

Empowerment of the Civil Society Organizations' Strategic Thinking to Create New Future for Nakornnayok Province

การเสริมพลังภาคประชาสังคมในการคิดเชิงยุทธศาสตร์เพื่อสร้างอนาคตใหม่

ให้กับจังหวัดนครนายก

◆ Wandee Sutthinarakorn

Associate Professor, Ph.D., Department of Vocational Education

Faculty of Education Kasetsart University, E-mail: feduwodus@ku.ac.th

วรรณดี สุทธินรากร

รองศาสตราจารย์ ดร. ภาควิชาอาชีวศึกษา คณะศึกษาศาสตร์ มหาวิทยาลัยเกษตรศาสตร์

◆ Suthee Rattanamongkolgul

Lecturer Dr., Department of Preventive and Social Medicine

Faculty of Medicine Srinakharinwirot University, E-mail: Suthee2006@hotmail.com

สุธีร์ รัตนมงคลกุล

อาจารย์ ดร. ภาควิชาเวชศาสตร์ป้องกันและสังคม คณะแพทยศาสตร์ มหาวิทยาลัยศรีนครินทรวิโรฒ

Abstract

This research aimed to empower the civil society organizations of Nakornnayok province to learn the strategic thinking and propose their provincial development strategies. The target group of the study included 40 leaders and civil society representatives who were the members of Thailand Agriculture Council and officers from the provincial Tourism and Sport Authority. Research instruments included documentary analysis, questioning technique, reflection, questionnaires, discussions, discourse for transformative learning and reinforcing learning theories. Qualitative data were analyzed by content analysis while quantitative data were analyzed by frequency counts, percentages, and rankings.

Findings revealed that the target group learned 'weaknesses' of civil sector's administration such as the lack of people's participation in city development. Although, rich natural resource is significant 'strength', people, who are mostly in agricultural sector, were not successful in their careers. Internal factors, strengths and weaknesses, were related to 'external factors' which are facing 'external investors' who expect to benefit city's natural resources. After empowering strategic thinking and transformative learning theory, there was an active driving

process of changing Nakornnayok province under cooperation of public and civil society organizations. Nakornnayok's vision was settled as "pleasant city to live, city of safety, city of generosity, city of trust, city of health, and city of learning". To achieve such a goal, there were 4 strategies: The dialogue was used in the middle of the interaction between the target group and researchers to allow a transformative learning to take place. Research instrument were document analysis, questioning technique, reflection, brainstorm, discourse analysis and reinforcing learning theory. A content analysis was applied to the qualitative data obtained, whereas the data from questionnaire were analyzed for frequency and percentage. The findings showed that the target group learned the problems and the root of the problems by determining the direction of government development and the influence of the world. They also learned how to make changes that needed clarity in content and strategic approaches which enabled them to set the strategic development for Nakornnayok under the vision of building a pleasant city to live. To achieve such a goal, there were 4 strategies: 1) to conserve the nature, environment and biodiversity; 2) to enhance the career and economy of the small and medium businesses of community by creating value added and value creation for their agricultural products; 3) to improve people lifestyle by linking learning in school systems with community learning centers to give youths the opportunity to experience real local experiences, including the design of the city, landscapes, buildings, places and buildings of the city to better support life in the future; and 4) to create a learning-based society, building a strong community and strong community organization network.

Keywords: Empowerment, Strategic Thinking, Civil Society Organizations, New Future, Nakornnayok

บทคัดย่อ

การวิจัยในครั้งนี้มีวัตถุประสงค์เพื่อเสริมพลังในการเรียนรู้การคิดเชิงยุทธศาสตร์ให้กับประชาชนนครนายก และนำเสนอยุทธศาสตร์การพัฒนาจังหวัดนครนายก กลุ่มเป้าหมายคือผู้นำและตัวแทนภาคประชาชนจากสภาพลเมืองจังหวัดนครนายก 40 คน เครื่องมือที่ใช้คือการสำรวจเอกสาร การตั้งคำถาม การสะท้อนผลการศึกษา การทำแบบสอบถาม การอภิปราย การสานเสวนาเพื่อการเรียนรู้สู่การเปลี่ยนแปลง และเสริมทฤษฎีเพื่อการเรียนรู้ ข้อมูลเชิงคุณภาพวิเคราะห์ด้วยวิธีการวิเคราะห์เนื้อหา ส่วนข้อมูลเชิงปริมาณวิเคราะห์ด้วยค่าความถี่ ร้อยละและจัดลำดับความสำคัญ

