

Forms of Promotion and Dissemination of Traditional Local Wisdom: Creating Occupations among the Elderly in Noanmueng Community, Muang Sub-District, Baan Doong District, Udonthani Province

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Abstract—This research sought to discover the forms of promotion and dissemination of traditional local wisdom that are used to create occupations among the elderly at Noanmueng Community, Muang Sub-District, Baan Doong District, Udonthani Province. The criteria used to select the research sample group were: having a role involved in the promotion and dissemination of traditional local wisdom to create occupations among the elderly; being an experienced person who the residents of Noanmueng Community find trustworthy; and having lived in Noanmueng Community for a long time so as to be able to see the development and change that occurs. A total of 16 persons were thus selected. Data was gathered through a qualitative study, using semi-structured in-depth interviews. The collected data was then summarized and discussed according to the research objectives. Finally, the data was presented in narrative format. Results found that the identifying traditional local wisdom of the community (which grew from the residents' experience and beneficial usage in daily life, passed down from generation to generation) was the weaving of cloth and basketry. As for the manner of promotion and dissemination of traditional local wisdom, these skills were passed down through teaching by example to family members, relatives and others in the community. This was largely the initiative of the elders or elderly members of the community. In order for the promotion and dissemination of traditional local wisdom to create occupations among the elderly, the traditional local wisdom should be supported in every way through participation of the community members. For example, establish a museum of traditional local wisdom for the collection of traditional local wisdom in various fields, both from the past and present innovations. This would be a source of pride for the community, simultaneously helping traditional local wisdom to become widely known and to create income for the community's elderly. Additional ways include organizing exhibitions of products made by traditional local wisdom, finding both domestic and international markets, as well as building both domestic and international networks aiming to find opportunities to market products made by traditional local wisdom.

Keywords—Traditional local wisdom, Occupation, Elderly.

I. INTRODUCTION

TRADITIONAL local wisdom is the knowledge regarding the production of handicrafts and commodities, as well as medicines and remedies, gained through experience and passed down from generation to generation in a locality. It

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encompasses culture, folk ways and customs, determining the characteristics of a society. It is intentional, important, meaningful and valuable to living together happily [1]. Overall, traditional local wisdom is a cultural heritage that has been collected over a long period of time. If neglected, unaccepted and damaged, it will disappear and no longer be a source of pride for the locals. Therefore, traditional local wisdom is important because it is considered a foundation for occupations and a root of development, which begins from development for self-reliance, development for interdependence, and development that results from refining bodies of knowledge based on traditional local wisdom. Consequently, traditional local wisdom is not merely valuable for the locality, but it is conducive to planning for long-term sustainable national development. Furthermore, traditional local wisdom reflects a particular community's folk ways, as one community's accepted folk ways practices may be different than another's. Differences often arise from factors such as nationality, religion, beliefs, traditional practices and most important of all, culture. However, local development based on traditional local wisdom necessitates the participation of community members in planning, operational application and follow-up on community development [2]. Only then will there be true participation in the continuation and preservation of traditional local wisdom. It may also bring about the creation of occupations in the future, particularly among the elderly of the community. At the present, the elderly tend to have better education and occupational potential than previous generations. Therefore, if given economic knowledge regarding opportunities for building a career and income, aided to develop the already existing procedural mechanisms, and provided with occupational aid, the elderly may not have to face poverty. Developing the potential of the elderly, promotion of occupations as channels for supplementary income as appropriate to the potential, can improve the quality and well-being of the elderly's lives. Furthermore, the elderly's labour displays their capability of living valuable and productive lives; not placing a burden on offspring and society. Promoting occupations among the elderly through traditional local wisdom is one avenue to create occupations for increased supplementary income for the elderly. It is also a way to promote traditional local wisdom by disseminating the valuable knowledge and wisdom from past

generations so that traditional local wisdom may continue to be passed on down through the generations. Promoting occupations among the elderly based on traditional local wisdom is also an opportunity to develop traditional local wisdom along with creating income for the elderly in the community. The elderly can be considered the sages and a source of knowledge and wisdom to be passed down throughout generations. Therefore, this research gives importance to the promotion of occupations among the elderly through traditional local wisdom. This is an opportunity to develop Thai traditional local wisdom and preservation of the same so that it may continue on in Thailand forever.

