

PRACTICE PRODUCTIVE AND PROTECTIVE WELFARE IN A THAI LOCAL ADMINISTRATION

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Abstract

Productive welfare model was coined several decades ago by Ian Holliday (2000). It has been introduced as a more ontologically appropriate model to many nations in East Asia and Southeast Asia, including Thailand. The productive welfare tends to encourage people to participate actively in labor market. However, it is not necessary to deny or neglect the protective welfare model. As the two models can be positively designed to support both economic growth and social equality. In Thailand, Ministry of Social Development and Human Security launched a program for promoting local administrations to organize the productive welfare with the belief that it will enhance human dignity. Among many local administrations, *Don Kaew* Subdistrict Administrative Organization, MaeRim, Chiang Mai practices the productive welfare model. The practice processes, however, reflect simultaneously both productive and protective welfare models. The highly effective Village Health Volunteers (VHV) and the determinant to the concepts of social democracy are some of the significant mechanism to create an integration of productive – protective welfare provisions. The practices of productive and protective welfare are to some extent to reduce inequalities, particularly, in the context of local administration.

Keywords: Productive welfare, protective welfare, reducing inequality, Thai local administration

Introduction

The famous typology of three worlds of welfare capitalism proposed by Esping-Andersen (1990) is highly accepted for applying to the most welfare systems in Europe and Western countries. Those in East and Southeast Asia, however, were not fitted well into the typology. Ian Holliday developed a more relevant welfare model for these countries – the productivist welfare

capitalism (Holliday, 2000). At the first time, the productivist welfare capitalism uplifted the significance of social policy among the East and Southeast Asian nations, later, the model has been extended to explain popularly the welfare capitalism around the world. The comparative study of John Hudson and Stefan Kühner (2009) as well as other scholars (Gough, 2007; Kühner, 2015) confirmed this global popularity.

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The productive and protective welfare models have been discussed mostly in the policy formulation level. The implementing or practicing of the models in the local administration level is important for the people living in the community but it is still limited. This paper aims to discuss a practicing of productive and protective welfare in a unique local administration in northern part of Thailand.

The first attempt to establish welfare state in 1932

Thailand or Siam had initiated the first social insurance scheme in 1932. The first attempt indicated the welfare ideology of Siam which implied a move towards social democracy at the time of the great revolution. The bill was introduced by Pridi Banomyong aimed to establish a beginning step to form foundation of universal welfare coverage in Siam. Pridi was the leader of the civilian faction, organized Siamese Revolution on June 24, 1932 (B.E. 2475). The lightning revolution by *Khana Ratsadorn* (or People's Party) abruptly ended 150 years of absolute monarchy. The assurance scheme, however, had to stop because the elite rejected for fearing of communist regime. They were unable to distinguish the differences between social democracy and the bolshevik idea. Or they might have known the differences but the fear of losing political benefit made them resist the first step of an attempt to root a welfare state in Siam. Pridi Banomyong had education background *docteur en droit* from Paris where social democracy thinking had been widely embraced.

The abolishment of the first social insurance scheme indicated the efforts to resist to the ideology of social democracy. The welfare ideology in Thailand even turned to root more deeply to the right side (see figure 1) when the first trickle-down national economic plan recommended by the World Bank experts was in place in 1961 (Nontapattamadul, 2014). Since then welfare ideology of Thailand embraced consequently residual model which encouraged economic growth and discouraged universal and social democratic - based welfare.

