The Development of Place-Based Learner Competencies in the Dok Khamtai Community, Phayao Province, Thailand

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ABSTRACT:
This study aimed to (1) examine place-based learner competencies based on the Community Capitals Framework in Dok Khamtai Sub-district, Phayao Province; (2) identify approaches for developing place-based learner competencies within the Dok Khamtai community; and (3) evaluate the feasibility and utility of the proposed competency development approaches. The study employed a multi-phase research design that integrated both qualitative and quantitative methods. Data were collected through semi-structured interviews and assessment forms. The findings indicated unanimous agreement among all five experts, with 100 percent endorsing the proposed framework as appropriate and suitable for implementation. Five core place-based learner competencies were identified for the Dok Khamtai community:
(1) Rootedness and Understanding of Dok Khamtai Local Identity;
(2) Leadership and Community Problem-Solving in Dok Khamtai;
(3) Occupational Development and Community Entrepreneurship in Dok Khamtai; (4) Communicating Dok Khamtai Identity to Society; and
(5) Coexistence and Responsibility toward the Dok Khamtai Community. In addition, ten approaches for developing place-based learner competencies were proposed for implementation within Dok Khamtai Sub-district, Phayao Province.

Keywords: Place-Based Learner Competencies, Dok Khamtai Community, Phayao Province.

1. Introduction

Education that is meaningfully grounded in local contexts has become an increasingly important focus of contemporary educational reform, particularly in communities where cultural heritage, indigenous knowledge, and natural resources serve as key assets for sustainable development. Dok Khamtai Sub-district, located

in Phayao Province, Northern Thailand, represents such a community, characterized by its historical significance, Lanna cultural heritage, ecological diversity, and rich local wisdom. Despite these assets, formal education has not always effectively integrated community capitals into learning processes, resulting in limited opportunities for learners to engage with and appreciate their local identity and cultural heritage. Place-Based Education (PBE), as conceptualized by Sobel (2004), emphasizes learning that is rooted in the local environment, culture, economy, and history of a community. By connecting educational experiences to real-world local contexts, PBE enhances learner engagement while fostering a sense of belonging, civic responsibility, and commitment to cultural sustainability.

Dok Khamtai Sub-district, located in Phayao Province, Thailand, comprises 10 villages administered by the Dok Khamtai Municipality and the Dok Khamtai Sub-district Administrative Organization. The sub-district has a population of approximately 4,587 residents living in about 1,590 households. It is characterized by a rich diversity of natural resources, cultural heritage, and indigenous knowledge. The majority of residents are engaged in agriculture and maintain livelihoods that are closely connected to local resources and intergenerationally transmitted knowledge. Community members apply indigenous wisdom in agricultural production, resource management, and the development of local products, contributing to both economic development and the preservation of cultural heritage. The sub-district is also home to several important religious and cultural sites that serve as spiritual and social centers for the community, reflecting the enduring influence of Lanna art and culture in the region. Notable sites include Wat Anumatti Wong, Wat Phra That Pho Ngam, Wat Don Chai, and Wat Saphan Kham (Dok Khamtai Sub-district Administrative Organization, 2026).

Among the significant traditions of Dok Khamtai Sub-district are the Than Nam Mo ceremony, the Kong Khao Haek ceremony, and the Than Tod tradition as well as an ancient practice imbued with compassion and generosity, observed each November. During this tradition, community members anonymously leave household goods, dried foodstuffs, or monetary donations at the doorsteps of the impoverished, the elderly, or the infirm after nightfall, embodying a spirit of altruistic giving and social solidarity. Additional cultural and heritage assets include the pottery workshop at Ban San Chok Pok, fish basket weaving at Ban San Chok Pok, the Hae Cham Nam Chok fishing net tradition, bai si ceremonial offerings at Ban San Pa Pao and natural study attractions. Notable local culinary specialties include Dok Khamtai chili paste (nam phrik), Khao Gan Jin and Khao Nom Piang Klang Paeng rice cakes. (Dok Khamtai Sub-district Administrative Organization, 2026)

