THE EXTENSION PROCESS OF SUFFICIENCY ECONOMY PHILOSOPHY FOR FARMERS IN PHITSANULOK PROVINCE, THAILAND

Sirin Simarak¹, Surapol Sreshthaputra²

¹Ph.D degree candidate, Department of Agricultural Economics and Agricultural Extension, Faculty of Agriculture, Chiang Mai University, Chiang Mai 50200, Thailand
²Faculty of Agriculture, Chiang Mai University, Chiang Mai 50200, Thailand
*Corresponding author: e-mail address <ssirin_m@yahoo.com>

ABSTRACT

The Sufficiency Economy Philosophy (SEP), based on HM King’s speech, was believed to be a guideline for solving Thailand’s problems since 1997. It was also used as a framework in developing the Ninth National Economic and Social Development Plan as well as the current plan. In agricultural sector, an application of SEP was known as “A New Agricultural Theory”. All governmental organizations involved in this sector were responsible in extending the SEP to farmers. The objective of this study was to explore the extension process for farmer in learning SEP. Especially emphasized on the extension methods for farmer to create the informal education which related to adults learning theory. The results of this study derived from the adults learning model theory and the extension methods to farmer, focus group discussions of 15 SEP extension organizations and the in-depth interview of 18 SEP model farmers. It was found that the farmers’ learning in Phitsanulok was adults learning by experience which was direct experience from work or diversity of farming activity that was self-learning and dynamically change. Therefore, the SEP learning extension for farmer in Phitsanulok must be the process that encouraged farmer to keep on self-learning by using a model farmer or a SEP learning central as a place in communicating knowledge and experience directly between farmer and model farmer, farmer and officer, and along with farmer continuously. Moreover, this study also found that the important supporting factors in extending the SEP learning to farmer were the necessarily in assigning the SEP as a policy of the country continually and also the SEP extension organization must clearly understood the philosophy.

KEYWORDS: Sufficiency Economy Philosophy, Agricultural Extension, Learning, Farmers.

1. INTRODUCTION

For the past decade, His Majesty King Bhumibol had given guideline to the Thai people to overcome the economics problems as so-called ’Sufficiency Economy Philosophy’ (SEP). It was first included in the Ninth National Economic and Social Development Plan (2002-2006) as a guideline principle for national development. HM the King’s SEP was one of many choices that could be used as a guidance for developing the country. The sufficiency economy was a philosophy that encouraged people from every walk of life to follow the middle path leading to the balance of their life such as food sufficiency without indebtedness. The Office of the National Economic and Social Development Board of Thailand had added the SEP in the Tenth National Economic and Social Development Plan (2007-2011) with the aim to overcome the economics problems faced by all sectors in the country. As a result, the
The agricultural sector had put this policy into practice. The SEP was applied extensively in agriculture sector called “A New Theory of Agriculture”

Punpienrat (2006) stated that most of Thai farmers lived in poverty and, in turn, had an unpleasant life. However, the SEP was believed to be the farmers’ way of life enabling the farmers to eradicate poverty and hence disseminated this Philosophy to farmers, but they could not understand clearly the philosophy. This led them unable to implement the philosophy to apply in their daily lives. It was clear that the farmers could not follow the government policy with regard to the SEP during the Ninth Plan because they could not adopt it properly. According to a recent survey on the public understanding of SEP, it was found that there were roughly two groups of people: the first group comprehensively understand and able to apply SEP in their daily lives and those who did not understand this philosophy as they received inaccurate information (University, R. S., 2004). Moreover, on 4 December 1998, His Majesty King Bhumibol said to his people in his birthday ceremony at Sala Dusidalai Suan Jitlada Dusit Palace about the understanding of SEP as follows:

“…The word “sufficiency economy” does not exist in the text book, there are other words but not this word. My last year speech said that the word Sufficiency Economy is used because there are no other words and also said that the sufficient economy just has to be implemented only in a half or only in a quarter of the principle, It is not necessary to implement all and I think this is understandable to all. In last months, there is someone who has applied this SEP for a long time said that this SEP is very good and understands that one quarter means one in four part of the country. The one quarter does not mean area of the country but it means one quarter of the practice. This has to be clear because even Ph.D holders may not understand clearly. After reading again is clear that the SEP does not need to implement all the principle, only one half or one quarter is enough. In addition, it is not possible to implement all the SEP, therefore to implement one quarter is enough and possible to implement. This is what I would like to explain last year…” (Puntasane, 2006)