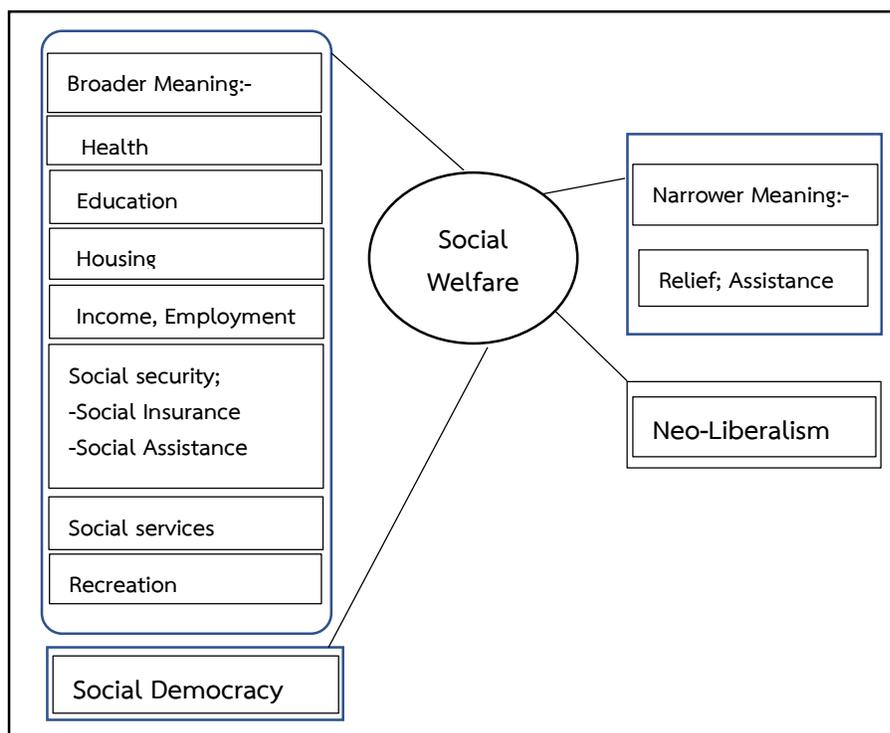
The introduction of productivist welfare capitalism by Holliday (2000) supports Thailand to carry on with the residual as well as neo-liberalist style of welfare. However, there was a little move to the left which was in the Thaksin government when the healthcare for all or 30 baht healthcare had been launched. The healthcare for all benefits more than 27 millions of Thais who never had accessibility before or had difficulty to the proper healthcare. Since then, every governments including the Thaksin's opponents still keep the scheme continued. However, the main social policies are mixed with a greater extent of the residual model rather than an institutional redistributive one. When some Thai policy makers come up with the productivist welfare model, they actually consider it as a tool for lightening the budget burden of the government and pressing those passive labors back into the labor market.

Productivist welfare model: A tool to maintain neo-liberalist of welfare?

The productivist welfare model has been questioned about its commitment to welfare for all the people. The emphasis more on production makes the model rather an instrument for improved productivity at the expense of lessening equally meeting human needs (Gilbert, 2004; Yang, 2016). Focusing on the productive welfare policy in

Korea, Gilbert contended that valuing of productive growth in the market is acceptable, however, the country's great challenge is to encourage "more than a handmaiden to the market economy". The critiques of Gilbert on the productivist welfare in Korea implies that the productivist policies are designed to support the neo-liberalist ideology of welfare while farther away the ideology of social democratic welfare (as illustrated by figure 1)

Figure 1
The two main directions of welfare ideology



(Source: K. Nontapattamadul, 2019, p. 18)

Productivist model: Strengthening foundations of social democratic welfare state

In the contrary, Kuhnle (2004) considered that the productivist welfare policies as launched in Korea would help strengthening the foundations of democratic and social rights of all citizens. The productivist welfare would help deepening its commitment to the state's roles to potentially move towards the Scandinavian or social democratic welfare state.

Kuhnle has positive outlooks upon the relationship between functions of productive and protective of welfare policies. The two welfare dimensions have been used to analyze social policy in many countries (Hudson, & Kühner, 2011, Rudra, 2007, Yang, 2016). These scholars support the idea that both productive and protective welfare policies can complement each other. It is not necessary to trade-off between the two.