ผลการศึกษาพบว่า กลุ่มเป้าหมายได้พบจุดอ่อนในการดำเนินงานของภาคประชาชนคือขาดการมีส่วนร่วมในการพัฒนาเมือง ประชาชนซึ่งส่วนใหญ่อยู่ในภาคเกษตรกรรมไม่ประสบความสำเร็จในอาชีพ แม้จะมีจุดแข็ง

ในเรื่องความอุดมสมบูรณ์ของฐานทรัพยากร ปัจจัยภายในทั้งจุดแข็งและจุดอ่อนได้นำสู่การเชื่อมโยงของปัจจัยภายนอกที่ถูกคุกคามจากกลุ่มทุนภายนอกที่คาดหวังจากทรัพยากรที่ยังคงความอุดมสมบูรณ์ ภายหลังการให้ความรู้ในทฤษฎีการเรียนรู้เพื่อการเปลี่ยนแปลงและเสริมพลังการคิดเชิงยุทธศาสตร์นำไปสู่การขับเคลื่อนการเปลี่ยนแปลงเมืองนครนายกภายใต้ความร่วมมือระหว่างภาครัฐและภาคประชาสังคมอย่างมีพลัง โดยกำหนดวิสัยทัศน์ของการสร้างเมืองนครนายกให้เป็นเมืองน่าอยู่ มีความปลอดภัย ประชาชนมีสุขภาวะที่ดี เป็นเมืองแห่งการเรียนรู้ และผู้คนมีความเอื้ออาทร มีความไว้วางใจซึ่งกันและกัน ยุทธศาสตร์สำคัญในการขับเคลื่อนตามวิสัยทัศน์มี 4 ประการคือ 1) รักษาธรรมชาติ สิ่งแวดล้อมและความหลากหลายทางชีวภาพ 2) สร้างเสริมอาชีพและเศรษฐกิจของกลุ่มธุรกิจชุมชนที่มีขนาดเล็กและขนาดกลาง โดยการสร้างมูลค่าเพิ่ม (Value Added) ให้กับสินค้าเกษตร และสร้างสรรค้มูลค่า (Value Creation) 3) ปรับปรุงวิถีชีวิตโดยเชื่อมโยงการเรียนรู้ในระบบโรงเรียนกับศูนย์การเรียนรู้ของชุมชนเพื่อให้เยาวชนมีโอกาสสัมผัสกับประสบการณ์จริงของท้องถิ่น รวมถึงมีการออกแบบเมืองภูมิทัศน์ อาคาร สถานที่และสิ่งสร้างของเมืองเพื่อรองรับชีวิตที่ดีกว่าในอนาคต และ 4) การสร้างสังคมแห่งการเรียนรู้ สร้างชุมชนเข้มแข็งและเครือข่ายองค์กรชุมชนที่เข้มแข็ง

คำสำคัญ : เสริมพลัง การคิดเชิงยุทธศาสตร์ ภาคประชาสังคม อนาคตใหม่ จังหวัดนครนายก

Introduction

Nakornnayok Province has an area of 2,122 square kilometers adjacent to Bangkok. With a distance of only 107 kilometers, the general condition of the area is completely different from Bangkok. Nakornnayok is a rural town surrounded by cultural landscape that is different from the city. Its geographic area, therefore, is rich with wild rice fields and streams stretching from the upstream to the valley plain in the north and high hills to the east connected to Dong Phaya Yen mountains, while the central and southern areas were plains. There are many forest areas including Khao Yai, Khao Kiaw, Khao Changok and Khao Nangrong. The nature has created many beautiful streams and waterfalls. (Wandee, 2015)

For geographic reasons, the people in the area are engaged in farming. Nakornnayok is a source of variety of rice, growing fruits and vegetables, farming and livestock. In addition, populations in the area are multicultural, including ethnic groups who have settled themselves in the areas with abundant water resources. There is a long tradition of cultural heritage reflecting the diverse cultures of the entire ethnic groups, different religions, intangible culture and intangible culture. The tangible cultural resources are 193 temples, 12 monasteries, 25 mosques, 6 Christian churches, (Nakornnayok Province Official, 2016) and other intangible cultural sources such as beliefs, and values which are nestled in rituals that symbolize the wisdom governing the behavior of people in society.

