SUFFICIENCY ECONOMY AND PEOPLE-CENTERED DEVELOPMENT: A CASE OF HUAY SAI ROYAL DEVELOPMENT PROJECT IN THAILAND

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ABSTRACT
Sustainability is of central importance for many countries in the world. Especially developing countries need to strive for sustainability and continuity in their economic, social, and political systems. This paper therefore seeks to study the sustainable human resource development with the Huay Sai Royal Development Project initiated by His Majesty the King Bhumipol Adulyadej of Thailand as a case study. In order to answer research questions about the nature and methods of people development for sustainability within the project, data were collected from documents, interviews and project visits. The author found that the nature of people development for sustainability in the project is based on two central themes which are people-centered development and whole system-focused development. People-centered development aims to make people succeed in their life. The latter theme focuses on efforts to form people into becoming social beings that are willing to put societal concerns before personal interests. This reflects the eastern approach of people development which puts people and their mindset at the centre of development. Other findings pertaining to the methods of people development show that action learning is a central method of development. Other methods supporting the success of the project are voluntary participation, step-by-step

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development, mutual learning and knowledge sharing between the agencies and the people and cooperation among the people themselves. The Huay Sai Royal Development Project, achieved successful community development by enabling people to help themselves so that they may increase career opportunities and recover the fertile natural environments previously lost through overstraining of the local ecosystem.

Keywords
sustainable development, sufficiency economy, human resource development, people-centered development

INTRODUCTION
Economic turbulence and scarce resources are causing many countries especially developing countries to struggle, remain viable, and survive. Traditionally, the main development paradigm for less and underdeveloped countries follow the path of modernization theories. These stipulate that countries have to go through successive stages of growth. This leads them to focus more on capital formation rather than on their people. While at the same time growing environmental degradation was the result of rapid industrialization, particularly during the post-World War II global economic boom (Clapp & Dauvergne, 2005). It can therefore be said that employing these older theories of development may increase average incomes of people, but at the same time, income inequalities between the rich and the poor have been increasingly widened. Large numbers of people in developing countries are still living in absolute poverty and lack of most basic resources (World Bank, 1992).

Hence, dependency theories have been highlighted as an alternative development paradigm for the developing countries. According to these dependency theories, the underdevelopment problem can be attributed to the unequal power relationship between
technologically advanced and the third world countries rather than to third world countries themselves (Harrison, 1982). The unequal relationships of international trade and investment are beneficial to the technologically advanced countries and detrimental to the less developed countries and put them in a weaker bargaining position. Somehow, the weakness of this theory is that it overemphasizes the economic and political factors. Furthermore, it is less focused on the global and local economical constraints which developing countries are facing.

During the eighties, the notion that growth could be achieved in an environmentally and social benign way gained popularity. This idea was subsumed into the rise of the concept of sustainable development which since then has become widely recognized and cited. The concept was first used in a 1987 United Nations-sponsored report known as the Brundtland report. This concept became increasingly significant for both public and private sectors. Sustainability is about actions which are ecologically sound, economically, viable, and socially just and humane (World Commission on Environment and Development, 1987). From a human resource perspective, there are two questions in need of being answered. The first question is “what is people development for sustainability?” The second one is “how could we develop people for sustainable development?”

**Human Resource Development**

The concept of human resource development is first introduced in 1969 by Leonard Nadler. It used to be one of the major functions in people-management theory. Its definition still remains controversial and sometimes confusing (McGoldrick, Steward and Watson, 2002). Swanson and Holton (2001) define HRD as a process for developing and unleashing human expertise through organization development and personnel training and development with the purpose of improving performance. In this paper, the definition of McLean, Bartlett and Cho (2003) seem to fit with the context, they define HRD as follows:
“Human resource development is any process or activity that, either initially or over the long term, has the potential to develop adult’s work-based knowledge, expertise, productivity and satisfaction, whether for personal or group, team gain or for the benefit of and organization, community, nation, or ultimately, the whole of humanity (Mc Lean, et al, 2003).”

By this definition, HRD is a long-term process of people development enabling people to learn through organized interventions and management action. The ultimate subject of this approach is the whole society.

It is accepted that the HRD concept draws from various disciplines such as systems theory, psychological theory and economic theory (Swanson, 1999). System theory supports the need to view organizations from a holistic approach and concerns the interconnectedness of other factors such as social networks and social needs of people, economic gain and organizational performance. Therefore, by investing in people through various means of HRD, organizations should be able to improve and upgrade the capabilities of people potential.