They actually exist in most social welfare policies around the world. The comparative study of Hudson, & Kühner (2009) among 23 OECD nations confirmed the efforts to balance both of them in according to the different contexts. The researchers developed “the fuzzy set ideal type analysis” (FSITA) as a tool for the study. The results indicated the fact that many strong welfare states turn to increase the productive welfare while maintain fairly the protective model. It showed significant implications of balancing between the two in the most appropriate way.

Productivist – informal regime in Thailand

After the 1997 financial crisis, social welfare policy in Thailand has moved towards the welfare mix or “welfare pluralism” (Nontapattamadul, 2014). The 30 Bath healthcare introduced by Thaksin government has been accepted as a move towards universal access of near-free healthcare (Gough, 2007). The budget for other protection welfare policies, however, still limited. The Thai welfare mix is characterized by traditional – local arrangements, family, kinship, charity, temples, as well as local administrations. The Thai local administrations have increased their roles in social welfare provisions. On July 2019, Ministry of Social Development and Human Security launched a four regions workshop program for promoting the productive welfare provisions among the local administrations. The workshop program was an intend to promote and support technically all the local administrations to establish productive welfare practices for their population. MSDHS believed that productive welfare program is appropriately implemented and benefitted for local people. The best practice of Don Kaew Sub-District Administrative Organization has been presented to encourage the participants from the 4 Thai regions; the Northern, the Northeastern, the Southern, and the Central plus Bangkok Administration. The presentations of the best practice in Don Kaew Sub-District Administration actually reflected not only the productive welfare but also the protective welfare practices.

Don Kaew welfare: From womb to tomb

At the MSDHS productive welfare promotion workshops, Chief Administrator of Don Kaew Sub-district Administrative Organization, Dr. Ubon Yawai-nawichai discussed the ideology of the Don Kaew welfare provision by referring to Professor Dr. Puey Ungpakorn's article; *the Quality of Life of a South East Asian : A Chronical of Hope from Womb to Tomb (Bangkok Post, 18th Oct. 1973)*. The article contains the same idea of Fabian philosophy of "From Cradle to Grave" which demands the move towards social democratic welfare state. The idea of "From Womb to Tomb" as well as "From Cradle to Grave" reflect the strong aspiration to move into the bigger box on the left side (as shown in the figure 1). However, the Thai economic development planning has been strenuously emphasized on a rapid economic growth since 1957 when the group of the World Bank (IBRD) consultants suggested the Thai to establish the first National Economic Plan (Nontapattamadul, 2014). Believing strongly in trickle-down effect, the interpretation of social welfare has been shaped in a limited notion for the sake of maximizing the economic growth model. It caused the very limited social welfare budget as well as widened the gap between the rich and the poor. The more it increases the efforts for rapid economic growth, the more it narrows the meaning of social welfare, and the less it concerns for the universal welfare coverage (figure 1.).

Implementing productive welfare and "From Womb to Tomb" in Don Kaew

Many scholars pointed out that the productive welfare tends to encourage neo-liberalist model while ignore social democratic welfare state model (Gilbert, 2004) but the practice productive welfare in Don Kaew SAO which referred to "From Womb to Tomb" implies the philosophy of social democracy. Dr. Ubon Yawai-nawichai explained how Don Kaew SAO arranged welfare practices covering the people's needs of all ages. The Chief Administrator raised in detail many examples. The first one was the case of a new mom with willingness to breastfeed her new baby but her fatigue body could not produce enough milk or her baby was too weak to suck it out. The hungry baby cried. It even worsened the mother's anxiety. The father of the baby who was former high rank official couldn't do anything but felt so down. The mother needed some help. Therefore, by home visiting, village health volunteers of Don Kaew SAO suggested her and her husband some tips. The lists of herbal medicine were introduced to both of them.