Nakornnayok is a source of abundant natural resources, biodiversity and multiculturalism which become the people way of life. It is a tourist attraction that is easy to access for investment and business due to its proximity to Bangkok, the nation's capital, now facing increased congestion that is difficult to control. At present, Nakornnayok people are facing urbanization, especially the invasion of the area to serve as a growth for the industrial sector (Department of Provincial Administration, 2010). While the province is designated as green area under the Town Planning Act, there is an attempt to use the gaps in legislation to set up factories or even a garbage disposal plant. This has an impact on the way people live and work. This brings with it a conflict with the people who cherish the city in a way that is bound to nature. The problems can cause difficulties in terms of management for Thai government. In the end, the state and the people become conflicting partners when they cannot handle the needs of the people (Tnews, 2017). Conflict will increase in feeling of prejudice against the government and continue to fail in cooperating with the government organizations, escalating in protesters in the worst scenario.

Strategic thinking is an alternative to solving problems through careful and round-the-clock deliberation. (Ebersole, 2017) Strategic thinking is meaningful in determining the content of a disagreement in a rational way with a method that directs success on the basis of understanding and cooperation on possible truths. This integration of Nakornnayok community is the first dimension of shared thinking in order to analyze the problems linked to the theory through explanations of the academicians to lead the learning in strategic thinking wherein it can bring the change to it for a better direction and a new meaning for the future of the province.

Objectives

1. To empower the civil society organizations' strategic thinking of Nakornnayok province.
2. To propose the development strategies of Nakornnayok province.

Literature Review and Conceptual Framework

Development Direction

The government has started the concept of national development for the modernization of the National Economic Development Plan No. 1 in 1961, resulting in a change in the way people live in society. Agricultural output goes on the path of export and contributes significantly to the large scale processing industry. Development for economic growth continues

to be the mainstream of development up to present. In practice, the state has renamed the plan as the second National Economic and Social Development Plan due to social inequality. The development plan of the seventh edition is to see changes in the promotion of sustainable agriculture in order to diversify crops to restore a decayed ecosystem along with mainstream development (Wandee et al, 2015) along with the flag of sustainable agriculture. The government has issued the Community Enterprise Act to promote community businesses in the form of community enterprises. This is conducive to the growth of small and medium enterprises, including the community's focus on the direction of self-sufficiency and cooperation rather than competition. This is the direction of alternative development, but the development of choice. Although it has developed in sequence, it is not strong enough. Unlike developed countries such as the United States and Canada, the economic value of small and medium-sized businesses is the same as that of large businesses. (Barclay and Porter, 2005)

Strategic Thinking

Strategic thinking refers to the way or plan that is thought up carefully with a practical procedure and flexibility which can be adaptable to different situations. It aims to win over competitors or to avoid obstacles which can achieve the desired goal. (Kriangsak, 2006) Strategic thinking is a process of thinking or a series of ideas beginning with the goal or the future. It is planned in the prescribed direction and the practice set to lead to success through the process of analyzing and evaluating one's own situation which is an internal factor along with the external environment analysis to achieve the goal set. (Porter, 1980)

Assumptions of the stories that arise from the accumulation of the world's learning experience about life and belief are indicative of the ability to predict what is going on. A person's brain is thinking back and forth between what is real and what is abstract to compare what is observed with what is believed possibly, and seek alternatives for what should happen next. The ability to think through assumptions or beliefs is a powerful tool because it leads to planning ahead, forecasting the results which can offer more new options.

Transformative Learning

Transformative learning means the process that leads to understanding the meaning embedded in the original experience. This can be done through interpretation, to explain and to give meaning to the experience that occurs. (O'Sullivan, 2003) Mezirow (2000) has defined 10 stages of transformative learning as follows:

1. Facing the dilemma with distorted truths.
2. Steps to explore oneself.
3. Critical evaluation of the basics of social, cultural or psychological knowledge.
4. Acceptance of individual dissatisfaction and change process will be shared. Other people talk about ways to make similar changes.
5. Explore options to create new roles new relationship and new practices.
6. Planning for action.
7. Find knowledge and develop skills for use as specified in the plan. Do yourself a favor and find technical knowledge.
8. Preparation to lead to new role-building efforts.
9. Build competencies and self-confidence in new roles and relationships.
10. Integrate knowledge and experience with life by regulating the conditions of a person's worldview.

