

●● Performance Appraisal of the Community Sufficiency Economy Learning Center Project Fiscal Year 2012 ●●

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ABSTRACT

The objectives of this assessment are: 1) to assess the level of participants' knowledge and understanding of the philosophy and participants' applications of the philosophy to practices 2) to assess integrated evaluation results within the integration scope associated with related sectors which both are under and do not belong to the Ministry of Agriculture and Cooperatives 3) to study the patterns of activities and operations implemented by the Sufficiency Economy Community Learning Centers and 4) to study the problems, impacts and integration and suggest development policy to improve operation and integration of the project in the future. A sample was drawn from target groups in the project "Sufficiency Economy Community Learning Centers" in the fiscal year 2012, using multistage random sampling composed of 497 farmers and 537 students. Data were collected from the interview, questionnaires, and observation.

The result shows that 96.58% of the farmers who participated in the program passed the assessment criteria by achieving at least a 50% score. 75.65% of this group has been awarded with good comprehension level while 11.67% and 9.26% were awarded with good comprehension levels respectively, while 92.56% of the participating farmers have passed the criteria for the application of the philosophy into practices. The most applicable skill for the farmers is using more logic of decision-making in their work. Most farmers have improved themselves after joining the project which leads to reduce or pay off their debts, protect the community resources and the environment, increase agricultural produces, decrease unnecessary expenses, self reliance and increase their savings.

1. Introduction

The philosophy of sufficiency economy is the theory of living for every level of person ranging from an individual, family, and community to the government sectors. To promote the theory of sufficiency economy, we need to encourage people to have consciousness, morality, integrity, wisdom and live their life with intelligence, reason and sufficiency. (Chaipattana foundation, 2012)

Being aware of the importance of sufficiency economy philosophy, the Office of Permanent Secretary of the Ministry of Agriculture and Cooperatives has implemented the project “Sufficiency Economy Community Learning Centers” since 2005 until the present. The project provided the farmers and participants with opportunities to learn according to their needs, to analyze their capabilities and needs, to plan the training program and to do the practice in the provided activities and demonstrate which were to enable the participants to acquire hands-on knowledge and an understanding of implementing activities according to various aspects of the development plan. The plan aims to solve the problems of farmers and members in the community which will lead to development in individuals, community and

society according to the sufficiency economy theory. There has been a continuous project assessment. In the fiscal year 2012, the Sufficiency Economy Community Learning Centers Project was implemented with the objectives to instill sufficiency economy values and agricultural skills to participating students.

Evaluation research is the systematic acquisition and assessment of information to provide useful feedback about some objects. The making of judgement on the worth and effectiveness of project, processes and outcomes; about the relationships between these; and about the resource and planning. (Adelman and Alexander, 1982: 5 ; Stake, 1980; Stufflebeam, 2004 ; Worthen, Sanders and Fitzpatrick, 1997)

Consequently, in order to gain the feedback for improvement and information for decision-making, there should be an assessment on the project’s operation on the outcome of the project, integration with relevant sectors, achievements and problems as well as solutions leading to the improvement of the project’s operation and integration in the future.

2. Objectives

The objectives of this assessment are:

1. To assess the level of participants' knowledge and understanding in the philosophy and participants' applications of the philosophy of practices.

2. To assess integrated evaluation result within the integration scope associated with related sectors which both are under and do not belong to the Ministry of Agriculture or Cooperatives.

3. To study the patterns of activities and operations which were implemented by the Sufficiency Economy Community Learning Centers in order to suggest points of improvement to the centers.

4. To study the problems, comments, impacts and integration generated from farmers, communities and stakeholders regarding the project implementation and suggest development policy to improve operation and integration of the project for efficiency and effectiveness of the project in the future.

The results of this assessment will be used as the information for the executive management and project-related personnel's decision and development in order to bring about the work efficiency.

