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THE DEVELOPMENT OF A MODEL OF THE AGRICULTURAL SUBJECT TEACHING AND LEARNING PROCESS BY USING A RESEARCH AS A BASIS: A CASE STUDY OF SUSTAINABLE AND APPROPRIATE AGRICULTURAL TECHNOLOGY SUBJECT

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This study aimed to develop a model of the agricultural subject teaching and learning process in the university by using the research as a basis. It provided an opportunity for students to learn local agriculture in the actual situation. This was done through the research connected from course outline. Besides, the students had learned actual conditions and situations which created motivation in agricultural subject teaching and learning. This was based on experiential learning by using the process of participatory action research. Results of the research project were as follows: 1) the occurrence of a model of the agricultural subject teaching and learning process in the university using the research as a basis; 2) the lecturer and students had learned through the actual situations of local agriculture using the research connected from learning content; 3) the students were interested in agricultural subject learning more than ever; 4) the occurrence of integrated teaching and learning, research and academic services; and 5) the occurrence of good relationships between the students and local people, making the students be aware of the values of local communities.

Keywords: Teaching, Learning process, Participatory action research, Strengthening.

Introduction

Thailand is an agricultural country. However, it was found that there is a continual decrease in agricultural heritage. This means that there is a decrease in a number of farmers year after year. It is expected that the number of farmers will fall to only 30 percent of the country's populations. Besides, and average age of Thai farmers is more than 50 years. Thus, it can be said that Thailand lacks of young agricultural workforce [1]. Based on the data obtained from Ministry of Agriculture and Agricultural Cooperatives, it is found that the percentage of farmers population was only 40 percent and their age range is 45-65 years or most of them are old [2]. Most parents of the students majoring in Agriculture of Rambhai Barni Rajabhat University are engaged in a agricultural sector. Nowadays, this sector is facing a problem because new generation does not like to do farming. Farming is a hard work, risky, and it needs workforce. Moreover, farmers cannot fix the price of agricultural yields. Production costs are high but the price of agricultural yields is not. Indeed, it is not easy to find agricultural workforce at present. These various factors have an effect on a decrease of farmer population.

As a matter of fact, the situations of agricultural sector do not only have an effect on Thai social and economic conditions but also the enrollment of agriculture course. This means that a

numbers of students majoring in agriculture decrease every year. For the previous and present agricultural class, it involves the transfer of knowledge, theories, principles, and details of learning content. Perhaps, the learning content seems not to conform to the actual conditions/situations of the local communities. This is because the agricultural lecturers may not connect the learning content to the actual condition/situation, causing tiresomeness among learners. Therefore, they are not confident to do agricultural careers since they are not able to connect academic content with the actual conditions/situations. This implies that classroom activities focus on agricultural knowledge but it lacks of management issues. Learners cannot connect learning content with the actual conditions/situations. Thus, they will have problems in doing agricultural careers [3]. One important factor making few students want to be enrolled in agriculture course is inappropriate teaching methods causing a gap between classroom experience and actual conditions/experience. Also, learners were bored with the classroom activities because they do not have motivation.

Although there are new teaching/learning strategies, it mostly still is in the classroom. Therefore, to adapt analytical thinking of learners by creating condition, effective learning can be achieved if they experience actual condition/situations in local communities. The obtained experience can therefore be integrated with learning content. That is, the learning content tends to make learners have inspiration and develop new perception focusing on phenomena condition. Thinking process can create inside-out and outside-in interaction [4]. Consequently, learners will have inspiration to do agricultural careers confidently. Besides, they will not sell their farm land and not be engaged in agricultural sector as many farmers have done any more. The community learning activities in the form of a case study outside the classroom can be effective. Besides, there is the integration between teaching/learning, research, and academic services.

Although there are new teaching/learning strategies, it mostly still is in the classroom. Therefore, to adapt analytical thinking of learners by creating condition, effective learning can be achieved if they experience actual condition/situations in local communities. In other words, to experience local communities can be a channel for planning academic service projects for local communities. Besides, the lecturer and students can perceive needs and problems of local communities as well as their expectation towards the university. Therefore, the presentation of the research project is to find out the answer of the said issues.