These 10 steps are conceptualized as a perspective transformation and scheme transformation. The change in the world is a transform of relationship from a new role assignment to a mission. The life-changing part is the idea, belief and values which are important parts of the worldview. The key to Mezirow's way of thinking is to ingest the thought and practice in the traditional structural relationship which is different from the social transformers creating social change by breaking down traditional structures, but build a fair relationship with the decompose which is the cause of injustice. While Mezirow's approach is intended to the meaning of the old structure, yet it is to build a new structural relationship. (Chareonwongsak, 2006)

In conclusion, strategic thinking is the way to build a successful and rationalized process of reflection of the information around. While learning to change is a new meaning in the existing experience to create something better on the basis of a fair relationship. Strategic thinking and learning for change is a coherent way to success.

Based on the literature review, the research framework can be drawn as Figure 1 below.

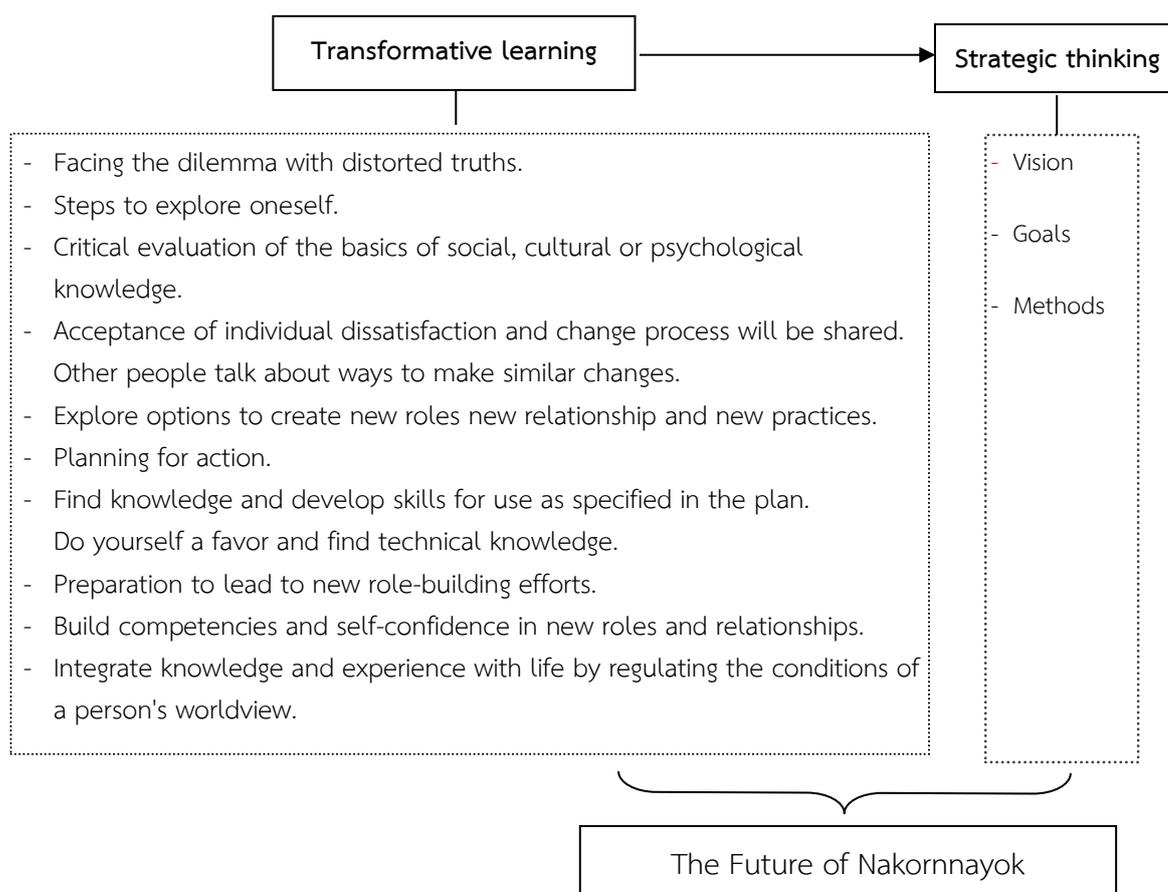


Figure 1: Conceptual Framework

Figure 1 showed transformative learning process starting with the exploration of problems indicating logical relationship brought people to face the dilemma with distorted truths. People, as a result, proceed to following process of transformative learning included exploring oneself, evaluating knowledge critically, accepting and sharing of change process, exploring options, planning for action, finding knowledge and developing necessary skills and so on. Finally people could be able to integrate knowledge and experience with life by regulating the conditions of a person's worldview. Transformative learning process has significant effect to the development of people's strategic thinking towards well-planned vision, goals, and methods, to foster the development of Nakornnayok's future.