Psychological practice supports the importance of considering the emotional needs of people in organizations as potential determinants of performance. Sinha (1999) argues that the psychologist’s task in national development is three-fold: to analyze the factors conducive to desirable changes as facilitator; to analyze the factors that act as impediments to change as inhibitors; and to determine ways of avoiding or cushioning the psychological costs of rapid development.
The economic aspect of HRD is in support of organizational productivity. Throughout our history, it is a consensus that the salience of a nation’s education and training system is becoming the key item in the struggle for competitive superiority (Ashton and Green 1996). All the countries around the world, both developed and developing seem to realize that the road to economic growth and development is tied to the skill formation of their human capital. The country must improve the productivity of the labor force and raise the standard of living of the population. As Thurow (1966) posits, countries wishing to develop and succeed in the future must begin to make long-term plans and commit major resources as investments in the education and the high skill formation of their society.

**HRD from Western and Eastern Perspectives**

The first formal conceptualization of HRD by the United Nations appeared in a general assembly resolution in December 1989. The United Nations, at that time, explained that HRD was a broad concept including many components and requiring integrated strategies, policies, plans and programs in order to fulfill the potential of human beings individually and collectively. It was conceived as a specific means to achieve specific economic goals. It could be seen that the concept was therefore linked to economic goals. Applying this perspective on HRD, the United Nation strengthened basic education and training with the aim that these HRD methods would facilitate people to acquire and upgrade their skills and satisfy demands of their country (United Nations, 1994).

In the 1993 report of the Secretary-General on human resources development, the United Nations stated that HRD provided a means of improving the human condition and a veritable revolution in production technology had made HRD an essential requirement for raising productivity in order to remain competitive in world markets. They further explained
that an effective HRD should promote lifelong learning and acquisition of knowledge, skills and competencies and had to accord with national values and culture (United Nations, 1994).

This entails that HRD can be considered a source of competitive advantage. This is consistent with the concept proposed by Torraco and Swanson (1995) who explained that HRD was a tool to achieve expected performance, especially in a rapid-changing technological environment. Since workforce expertise has become a critical ingredient of competitiveness, HRD is increasingly a vital necessity.

In some eastern countries, the perspective on HRD is different from some scholars in the West. An example is the perspective of Confucius, a sage in ancient China (551-479BC) who regarded people-centeredness as a core value of Confucianism.

“Confucius believed that human being’s difference from animals lied in human being’s social character that means every man is also a social person at the same time. He admitted every social person had physical needs as well as emotional needs by claiming wealth and honor; these are what everyone desires, poverty and lowliness; these are what everyone tries to avoid. …..Society was a product of the individuals who compose it (Kong and Zhang, 2011).”

Confucius believed in a participative approach to encourage, empower and engage people to serve a common purpose of the state since employees will learn to seek out and accept responsibility and to exercise self-control. In Confucius’s opinion, therefore, HRD systems should enable people to have more knowledge, practice, loyalty as well as honesty and continue learning until the end of life (Kong and Zhang, 2011).
The meaning of HRD from the western and eastern countries indicated in this paper implies that both of them defined HRD as a medium that make positive effects to individuals and society. The difference of these two perspectives, however, is the emphasis of the former on capability to compete with others as an external aspect, while the later has an internal focus that is mindset of people to control themselves.

**People-Centered Development**

Besides the people-centeredness as a central theme of Confucianism, there exist other studies related to similar themes of people-centered development. David Korten (1990) who advocated his study in the Philippines uses the word people-centered development to reveal his concept on equity-led sustainable development. He proposes an alternative development vision in which the process of development and its essential focus on personal and institutional capacity. In addition, he also acknowledges that only the people themselves can define what they consider to be improvements in the quality of their lives.

For people-centered development approaches, local people need to be empowered to participate in their development process. This requires a capacity building process based on their local knowledge and resources participation by which a participatory action research or action learning approach forms the essential development method (Vlaenderen, 2001). Participatory Action Research has arisen mainly out of the experience of developing countries (Maguire, 1987) by which a participation of the people by engaging in a dialogue they could identify and share their problems and develop solutions as to how to solve them (Vlaenderen, 2001). Through dialogue, the participant becomes aware of more alternatives and choices for better living. Moreover, reflection through dialogue and empirical experience encourages people to employ, exercise and share their local knowledge with each other. Another explanation on the benefits of specific local experience stems from the resource-based view
theory. The theory implies that HRD can contribute to sustainable competitive advantage through facilitating the development of competencies that are community specific embedded in the community history and culture, and generate tacit knowledge (Barney, 1992; Wright and McMahan, 1992).