3. Scope of area and taret population

Areas and target groups in evaluating the project "Sufficiency Economy Community Learning Centers" in the fiscal year 2012 were divided by the objectives of evaluation areas of assessment as follows:

1. Evaluate the levels of knowledge and understanding of the project participants in fiscal year 2012 and apply the knowledge of "Sufficiency Economy" acquired from the project into practices as areas of study below;

1.1 Study and evaluate the farmers who participated in the main center of the project "Sufficiency Economy Community Learning Centers" in the fiscal year 2012, a number of sample size at least 400 cases were computed by Taro Yamane's formula and using multistage random sampling from the participating farmers by region including 1) Upper Northern region 2) Lower Northern region 3) Central region 4) Eastern region 5) Upper North-Eastern region 6) Lower North-Eastern region 7) Western region 8) Upper Southern region and 9) Lower Southern region (excluding 5 southern border provinces). Then the provinces were randomly selected and the learning centers were also chosen

by selecting the 50-60 participating farmers per region with a total of 497 farmers chosen for the study and evaluate their levels of knowledge/understanding and how they can put that knowledge into practice by quantitative assessment using questionnaire and qualitative assessment using interview and observation.

1.2 Study and evaluate the students who participated in the activities of the project “Sufficiency Economy Community Learning Centers” in the fiscal year 2012 by random sampling according to statistics of the students trained on campus learning centers using multistage random sampling by region including 1) Upper Northern region 2) Lower Northern region 3) Central region 4) Eastern region 5) Upper North-Eastern region 6) Lower North-Eastern region 7) Western region 8) Upper Southern region and 9) Lower Southern region (excluding 5 southern border provinces). Then the provinces and schools were randomly selected by selecting 50-67 participating students with a total of 537 students chosen for the study and evaluated their level of knowledge/understanding and how they can put that knowledge into practices by quantitative assessment using questionnaire and qualitative assessment using interview and observation.

2. Study and evaluate the integration in collaboration with the related departments according to the three indicated fields of implementing directions such as area, mission and participation by specifying the target group for studying and evaluation which consists of 1-3 executives or persons in departments affiliated and inaffiliated with the Ministry for Agricultural and Cooperatives per region (regions as categorized in item 1) by specific sampling to be studied and assessed with quantitative assessment using questionnaire and qualitative assessment using in-depth interview.

3. Study the format of implementing activities, managing Sufficiency Economy Community Learning Centers and make recommendations for developing the Learning Centers by selecting outstanding Sufficiency Economy Community Learning Centers which can be set as samples of good practices around 4-5 centers per region (North, Central, Northeast, and South) totaling to 19 centers. The study is conducted in qualitative mean using in-depth interview, observation and group seminar in order to create a model for operating Sufficiency Economy Community Learning Centers.