Scope of Research

This research aimed at empowering the civil society organizations in Nakornnayok province to equip them with strategic thinking in order to create their development strategies which are more

meaningful to the future of their birth land. The research was carried out in the period of September, 2016 to March 2017.

Research Methodology

This qualitative research was carried out along with the learning process civil society organizations and academicians from universities in order to enhance the transformative learning in strategic development of Nakornnayok province. The research methodology is as follows:

1. Documentary analysis, the information was collected from the general database of Nakornnayok province which included problems and limitations in terms of the provincial development.
2. Discussion, the researchers presented the results of document analysis to the civil society organizations leading to the critique for results, weight and priority.
3. Discourse, the researchers had a brainstorm with the civil society organizations to set a direction for the provincial development. Conclusions from the exchange of knowledge led to the analysis and interpretation of meaning, using theories of transformative learning as a guide to explanation of each phenomenon.

Stakeholders

1. Leaders and representatives from Nakornnayok citizens council who came from different sectors e.g., Natural Resources Conservation Group, Community Enterprises and Mass Media, totaling 40 people.
2. Representatives of government organizations from Nakornnayok Tourism, Farmers' Council, Lecturers from universities, totaling 10 people.
3. Academicians from universities and Independent academicians, totaling 5 people.

Research Instrument

Research instrument used included documentary analysis notes, dialogue, reflection, questionnaires, brainstorm and discourse.

Data Analysis

Qualitative data from documentary analysis and discussions were analyzed by content analysis in order to interpret, categorize and explain the structural relationship of the data obtained, whereas the quantitative data from the questionnaire distributed to 40 leaders were analyzed with Frequency and Mean as well as given an order for the data presentation and

interpretation. For the discourse, it was set to enhance knowledge of the civil society organizations in strategic thinking and the direction of alternative development by analyzing the comparative advantages and disadvantages of mainstream development. For the sake of integrating the advantages between the paradigms, this would be a theoretical guide to directing content change appropriate for Nakornnayok province using the methodology to create strategic planning based on the strategic thinking.

Results

The findings are as follows:

1. Results from documentary analysis of general state of Nakornnayok province revealed major problems as the followings: 1) Farmers do not succeed in their career, 2) There is no standard in their agricultural production, 3) There is no participation in resources management, 4) Farmers do not succeed in selling their products, and 5) The physical and environmental development of the city was not well executed. On another hand, the strengths revealed the following: 1) There is a cultural diversity of different ethnic and religious groups, 2) There is biodiversity covered all the provincial areas, 3) Location is suitable for living places, 4) It is tourism-oriented city, and 5) It is the agriculture-based production which is rich in natural resources.

2. From the internal factors (Strengths and Weaknesses), it was found that the main strengths of Nakornnayok province according to the opinion of its community is that it was a production base in the agricultural sector with the integrity of natural resources (100.00%), biodiversity (90.00%), There are many local plants, especially rice. There are also cultural diversity of ethnic groups and religious groups (80.00%) which gave the province an art, religious and cultural abundance based on agriculture which reflected the way of life of its people. The province is a small town suitable for living (62.50%) and tourism-oriented city (57.50%), respectively as shown in table 1. Meanwhile, it was found that resource management was a critical issue as the people did not participate in the management of natural resources as they should (100.00%). The natural resources utilization was not as proficient as it could be even though the province was naturally abundant. In addition, people in the agriculture sector did not succeed in their career (97.50%), including farm production (92.50%) and small business entrepreneurs (87.50%). Their business operation was not up to standard including physical improvement and urban environment (85.00%) as shown in table 2.