A Review of HRD for Sustainable Development

The weakness of the classical theory of development is an emphasis on only economic factors, but a lack of attention to people development. To increase sustainability in development, there is a need to create a balance among three aspects: the environment, the society, and the economy. The concerns associated with each of these three aspects require people to be put at the center of development. It could be said that HRD, without being sustainable, cannot be true HRD. The concepts and ideas of developing people for sustainable development have been proposed by many scholars and agencies (e.g. Docherty, Forslin and Shani, 2002; Elkington, 2006 Barney, 1991; World Commission on Environment and Development, 1987). The characteristics of HRD for sustainable development could be captured and concluded as follows:

1. HRD for sustainable development is a development applying a long-term perspective (rather than short-term). This is because the ultimate goal of sustainable development is to change values and mindsets of people which requires a long timeframe and would not be achievable on the short term (Filho, 2000).

2. Balancing development is an essential concern. Development in the classical sense puts more emphasis on the economic dimension. Sustainable development needs to go far beyond the economic aspect. That means development has to include economic, social, and environmental dimensions. Past experiences in many developing countries revealed unbalanced transition from agricultural society to an industrial society which resulted in
environmental degradation and other social problems (World Commission on Environment and Development, 1987).

3. Development should cover three levels: individual, organizational, and societal levels. This means sustainability at one level should not build on the exploitation of the others (Docherty, et al, 2002). Development that focuses only on the individual level may produce beneficial results in the short run, but the long-term results may quite likely feature adverse effects on society and people who will be weak, lackadaisical and dependent on help from others.

4. Development should be systemic and holistic, integrating all sectors. At the national level, HRD is the duty of the family, schools, academic institutions and media groups, while the government is responsible for the coordination of resources through workforce and education policy and promoting a strong economic system. The ultimate goal of sustainable development is securing better quality of life for all, combine all three aspects, responsible economic growth, equitable social progress, and effective environmental protection (Elkington, 2006).

5. The focus of development is on people. HRD for sustainable development needs to treat people as a strategic asset. This concept aligns with a substance of strategic human resource management, which regards human resources, knowledge, and intellectual capital as the key sources of long-term sustainable competitive advantage (Barney, 1991). Also stated by Pfeffer (2010), sustainable business needs sustainable human resources. For sustainable development, Dochety, et al (2002) argue that HRD must develop skills, knowledge, cooperation and trust, motivation, employability, constructive industrial relations, and also broader institutional/social prerequisites such as training systems.

6. There are various instructional and developmental strategies for developing people. Choosing and applying the most suitable methods of HRD depends on social context. There is
no one best way. An essential approach is to foster participation and focus on learning from real conditions as is the case with action-learning methods or field projects (Haugh and Talwar, 2010).

7. Developing moral and spiritual refinement for public interests within individuals is a necessary condition for sustainable development. This corresponds to the concept of Schumacher (1973), who argued that sustainable societies need education and HRD that focus on expanding human capacity for moral reasoning, meaning making compassion. The outcome of HRD should lead to the creation of a pool of human resources, capable of making wise choices in their personal lives, in organizational decision-making, and in community and socio-political realms.

8. Development that will lead to sustainability needs to empower people with the right to choose the way of their own lives (United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), 2006). The literature on people development is very clear on the point that people must be given freedom and choices to fulfill their needs, desires and wants.

9. To achieve the goal of sustainable development, HRD should be positioned as a central strategic management component, rather than a routine job. Strategic management will assist agencies and responsible persons to integrate the various resources that need to be used in development and make it possible to seek the cooperation among government, public and private sectors and the civil society (Larwood, Falbe, Kriger and Miesing, 1995; Westley and Mintzberg, 2005.).

**METHODOLOGY**

This study has relied mainly on qualitative techniques. Data were collected from documents, interviews and project visits. Interviews were conducted three times with important actors involved with the Huay Sai Royal Development Project, Pol.Lt.Col Noppakul Bumrongpong
and Pol.Lt.Col Chan Ramanudom. The researcher has spent a total of six months in order to answer this study’s questions “What is the nature of people development for sustainability in the Huay Sai Royal Development Project?” and “How could this project develop people for sustainable development?” Moreover, this paper aims at trying to identify and analyze the factors that make this project a success.

FINDINGS

Past Experience of Development in Thailand

In the past, Thailand was an agricultural community and most people lived in rural areas. Development occurred after the end of the World War II. At that time, Thailand received help from western countries, especially the United States. The focus of the Western countries on economic growth strategies has therefore strongly influenced the development efforts in Thailand between 1947-1977. These development strategies have resulted in extensive infrastructure investments such as roads and ports to facilitate a more effective exchange of goods through Thailand’s markets. However, this has been achieved through a trade off that included the destruction and degradation of forests to extend cultivable areas.

