

The Role Local Wisdom in Promoting Lifelong Learning in Thailand

Prof. Dr.Sumalee Sungsri

Thailand has long history.

The country has never been colonized.

The country has invaluable traditions and culture.

Local wisdom is available in every local area of Thailand.

Knowledge and experience related to day to day living, occupations and culture had been passed on from generations to generations.

These knowledge and experiences are still useful for people at present because they deeply relate to their way of live.

If these local wisdom are well looked after and promoted, they can be very good sources of knowledge, information and guidelines for quality of life development of people.

The research

- In order to receive an appropriate guideline for encouraging local wisdom to take part in promoting lifelong education of the country, the researcher has conducted this study.

Objectives of the study.

- 1) to study lifelong learning activities provided by local wisdom at present.
- 2) to study learning processes which existed at local wisdom learning centres.
- 3) to identify guidelines for encouraging local wisdom to participate in promoting lifelong learning for people in rural areas.

Scope of the study

1. Local wisdom in Thailand is categorized into 9 aspects

1) Agriculture

2) Industrial work and Handicraft

3) Herbal doctors

4) Management of natural resources and environment

- 5) Community's business and Fund raising
- 6) Art and Folk Drama
- 7) Local Language and Literature
- 8) Philosophy, religions and culture
- 9) Traditional Thai foods and sweets

2. The Office of National Education Commission (ONCE):-

- searched for local wisdom in each local area
- gave honour certificates to local wisdom and registered them
- set up a local wisdom learning centre in each area to let local wisdom transfer their knowledge and experiences to people.

Method of the study

Population and samples

1) Local wisdom

- in each of the 4 regions throughout the country, 4 provinces were selected.
- within 4 provinces in each region, 9 local wisdom in 9 aspects (1 for each aspect) were selected.
- total number of samples of local wisdom in 4 regions was 36

2). Teachers of local schools

- Teachers of the schools located in the areas near the local wisdom.
- 2 schools near 1 local wisdom centre were selected
- From 36 local wisdom centres, 72 schools
- 3 teachers from each school
- Total number of sample teachers was 216

3) Adult Educators of the Department of Non-formal Education at provincial and district centres in the areas of local wisdom.

(5 educators from each area)

36 areas of local wisdom X 5 = 180

4) Rural people who came to local wisdom learning centres/households

(10 people from each centre)

36 local wisdom centres X 10 = 360

people

5) Experts in local wisdom

30 people

Research Instruments

- 1) Interview forms for local wisdom
- 2) Interview forms for rural people
- 3) Questionnaires for formal school teachers
- 4) Questionnaires for NFE educators

Data collecting

Step I : documentary study

- Study of national policy and plans related to local wisdom
- ONEC reports on work of local wisdom in each rural area.

Step II : Field research

- For local wisdom, researchers team with the information from ONEC and the assistance of DNFE staff at provincial and district levels, went to 16 provinces in 4 regions to interview 36 local wisdom.

- For people in rural areas, the researchers interviewed them at the same period of visiting local wisdom in each local wisdom learning centre.
- For teachers of formal schools and adult educators of provincial and district NFE centres, the researchers gave them questionnaires.

Data Analysis

- Quantitative data were analysed by frequency, means and percentages
- Qualitative data were analysed by contents analysis

Main Findings

1. General information about local wisdom
 - local wisdom can be found in every province of the country.
 - They are both male and female.
 - Most of them were over 50 years.
 - Most of them gained knowledge and experience from their previous generations in the form of informal learning

- After that, they developed their knowledge and experiences by self-study and practice.
- Some of them work at their own households while some work at local learning centres.
- They allow learners and people to visit them at any time.
- They are willing to transfer their knowledge and experiences to people without any fees.

Examples of knowledge and experiences of local wisdom in each aspect

1) Agriculture :-

- Organic fertilizer
- herbs for protecting insects
- soil doctors
- growing vegetable without chemical fertilizer
- producing better crops
- irrigation system
etc.

2) Industrial work and Handicraft :-

- silk weaving
- bamboo weaving
- wood carving
- leather carving
- metal carving
- etc.

3) Herbal doctors/medicines :-

- Herbal medicine
- Thai massage
- Herbal vegetable and trees
- Herbal balm, oils, lotion
- Herbal foods.
- Health and Hygiene
etc.

4) Management of natural resources and environment :-

- irrigation system
- eatable fences
- clear and clean water in villages canal
- garbage recycle.
- Forest reservation

etc.

5) Community's business and Fund raising

- setting up vocational groups
- Income generating groups
- marketing knowledge
- community co-operative shops
- Rice Bank
- Villages Bank
- etc.

6) Art and Folk Drama

- painting
- wood work
- flower decorating
- making different types of bouquets of flowers and banana leaves
- Sculpture
- Thai classical dancing
- Thai classical music
- Folk songs
- traditional shows eg. Mowlum, likae, Nung – taloong etc.