4. Study the problems/challenges and the suggestions from the relevant

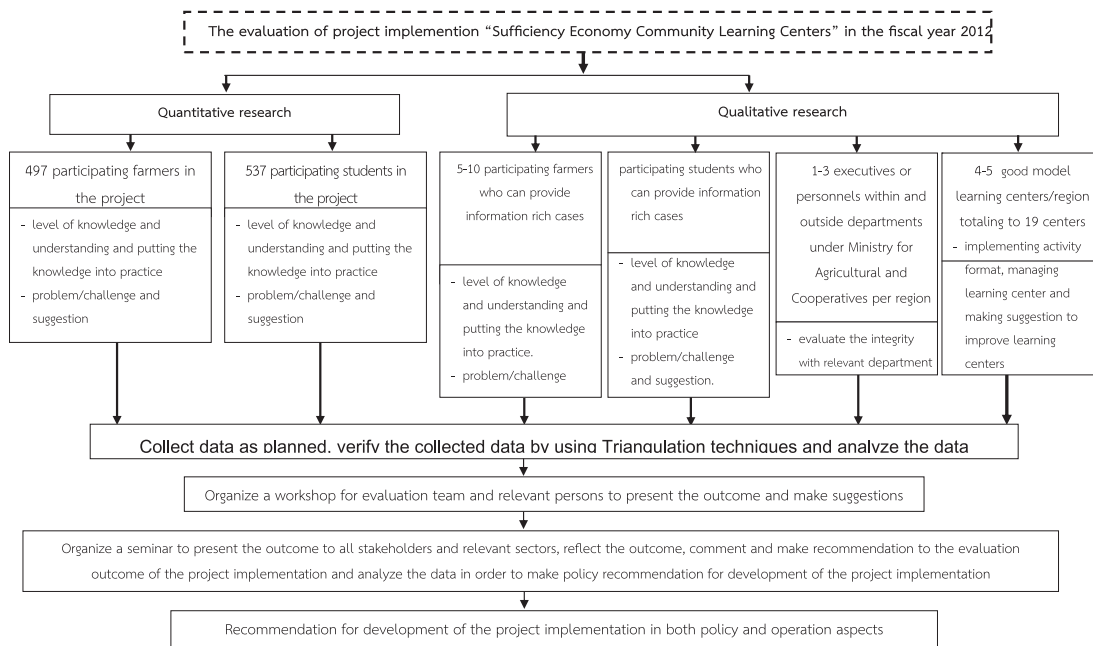
personnel in implementing the project throughout the impact of integration to the farmers, community and other aspects. Then the policy for recommendation to improve the operation of the project in order to increase the efficiency was prepared. The guideline will be set up and used in the future projects by conducting quantitative and qualitative research in implementing the project by collecting information from any relevant persons in terms of problems, challenges, suggestion, impact from the project and integration. Information will be analyzed and converted as policy recommendations in various aspects

by using sampling group in no. 1 and 2.

4. Methodology

The method of evaluating the project “Sufficiency Economy Community Learning Centers in the fiscal year 2012” was conducted by using the principle of Evaluation Research and Mixed Method which both quantitative and qualitative information were collected and used in the process of gathering information for value judgement and recommendation to the relevant personnels in order to develop the project implementation and decision-making as the following conceptual

Conceptual framework in conducting the project evaluation



framework.

5. Evaluation results

5.1 Basic information of farmers and students who provided the information

The majority of the farmers who answered the questionnaire was female with an average age of 50.81 and mostly graduated from primary school. They mostly earn a living from horticulture and rice farming. Most of them are in debt and have family savings. The main sources of knowledge in sufficiency economy are from trainer/facilitator, television and community leaders, respectively. Most farmers would like to participate in the project's activities because they want to learn the sufficiency economy principle. / The popular subject among participants is on how to put the philosophy into practices because the philosophy was introduced by His Majesty the King, whereas the production and usage of organic fertilizer can be applied in their daily lives that will bring about concrete results. Those farmers prefer hands-on activities due to easy understanding and playfulness when compared with traditional training programmes.

Major students who answered the questions are female between Grade 5 and Grade 6 with an average age of

11.71. The main sources of knowledge in sufficiency economy are from their teachers, training and television, respectively. Most students want to participate in the project's activities because they want to apply the philosophy of "sufficiency economy" into their lives. Their most impressive subjects are feeding animals and planting hydroponic vegetables because it is hands-on, entertaining and can be applied to their daily lives. The students prefer to take action in the activities as it is not tedious.

5.2 The results of the evaluation of project participants' knowledge and application of the philosophy into practices

● Table 1 An assessment sufficiency economics knowledge of the farmers who participated in the program

n=497

Level	n (%)	Evaluation
Very good (> 80 %)	46 (9.26)	Pass (96.58%)
Good (60-79 %)	376 (75.65)	
Satisfactory (50-59 %)	58 (11.67)	
Improve (< 50 %)	17 (3.42)	Not pass (3.42 %)

The result shows that 96.58% of the farmers who participated in the program passed the assessment criteria by achieving at least 50% score. Majority for this group at 75.65% has been awarded

with good level while 11.67% and 9.26% were awarded at satisfactory and very good levels respectively.