Research Question

What should be the model of teaching/learning process development in the university by using the research as a basis?

Objectives

- To develop a model of the agricultural subject teaching by using a research as a basis;
- To make students learn through the actual situations on local community agriculture and the research connected with the course outline; and
- To create motivation in agricultural subject learning by using experiential learning which can be connected to the learning content

Scope and Limitation

1. Population in this study consisted of Rambhai Barni Rajabhat University students taking up course of sustainable and Appropriate Agricultural course Sustainable and Appropriate Agricultural Technology and people in surrounding communities involved in the research.
2. Learning content consisted of the course which was part of the research and body of knowledge or experience related to the research existing in the surrounding communities.

Methodology

1. Holding an action meeting to explain about the project to the students based on the project concepts and roles of the students as follows:
 - 1.1. The lecturer facilitated learning process such as allocation of part of learning content of the subject so that the students would have available time to experience the actual conditions/situation in communities around the university. Learning content obtained from the communities was analyzed and synthesized by the lecturer and the students. Results were compared with the theories and learning content obtained from classroom activities.
 - 1.2. The students acted as a researcher based on the scope of the research project. It focused on the participatory action research.
 - 1.3. The communities were the learning sources of the students.
 - 1.4. Learning venue referred to the interaction process among concerned people, i.e. the lecturer, students, and people in the communities (between internal and external body of knowledge). In other words, it was the process of knowledge exchange for further utilization.
2. Development of classroom problems with the students.
3. Enrichment of knowledge/skills/competency in conducting research.

Before implementing the project the students must understand learning content, various technical processes (e.g. being a facilitator), community approach, designing the participatory learning process, and participatory data collection, etc.
4. Project monitoring such as holding a meeting for information exchange, problem analyzing and solving, and periodical task supplement both in the classroom and the actual situations.
5. Continual self-evaluation during the project implementation to perceive problems encountered, limitations and improvements. Also, a negative effect arised from the project could be seen and it might have an effect on the policy suggestion of concerned agencies.

Result of the Study

Results of the study were concluded based on objective of the study as follows:

Objective 1 To develop a model of agricultural subject teaching and learning process by using the research as a basis

There was the connection and integration of the two aspects. The first aspect was the teaching and learning activities based on normal lesson plans. The second aspect was a small research conducted by the students. This aimed to make the students find the answer of the research problems through an analysis of the learning content in the classroom and learning content in the actual conditions/situations, and then connected it together. In other words, to find the answer how the alternative agriculture condition or the community's bio-agriculture was.

It was found that the students had knowledge obtained from the actual conditions/situations more than ever. Also, they had learned about the bio-agriculture methods (alternative agriculture) which were different based on each community. However, all communities shared a similar problem, marketing channels.

Based on result of the study, it led to the development of a model of the agricultural subject teaching and learning process.

1. It was the integration of learning through classroom activities and learning in the actual conditions/situations (community based).
2. The learning process in a community through the research process must be designed such as participatory learning process (the lecturer, students, and people in the community) and the process of returning data to the community.
3. This form of teaching and learning employed as a basis for the policy determination by the faculty or university was still unclear. This was because the administrators still cling to the traditional teaching and learning method. Also, they did not understand the community participation process.
4. The students passing this form of teaching and learning process perceived that it could motivate them to learn more than ever.
5. Based on the development of the model using the research as a basis, the following must be improved:
 - 5.1. Understanding and paradigm as well as skills of the lecturer placing the importance on community-based learning. How to make the students approach the communities? How to compare the experience obtained outside the classroom with the theoretical learning content? How to make the students learn more? Besides, the lecturer should learn more about the mutual learning process or participatory learning.
 - 5.2. Construction of the supplementary mechanism of the students. The students still perceived that the research was difficult due to its statistical data. However, they should understand the research which needs to understand the communities. This could be done by the creation of inspiration for the students to experience the actual conditions/situations in the communities. This included the participatory process or being a facilitator.
 - 5.3. Budget support should be provided to the students to conduct the research in the communities.
6. The integration of the research and the teaching and learning process could be done and connected to the academic services of the university which meet needs of local people.