The most sensitive part came up with the sincere suggestion about practical lactation aid. The village health volunteers observed that the baby's muscle was not strong enough to suck milk out of the mother's breast so they suggested the father to try to suck it first. When the milk began to flow out then the baby could suck it. However, the father thought that this practical lactation tip from the volunteers was too humiliated for him. The complexity of Thai ways of life mostly reflects the

rich differences of interpretations. Many Thais keep avoid talking about explicitly sexual behaviors particularly with those unfamiliar. Feeling like he was insulting, he then got angry and reacted by using verbally attack them.

The village health volunteers with well-trained of humanistic approaches, apologized and politely left their home. Anyway, in the evening, after calm-down, the father finally tried the tip and it astonishingly worked well. The baby then had breastfed properly. He phone-called the Don Kaew VHV to apologize and thank them. The practice reflects that fundamental of the Don Kaew productive welfare is the emphasizing on values of human dignity.

The second example was the case of single father who had committed to suicide. He had two children to take care when his wife left him for a new husband. He had no land, no job, no income while one of his children was person with disability and the other had depression the same as him. Don Kaew VHV team came to talk to him. The man felt distressed but still he showed a sign of willingness to do anything for self-reliance. Then VHV team came up with the proposal for him, a plan to allocate a vacant land, the owners had to pay taxes to the Don Kaew SAO unless donated to the poor to temporary used it. The Don Kaew SAO arranged him the land and gave him vegetable seeds. He was very happy. He could grow and sell produce for living as well as take care of his children on the land. The owner of the land was free from the land tax burden while the single father had temporary used the land for living. This arrangement was

re-allocation of the resource and to some extent a re-distribution from the rich to the poor. It would be practice of productive and protective welfare at the same time. The VHV of Don Kaew SAO did not devalue the man dignity by giving him the residual form of social assistance but rather an ontologically appropriate opportunity to stand by his own capacities. The man and his two children had been protected their rights to be productive.

Dr.Ubon Yawai-nawichai raised the third case she involved. It was teenage gangsters who called themselves “Samurai Gang”. The word “Samurai” did not mean an honor high class of Japanese nobles in the ancient time but just simply referred to the swords they used competingly and randomly to attack people, trees and public property while rode their motorcycles. They actually had their own way to show an inner aggressive energy. They however disturbed the peacefulness around Don Kaew communities. The Chief Administrator of Don Kaew SAO with a great assistance from multidisciplinary team, teachers and psychologists who approached the Samurai Gang. After open-minded discussion among the gang members, they came up with an alternative plan aiming to transform their inner aggression into an appropriately positive action.

The teens told the team that they preferred playing music but had no money to buy guitars, drums, keyboards, and other instruments. The team agreed to support their dream. With the great helping hands from people around the community. Some kindly donated guitars, drums, and money for the Samurai Gang. The teens

enjoyed playing these music instruments. Later they talentedly built up a band. Don Kaew SAO even provided some place to serve them as a music room for practicing. Then they quitted Samurai Gang and turned to be a band. They were excellent in music. They even made incomes from the activity. Normally, this kind of gang should be arrested by the police and ended up in some juvenile observation and protection center. This example therefore reflected the productive way to arrange an appropriate solution with strong community spirit of help without any authoritarian approach. The enhancement of human dignity played the important role for bringing back peacefulness as well as transforming a group of aggressive teens to be a productive music band.

The fourth example was about an attempt to re-establish social inclusion for a vulnerable group. Don Kaew SAO received the lists of people with disability from central government. The lists were to prepare for providing allowances for PWDs. According to the lists, within 10 villages there were only 47 PWDs. The administrators of Don Kaew SAO were skeptic with the numbers. There was probably some of PWDs who excluded from the lists. Therefore, a number of volunteers were mobilized to re-check every household in the subdistrict. The result found that more than 100 PWDs should be included. Most of them had no ID card. The volunteers then included all of them into the lists and arranged the ID card so that their rights were protected. They also could access to other programs such as occupation for PWD funds, training programs,

home repairment. This practice is an advocate intervention and protects the PWDs rights.