● Table 2 An assessment the application of the sufficiency economics philosophy into practices of the farmers who participated in the program

n=497

Level	n (%)	Evaluation
Very good (> 80 %)	85 (16.90)	Pass (96.58%)
Good (60-79 %)	320 (65.39)	
Satisfactory (50-59 %)	56 (11.27)	
Improve (< 50 %)	37 (7.55)	Not pass (7.55 %)

The result shows that 92.56% of the farmers have passed the criteria for the application of the philosophy into practices. The most applicable skill for the farmers is using more logic of decision-making in their work. Most farmers have improved themselves after joining the project which leads to reduce or pay off their debts, protect the community resources and environment, increase agricultural produces, decrease unnecessary expenses, self reliance and increase their savings.

● Table 3 An assessment sufficiency economics knowledge of the students who participated in the program

n=537

Level	n (%)	Evaluation
Very good (> 80 %)	83 (15.50)	Pass (87.70 %)
Good (60-79 %)	295 (54.90)	
Satisfactory (50-59 %)	93 (17.30)	
Improve (< 50 %)	66 (12.30)	Not pass (12.30 %)

The same assessment criteria of achieving at least 50% score is also applicable with participating students. The results show that 87.70% of the students passed the above criteria. Majority of this group at 54.90% has been awarded with good comprehension level while 17.30% and 15.50% were awarded at satisfactory and very good comprehension levels respectively.

● Table 4 An assessment the application of the sufficiency economics philosophy into practices of the students who participated in the program

n=537

Level	n (%)	Evaluation
Very good (> 80 %)	75 (14.00)	Pass (94.60 %)
Good (60-79 %)	369 (68.70)	
Satisfactory (50-59 %)	65 (11.90)	
Improve (< 50 %)	29 (5.40)	Not pass (5.40 %)

There are 94.60% of the students have passed the criteria for applying the

knowledge into practices. Most students have applied “how to plan their study” by organizing study schedule, and preparing study equipment. The second thing mostly applied by students is “complete their assignments effectively and on time. As a result, the students have more money savings and self-esteem as well as good health.

5.3 The results of the evaluation of integration in collaboration with the relevant departments both under and outside the Ministry for Agriculture and Cooperatives

The result has shown that the integration process is at a very good level in 17 main centers. Two centers are at a good level. The integration result in 18 centers is in very good level whereas 1 center is in good level. In summary, 17 main centers are in very good level and 2 centers are in good level. The most integrated department is the Department of Agricultural Extension which has shared area in every learning center. It mostly organizes joint training and demonstration. The second most organized activity is study visit and participating in evaluation, monitoring and research.

It is found that the integration results in completing tasks as planned, decreasing duplication of work and

reducing working hours. It also enables the learning exchange between the personnel of various departments and responds to the needs and decreases the duplicacy of the target group.

The impact from the project implementation and integration on farmers, community and related agencies is that when many departments organize the training and provide the knowledge to the farmers in the area at the same period of time; this is a good impact because it is considered time-saving approach for them as they don't have to skip their work too often to join the training. The impact on the community is that the communities are widely accepted by both government sector and private sector. The communities can be even considered to be the learning place for sufficiency economy. In addition, the project implementation can also help the personnel from various departments to make their relationship and it also helps to recover and protect the community environment as well.

The suggestion for integration is that the integration should be implemented at the policy level. Various related departments should collaborate with a written agreement and give the order to the operation personnel under

particular departments/ministries in order to facilitate the integration process and the activities can be organized in the community simultaneously.

5.4 Pattern of implementing activities, management of sufficiency economy learning centers and making suggestions to develop sufficiency economy learning centers

According to the study, we can summarize the pattern of 19 sufficiency economy learning centers as follows:

Location of the learning centers: most centers are located in a community's public area. Fewer centers are located in governmental offices such as the Offices of Subdistrict Administrative Organization and Provincial Offices of Agricultural Land Reform Office.