“…คำว่าเศรษฐกิจพอเพียงไม่มีในสมุดคำศัพท์หรือหนังสือเศรษฐกิจพอเพียง มีอย่างเดียวแต่ไม่ใช่คำนี้ ที่มาเดิมคือ เศรษฐกิจพอเพียง เพราะทำครึ่งไปได้และใช้คุณภาพนั้น เศรษฐกิจพอเพียงถ้าใช้ปฏิบัติจริงคือได้ ไม่ไหวทั้งหมดหรือถ้าเราสนใจส่วน ที่เกิด ไม่ได้ไปเพียงบางส่วนได้จะตายไปหมด แต่ไม่ได้กลับมาเพียงบางส่วน ได้ปฏิบัติเกี่ยวกับเศรษฐกิจพอเพียง ขาดความเข้าใจว่าปฏิบัติเกี่ยวกับเศรษฐกิจพอเพียงส่วนที่เกิดก็ต้องมีความเข้าใจว่าปฏิบัติได้ครึ่งเดียวคือ.nowadays, this Philosophy has been applied extensively in agriculture sector, especially when applying to Agriculture. There was an application example in agriculture called “A New Theory of Agriculture”, but this theory did not mean that every farmer must apply the SEP as a guideline of daily lives. The degree of sufficiency of each people was not the same. Farmers should apply the SEP for their suitability by using in 3 components and 2 underlying conditions to be suitable for each person.

Phitsanulok was an interesting province in studying learning model of farmer in lower northern Thailand, because it was the center of lower northern parts of Thailand since the fifth Economic and Social Development Plan. According to seventh Economic and Social Plan, it was known as “Indo China intersection” since it was the center of transportation among Indochina region (Chareonmuang, 2004) Even though Phitsanulok was Indo China intersection but most of the population were farmers (Chareonmuang, 2004). The Phitsanulok geography was a flat area and there were two important rivers called Nan River (Big Kwar) and Yom River (Small Kwar). About 60.1% of the area was agriculture land that used for growing rice, cassava, sugar cane and soybean (Department of Environmental Quality

Therefore, it was noticed that HM’s had put emphasized that it was not possible to implement all the SEP especially when applying to Agriculture. There was an application example in agriculture called “A New Theory of Agriculture”, but this theory did not mean that every farmer must apply the SEP as a guideline of daily lives. The degree of sufficiency of each people was not the same. Farmers should apply the SEP for their suitability by using in 3 components and 2 underlying conditions to be suitable for each person.

The most important sustainable development method for the farmers was to develop a learning process for solving problems which was supported by the public sector. In this research, it was aimed to investigate how to transmit the understanding of SEP which was believed as a guideline to solve the livelihood problem of the farmers and how to convert it into a good practice and reach a good quality of life. Therefore, the investigate of SEP extension process for farmer in Phitsanulok lead to appropriate selection of the SEP extension methods for farmer.

2. MATERIALS AND METHODS

The objective of this research was to study the SEP extension process of farmers which emphasized on the extension methods for farmer to create informal learning that was relevant to the adults learning theory. The research methods were as follows:

2.1. Research Instrument

The question was used as the tools in investigating the SEP extension process for farmers in Phitsanulok which consisted of the content of SEP that was applied in agriculture, the SEP extension method for farmer of the organization and the supporting factors for farmer in learning SEP.

2.2. Collecting Data

The analysis and synthesis methods of the theory study consisted of the study of adults learning theory and the agricultural extension process from article, journal and text book to determine the framework of in-depth interview of 18 farmers who were the representative in applying SEP from 9 districts and group discussion with the 15 SEP extension workers from supporting organization.

2.3. Research Validity

The triangulation validity was used to validate the data by examining the data in the same issue from the theory study, farmer's interview and the discussion with the extension officer.

2.4. Data analysis

The content analysis was used to analyze the data by summarizing the SEP extension process for farmer in Phitsanulok in the aspect of the extension of farmer's learning and the extension method for farmer. Then, the coordination of the finding and the theory were interpreted by determining which research comments were conform and different from the finding and would be describe in presentation.

3. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

3.1 Background of SEP in Agricultural

For the past ten years, His Majesty the King’s sufficiency economy philosophy had been intensively promoted in Thailand. The sufficiency economy was a philosophy that encouraged people from every level to live their life following the middle path. Thus, sufficiency economy philosophy was one of choices that could be used as guidance for developing the country. In
addition, Sathirathai and Piboonsravut (2004) mentioned that the concept of His Majesty the King were emphasized “the way for recovery that would lead to a more resilient, balance and sustainable development, and ability to meet the challenge arising from globalization and other change”

According to Board (1999) a definition of sufficiency economy philosophy from His King Majesty was as follow:

“Sufficiency Economy is a philosophy that stresses the middle path as an overriding principle for appropriate conduct by the populace at all levels. This applies to conduct starting from the level of the families, communities, as well as the level of nation in development and administration so as to modernize in line with the forces of globalization. “Sufficiency” means moderation, reasonableness, and the need of self-immunity mechanism for sufficient protection from impact arising from internal and external changes. To achieve this, an application of knowledge with due consideration and prudence is essential. In particular, great care is needed in the utilization of theories and methodologies for planning and implementation in every step. At the same time, it is essential to strengthen the moral fibre of the nation, so that everyone, particularly public officials, academia, businessmen at all levels, adhere first and foremost to the principle of honesty and integrity. In addition, a way of life based on patience, perseverance, diligence, wisdom and prudence is indispensable to create balance and be able to cope appropriately with critical challenges arising from extensive and rapid socioeconomic, environmental, and cultural changes in the world.” (Unofficial transition. A working definition compiled from remarks made by His Majesty and King on various occasions and approved by His Majesty and sent by His Majesty’s Principle Private Secretary to the NESDB on November 29, 1999)

From the stated meaning of SEP, Extension (2000: online) also stated that the principle and concept of SEP were the development based on the basis of middle way and precaution by considering the moderation, reasonableness, self - immunity including by using knowledge, deliberation and moral in combination with the planning, decision making and execution. Board (2003: online) explained the working definition of sufficiency into 3 characteristics as follows:

1. Moderation meant appropriately which was not too much and not too less in the dimension of action such as the production and consumption in moderate level that brought the balanced and prompt against the change.
2. Reasonableness meant the decision about the level of moderation that should be reasonable by carefully considering the cause factor and the relevant data along with the expected results which could occur from those actions.
3. Self - immunity meant the prompt preparation for the consequence and change in any aspect which would be occurred by considering the possibility of any situation that could be occurred in the sooner or later future.

The Conditions of Sufficiency Action
1. A set of knowledge that brought about to implement the economic activity in moderate level which was needed
   a. Knowledge was the storage of all relevant knowledge included the content of any relevant subjects to be a fundamental for implementation in any opportunity and time frame.
   b. Deliberation was the capability in connectivity of acquired knowledge and theory in associate with planning before applying in every implemented step.
   c. Precaution was the awareness in utilization of implemented plan from any principle into application because in fact, the situation always changed. Therefore, the application of knowledge and deliberation need to be employed carefully and keep up with the changing situation.
2. Ethics Qualification which had to be strengthen includes
   a. Mental /wisdom by emphasized on moral knowledge that was aware of moral, faithful and suitable knowledge.
b. Behavior or way of lives by emphasis on patience, diligence,
intelligence and deliberation.

Therefore, in order to be balanced and prompt against rapid and widely changes in Social
and economic, His Majesty suggested the implemented guideline on SEP which was called “A
New Theory Agriculture” for the farmers to be self - supporting, live without difficulty,
sufficiently living and be modest according to one's economic capacity, abstemious, behave
appropriately and self - supporting. The farm administration extension group, agricultural
business extension units, Extension (2000) conducted a first level of new theory agriculture
about urban agriculture production base into disseminate by having the production in the
characteristics of self - sufficient and diversity of activity in farmland, supportively activity,
utilization of family labor, reduction cost of production, increase earning and also integrate
farmland activity to create benefit. Formerly, farmer cultivated for consuming by employing
surrounding natural and crop diversity and mixture of plant including vegetable, fruit, tree,
herbal and living plants in agro forestry type. These plants were ecology relationship that need
differently and appropriate environment to grow such as sunlight, temperature, humidity and
soil. For example, small bush plants need not much light under big bush plants, a destruction
of insect disease occur to restrict the amount of some plant to be properly in the plant ecology
system and mixed or variety of plant have ability to inhibit the infection of disease and other
insects which brought the balance living capability.