Objective 2 To encourage the students to learn from the actual conditions/situations of local community agriculture. This could be done through the research connected the course outline.

The students had learned about safe agriculture (non-toxin) in the communities through inquires, observation, and discussion with farmers in the community. The following were revealed:

1. The method of safe agriculture arised from the attempt to reduce production costs, need for good health, risk reduction due to chemical application, and an awareness of the ecological system.
2. The practice of safe agriculture of the communities usually arised from agricultural extension by external organizations, e.g. the Provincial Agriculture Office, N.G.O. the Bank for Agriculture and Agricultural Cooperatives. Besides, there was a diverse forms of bio-agriculture based on each community. This type of agriculture was firstly done through knowledge transfer, trial and error, training, etc.
3. The practice of safe agriculture of the communities usually connected with the concept of sufficiency economy and the construction of sustainable agriculture of the communities.
4. Since the students had already experienced the actual conditions/situation, they were able to adapt or change their ideas, e.g.
 - 4.1. There are some interesting things in the communities' farm areas that they have not yet learned about it.
 - 4.2. Agricultural careers are not boring but it is challenging the student's feeling.

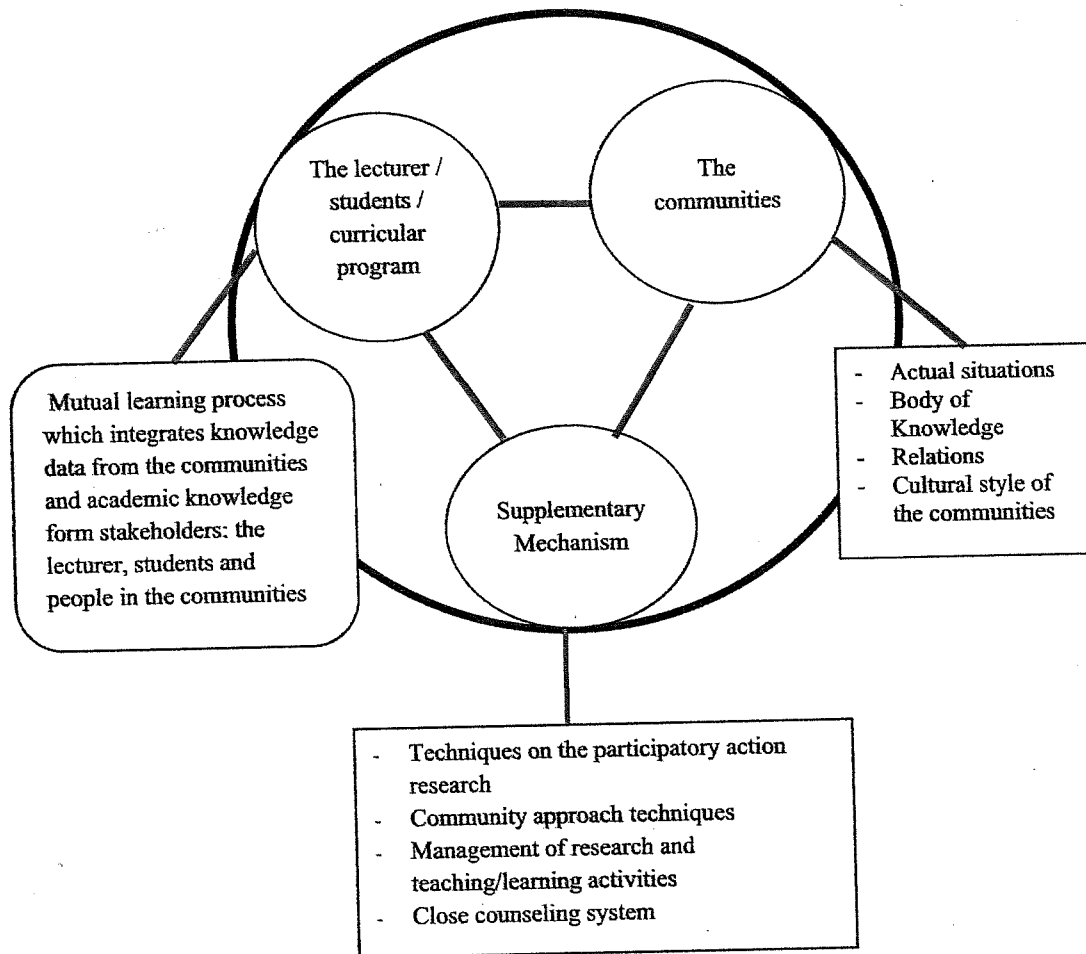
Objective 3 To create motivation in agricultural subject learning by making use of direct experience (experiential learning) to connect to the learning content