Type of building: Most learning centers have their own permanent building. A few centers do not have their own building but using other department's building or unused school building. Most learning centers have owned areas less than 5 Rai whereas fewer centers have 5-10 Rai.

The foundation of the learning centers results from external factors such as government policy and internal factors such as community needs. It is also

found that most leaders of the learning centers are also the leaders of the communities but some leaders are not community leaders such as elderly or local philosophers elected from the community members. Most learning centers have more than 50 members. All members are united together because of their family bond or living in the same community. Most activities have been conducted informally rather than formally. The activities are initiated by the learning centers in cooperation with external institutes. The activities will be planned, monitored and evaluated mostly in an informal way.

Providing the knowledge of sufficiency economy to the member by government sector will be in the form of training program or study visit. Only some institutes did the monitoring and evaluation of the training or study visit. If the program is provided by the learning centers themselves, it would be informal by learning from examples of successful case studies.

The factors that bring success to all learning centers are the strong coordination among the members, appropriate area of the centers, the strength of the leader, faith in the sufficiency economy principle and support from external institutes.

Recommendations for development of learning centers can be drawn as follows:

1. To sustain and strengthen, developing learning centers must start from the community. The community members should gather together and be strengthened mentally in order to understand how to live their lives according to the sufficiency economy philosophy.

2. Government institutes should study the existing capital of learning centers and should allow the centers to participate in planning and indicating directions of self development.

3. When the budget is allocated, it should be monitored in order to ensure the best value-to-money approach of the budget. Moreover, the budget should be analyzed carefully, otherwise the budget itself can weaken the community.

4. The skills of delivering and training should be developed for local wisdoms.

Problems

According to the study, it is found that the biggest problem of the farmers is they cannot join the activities with the learning centers during the harvest season. The second problem is the equipment

and materials for doing activities are not sufficient and the activities are not constant. The biggest problem of the students is that students also have to join many activities organized by their schools and the equipment and materials for doing activities are not sufficient.

The biggest problems at personnel level are that personnel have too many assignments under their responsibilities. The second biggest problem is they are not supported by their original affiliations and the other institutes' personnel do not promptly collaborate with them.

The biggest problem at organization/policy level is there is not enough fund to support the activities. The second biggest problem is lack of personnel and equipment to support the operation.

Suggesting solution

1. Suggestions from the participating farmers and students

- 1) Selection of participants If possible, only farmers and people with strong interest are selected to join the programme and the criteria should not require only those who never participated because the content of the training is different so everyone has the right to learn new things. The participants should be aware of the importance of joining the

project so they will be motivated. In addition, the responsible personnel in schools shall be briefed in order to understand the objectives and direction of the project.

2) Implementing activities aspect the activities should be conducted continuously and in a timely manner. The activities should be applicable to daily life and consist of talking, learning exchange, joint study visit, sufficiency economy practice, mentoring, questioning to stimulate the linkage between thinking and knowledge in order to create sustainable knowledge. There should be competition among sufficiency economy learning centers in provincial and national level. The activities should be developed from the project to community by publicizing the project's success in order to illustrate the project's success and create awareness among community members. We should monitor the activities frequently and listen to the suggestion. Main learning centers and school centers should make a joint work plan and exchange their lessons learnt.

3) Financial support There should be budget for organizing study visits to learn the successful agricultural activities. The training curriculum should be flexible and adjustable to respond to the needs

of the farmers and the community.

2. Suggestion of the officer from integration sector

1) Implementing activities aspect

1.1) The integrated collaboration should be adopted throughout the project not only during the training period. Moreover, we should make joint work plan to bring out the efficient operations and the integration plan should be made with a specific date.

1.2) There should be concrete activities about sufficiency economy for the poor and unemployed people in the community in order to be a production group and distribute the products to the sellers by providing unused land for this group of people.

1.3) The operation officers of the project should have the opportunity to undertake study visits or exchange the knowledge and experience from successful farmers.