During 1977-1997, more industry entered into Thailand and played a significant role in the development of the country and led to a vital change in Thai society. Thailand moved from being an agricultural to being an industrial society. Also, this entailed intensified promotion of Thailand as attractive destination for foreign investment. The industrial production that used to focus on subsistence and supply of the domestic market needs was moving to an extended production focusing on trade and export. People changed their ways of life and careers from being agricultural workers to being laborers living in the industrial centers of urban areas.
The success of the above-mentioned development approach was revealed in a series of high growth rates of Thailand’s gross domestic product (GDP) compared to other developing countries. Thailand, at that period of time, saw an average increase in its GDP of 8.1 percent per year. Even during the global economic downturn in the period between 1974 and 1985, the growth rate of the country's gross domestic product was still strong at 6.3 percent per year (Thongpakdee, 2007). During this short period of development, the economy of Thailand witnessed relatively stable price levels, exchange rates and employment figures. Inflation was also low as compared with other developing countries.

The Western development approach could not longer sustain Thailand’s economy after 1997, the year in which Thailand faced on economic slump, partly caused by an attack on the Thai Baht following incorrect national reserve policy, which dropped from 3.8 trillion US dollars to only 2.8 billion US dollars. This period of economic turmoil around 1997 in Thailand is often referred to as the Tomyum Kung Crisis and featured skyrocketing external debt levels (see table 1). The Bank of Thailand in July 1997 floated its currency, the Thai Baht. Floating of the baht brought huge increase in debts to commercial banks and companies with foreign debts. Many companies went bankrupt, people lost their jobs and unemployment spread. Following this situation, the government subsequently turned to the International Monetary Fund for assistance. The result was rapidly increasing debt levels within the country.

Table 1 External Debt of Thailand

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Debt (Million US$)</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1980</td>
<td>5,239.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1990</td>
<td>28,095.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1995</td>
<td>100,832.0</td>
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<tr>
<td>Year</td>
<td>Debt (Million US$)</td>
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<tr>
<td>------</td>
<td>-------------------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1999</td>
<td>95,051.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2000</td>
<td>79,715.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2001</td>
<td>67,511.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2002</td>
<td>59,459.0</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: United Nations Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific, 2005

It is widely accepted that the development process that followed the Tomyam Kung Crisis has been a tremendous success in a relatively short period of time. The success was due partly to efforts of poverty reduction, an increasing average age of the population, an increasing number of people who received higher education, and higher per capita income. At the same time, however, this development approach led to some problems in Thailand. The first problem is a widening gap of incomes between the rich and the poor. Second, natural resources have been destroyed to benefit personal and industrial purposes. Third, the family system in Thailand has been weakened since general life-style and occupational systems in Thailand underwent dramatic changes from an agricultural to an industrial society. Fourth, people increasingly lacked the ability to control their life since they had to rely on knowledge, technology and capital from abroad. Thai people and businesses lost the control over production process because the information and knowledge necessary for the production and marketing systems was determined and transmitted from outside and not based on the accumulation of the wisdom of local people. Farmers were subjected to increased risk as a result of the opening up of agricultural markets to international trades and the reliance on volatile world market prices. This led to great amounts of debt being accumulated on all levels.
Sufficiency Economy and People-Centered Development: Findings from Huay Sai

Royal Development Project in Thailand

His Majesty King Bhumibol Adulyadej, a developer who got UNDP Human Development Lifetime Achievement Award in 2006, argued that the past development approach used in Thailand is not suitable for Thailand, since small-scale farmers were neglected by the development strategy. Eventually, the majority of people became victims of the development process. For this reason, His Majesty the King initiated numerous agricultural research projects. The focus of the projects was to search for suitable technology for delivering applicable solutions to small-scale farmers. Since 1977, many projects under the patronage of His Majesty the King have been supported by the government and public sector. Public officials and experts have been detached to join the projects. In addition, there are six learning and experimental centers that were established across the country. With emphasis on small-scale agriculture, appropriate farming technologies, preservation and sustainable use of water resources, conservation, and flood and drought mitigation, the Royal projects have brought benefits to the people in rural areas across Thailand.

Background of the Huay Sai Royal Development Study Center, Cha-Am District, Petchaburi Province, Thailand

A visit of His Majesty the King during the summer of 1983 brought to light a lot of problems stemming from damaged soil. Before 1980, this area was known for its fertile soil and its large population of the native “hog deer”. However, following the drying up of the land and rapid soil degradation, the hog deer became extinct. On April 5, 1983, His Majesty King Bhumibol Adulyadej advised concerning the area of Huay Sai District as follows.
“This and the nearby areas used to be very fertile. There was plenty of water in the waterfall and water courses all year round. However, the degradation of forests causes the dry spells and unpredictable rainfall patterns. It can be predicted that the place will eventually continue to desertify each year (Office of the Royal Development Projects Board, 2004).”