Table 1 Weighting for the provincial strengths in the view of Nakornnayok people

Strengths	Chosen	Not Chosen	Total	Order
	Amount (%)	Amount (%)	Amount (%)	
1. It is the agriculture-based production which is rich in natural resources.	40 (100.0)	0 (0.0)	40 (100.0)	1
2. There is biodiversity covered all the provincial areas.	36 (90.0)	4 (10.0)	40 (100.0)	2
3. There is a cultural diversity of different ethnic and religious groups.	32 (80.0)	8 (20.0)	40 (100.0)	3
4. Location is suitable for living places.	25 (62.5)	15 (37.5)	40 (100.0)	4
5. It is tourism-oriented city.	23 (57.5)	17 (42.5)	40 (100.0)	5

Table 2 Weighting for the provincial weaknesses in the view of Nakornnayok people

Weaknesses	Chosen	Not Chosen	Total	Order
	Amount (%)	Amount (%)	Amount (%)	
1. There is no participation in resources management.	40 (100.0)	0 (0.0)	40 (100.0)	1
2. Farmers do not succeed in their career.	39 (97.5)	1 (2.5)	40 (100.0)	2
3. There is no standard in their agricultural production.	37 (92.5)	3 (7.5)	40 (100.0)	3
4. Farmers do not succeed in selling their products.	35 (87.5)	5 (12.5)	40 (100.0)	4
5. The physical and environmental development of the city was not well executed.	34 (85.0)	6 (15.0)	40 (100.0)	5

3. From the external factor (Opportunity and Threats) emerged from discussions, it was found that the opportunity of Nakornnayok is a tourist attraction easily accessible due to convenient transportation. Meanwhile, the obstacle is that visitors to Nakornnayok have a variety of levels which are difficult to control. The city is going to face with garbage and noise pollution from substandard tourists. The threat of Nakornnayok is the expansion of big cities, especially Bangkok. The farmers lost their lands due to unknowing and economic constraints, proliferation of industrial operators, including power plants, large scale waste-disposal plants, affecting the resource base and the environment of the community.

4. On the discourse, representatives from civil society organizations reflected less participation brought about some conflicts in the direction of city development. The

researchers explained the structural relationship which reflected causes of problems due to the direction of the mainstream development. It started with the change of production pathway to monoculture which was influenced by the concept of the Green Revolution in 1960 which appeared in the first National Economic Development Plan in 1961. Agricultural products were sent to industrial processing, and Thailand is moving towards a development that supports a large industry. Direction of mainstream development has been driven by government organizations continuously. In the midst of the strength of a large industrial business, agricultural sector became weaker despite the seventh development support of sustainable farming which promoted small and medium community businesses. However, the community businesses both small entrepreneurs and SMEs or OTOP enterprises were not as strong as they should be.

5. When having a dialogue, firstly, the researchers give transformative learning knowledge then discuss about the future of Nakornnayok based on strategic thinking with cooperation of civil society organizations and public organizations. Researchers then empowered civil society organizations to create new meaning for the provincial development by setting a vision for Nakornnayok to become a pleasant city to live, city of safety, city of generosity, city of trust, city of health, and city of learning. It is learning-based city where it is safe and pleasant place to live. People can live with harmony and trust each other. The goal of city building is to decentralize and strengthen its civil society organizations which has 4 strategies as follows:

5.1 To conserve natural environment and biodiversity by promoting alternative farming systems, reintroducing biological diversity, preserving biodiversity, setting up water management system through relevant stakeholders and environmentally-friendly waste disposal system.

5.2 To enhance the career and economy of the small and medium business community by creating value added and value creation for their agricultural products through historical and cultural narratives as well as community-based tourism promotion. To provide the people with space to generate income outside the agricultural sector is also recommended.

5.3 To improve people's lifestyle by linking learning in school systems with community learning centers to give youths the opportunity to experience their local experiences, including the design of the city, landscapes, buildings, places and buildings of the city to better support people's lives in the future.

5.4 To create a learning society, building a strong community and strong community organization network by promoting the learning theory and intellectual strength for the council of civil society organizations.