1.4) The officers should monitor, give advice, provide assistance and clearly demonstrate how to operate the tasks and how to solve the problem 1.5) The objectives and goals should be publicized to the local operation officers in order to make clear understanding of the operations.

1.6) The project should be implemented on an ongoing basis.

1.7) The integrated operation should be focused more aggressively and the operation outcomes should be monitored at every stage of production period by making a work/activity plan in the same area in order to build up the true learning centers.

1.8) There should be more sectors to be involved in the project.

2) Financial support

2.1) Budget aspect

2.1.1) Sufficient funds should be provided according to the real situation.

2.1.2) There should be more supportive budget for the participating sectors in order to facilitate the operation.

2.2) Personnel aspect

2.2.1) Officers should sacrifice their time and dedicate themselves to the farmer members.

2.2.2) Officers from every sector have provided excellent collaboration but the participating officers have many duties in many projects so they do not have time to fully help operate the learning centers.

2.2.3) Officers must have the specific knowledge and skills to be delivered to the farmers.

2.2.4) The result of integration should be considered to receive rewards/merit.

2.3) Executive/policy aspect

2.3.1) There should be clear integration at ministerial level so the provincial sectors can easily cooperate and request for collaboration.

2.3.2) Command level, operation level and academics should understand the objectives and mechanism of the projects implementation, channel of communication and chain of command.

2.3.3) Executives or organizer leaders should give priority to the activities of the learning centers and integration.

2.3.4) There should be a clear and continuous work plan. The continuous operation and support should be implemented.

2.3.5) Organizing integration activities should be assigned to a main department to have the authority in decision-making.

2.3.6) Government policy should consider in bringing sufficiency economy in

the past to apply such as using dung as soil fertilizer. Empty and unused areas should be allocated for the poor and the unemployed people in order to motivate them to do hydroponic agriculture and make money. There should be a linkage between the importance of hydroponic agriculture, environmental conservation, life-concerned and leading Thailand to be the true kitchen of the world.

6. Suggestion from the study

According to the evaluation results, the evaluators make suggestions as follows:

6.1 Policy level

1) The policy of operating learning centers should be co-drawn at ministry level. The policy should be made in writing which specify the joint policy for the departments under the Ministry for Agriculture and Cooperatives and draw up the joint policy between the Ministry and other relevant counterparts such as the Ministry of Interior and the Ministry of Education.

Besides, policy formation should be considered as department's agenda instead of executive's agenda. Therefore, the operation of learning centers can be continued.

2) Policy formation should be assigned to only one main department in

order to have the authority in decision-making and cooperating with other counterparts and to avoid the work duplication.

3) The criteria of the participants should be reviewed especially for participants who formerly attended the project. There are many farmers claiming that they constantly learnt new and interesting experiences. These farmers should be able to join the project again in order to share their new experience with others.

4) There should be criteria to consider the merit for the responsible officers of the project.

5) There should be a policy formation in curriculum designed by participants. Curriculum design can be divided into 2 categories which are compulsory curriculum and adjustable curriculum according to the community appropriateness.

6) There should be policy formation to bring about the collaboration between main centers and school centers that participants can exchange the knowledge on the sufficiency economy.

7) We should form a policy to praise good main centers and school centers in order to encourage the operating personnel and to be a model for other

learning centers. The praise can be in the form of giving certificate or contest.

8) We should form policy, guidelines and measure in directing the project operation in both provincial and local level. This will lead to continuous monitoring of the project.

9) When the policy is delivered from the central level to provincial level, there should be a test to check the understanding of putting such policy into practice in the area.

6.2 Level of delivering policy to operating area in provincial level

1) In each province, there should be a work plan which is consistent to the policy received from the central government. The work plan should be made integratedly in the departments both under and outside the Ministry for Agricultural and Cooperatives.

2) Meeting should be organized to report to the relevant counterparts to make understanding of the principle, objectives and guidelines that will lead to achieve the target goal.