Based on this statement of His Majesty the King, an initiative of the project was established in the west area of Mrigadayavan Palace in Sam Phray, a sub district of Cha-am in Phetchaburi province. The center covers a total area of 15,882 rai (2541.12 hectares). The objective of the project is to be the center of the development of forestry for multipurpose uses. There are many agencies involved in this project, with the Border Patrol Police Bureau, a unit of the Office of the Royal Thai Police, playing the key role as coordinating agency among the different government units.

Structure and Administration in the Huay Sai Royal Development Study Center

The heart of the project is an integration of the activities and operations of the various agencies into the center. For public benefits, there is no one agencies owning this center: Rather, all of the involved agencies cooperate, share responsibilities and support each other. In the Huay Sai Royal Development Project, there public agencies are joined by organizations of the private sector. Administration of the project relies on a system of using different committees. The Directorate of the center is appointed by a committee and is responsible for monitoring and coordinating the operations of the center, including routine operations and specific projects as mandated by the center’s mission in each period of time. The center’s workforce is made up of the delegated officials of local agencies. The center also temporarily employs local individuals who live around the area of the project. There are two kinds of
working groups, the academic working group, which is responsible for conducting research studies in accordance with the project’s mission as guided by His Majesty the King’s initiative, and the research extension work group, which is a committee responsible for an extension of the results of the laboratory studies and research work to be practical and relevant to their application by local farmers within and beyond the designated project area (see figure 1: Structure of the Huay Sai Royal Development Study Center).

Figure 1: Structure of the Huay Sai Royal Development Study Center
Problems of people living around the Huay Sai Royal Development Study Center

The area making up Huay Sai Royal Development Project covers 22,627 acres. People living in this area invaded the land with mono-crop cultivation. Preparing the land for mono-cropping, they cleared forests and created large plantations of cassava along with an over use of chemical fertilizer. These agricultural practices resulted in the nearly complete deforestation of the area and significant deterioration of soil conditions. The natural balance of the environmental forces has been severely and negatively disturbed by the human intrusion. Eventually the effects of this human disturbance came back to haunt the local population in form of irregular precipitation with heavy wind and water erosion, droughts and a general reduction of annual rainfall that do not allow further cultivation of crops. Penetration into the forest area has been a cause of dispute between the government and the local population occupying the area and claiming rights over the land. Increased production of crops created by mono-cropping reduces market prices and leaves the farmers with little profit. In many cases high irrigation and fertilizer costs eat away these profits and pushes farmers into serious financial pressure and debt. Once the debts overwhelm the farmers they become unable to continue farming, leaving the land unattended, confiscated by financiers.

“What is People Development for Sustainability in Huay Sai Royal Development Project?”

According to the initiative of His Majesty the King, the development approach is based on two central themes which are people-centered development and whole system-focused development. People-centered development aims to make “people succeed in their life” by two approaches. The first approach focuses on work related know-how. The second approach focuses on efforts to form people into becoming a “good” person, i.e., being disciplined, patient, compassionate, harmonious, grateful, etc. His Majesty the King thereby emphasizes
that personal success requires knowledge and virtue. This reflects a development concept in the Eastern countries that focuses more on ethics and public interest. If society can live in peace and prosperity, the individuals comprising it will also gain benefits (Dhiratayakinant, K. 1988).

Development approaches aiming towards sustainability must be centered on the people and concerned with their surrounding context. Based on the past experience of Thailand, it can be noted that merely focusing on increased income levels may not be the ultimate goal of the development process. Modern societies tend to equate success with constant economic expansion and people development for sustainable development needs to be grounded into the mindset of the people (Tome, 2011). This is also consistent with the concept proposed by Schumacher (1973), one of the first scholars to point out that constant economic growth cannot be sustained in the long run and may even lead to depletion of environmental resources resulting in loss of collective wisdom, degradation of moral standards, inequality, and oppression.

In the case of the Huay Sai Royal Project, development increased people’s average per capita income. However, this economic success was celebrated only for a short period of time, before, in long term, it caused the destruction of natural resources and drought in the area. The people were then forced to venture deeper into the forests. The adverse effects ultimately touch the country as a whole. In order to resolve and prevent these problems the Huay Sai Royal Development Project tried to implement the following measures:

1. Since there are problems of severe soil erosion, vetiver grass was sown in order to improve the conditions of hardpan soil.

