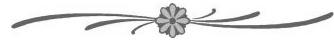
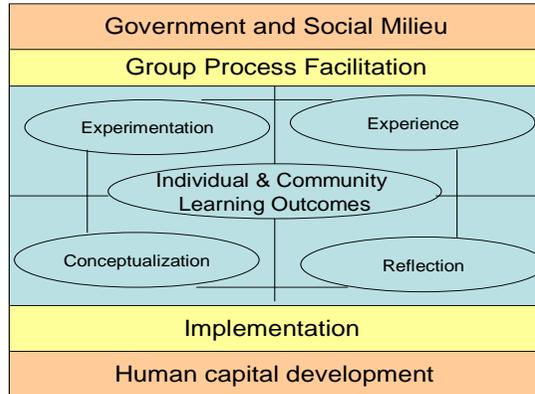


Figure 3: Blueprint for change in the community by individual and community learning



The learning process have served as a blueprint for change in environmental policies for community that will be implemented effectively only by ensuring that all 11 sub-allocating element factors (see Figure 1) The value of this approach will be in leading fundamental change. It will be also appropriate for major incremental change in learning process. I suggest that there are four phases on learning process required to sustain both of individual and community change represented by the AIC process : experience, reflection; conceptualization; experimentation by instituting an ongoing feedback process.

Phase 1: Experience

The process enabled participants' to share their experiences with the researcher and led to a consensual construction of their perception about the potential consequences or repercussions of their actions. Some negative reactions emerged: this was understandable. Such discussion may have occurred during AIC phases for some of participants. It may have occurred for others within the perceived safety of their domestic environment, where they discussed their interpersonal and intrapersonal capabilities with other participants.



Phase 2: Reflection

Participants utilized a learning journal during the AIC process. They recorded their thoughts and feelings that emerged in the learning process. They shared their experiences. The inducement to act was driven by a process of internalization and externalization. Internally, participants recalled their previous experience of the environmental policies in a community, their learning experiences, and their experiences with either work colleagues or significant others. Externally, that decision was driven by their analysis of the environment such as a perception of support from colleagues. The internalization and externalization process helped them to gather the information necessary for them to act.

Phase 3: Conceptualization

The reality for each participant was that their values and their interpretation of 'facts' were interlinked. In this way they were able to contribute meaning to their experience.

Phase 4: Experimentation

In this phase, the participants attempted to use their new learning in a situation of their choosing for environmental planning. Participants arrived at an understanding of the situation within the context of the participants. Learning, and implementing in a group process of facilitation is not necessarily a 'behavioural' experience.

From the phases may be seen that the learning process played a key part in participants learning and development that will be developed for human capital in community.

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วารสารศึกษาศาสตร์ มหาวิทยาลัยนครสวรรค์
ปีที่ 12 ฉบับที่ 2 พฤษภาคม - สิงหาคม 2553

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