The following were found:

1. Classroom activities were not boring any more.
2. The students had learned more than ever based on theories and principles even though it sometimes did not conform to the actual conditions. They found that there were many things in the community which interest them.
3. The students had made acquaintance with people in the communities and they had good attitudes toward the communities more than ever.

Conclusions and Discussions

Issue 1 The model of the system and process developments. This process was included in the project using the research as a basis. The components pushing the project were shown below.



Issue 2 Factors effecting the system and process pushing. This project did not only promote the research process but also used the research as part of the teaching/learning process. Also, the research process was not only under the variable scope which could be controlled but it was the research that the students must experience people and environment outside the university. The process pushing the project was affected by various disturbing factors as follows:

1. Factors which did not conform to the system and project implementation

Time span and its conditions – Time span of classroom schedule, evaluation, and grade submitting was completely fixed. The lecturer did not know how to evaluate learning performance when the research document had not yet finished. This was because the research document was part of the scores of the agricultural subject.
2. The connection (integration) between the two systems: research and teaching/learning activities. In the previous days, these systems were definitely separated (traditional teaching method). That was, lecturers wanted students to learn the academic content. They might sometimes connect results of research to the academic content. For the research system, on the other hand, they might wait until the research was finished and later on they got the obtained body of knowledge to the teaching and learning activities. In fact, both systems did

not relate to each other base on the process aspect. However, this project needed to integrate the two systems in order to develop learning achievement of the students. Therefore, thesis could be done by using factor as connectors through the following:

3. Holding a mutual learning venue for all concerned parties.
4. The lecture connected theory content of a specific subject to the real world experienced by the students. They were encouraged analyzing it periodically and made discussions. Then, the students would learn and obtain new body of knowledge which conforms to the actual situations. This conformed to an idea of Nakhornthap [5] that teaching in the form of research is a teaching method that provides an opportunity for students to learn and construct body of knowledge by themselves. In other words, they obtained direct experience form learning. This meant that their learning style was the combination of active and passive learning. It could be said that learning facilitation using the research as part of the classroom activities was beneficial to learners, lecturers, and concerned personnel. Importantly, learners had an opportunity to develop various skills such as analytical thinking, problem solving, time management, information retrieval and using.

Issue 3 The process of learning enrichment of the students

Since the research process and the project process was considered as the construction of learning process having clear objective, so it must have a process which encourages the teacher and students to learn in the research project, e.g. comprehension process, participatory data collection process, and learning venue process (data collection techniques, data synthesis) etc.

Issue 4 The process of teaching/learning/research integration and the conformity of learning reform

Important missions in the traditional or existing teaching/learning facilitation in the university at present is definitely separated based on teaching/learning, research, academic services, and cultural arts conservation. This research project conducted in the actual situations made the lecturer and the students to find a way and an opportunity to integrate these missions of the lecturers and the university for learning or educational reform. Besides, it is beneficial to the academic services of the university such as production costs reduction, channel adding on organic vegetable market, and organic chicken egg box made of agricultural by – products. Oak [6] cited that Thailand will be successful in educational reform if the traditional teaching methods are changed. That is, it must place the importance on child – centered or active learning. They must be skillful in analytical thinking and problem solving. The ultimate goal of educational reform is the expectation that learners and people in the society are able to use the progress of technology and social change for constructing knowledge which appropriate to them and the society. In this process, Nakhornthap [7] stated that children or learners of all levels, in the city or in the village, must learn things near them should promote each local community to build learning networks more than before. Also, schools must set a learning standard which conforms to the real world existing everywhere in the society.