Sustainable Development Goal 4 (SDG 4) emphasizes the importance of ensuring inclusive and equitable quality education and promoting lifelong learning opportunities for all. Within this framework, local-level educational management serves as a critical mechanism for connecting learning experiences with the history, culture, indigenous knowledge, natural resources, and developmental needs of the community. Community-based learning enables learners to derive meaningful learning experiences, apply knowledge and skills in real-life contexts, and develop a sense of belonging, pride, and responsibility toward their local community (Aldhafeeri & Alotaibi 2022; Channuwong & Kantatian,2012).This perspective is consistent with Duangjaidee (2024), who argued that educational institutions should draw upon the unique characteristics and resources of their communities to design learning experiences that enhance problem-solving skills, foster civic consciousness, and creatively utilize indigenous knowledge to generate value for community economic development and sustainable growth.

A widely recognized framework for community development is the Community Capitals Framework (CCF), proposed by Emery and Flora (2006). The framework identifies seven forms of capital that contribute to community development and well-being:

1. **Natural Capital** refers to environmental and ecological resources, including forests, rivers, lakes, wildlife, soil, and natural landscapes.
2. **Cultural Capital** refers to cultural heritage, traditions, beliefs, values, languages, and intergenerational knowledge that shape community identity.
3. **Human Capital** refers to the knowledge, skills, abilities, health, leadership capacity, and resource-access capabilities of individuals.
4. **Social Capital** refers to social networks, relationships, community organizations, trust, and a sense of belonging among community members.
5. **Political Capital** refers to access to decision-making processes, influence, leadership, and the capacity to mobilize resources and advocate for community interests.
6. **Financial Capital** refers to monetary resources, investments, grants, philanthropic contributions, and other forms of economic wealth available within the community.
7. **Built Capital** refers to physical infrastructure and facilities, such as schools, roads, water supply systems, public buildings, and communication networks, that support community well-being and development (Duangjaidee, 2024).

The Community Capitals Framework provides a holistic perspective on community development by emphasizing the interrelationships among multiple forms of capital. It supports participatory approaches to understanding community contexts, identifying local strengths and resources, and collaboratively addressing community challenges. Consequently, the framework offers a valuable foundation for designing place-based educational initiatives that connect learning with community assets and promote sustainable development.

The development of place-based learner competencies in Dok Khamtai Sub-district, Phayao Province, is therefore of considerable educational significance. It seeks to enable learners to acquire knowledge through authentic community contexts, appreciate the value and potential of local resources, and apply acquired knowledge, skills, and desired characteristics to their daily lives, future careers, and the sustainable development of their community. Learning experiences grounded in local resources, indigenous knowledge, and community identity can foster learners' sense of pride and belonging while deepening their awareness of the importance of community assets and cultural heritage. Such experiences also encourage learners to apply their learning creatively to the development of local products, services, and innovations that contribute to improved quality of life and sustainable community development. By connecting classroom learning with real-world community contexts, place-based education provides meaningful and relevant learning opportunities that strengthen learners' engagement with their community. In doing so, it serves as an important bridge between formal education and lived experience, ensuring that learning is both contextually relevant and capable of generating positive social, cultural, and economic outcomes for the community.

2. Research Objectives

1) To examine Place-Based Learner Competencies Based on the Community Capitals Framework in Dok Khamtai Sub-district, Phayao Province

(2) To identify approaches to developing place-based learner competencies within the Dok Khamtai community

(3) To evaluate the feasibility and the utility of the competency development approaches for learners in Dok Khamtai Sub-district, Phayao Province.

3. Research Methodology

Research Design

This study employed a multi-phase method integrating both qualitative and quantitative data collection procedures. The research was conducted in four sequential phases, as detailed below.

Phase 1: Examination of Community Capitals in Dok Khamtai Sub-district, Phayao Province, Using the Community Capitals Framework **(**CCF**)**.

