

V. INTERPRETATION OF EMPIRICAL FINDINGS AND CONCLUSION

Findings in the last chapter is the most important part of this research. The main purpose of this research is to find the factors that influence the community activeness. The answers are in the last chapter. However, before the end of this research report, some interpretation of the empirical findings can help clarify the relationships of variables described in the last chapter. Of course it is easy at this stage to explain why those relationship exist. Nevertheless, only pure empirical evidence seems to make a research incompleated.

Corporate Action for Public Purpose

From the stepwise regression analysis, three most important independent variables that influence the "corporate action for public purpose" are exposure to modernity, size, and conflict avoidance. These three variables account for 68% of the variance of "corporate action for public purpose"

1. Exposure to Modernity

It has the correlation of $-.56$ with "corporate action for public purpose". It has the correlation of $-.51$ with the frequency of formal meeting, and the correlation of $.37$ with leaders education. So it seems that the more educated leaders the more they travel to Bangkok.¹ The more they travel to Bangkok, the less time they can contribute to local activity.

It is a practice of rich rural people to send their children for higher education in Bangkok. These children, after their graduation, will mostly settle down in Bangkok.

¹ See Appendix B.

The rural leaders will be richer than average people in their community. The parents will visit them quite often. This, if they are local leaders, will take time away from them to deal with the local matters. One district officer told the researcher that the more the leader travel out of his hometown the less chance for the people to ask him for help or consultant. So when such leader try to mobilize the local people to support some public project, they might be less willing to do so.

2. Size of the Leader

The size of an individual is a factor that can increase his charisma. Local leaders work with people. They have to persuade people to act collectively for public goals. In such persuasion, they might need some charisma for the better success. The bigger size might be a factor in increasing one's charisma.

3. Conflict Avoidance

In the empirical finding, the value of conflict avoidance positively influence "corporate action for public purpose". From the researcher's own observation, the Thais cannot differentiate "issue" or "principle" from personal matter. When there is a conflict on one issue, quite often that it will lead to personal conflict in the future. So the Thais who support a public project do not do so only because the benefit of such project. But they will also consider "who" are in the project, or "who" initiate that project. They might not join the project, even though they see the value of such project, if they do not like some people in the project.

A group of Thai scholars from three universities studied the rural area south of Bangkok in 1974. The project is called "The Mae Klong Integrated Rural Development Program".

They found that conflicts always exist in Thai villages. They wrote:²

"On observation, there tend to be chronic conflicts in the Mae Klong area villages despite the fact that nearly all villagers in a given village are related by blood and marriage. In general, the people in a given village are divided into factions engaged in conflicts with one another in every village activity making it very difficult for cooperation towards common interests and benefits. Usually the conflicting factions within a given village cannot be discerned until efforts organized to work for the common good or of local authorities are held. The crux of the matter is that there is always a potential state of conflict in the village which comes to the surface only when cooperation is needed from every faction. From the reports by the lecturer - students teams, it reveals that obstacles to development efforts are largely due to existing and potential conflicts within the villages"

A foreign scholar, Robert L. Mole, made a good observation of the Thai behavior in regard to personal relationship. He writes:³

"One could well describe the American approach to most problems as impersonal and technical. However, in Thailand the emphasis is more aimed at the manipulation of personal relationships than upon the execution of sheer professional competence".

² Kasetsart University, Thammasat University, Mahidol University, Mae Klong Integrated Rural Development Program. Baseline Survey Report, 1978, Page 315.

³ Robert L. Mole, Thai Values and Behavior Patterns (Tokyo: Charles E. Tuttle Company, 1973, Page 77.

The reason described should explain why, in Thailand, the leaders who can avoid conflicts will get more support from people in joining "corporate action for social purpose" This is opposite to the cases of the United States, India, and Yugoslavia. In these three countries, the more the leaders try to avoid conflict, the less active the community.

4. Other Independent Variables

Other variables that have high correlations with "corporate action for public purpose" are "frequency of formal meetings" and "selflessness". They have the correlation of .53 and -.37 respectively with "corporate action for the public purpose". However, in the stepwise regression analysis, both variable do not cause much difference in the explaining variance. "Frequency of formal meetings" cause only .015% of the variance. This may due to its high correlation with "exposure to modernity".

The negative correlation of selflessness to "corporate action for public purpose" is very hard to interpreted. Thai leaders have the lowest score of this value comparing to the four countries of the ISVIP. For the Thai samples high selflessness among leaders bring less "corporate action for public purpose". So it seems that Thai local leaders initiate or support "corporate action for public purpose" because they think that it is the personal gain. It should also be pointed out that in the stepwise regression analysis, "selflessness" causes only .026% of the variance of "corporate action for public purpose".

Innovative Change

From the stepwise regression analysis, there are three important variables that influence "innovative change". They are education, age, and the value of "national commitment" These three variables

account for 61% of the variance of innovative change".

As for the influence from "national commitment", the pattern is similar to India. The ISVIP found that, in India, the degree of leaders' commitment to nation and the extent to which they can tolerate conflict seem crucial in determining whether their communities will be active in an innovative sense. From the discussion with many local leaders by the researcher, it seems that the local Thai leaders appreciate the "innovative change" not only because it is beneficial to the people, but also because it is something to be proud of on the national level.

It should be mentioned here also that the community wealth has the correlation of .39 with "innovative change". But in the stepwise analysis, it yields only .014% of the variance of "innovative change". However, it can be stated that the community wealth seems to have influence on the "innovative change" of the community also.

Conclusion

It has been proved, with the empirical evidence, that it is possible to predict the level of community activeness. The community with high level of "corporate action for public purpose" tend to have the local leaders with following characteristics:

1. Do not always travel to the capital city of Bangkok.
2. Be "big" physically.
3. Capable to avoid conflict.
4. Formally meet frequently.
5. Not too high in selflessness.
6. Not too high in educational level.

As for the second dimension of community activeness, "innovative change", the pattern is different. The leaders who could bring

faster pace of "innovative change" will tend to have following characteristics:

1. High level of education.
2. Young.
3. High sense of national commitment.
4. To the lesser extent than the above three characteristics, they should also be high in the following values: action propensity, change orientation, economic development, and honesty.

Also the income of the people in the community will also influence "innovative change". The richer the community, the more "innovative change".

Lastly, it should be pointed out that the findings of this research based on the data collected from communities in central Thailand. The patterns might be different in other regions. However, in regard to the leader values, it seems that the local leaders in Thailand have similar level of values especially when comparing with leaders of other countries. The Thai samples are 1,020 leaders from 40 rural communities in three regions.