The fifth example was the Innovation Community Health School for the Elderly or *Rongrien Homhug*. Don Kaew ICHS included community hospital and rehabilitation health center. The ICHS also organized volunteers to home visit the bedridden elderly. Many volunteer members of this group were business person from various firms. They occasionally invited Buddhist monks to visit bedridden so that they could make merit and listen to sermon. This activity was to encourage spirituality welfare for the less opportunity of bedridden elderly.

In addition to spiritual welfare, Don Kaew SAO took special care for the end-of-life elderly to be prepared, to know how to write the living will, and to leave peacefully in a fulfilled human dignity. The cremation allowances were to support the family of the pass away. Even in the funeral, Don Kaew SAO supported the no alcohol, no tobacco, and no gambling in the ceremony which traditionally did before. This implied the productive and protective results of the policy activities.

Apart from that, the Don Kaew SAO supported women grouping to produce fermented sour pork, a local northern preserved food for sale in local markets. This was a community enterprise which generated incomes for the group members. Despite that this income generating activity creates only moderate financial benefit, it serves to some degree the productive function as well as sense of belongings among the community members.

Discussion

Productivist practicing in Don Kaew: Informal with social democratic values

The welfare practices of Don Kaew SAO were definitely relevant to Gough (2007) analysis of the productivist welfare model in Thailand as an informal regime. Don Kaew productive welfare informal regime refers to flexible processes where the policy issues emerge or the needs and demands of people exist. The philosophy of social democracy interpreted from the significant discourse “From Womb to Tomb” is used as the foundation of welfare practices. The discourse however is flexibly adapted into the micro level existing in everyday life of the people. When the Don Kaew SAO concerns about the social exclusion issues and put great efforts to search for those excluded PWDs, this reflects the advocate action to protect the rights of the vulnerable. This protecting action definitely is based on social democratic value.

Re-establishing social inclusion reflects both protective and productive welfare

Allowance for PWDs is a policy intended to assist person with disability to sustain their living. The amount is not many but for those who are in difficult situations it certainly supports them the will to gain ontological security. The act of including vulnerable groups within the entitle list is a protective welfare practice. Furthermore, this is not only an act for giving entitlement back for them but also a sense of human rights protection. And the

result of it benefits will support the productivist welfare regime. At least, those re-included into the entitle list are saved from the worsen difficulties that dragged them down into the destitution. Without the re-establishing social inclusion, the vulnerable groups are easily to be stigmatized and dehumanized. They are inevitably pushed to fall into the deep abyss without any safety net.

Social inclusion is an important foundation process to establish welfare state to protect every member of the society from the any uncertainty affected to their well-being.

Inclusive society is defined as a society for all, in which every individual has an active role to play. Such a society is based on fundamental values of equity, equality, social justice, and human rights and freedoms, as well as on the principles of tolerance and embracing diversity. (UNESCO. 2012 cited in SBS, 2019, p. 11)

The research report commissioned by SBS and Deloitte Access Economics confirmed the fact that social inclusion yields economic benefits at least 5 significant areas: increased productivity in the work place, improved employment outcomes, improvement in mental and physical health, reduced cost of social services, and promoted inclusive growth (SBS, 2019, p.19). The Don Kaew SAO protective practice to confirm no any PWD left behind is actually social inclusion that values the equal rights and human dignity of vulnerable groups to participate in productive welfare. The report

supports the relationship of practice protective and productive welfare in the local level.

The value of respecting human dignity in productive welfare

The interventions of village health volunteers with the Samurai Gang are obviously based on empathic understanding and respecting their human dignity. They intend to avoid authoritative legal enforcement. The inappropriate behaviors of the gang were redefined in positive way. Despite the fact that these teenagers could be punished and even put into juvenile observation and protection center or the kid jail (from the teen's perception). And once a teen enters to the juvenile center, he or she will always end up with losing opportunity to grow up in a proper way. They often learn from each other live experiences that tend to shape them into inappropriate ways. At least, they lost their liberty. The story showed that VHVs plus collaborations from the community rendered the teens real opportunity to preoccupy with music which later productively rewards them very well. The philosophy underpinnings the practice is humanistic thinking that relates fundamentally to social democracy. And to some extent it reflects the nature of protective welfare practices.