3) When selecting learning centers, we should consider their capability in operation such as proper area, strong leadership, and member's readiness for

learning.

4) The responsible departments at provincial level should play an important role in promoting the learning according to the resources of the learning centers by focusing on the analysis of the existing conditions, problems and learning needs.

5) Representatives of each provincial counterpart should publicize their own departments to the participants.

6.3. Operation level

1) Setting up learning centers which consist of main center and school center. Both centers should be located nearby and be able to create learning network to be a knowledge base of sufficiency economy. Provincial counterparts should play a role in stimulating, supporting and promoting when learning centers organize activities. In doing so, the operation of learning centers can be consistent to the social capital or environment, intellectual capital and human capital of each learning center. Besides, there should be a network in each learning center for the mutual exchange of the learning outcomes.

2) Developing learning process of target group of farmers and students should do the following:

2.1) Open mind to be ready for

learning and ready for accepting change.

2.2) Provide knowledge and understanding about sufficiency economy both on the theoretical and practical parts by focusing on passing on the knowledge directly from person and hands-on, letting target group learn and master it and seeing how to apply what they learn to their lives.

2.3) Develop systematic thinking in order for the target group to be able to link the concept of sufficiency economy to their identities. They can analyze problem and their own needs as well as set their goals in learning and self improvement.

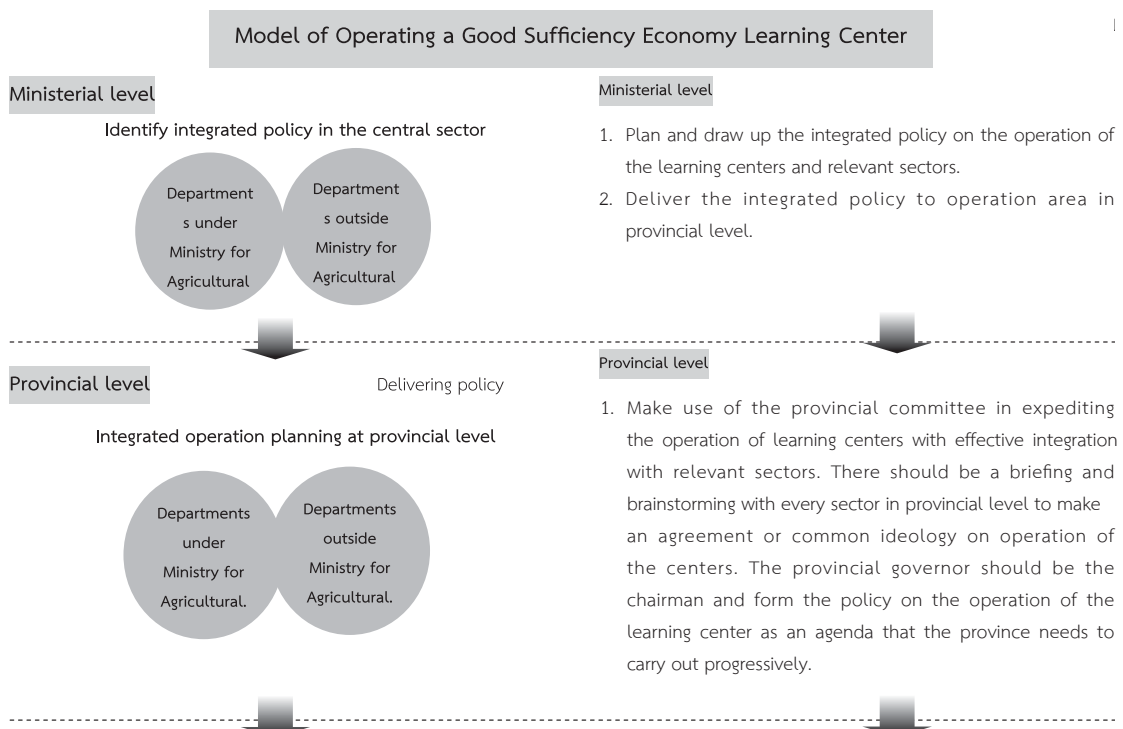
2.4) Learning how to make a work plan

2.5) Follow the work plan

2.6) Evaluate and reflect the result of the operation for continuous and sustainable development