7) Local Language and literature

- local language of each region
- traditional poetry
- traditional proverbs
- local songs
- Dictionary of local languages
etc.

8) Philosophy, religion and culture

- believes
- religious ceremony in different occasions
- traditions and culture related to people way of life from birth to death.
etc.

9) Traditional Thai foods and desserts

- different types of curries
- different types of chili-pastes
- traditional foods for each ceremony
- different types of desserts
- fruits preservation
- vegetable preservation
- carving fruits and vegetable for decoration etc.

2. Lifelong learning activities provided by local wisdom.

Local wisdom in 9 aspects have promoted formal, non-formal and informal education as follows :-

2.1 Formal education

- assisting in developing local curriculum for primary and secondary schools eg. agriculture, sculpture, silk weaving, traditional foods, etc.

- giving lectures in related subjects
- being learning resources for students:-
 - to get information for writing reports
 - to have study visits
 - to practice some skills
 - to obtain direct experiences

2.2 For Non-formal education

- assisting in developing curriculum for adult learners eg.vocational subjects, quality of life promotion subjects.
- giving lectures
- being resource persons for several training programs

- Providing short and long-term trainings
- being examples of best practice in various vocational subjects eg. agriculture, art and craft, making natural fertilizer
- learners come for study visits to their centres
- learners come for short practice
- learners come for studying

2.3 For Informal education

Local wisdom promote learning among people both in their community and other communities in various aspects eg.

- being sources of knowledge and information
- organizing exhibitions
- demonstrating activities for visitors

- being resource person for radio programs and television programs.
- disseminating knowledge and experiences through printed media, CD, VCD, local newspapers, village news towers.

3. Learning process which is organized at local wisdom learning centres and/or their households.

- local wisdom do not have any text-books.
- they have no curriculum
- knowledge and experiences are in their heads, hearts and hands.
- they teach informally like telling and demonstrating

- learners usually bring their own materials.
- Learning can take place or stop at any time according to learners readiness.
- They evaluate the progress of the learners at every stage.

- Process of transferring knowledge and experiences includes :-
 - demonstration
 - lecturing or telling
 - letting learners study from examples

- group practice
- one by one practice
- follow-up by instructors
- re-practice
- being assistant of instructors
- evaluating results of work

4. Guidelines for encouraging local wisdom to participate in promoting lifelong learning.

4.1 Guidelines in general

1) All educational institutions should realise the value of local wisdom as a valuable treasure of the country. Their knowledge and experience should be preserved and transferred to the next generations.

- 2) Ministry of Education, Ministry of Culture and Educational Institutions should set up policies on encouraging people to obtain knowledge and experiences from local wisdom.
- 3) the government should make public relations through different kinds of media to let people in every area know and realise the importance of local wisdom.

4.2 Guidelines for encouraging Local wisdom to promote Formal education

1) Ministry of Education should introduce curriculum and instruction about Thai local wisdom at every education level.

2) Ministry of Education should produce text-books and supplementary readings about local wisdom.

- 3) Every school should have some subjects and instruction about local wisdom.
- 4) Teachers should encourage students to realise the importance and the value of local wisdom.
- 5) Teachers should provide their students with supplementary activities about gathering knowledge and experiences from local wisdom.

6) Administrators should invite local wisdom to help in teaching and learning process eg to develop curriculum, to give lectures, to produce learning media, to be learning resources.

7) Teachers should assign students to do reports about local wisdom.

4.3 Guidelines for encouraging Local wisdom to promote Non-formal education.

- 1) NFE centers should make public relations to let learners know and understand local wisdom
- 2) NFE centres should develop curriculum on local wisdom
- 3) NFE centers should provide teaching and learning activities related to local wisdom.

- 4) NFE centres should organize short and long-term trainings by inviting local wisdom as resource persons.
- 5) NFE centres should organize exhibitions on local wisdom work.
- 6) NFE centers should encourage local wisdom to transfer their knowledge.
- 7) NFE centres should provide support to local wisdom for transferring their knowledge.
- 8) NFE centres should produce books or booklets which include knowledge and experience of local wisdom.

4.4 Guidelines for encouraging Local wisdom to promote Informal education

- 1) Local organizations should survey and compose the list of local wisdom that are available in their areas
- 2) Local organizations should support for setting up local wisdom learning centre in each local area.

- 3) Local organizations should make public relations to people about knowledge, experiences and work of local wisdom.
- 4) Local organizations should produce books or booklets which present knowledge in each field of local wisdom.
- 5) Local organizations and related agencies should provide support to let local wisdom to disseminate their knowledge and experiences through different kinds of media.

- 6) Local organizations should support local wisdom with materials and instruments to use for transferring knowledge to people.
- 7) Local organizations should support local wisdom in making their houses or local learning centers to be places for study, visit and practices.