It is the value of respecting human dignity that challenges the authoritarian way to solve the inappropriate behavior. The story reflects the mentality of the community as they participate creatively for changing the gang into the music band. It is also interesting because generally Thai social structure is highly hierarchy and authoritarianism is

widely accepted (Hays, 2014; Thongsawang, Rehbein, & Chantavanich, 2020). The teenagers were supposed to be punished and put in the jail which was easier way the authoritarian Thai would tend to do. Therefore, when the Don Kaew SAO and the community expressed their values of human dignity, it challenged the mainstream mentality of the tradition Thai social system. This implies contestation and reflects the power of deconstruction which gradually transform to the social democratic values. The more local administrations strengthen the value of respecting human dignity/human rights, the more the deconstruction power would overcome the authoritarian practices.

Skepticism about neo-liberalist stances

According to Gilbert's critiques (2004) on Korean productivist welfare, it is designed to maintain the narrower meanings of neo-liberalist ideology. It moves farther to the right side (Figure 1.) and implies lesser concern about equality. The productive welfare aims to accelerate economic growth therefore it put lesser financial budget into social protection plans. The productivist model has low level of direct redistribution (Aspalter, 2011, p.741 cited in Yang, 2016, p.13). The purposes of redistribution, in the light of social democracy, are to allocate sharing of economic growth benefits to all of state members as well as to reduce the disparity between the rich and the poor. This implies the belief that the higher the achievement of the purposes, the more effective social protection will create strengths to the whole society.

The analysis of Gilbert (2004) is true when policy formulators in Thailand concern only about lessening the government's budget burdens particularly in social welfare. In 2019, MSDHS had an attempt to propose the initiated productive welfare policy to the Thai cabinet. The main rationale was to encourage participation of welfare recipients into the labor market as well as reduce the budget burden. However, high administrators considered also that motivating the welfare recipients to work productively is simultaneously enhancing the people's human dignity. Those who can change themselves from passive participants into active workers will finally fulfil their human needs as well as human values. While the Thai cabinet still reluctantly accept the policy initiated, MSDHS made decision to implement the productive welfare policy by using mezzo – micro approaches. Fortunately, a number of SAOs including Don Kaew have already practiced to some extent the productive welfare in their locations.

The scholars' skepticism whether the productive welfare would give up equality and support only economic growth can be examined by the extent of redistribution is planned and regulated. Nevertheless, Thai context has limited mechanism for direct redistribution which exists generally among the western welfare states. The indirect redistribution plays greater roles in Thai society.

Indirect redistribution made the productive welfare informal

The productivist – informal welfare is the true color of social policy (Yang, 2016, p.13) which fits ontologically to the Thai welfare pluralism. The nature of low level of direct redistribution determines characteristic of its welfare pluralism. The example of depressed single father committed to suicide in Don Kaew confirms the indirect redistributive welfare practicing. For the local level, Don Kaew has an ordinance to tax those who possess larger lands with no any productivity. The land tax ordinance is not progressive rate. It does not aim to reduce the gap between the rich and the poor but to prevent wildfire. However, Don Kaew administrators provides tax-exemption for those who allow the needy people to use temporarily their land for living. The depressed father was willing to plant vegetable and grow rice in the land. He later recovered from depression and was able to gain incomes for raising his three children. This is a practice of productive welfare. And it is also pragmatically indirect redistribution which is implemented in a local level and practiced in accordance with Gough's analysis Thailand informal pattern of productive welfare (Gough, 2007).