Phase 2: Investigation of Place-Based Learner Competencies in Dok Khamtai Sub-district, Phayao Province.

Phase 3: Development of a Draft Framework of Approaches for Place-Based Learner Competency Development in Dok Khamtai Sub-district, Phayao Province

Phase 4: Evaluation of the Feasibility and Utility of the Proposed Approaches for Place-Based Learner Competency Development in Dok Khamtai Sub-district, Phayao Province.

Summary of Research Design by Phase

Phase	Objective	Participants (n)	Instrument / Analysis
Phase 1	Examine community capitals via CCF	5 experts (Experts in local affairs, Lanna community, public administration, and education)	Document synthesis / Expert panel / Frequency & percentage
Phase 2	Examined place-based learner competencies	5 key informants (Local leader, Monk and administrators)	Focus Group Interview / Content Analysis
Phase 3	Develop draft developmental approaches	7 experts & stakeholders (Local leader, academic teacher)	CCF documentation / Focus Group Discussion
Phase 4	Evaluate the feasibility and utility of approaches	21 teachers & stakeholders	Assessment form / Arithmetic mean

Research Findings

1. Place-Based Learner Competencies Based on the Community Capitals Framework within **the community of Dok Khamtai Sub-district, Phayao Province**

The evaluation conducted by all five subject-matter experts yielded unanimous agreement, with 100% of the panel concurring that the proposed framework, comprising six dimensions: (1) Natural Capital, (2) Cultural Capital, (3) Human Capital, (4) Social Capital, (5) Financial Capital, and (6) Built Capital, was suitable for implementation. However, Political Capital was not supported for inclusion in the framework.

The study identified five core place-based learner competency domains for the Dok Khamtai Sub-district community, as follows:

Summary of Place-Based Learner Competency Domains

Competency	Domain	Core Focus
1	Rootedness and Understanding	History, culture, traditions,

	of Local Identity	indigenous knowledge, community capitals
2	Leadership and Community Problem-Solving	Civic leadership, participatory planning, collaborative action
3	Occupational Development and Community Entrepreneurship	Value creation, production, marketing, sustainable innovation
4	Communicating Local Identity to Society	Storytelling, media literacy, technology, multi-level communication
5	Coexistence and Community Responsibility	Mutual respect, civic participation, resource conservation, social cohesion

2. Approaches to developing place-based learner competencies in Dok Khamtai Sub-district, Phayao Province

Approaches to Developing Place-Based Learner Competencies

The study identified ten approaches for developing place-based learner competencies within the community of Dok Khamtai Sub-district, Phayao Province, as follows:

Approach 1: Learning Local History Through Direct Field Experience Aligned with Competency 1

Activities are organized to enable learners to independently explore, investigate, and document the historical origins of the Dok Khamtai community through field visits to ancient sites and significant temples, including Wat Anumatti Wong, Wat Phra That Pho Ngam, and Wat Don Chai, as well as through structured interviews with local wisdom holders and elderly community members. This approach aims to foster historical awareness and cultivate a deep sense of pride in the community's cultural heritage.

Approach 2: Conservation and Perpetuation of Local Traditions Aligned with Competencies 1 and 5

Learners are encouraged to actively participate in significant community traditions, including the Than Tod Ceremony, the Than Nam Mo Ceremony, and the Kong Khao Haek Ceremony, by engaging in the planning and organization of activities, documenting indigenous knowledge, and transmitting cultural values to future generations.

Approach 3: Youth Leadership Projects for Community Problem-Solving Aligned with Competency 2

Learners' leadership capacities are developed through authentic community-based problem-solving projects, such as natural resource management in mixed deciduous forests and elder care initiatives within the sub-district. Through these projects, learners engage in problem analysis, planning, and the implementation of activities in collaboration with community organizations, including the Dok Khamtai Municipality and the Sub-district Administrative Organization. This approach aims to strengthen leadership skills, foster civic responsibility, and enhance learners' capacity to contribute to community development.