II. OBJECTIVE OF THE STUDY

This research aimed to study traditional local wisdom in order to find the forms of promotion and dissemination of traditional local wisdom in Noanmueng Community, Muang Sub-District, Baan Doong District, Udonthani Province; in particular, traditional local wisdom that is the main source used to create occupations among the elderly.

III. RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

This study was conducted as qualitative research to find accurate information regarding forms of promotion and dissemination of traditional local wisdom that is used to create occupations among the elderly at Noanmueng Community, Muang Sub-District, Baan Doong District, Udonthani Province. In order to collect data to explain the phenomenon and the relationship of various contexts, the researcher conducted in-depth interviews with a semi-structured interview format, through non-participant observation. The criteria used to select the research group were: must have an active role involved in the promotion and dissemination of traditional local wisdom; must be experienced; must be trusted by the residents of Noanmueng Community; and must have lived in Noanmueng Community for a long time so as to be able to see the development and change that occurs. A total of 16 persons were selected according to these criteria.

IV. RESULTS OF THE STUDY

Traditional local wisdom that is peculiar to Noanmueng Community – knowledge gained through experience, used and passed down from generation to generation from ancestors – is knowledge of cloth-weaving and basketry methods. Those who were knowledgeable passed down such skills through teaching by example to family members, relatives and others in the community. However, at present it was found that the skill of cloth-weaving has faded from the community because of a lack of anyone to pass the knowledge on. Only remnants are left, such as bits and pieces of materials and implements discarded in a corner of the house.

In the past, cloth was woven with the intention of being used for household purposes; for garments or blankets, or other uses. At the present time, society has changed, and only a small group of people know how to use hand-woven cloth.

Most community members wear sarongs to participate in merit-making or Buddhist ceremonies at the temple, to weddings or to other formal events, and for convenience and comfort, wear trousers instead of sarongs. Currently, it can be observed that the younger generation of girls in the community rarely wears sarongs, owing to the change in clothing culture. Those of the new generation do not know how to wear sarongs, and most people have turned to machine-woven cloth [3].



Fig. 1 Method of weaving cloth



Fig. 2 The old methods of cloth-weaving from the older generations

The knowledge and method of weaving cloth as practiced in times past was disseminated on a person-to-person basis, as well as through teaching by example to one's children and grandchildren, who must pay attention and practice diligently in order to gain skills and expertise to ultimately be able to weave cloth on their own. Formerly, the objective of weaving cloth was for personal apparel; not to sell for profit. This differs from the present, in which machines and modern techniques have made weaving simple and non-time-consuming, as well as producing many beautiful patterns. Consequently, people in the modern times are not very interested in learning the old methods of cloth-weaving from the older generations which have existed from antiquity. For this reason, traditional local wisdom about cloth-weaving has

faded away from the community for lack of anyone to pass the knowledge on [4].

As for traditional local wisdom about basketry, some groups in the community still hold on to the knowledge to earn supplementary income after finishing agricultural work in fields or orchards. These people weave mats and rice baskets to sell in various markets, both within and outside the community. Some people also make these items for household use; this group of people is largely middle-aged upwards. The younger generation largely has no knowledge or interest in basketry, and instead turns to ready-made products from factories. This results in a lack of dissemination of traditional local wisdom, which is an identifying characteristic of the community [5].

Those who cling to traditional local wisdom about basketry as an occupation for supplementary income say that traditional local wisdom about basketry is a body of knowledge that has been passed down from their grandparents and learned from their parents, used for the benefit of the household, such as rice baskets, mats and baskets. The raw materials used include lai, kok, and pue (local plants), which can be cultivated or found naturally in the area. Therefore, the initial investment capital is not very high. Currently, rice baskets and mats are made and sent to market in Baan Doong District and other areas, including important tourism spots of the community, such as Kamchanoad. The revenue gained is considered supplementary income to cultivating fields and orchards [6].