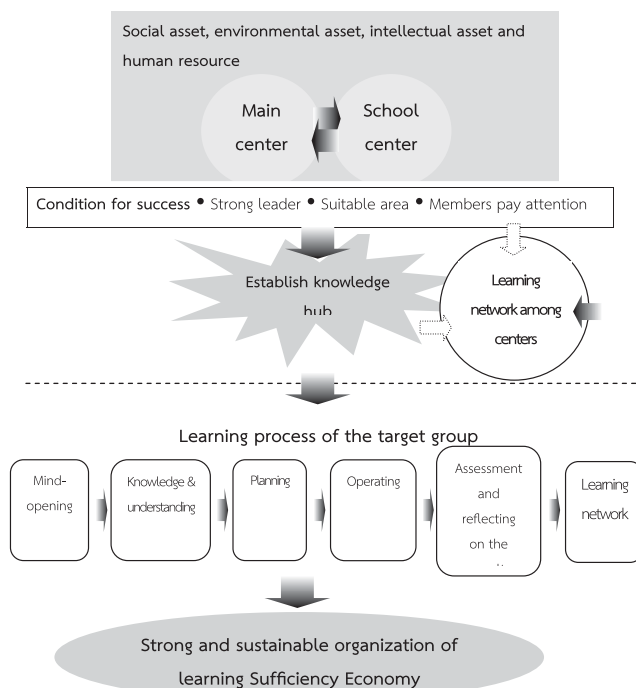
6.4 Build a network for learning exchange in both at the individual and organizational levels in order to be a strong and sustainable organization of learning based on the sufficiency economy.

From the above suggestions, the evaluators synchronize the model of operating learning centers, bring the format to be criticized by the stakeholders and modify the model to be a good model of operating learning centers as illustrated below.



2. Make use of the provincial committee in identifying operation plan or integrated project on sectors affiliated/ inaffiliated with Ministry for Agricultural and Cooperatives.
3. Put the integrated plan to practice at the operation area of the centers
4. Provincial sectors take on the duty of a trainer in encouraging and promoting the centers in order that the operation matches the social asset, environmental asset, intellectual asset and human resources in the area.

At learning center operation area level



At learning center operation area level

1. Main center and school center have connection and exchanging activities.
2. Analysing the community asset e.g. social asset, environmental asset, intellectual asset and human resources.
3. Accumulating knowledge on Sufficiency Economy for knowledge exchange
4. The knowledge hub may allow network between learning centers to make use of it.

1. Participants open up to knowledge and learning and desires for change
2. Establish a true understanding on the philosophy of Sufficiency Economy both in theory and practice
3. Analyze personal issues and needs and plan the solution together
4. Execute the learning process, emphasizing on hands-on learning experience. The target group should learn what mean to them and able to make use of what they learn.
5. Evaluation should be done for constant development
6. Establish learning exchange network both at individual and center level in order to become sustainable learning institution

7. Suggestions for future studies

The evaluator would like to propose the topics for future studies as below;

1. There should be a study on the sustainability of knowledge and understanding and the application of knowledge of daily life.

2. There should be an in-depth study on a good practice of the learning center to be a Master Model to develop learning center in the future.

3. There should be a study on how to transfer policies into action from the conditional aspect and problematic aspect on the operation of the center all from the policy level, communication and operation level.

4. There should be a study on the sustainable direction of learning center development.

5. There should be a study on learning management to be able to become a sustainable institute for sufficiency economy such as the development on the content of knowledge in sufficiency economy, the development in passing on local wisdom, curriculum development, knowledge management, media and learning resources, assessment and

follow-ups, research and learning environment management.

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