The way of life in SEP for farmer level was the economy for agricultural emphasis on self-
sufficiency of farmer in applying knowledge for managing land especially water resource and
agricultural activity by adopting the first level of new theory which applied sufficiency
production base in farmland and mostly utilized natural resource in order to diversify the
agricultural activity in farmland to be supportively activity, increase earning activity, fully
utilized family labor, reduction cost of production and also integrate cropping, husbandry and
fishery in farmland to create maximum benefit.

The diversity in farmland was also important in agriculture according to SEP by
employing multi-farm activity in the same area such as
1. Rice was the main food for Thai people for consuming in family.
2. Pond was the water source in farmland and raise animals
3. Vegetable for household consuming, reducing daily expense
4. Herbal was food and folk medicine.
5. Tree and timber were firewood building and wickerwork.
6. Animal husbandry was protein source of food and increase income
7. Flower and ornamental plants were beauty, recreation and increase income
8. Fertilizer was soil nourishment for maintaining a balance of nature and
environment

Moreover, the diversity of activity in farmland was also supportively activity in some
aspects such as
1. Fishery in rice field which the byproduct of rice was the food of fish and the fish
eat the rice pest, beside the feces of fish was fertilizer for rice.
2. Vegetable cultivation and chicken feeding which chicken eat vegetable scraps
and chicken feces were fertilizer for vegetable.
3. The utilization of resources in farmland such as animal feces were manure, the
scraps of leaves and grass were fertilizer, the scrap of vegetable was fish food
and rice straw used in mushroom, manure, moisture soil and food for animal

Therefore the SEP application of his majesty for adopting as a guideline for implementing
agricultural activity of farmer could be done reasonably and supportively balance without
relying on irrelevant factor which resulted in self-immunity and self-sufficient. The earn living employing SEP could be done as follows:

1. Mixed and variety of agriculture was the beginning of SEP.
2. Vegetable cultivate for reducing the expense of food in family
3. Using manure and fertilizer with chemical fertilizer for reducing the expense and soil improvement
4. Growing mushroom in rice straw and scrap material in rice field
5. Growing fruit and tree in the backyard
6. Growing herbal for improving health and sanitation
7. Fishery in garden plot, rice field and pond for protein food and increase earning.
8. Feeding local area chicken and egg chicken around 10-15 for food in family by using paddy and rice bran from rice farm. Corn for animal feeding from agricultural plants and scrap vegetable from vegetable cultivation.
9. Biogas from feces of cow or pig for making fuel in household.
10. Extracted biochemical from vegetable scrap and herbal for using in farmland.

Moreover the SEP way of life was to earn a living on the available resources by using knowledge and capability in order to be sufficient in moderation characteristics that resulted in well-being of family. The surplus from living could be sold for earning and reserved for future. Therefore SEP was the way of living in moderate way base on the self-dependence as follows:

1. Mental aspect by being self-dependence, positive conscious, self and overall nation creative, generosity mind, compromise and consideration based on the common interest.
2. Social and community aspect by helping each other and creating vigorously social network.
3. Natural resource and environmental aspect by intelligence production management, acknowledgement value of natural resource and environment, and based on conservation and sustainable utilization.
4. Technology aspect by utilization of available and modern technology properly and conform to the need and environment, application of intelligence of locality and development of technology from self-learning.
5. Economy aspect by increase earning, expense reduction and reserve for capital.

Therefore, SEP in agricultural could be applied in daily life of farmers as appropriated because SEP was the principle in middle way lifestyle that carried out an activities in moderation, appropriation and reasonableness of actions. By using this philosophy, each farmer could applied variety of agricultural methods depend on the locating area and experience of farmer by emphasize on moderate living, production enough for consumption and then sharing or distributing suitability including building self-immunity in living by operate diversity of activity in agricultural for natural balanced and sustainability.

3.2 The SEP extension process for Farmer in Phitsanulok.

The study found that the SEP learning of farmer in Phitsanulok was the learning from self-reliance activities according to level 1 of New Agricultural Theory. These activities were the capability of knowledge management in land field and water resources in agriculture activities, mostly utilization of natural resources, variety agricultural activities in land field, supportive activities, extra earning activities, fully utilization of family workforce, production cost reduction, the mixed activities of plant, animal husbandry, and fishery in field to fully utilization of land, understanding the problem in family by using household accounting to reduce cost and reasonably manages the cost. This included the field management by reducing the reliance on the external factor and more on self-reliance by using available natural
resource in agricultural such as using organic fertilizer instead of chemical fertilizer and using wood vinegar instead of pesticide.