Be that as it may, no agencies have shown an interest in lending tangible and sustainable support to sustain the promotion and preservation of traditional local wisdom. This can also be considered a factor in the problem of passing down traditional local wisdom. Most community members lack knowledge and understanding, and lack anyone to teach or raise awareness. The fact that products are manufactured only for a small market demand shows that there is still a lack of consciousness of the value of traditional local wisdom. Traditional local wisdom has lost its spirit and identity. If this continues, homemade products will not be able to compete in the market with factory-made products. Nevertheless, building the community economy based on traditional local wisdom is one avenue of increasing and promoting income for the local people, especially among the elderly. This will improve the standard of living for the elderly and enhance their sense of self-worth. Promoting occupations among the elderly based on traditional local wisdom is also an opportunity to develop traditional local wisdom along with creating income for the elderly in the community. Therefore, government agencies should lend guidance and aid to the local people in order to motivate action to promote and pass down traditional local wisdom to retain its identity with the objective of preservation and the promotion of occupations, particularly among the elderly. For example, support for occupational groups for the elderly to produce products from traditional local wisdom of the community, publicize traditional local wisdom far and wide, including supporting the establishment of community museums so that future generations may learn from them. This can also be considered a form of passing down and preserving

traditional local wisdom within the community [7].

V. DISCUSSION

The traditional local wisdom of Noanmueng Community is knowledge gained through experience, used for the benefit of their ways of life and passed down from generation to generation from ancestors. It was found that skills were passed down through teaching by example –largely by elders, who would perform as an example for family members, relatives and others in the community; for example, showing how to weave cloth and basketry for household use. However, as the customary ways of life changed according to the economic and social environment and modern values, the traditional local wisdom of Noanmueng Community slowly faded away for lack of anyone to pass down the knowledge. There are only a few groups of people who still preserve traditional local wisdom, particularly the elderly and community members who hold on to traditional local wisdom to use in occupations for supplementary income after finishing agricultural work in the fields and orchards. Previously no agency has stepped forward to support, promote and preserve traditional local wisdom in a concrete and sustainable manner. Most of the community members consequently continue to lack knowledge and understanding, and lack anyone to guide and raise awareness of the importance and value of traditional local wisdom, to the point that traditional local wisdom is neglected as an identifying characteristic of the locality. Traditional local wisdom is important to creating a community identity, creating occupations and work for the local people, especially the elderly. This will improve the standard of living for the elderly and enhance their sense of self-worth. Promoting occupations among the elderly based on traditional local wisdom is also an opportunity to develop traditional local wisdom along with creating income for the elderly in the community. This concurs with the research which found that traditional local wisdom is an important mechanism in ameliorating the problem of poverty in communities. Social processes must be used in solving the problem, namely, love, unity, generosity and kindness, and cultural activities in the community, which will help promote and raise motivation from community members. The elderly is an important group of people, because in order to have experience, know how to solve problems and understand the trends of community culture, one must have considerable age to have gained these characteristics [8]. Subsequently, government agencies, community leaders and community committees can be considered a driving force in building cooperation, and participation by members of the community, as the problem of dissemination is in part a result of a lack of tangible help from government agencies. This concurs with research on the forms of passing down traditional local wisdom that are conducive to developing fruit-bearing trees, which found that problems and obstacles in passing down traditional local wisdom arise in part from a lack of cooperation from relevant government agencies, a lack of agencies or institutions to serve as coordinator between those desiring to learn and the those with the wisdom to teach. Local organizations are not recognized

by the government sector, and lack tools for the dissemination of knowledge regarding the development of occupations and learning. The media lack proper understanding and knowledge of the matter and are not interested in publicizing traditional local wisdom [9]. This also concurs with research on community participation in development which found that community committees have an immensely important role in community development, because they are composed of locals, and gain great cooperation from the community members [10]. Therefore, relevant government agencies, community leaders, and communities committees can be considered as having greatly important roles in pushing for participation of community members in order to determine the forms of promotion and dissemination traditional local wisdom for creating long-term, sustainable occupations for the people and elderly groups in the community.

VI. RECOMMENDATIONS

Relevant government agencies, community leaders, and community committees should offer support by instilling local consciousness of the value and importance of traditional local wisdom, as well as supporting and disseminating traditional local wisdom in every way possible through the participation of the community members; for example, establishing museums of traditional local wisdom to compile various fields of traditional local wisdom from the past and the present, to serve as a center for learning and a source of pride for the local people.

Relevant government agencies, community leaders, and community committees should support and promote building occupations for the elderly from traditional local wisdom, which will create occupational opportunities and income for the elderly in the community; for example, organize a produce stage displaying products made by traditional local wisdom, finding markets both domestically and internationally, including building domestic and international networks to find opportunities to sell products made from traditional local wisdom.

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