If the VHV's just strictly focused on residual model, they might have provided merely a little pension and sent his three children into orphanage home. It would have been the narrower meaning of welfare arrangement at the right side of the figure 1. The "too little and too late" or band-aid approach should neither consider as productive nor

protective. It is rather punishment for the poor. The orphanage home might have protected these children in some extent. But it had disrupted lots of potential for human development. The children should stay with their own parent with an appropriate support from the local community. Therefore, the VHVs of Don Kaew alternative decision-making with indirect redistribution would be considered an appropriate of practice in the lights of both productive and protective welfare.

It is notable that the underlying ideology of welfare practice among Don Kaew VHVs was humanistic values. They understand and respect well on human dignity of the distressed father. Instead of giving temporary assistance, they provide alternative ways so as to create “real opportunity” for productive welfare of this vulnerable person.

Indirect redistribution as a new redistribution

For the term “real opportunity” constructed by Anthony Giddens (1998) is interpreted alternatively as new redistribution (Cammack, 2004, p. 161). The new redistribution covers not only property, wealth, and material but also possibility or opportunity for any member of society. Based on this interpretation, the depressed father received not only land and seeds but also a real opportunity to change his life in a better way. At the beginning, he had been committed suicide but when the Don Kaew health volunteers and the social development worker offered him a little piece of land to grow vegetables. He was glad to gain incomes enough to raise his three children. The arrangement encouraged him to gain accessibility to

real opportunity. This is Don Kaew indirect redistribution which enabled the father to income security. This indirect redistribution built up real opportunity practicing in the local Thai administration. And then it implies that protective welfare is able to provide at the same time of productive welfare practicing.

Productivist welfare alone cannot reduce the inequality

Inequality has many dimensions. Researchers used the model of a pyramid to present income inequality in Thailand. The top of the pyramid comprises the only one percent but extremely rich equipping with supreme economic and political power, while the rest of the pyramid is those who have less or no assets (Phongpaichit, & Baker, 2016; Thongsawang, Rehbein, & Chantavanich, 2020). Inequality causes many problems, crime, corruption, teen pregnancy, trafficking in person, insecurity in life, and access to education, as well as the political conflicts (Jitsuchon, 2020a; Phongpaichit, 2016). To mitigate inequality, scholars proposed policies which guarantee people rights and encourage people to defend their rights, their property, and their opportunities against injustice, discrimination and exploitation (Jitsuchon, 2020a; Phongpaichit, 2016). Thailand does not have progressive property or wealth taxes, nor really progressive personal income tax. Furthermore, taxation policy reform which includes assets and wealth taxes is highly necessary (Jitsuchon, 2020b; Phongpaichit, 2016). The strengthening of direct

redistribution is promising mechanism to overcome the persisting inequality.

However, the main function of productive welfare is indirect redistribution. Therefore, the productive welfare alone cannot support the mitigate inequality. The practice of productive welfare in local administration as the case of Don Kaew SAO certainly has the protective welfare function included. The concept of social democracy plays an important role in balancing productive and protective welfare models. Social inclusion as well as arranging real opportunity also make the indirect redistributive mechanism protect people welfare well.

The practices however are implemented within the local administration. It cannot claim to promise the same results at the national level where the inequality has larger scope and more complexity. The inequality at the national level needs greater effort and mechanism to reform direct redistribution.

Conclusion

Productive welfare model originated from an awareness of the true color of welfare policies in Asia and Southeast Asia are different from the Western world. Some scholars critiqued the model was designed to maintain neo-liberalist style of welfare. The others considered that it supports the foundation to develop social democratic welfare state. The Don Kaew SAO has practiced both productive and protective welfare at the local level. The actual case examples reflected well balance of the two. The most important things are the related

ideologies, the strengths of volunteers, and community participation that effectively create human dignity, social inclusion, real opportunity, and indirect redistribution. These practices reflect both productive and protective welfare implementing in the local level. The inequality at the national level, however, demand the more strenuous policy reform and the political movement.

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