The stated activities helped the farmer in Phitsanulok to learn the content of SEP in the aspect of self-understanding and self-reliance. These learning were experience-focus learning that managed the experience adults learning of farmer to acceptance and changed behavior. The learning of farmer needed practical learning to gain experience and created new knowledge that conformed to the existing knowledge. This was the process of self-learning which farmer who was the learner was dynamics.

The SEP learning of farmer was driven by the government, private organization, the basic education commission, the local educational organization and mass communication. These organizations were supporter and extension of SEP knowledge to farmer by selecting the model farmer to transfer knowledge and experience in a form of SEP learning central. The supported organization role was to help in production technology, the knowledge in agriculture and acted as a coordinator for farmer to learn in term of training, study tour, practice and knowledge and experience exchange in SEP by emphasis on exchange knowledge between farmers.

The SEP extension for farmer was the cooperation between the extension officer and farmers. Worth (2006) was reported that the farmer would learn when change from knowledge receiver to self-learning with the extension officer and enabler. The learning consisted of 3 important components that were always self-investigation to continual develop the knowledge in order to truly understand, the assimilation of knowledge by applying the knowledge in order to understanding the activity, and knowledge sharing in order to create skill and promote sustainable self-learning and group-learning which indicated the corporation by sharing the knowledge between farmers, officer and enabler.

Moreover, the supporting organizations with the basic education commission educated and practiced for basic school student to initiate the SEP concept in the form of SEP learning central in School. This learning central educated the student in saving money activity in school and home accounting in order for the student whom their parents were farmer could use these activities together. The objectives were to create the awareness of expense between the student and their parent and to extend the SEP concept through this student.

From the content of SEP learning of farmer in Phitsanulok, the process of extending SEP for farmer should consider the factors as follows:

1. The attention on the concept of farmer’s experience by learning from variety of activity.
2. The experience reflection of farmer by observation and trial practice the agricultural activity according to the SEP concept.
3. The summarize of concept and principle in agricultural implementation activity according to SEP concept.
4. The trial practice to aware of implementation value.
5. The knowledge of farmer was from the investigating and self-researches.
6. The knowledge assimilation by implementing the agricultural activity according to SEP concept to understand the activity
7. The skill and the experience of farmer derived from the knowledge exchange and sharing between the farmer and the officer and between the farmer groups in cooperation manner.
Therefore, the extension method for farmer in learning SEP should be a method of learning by experience as follows:

1. The establishment of SEP learning central for a learning resources and demonstrate the agricultural activity for farmer.
2. Training, study tour and presenting the model of SEP for exchange the SEP concept and agricultural activity.
3. The agricultural experience reflection from the model farmer for the farmer to aware of the SEP implementation in agricultural and the reason of implementation SEP.
4. The supporting for farmer to learn the home accounting and farming account
5. The supporting for farmer to understand the mix agricultural in a corporative system and environmental friendly.
6. The supporting for farmer to be self-reliance by producing everything for consuming to reduce the household cost.
7. The supporting of cooperative problem solving by letting the children of farmer to create a home account in order to learn the problem of the family.
8. The farmer and extension officer were discussion in the form of agricultural activity continually.
9. The discussion about the agricultural between the farmers continually.

Moreover, the supporting factors in learning SEP for farmer are as follows:

1. SEP was the speech of his majesty king.
2. SEP was including in National Economic and Social Development Plan and was the policy of every organization.
3. The extension officers had truly understood the SEP.
4. The extension organizations took part in learning and build network of SEP management
5. The extension organization monitored the selected farmer continuously
6. The government focused on budgeting the SEP extension continuously.
7. The farmers were desirable to develop himself to be more capable continually.
8. The mass media includes radio television and newspaper pay attention on presentation about SEP news.

4. CONCLUSIONS

From the finding of SEP extension process for farmer in Phitsanulok, it was found that the extension concept was the learning by experience which was correlated to the experience adult learning of Kob’s Model (as cite in M. McMullan, et al., 2003) but the learning was exchange learning by using model farmer as a central of meeting to exchange the production activity and exchange the attitude of farmer continually. This finding also correlated with the knowledge extension model for farmer of Worth (2006) in the aspect of the exchange and learning together among farmer and between farmer and the extension officer. On the other hand, the frequently change of the government policy discontinued the supporting SEP extension and the learning exchange between farmer and enablers from this finding and Worth (2006) was different. Therefore, the continual containing SEP in the nation economic and social development plan at least could maintain the driven for farmer because SEP was appropriated with the context of Thai farmers.

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