2. Small dams were constructed to control the water conservation and flow for more continuous irrigation throughout the year and maintain moisture levels during the dry reason.
3. In order to reintroduce and preserve a diverse fauna, wildlife breeding centers were established to produce, among others, a healthy hog deer population for releasing back into the nature.

4. People in the project were provided with guidelines of self-reliance and a “New Theory” focusing on alternative ways of making a living. In order to achieve self-reliance, a family was encouraged to change from mono-crop or cash-crop farming to integrated farming. A combination of plants such as rice, vegetables and fruit trees are recommended for planting on the farm. His Majesty’s “New Theory” emphasizes that basic foods are sufficiently produced for the community by means of simple methods. Any surplus should then be shared or sold among the neighbors. However, in order for this practice to be successful, the community must exhibit unity and work together with diligence, perseverance and self-estimation. The expansion of the production must be done gradually while refraining from making debts.

The New Theory aims to introduce to the farmers proper management practices of soil, water and crops in relation to the optimum utilization of labor force, time and capital. The practice suggests an approximate division of the land based on the 30:30:10 ratio for implementing the four main agricultural activities, which are digging the pond for storing rainwater, growing rice, conducting integrated farming, and building residential areas as well as preparing space for raising animals.

The development of a sustainable development project in Huay Sai is a comprehensive approach that focuses on the three dimensions of development: economic, society and environment. The economic dimension of sustainable development aims at helping people live better. Although people may not be rich, proper balance between income and expenses is necessary. The social dimension aims at making people less dependent on others, living a peaceful life with dignity, shaping their own future and making their own choices. The
environmental dimension of sustainable development is one of the biggest concerns not only for the ordinary people, but also for both governments and non-governmental organizations. There are several studies that show the correlation between income growth and environmental degradation (Naidoo, 2004; Thomas, 2001). The challenge is therefore, how to create a balanced coexistence and harmony between human activities and the ecological environment.

In general, the Huay Sai Royal Development Project has been successful in rehabilitating the natural resources and forests, including soil, water, flora and fauna. The project initiated under the patronage of His Majesty the King in 1983 strongly built on a form of development that balances the three dimensions of sustainable development that departed from mainstream development approaches and predating the United Nations’ Brundtland Report in 1987.

“How Could the Huay Sai Royal Development Project Develop People for Sustainable Development?”

Based on site visits, interviews and documents, several methods were found to be used to develop people in the Huay Sai Development Project. These methods were outlined as follows:

1. Before implementation of the project, His Majesty the King systematically studied and gathered information about the area and its context. The project was based on results obtained from the empirical study or “action learning”. Information and feedback gathered from those who were involved in the project such as government officials, academics and local people were used to detail a plan that could address to the needs of the people. When the information was systematically ordered, it was distributed to the people. Learning from empirical experience or practice is different from and often preferable to formal training methods more generally used by government agencies, because the body of knowledge in the
formal training program may not correspond to the way of life of the local people. The New Theory which mirrors part of the Philosophy of Sufficiency Economy is based on empirical results. The people who applied this theory in the Huay Sai Royal Development Project have been enabled to live in a more secure surrounding characterized by harmonious and sustainable coexistence of society with its environment.

The Huay Sai Royal Development Project did not only resolve the problem of people invading and co-opting the forest, causing environmental degradation, but also became a learning center for people within both public and private sectors. This project can be considered as an example of best practice in implementing development approaches for sustainability. Moreover, it is found that the results from successful research and experimentation have been conveyed to the people in 22 villages surrounding the project (Office of the Royal Development Projects Board, 2012). This center encourages the people to sustain their career in a wide variety of agricultural fields such as frog breeding or dairy farming. All in all, the ultimate purpose of all activities is to enact the people to help themselves.

2. Voluntary participation has been used widely and successfully in the project. By including the farmers that cleared forests and used mono-cropping as central participants in the project, the rehabilitation of the environment was supported and significantly accelerated. The Border Patrol Police Bureau as the main coordinating agency of the project was responsible for the problems dealing with the forest clearings and well equipped to deal with this mission. Their staff talked and listened to feedback from local people and the individuals engaged in deforestation activities. His Majesty the King issued permissions to allow the distribution of land belonging to the Royal Project to local farmers for cultivation as long as they participated in the program. Unwilling locals were compensated. Using this voluntary
participation method, there were many people involved in the project, which was essential for the rehabilitation of soil quality and rebalancing human activities with the natural resources.