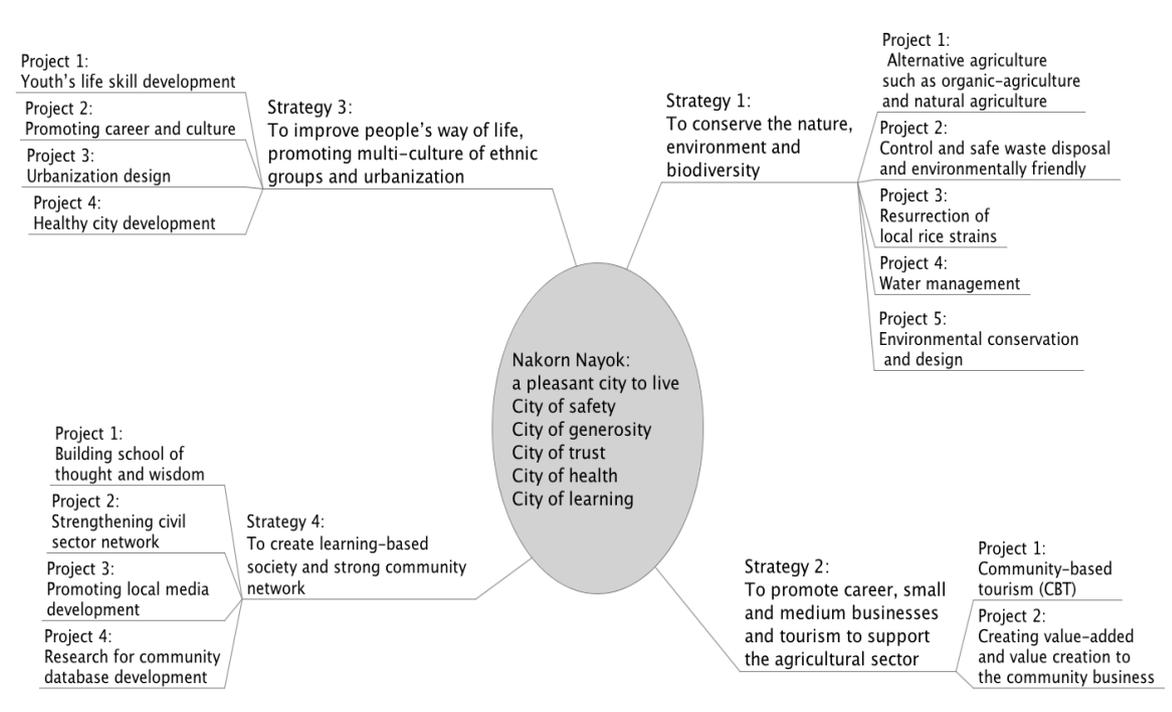


Figure 2 Strategies of Nakornnayok Province

Discussion

1. The study revealed less participation in natural resource management and city development caused the impact of urbanization and industrial expansion has led to a growing conflict as long as the civil society organizations is not involved in the management of the area as it should. The conflict in resource use is, in fact, rooted in different development directions. Although the development trend of the government is in the direction of more selective development, government officials are also familiar with the mainstream development. As a result, the practice in the area is also a phenomenon of conflict in a variety of situations where the social inequality exists, regardless it is in a form of economic (Barclay and Porter K. 2005), political and governance inequality

2. Understanding the concept of national development directly affects the actions of government officials and the activities of the civil society organizations. It is important to understand the meaning of the real experience which is the original experience of both parties. This could lead to better understanding, giving the new meaning to their provincial development and defining roles and relationships of each individual involved. When the

governing structure is fair. (Mezirow, 2000) It would be useful in determining the desired direction for Nakornnayok Province under mutual consent and willingness. The issue towards civil sector participation could be solved and rooted for effective city development.

3. When there is a social conceptual conflict, confrontation of diversified thoughts with violence in the previous time was not accepted. While government organizations made an effort to solve conflicts by trainings (Tnews, 2017), nevertheless, results were not preferable successful. Furthermore, the representatives reflected that ‘guidelines for city development’ in the past also were not accepted by government organizations. Hence, it requires an understanding-based solution and strategic thinking which is meant to create a change of city development under clear content based on mutual understanding. This leads to the success of mutual cooperation. (Chareanwongsak, 2006)

Suggestions

1. The civil society organizations should adjust their tactics to build cooperation with government officials by learning to understand the root of the problem because both public and private sectors are affected by the influence of the mainstream development. The struggle for justice is based on cooperation rather than overcoming each other.

2. The theory of development and strategic thinking reinforces both the thinking and practice of the people. This will result in a new meaningful operation in the development of Nakornnayok that is cherished. The civil society organizations should cooperate with the local academicians or educational institutes to learn the truths that link theory and practice as it will further enhance the transition to strength.

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Associate Professor, Wandee Sutthinarakorn, Ph.D., holds her Doctor of Philosophy in Vocational Education, and currently is a lecturer, Department of Vocational Education, Faculty of Education, Kasetsart University.



Dr. Suthee Rattanamongkolgul holds his Doctor of Philosophy, and currently is a lecturer in Epidemiology, Department of Preventive and Social Medicine, Faculty of Medicine, Srinakharinwirot University.