Therefore, this research project conformed to a guideline on the educational reform. It focused on learning in the local communities or in the form of experiential learning. This research project was a tool for adapting teaching and learning styles which conformed to a guideline for learning reform:

1. Child – centered and experiential learning. This was done through the research process and participatory learning of the students.

2. Learning outcome on analytical thinking skills of the students, brain storming process, analyses, and knowledge exchange.

This conformed to an idea of Saeng-ngern [8] that learning in the real life is learning through conditions and situations around a learner freely. It must needs of the learner in which he can learn by himself. The learner can learn from all learning sources at any time for lifelong education.

3. Conformity with the concepts on consciousness awareness, world view, attitudes, community values, and community strengthening.
4. Creation of good relationships between the lecturer, students, and people in the communities. People in the communities must be active to inform data or information and willing to take the students to important data/information sources. Khamboonchoo [9] revealed that an important factor is an awareness of a strong community. That is, to make people understand their community will results in local ties.
5. Conformity to the establishment of a learning community or it is the learning base of the university. Learning sources at present usually limit to the lecturer, library, textbook, electronics media or information technology. However, it does not expand to the external world. Meanwhile, local communities can be an effective learning source, not only in education but also economy, culture, tradition, agriculture, local technology, etc.
6. Teaching integration of real life experience and academic knowledge. Wasri [10] cited that education at present places the importance of academy as a priority but does not connect it to real life experience of learners. This research project, however, had set a condition on the integration of real life experience and academic knowledge such as a study on organic farming costs.

This research project also included the following:

1. Knowledge and understanding in research;
2. Non- conformity of the diagnosis process and the traditional teaching system;
3. Confusion of role coordination of concerned personnel; and
4. Other components

Knowledge and understanding of research is a problem issue. This is because the research in the form of participatory investigation is a new thing which is difficult for the student to clearly understand. This is particularly to the student who must design the research, participate in survey, and held a learning venue. However, a trainer and skill nourishment venue can alleviate worrisome of the students. When the students went to local communities, it was found that people in the community welcomed them hospitably. Thus, it was possible that knowledge and understanding in research might not be an important factor.

Nonconformity of the diagnosis process and the traditional teaching system is a normal matter when there is a research included in the traditional method of teaching. This is particularly on the participatory action research conducted in the communities. It is the nonconformity in paradigm and mind set. Previously, it was understood that teaching/learning activities focused on clear comprehension of learning content. It was the learning achievement which would be applied to the external real life. Thus, it focused on the teaching techniques placing the importance of learning content and the library. This conformed to an idea of the Office of Learning Society and Youth Quality Promotion [11]. It revealed that the "gap" challenging the

educational reform is that the curricular program is not related to the real life of a learner because a learner is forced to graduate without potential furthering.

The following were attitude towards the research project of the lecturer and the students:

1. It is a good project without seriousness in learning
2. Students are free in learning even though they do not fully understand the process of the project.
3. The lecturer and the students have an opportunity of experience the community lifestyle and want to work with people in the communities when they graduate.
4. Agricultural subject provides proactive alternative and learning in the actual situations. These are needs of the students who are not skillful in theories.
5. The lecturer and the students wish this kind of project to be continued and the students are willing to be a trainer for next batch.

In conclusions, the research-based learning could stimulate to learners freely and it made them interested in the learning content. Thus, it elevated the learning achievement because this kind of learning was not boring but enjoyable. Importantly, it could change personality of learners and their point of views in terms of analytical thinking. Therefore, it was different from other learning methods. The following were changed:

- From teaching based to learning based;
- From passive to active learning;
- From subject to wisdom;
- From knowing to learning; and
- Changes learners by research based learning.

Therefore, this research project is a learning model arised from the integration between learning content in the classroom and local body of knowledge through research. There is the occurrence of good relationships between the university and the community. In fact, the lecturer, students and people in the local communities are connectors of the relationships. However, there are some problems and limitations found in the project but it is a way of teaching/learning development which can be employed by universities.

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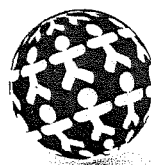
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