It was found that an important motivational force that led local farmers to join the project was the allocation of cultivatable land and the knowledge and training needed to use these resources to enable them to advance their agricultural career path and live a relatively comfortable life. Upon seeing the success and improving lifestyle of their peers, farmers previously not participating in the program quickly changed their minds and also volunteered. This resembles another notion of His Majesty the King who emphasized the importance of “an explosion from within” in developing people and communities. The building of community support and strengthening of strong motivational forces is an important precondition for any development initiative to succeed.

3. Developing people needs to be incremental, following a series of small, achievable steps prioritizing those of highest relevance to the immediate problems. The Huay Sai Royal Development Project began to develop the people by starting from improving people’s health, considering it the basic requirement for any other activity. The next step was then to develop the infrastructure and other basic essentials for occupations such as roads and irrigation systems for agriculture.

In addition local wisdom and practical application of knowledge need to be at the base of the study and synthesizing of empirical research data used to develop knowhow and knowledge to be used in community development efforts.

4. Mutual learning and knowledge sharing are one of the popularly used methods in the royal projects. This applies not only to the individuals within the local community, but also to sharing knowledge between public agencies and communities as well as among the different organizations involved in the development projects. Since there are many responsible agencies involved in the project, the method used for boosting coordination
among these agencies is “breaking the boundaries” of each agencies and each individual. The officials working in the project were reassigned from different agencies under authority of a certain department so that they may act as liaison person that is familiar with the processes and working styles of the different organizations involved. While initially there were coordination problems among these diverse teams, this obstacle was overcome by trying to facilitate officers’ identification with the development project and its mission, rather than their previous department. Officers do not wear their agency or departmental uniform in order to encourage a feeling of equity, harmony and collective responsibility to achieve the mission of the project. When people share a common identity and have a sense of collective mindset, they will feel free to share their knowledge as it was mentioned by His Majesty the King in the following statement:

“The most important thing is to keep an open mind towards other people’s opinions and criticism in an intelligent manner. Because listening to others is one of the ways to mobilize intellectual and practical experience to secure the success of the project (Office of the Royal Development Projects Board, 2004)

Knowledge sharing among the people who are the project facilitated face-to-face interactions, focusing on reflection of ideas and continuous learning. The intensive experience from knowledge sharing had deep impacts on cognitive, affective and behavioral levels and helped participants develop socially responsible mindsets.
DISCUSSION

Huai Sai Royal Development Project and the Characteristics of HRD for Sustainable Development

As mentioned earlier, sustainable people development entails nine characteristics. This part therefore aims to analyze whether the Huay Sai Royal Development Project has all of the nine characteristics of people development.

1. Sustainable people development should focus on long-term rather than short-term development. The Huay Sai Royal Development Project started in 1983, and initially witnessed conflict between the villagers and the project because people wanted to own the land rather than just cultivating it. However, after its initiation until now, the project area has changed from a drought and damaged environment to a fertile forest. This is because people were allowed to possess the area and given the knowledge to cultivate in a right way. Almost 30 years after its initiation in 1983, the project proves that people are better off due to a changing mindset of the people which is only difficult to change in a short time.

2. Sustainable people development needs to focus on balancing economic, social and environmental factors. The Royal Project has exceeded its expected results, because it enabled the development of rich forest which is very difficult to recover once cut down. But in the Huay Sai Royal Development Project, forests were rehabilitated by letting the trees grow without having to open up the soil surface. The quality of life of the farmers living in the areas improved from moderate levels to high levels. When comparing the average per capita income of the farmers living around the project center with the corresponding estimated basic costs of living for 1986, most of the farmers living around the Huay Sai Royal Development Study Center obtained an average income higher than that evaluated using the basic need criteria (Office of the Royal Development Projects Board, 2004).
3. Sustainable people development covers all levels of development, from individual through organizational to societal levels. This project has shown that the successful personal development on the individual level could be achieved without harmful effects to the society or environment. The two main concepts of people-centered development and holistic system-focused development are consistent with the concepts proposed by Docherty et al (2002) and Whelten, Rands and Godfrey (2002) in the corporate social responsibility literature that focus on the stakeholder expectations justified through ethical reasoning or through expectations of what social equity is.

4. Sustainable people development applies a holistic view that means that the process of people development has to be integrated into a broader development system. In the case of the Philosophy of Sufficiency Economy as used in the Huay Sai Royal Development Project, is comprised of social, economic and environmental dimensions, including a modification of the attitude of people to value societal harmony and self-reliance. Sufficiency economy is a philosophy that stresses appropriate conduct and way of life while incorporating moderation, due consideration in all modes of conduct, and the need for sufficient protection from internal and external shocks. The aim is to create bonds among people, boost creative forces in order to prepare them for critical challenges occurring as a result of environmental changes. When people can join hands in various activities, they can enhance creative problem solving among themselves which in turn helps strengthen the community, reduce the risks of impact from external factors and build connections with large-scale businesses, government agencies as well as organizations. The end result will then be the expansion of various forms of cooperation at the national level.

5. The central force of sustainable development has to come from within the people and community as described by His Majesty’s expression of “an explosion from within”. The strong internal motivational forces exhibited by the strong voluntary support of local farmers
in the Huay Sai Royal Development Project vividly exemplify this notion. The local development has indeed started from strengthening people knowledge and skills, also featuring a change in the attitude or mindset of people to be willing to have patience, discipline and harmony.

6. There is no one best way for sustainable people development. From the experience in the Huay Sai Royal Development Project, the most effective method is “action learning” which is synthesized from theoretical approach mixed with lessons learned from the practical experience. A synthesis of action learning is also from learning by trial and then concluding which methods are simple enough to apply and suitable for the local circumstances. Another development method applied in the project is the creation of a learning climate among the people in the community. Meanwhile, there are also a wide variety of methods used in the project, for example, vocational training and mentoring systems for cultivation. After people were trained, they went back and tried to apply what they learned from a trainer and their peers. Feedback from these trials was then reported back to their learning group. It is this focus on practical approaches and applicability of knowledge that make action learning so important among the many methods of available to develop people.

7. Sustainable people development should focus on cultivating people’s mindsets. One of the aspects of development in the Royal Project is a focus on virtues and ethical behavior as it is mentioned in the principle of the Philosophy of Sufficiency Economy. Farmers are encouraged to exhibit desirable behaviors and traits, such as trustworthiness, honesty, integrity, sharing and altruism. The concept of Sufficiency Economy may act as an informal institution that creates strong formal social capital in the society.

8. The Huay Sai Royal Development Project focuses the idea that individuals and families must be self-reliant. The philosophy of sufficiency economy guides people in living their lives according to the middle path. To achieve this, the application of knowledge with
prudence and virtue is essential. People should rely on themselves without overindulgence. This way of living occurs when people are reasonable and have accumulated knowledge and experience. After joining the project for a while, the participants found themselves in much healthier financial situations with higher savings.

9. The project employs the concept of strategic human resource management as the project integrated the agencies working together as a one stop service unit. His Majesty the King made the following observation regarding this aspect of the project:

“The center included many officials who work in different agencies and departments, some of them working in the agricultural field, social field, employment support service or education promotion service. All of them are working together for the benefits that will ultimately be gained by the people.”

Integrating the various agencies could break the boundaries between them and encourage each other to horizontally coordinate rather than command. Applying a strategic perspective, the HRD approach used in the project is a ‘best fit’ approach. That is starting from analyzing a root cause of the problems in the area, including the identification of the stakeholders’ needs. All of the analysis is then integrated into the plan by considering with local wisdom of the people living in the area. This is consistent with the resource-based view theory, which is focusing on core competencies that will lead to sustainable competitive advantage. Since most of the people in the area are farmers, strategies to enable year round harvesting without degradation of the environment are one of the sources of their sustainable competitiveness.
CONCLUSION

In this paper an argument is made for the need of a sustainable concept within a people-centered development approach. From the past experience of development in Thailand, much of the national budget has been allocated to education and health policies. The result was just increasing incomes to some people in the country, but the ultimate goals of the development policies have not been reached. Since the development in the past ignored sustainability concerns, there have been growing disparities between the rich and the poor. While the approach initiated by His Majesty the King strengthens sustainability as a goal and means of development. The ultimate goal of the development is to develop people to help themselves become self-reliant. The means of this development are participatory development through a wide variety of methods and the use of local knowledge as a basis for cultivation. Sharing knowledge made people feel more empowered and encouraged them to change basic attitudes and behaviors.

In general, there are three main key success factors from the case. Firstly, the development approach is aligned with life-style and local wisdom of the people. The people have not been apart from the land they have been living on for such a long time. In turn, the project gives people career opportunities, secure income, debt reduction, fertile natural environments and forests. Secondly, this project promotes step-by-step development, starting from building a good basis for the people at the individual level to enable them to become self-reliant to a certain extent without taking advantage of others. Then, the people can join in various activities in the form of group, community or even community enterprises. Lastly, the initiation of the project is from an in depth study of the problems in the area and action research with a closely coupled monitoring system by which the feedback is always fed into the study center.
In conclusion, the development approach based on the Philosophy of Sufficiency Economy focuses on shaping the mindset of individuals, which becomes the basis for their way of thinking and their actions. Once people change their mindset, they become able to increase and enhance their potential. They will also have the power to make choices in their life with right thinking and right behavior.

REFERENCES