Approach 4: Creative Community Product Development Aligned with Competency 3

Integrated learning experiences are designed to enable learners to apply local indigenous knowledge, such as pottery making at Ban San Chok Pok, fish basket weaving, and the preparation of Dok Khamtai chili paste, to develop value-added products. Learners also

engage in marketing planning and cost management to enhance the economic potential and sustainability of community-based products.

Approach 5: Promotion of Community-Based Tourism Aligned with Competencies 3 and 4

Learners are trained as junior tour guides to present community attractions, including the Dok Khamtai Center for Plant Genetic Conservation Project under the Royal Initiative of Her Royal Highness Princess Maha Chakri Sirindhorn, as well as various cultural heritage sites. This approach aims to develop communication skills, foster an entrepreneurial mindset, and enhance learners' capacity to generate income from community capitals through sustainable tourism activities.

Approach 6: Communicating Community Identity Through Digital Media Aligned with Competency 4

Learners are supported in producing digital media content, including short-form videos, community documentaries, and social media posts, to showcase the stories, indigenous knowledge, local culinary specialties, and traditions of Dok Khamtai to audiences at both the local and national levels. This approach aims to strengthen digital communication skills, promote community identity, and enhance learners' ability to disseminate local knowledge through contemporary media platforms.

Approach 7: Volunteer and Community Service Projects Aligned with Competency 5

Learners are supported in organizing and participating in volunteer activities, such as elder care, environmental conservation, and assistance for disadvantaged community members, in the spirit of the Than Tod tradition. This approach aims to cultivate compassion, civic-mindedness, and a sense of social responsibility in accordance with the values and way of life of the Dok Khamtai community.

Approach 8: Integration of Home, Temple, School, and Community Aligned with Competency 5

A collaborative partnership is established among families, religious institutions, schools, and community organizations to jointly organize learning activities. This integrated approach enables learners to acquire knowledge and values from key social institutions while fostering a deep understanding and genuine appreciation of the identity, culture, and values of the Dok Khamtai community.

Approach 9: Developing Community Entrepreneurship Skills Through Place-Based Marketing Aligned with Competency 3

Learners are encouraged to develop and manage small-scale entrepreneurial ventures based on local products, such as Khao Nom Piang Klang Paeng rice cakes and other indigenous knowledge-based products. They engage in both online and offline marketing activities to promote these products, generate income, and contribute to the sustainable growth of the community economy. This approach aims to strengthen entrepreneurial skills, financial literacy, and learners' capacity to create economic value from local resources.

Approach 10: Student-Led Community Research Aligned with Competencies 1, 2, and 4

Learners independently conduct small-scale community research projects on topics of local significance, such as the transformation of indigenous knowledge, natural resource management challenges, and the transmission of traditional practices. They collect and analyze data, draw conclusions, and present their findings to community stakeholders. This approach promotes participatory engagement, strengthens research and communication skills, and supports evidence-based community development.

3. The feasibility and the utility of the competency development approaches for learners in Dok Khamtai Sub-district, Phayao Province.

The assessment results revealed that, in overall terms, the approaches to developing place-based learner competencies in the community of Dok Khamtai Sub-district, Phayao Province, received a mean

feasibility score at the highest level ($\bar{x} = 4.63$). The approach with the highest mean was Approach 8: Integration of Home, Temple, School, and Community ($\bar{x} = 4.81$), while the approach with the lowest mean was Approach 3: Youth Leadership Project for Community Problem-Solving ($\bar{x} = 4.33$). With regard to utility, the overall mean was likewise at the highest level ($\bar{x} = 4.82$). The approach with the highest mean was Approach 1: Learning Local History Through Direct Field Experience ($\bar{x} = 4.95$), while the approach with the lowest mean score was Approach 3 : Youth Leadership Project for Community Problem-Solving ($\bar{x} = 4.62$).

Discussion

The research findings demonstrate that all ten approaches to developing place-based learner competencies in Dok Khamtai Sub-district, Phayao Province, are consistent with the principles of Place-Based Education (PBE). According to Sobel (2004), PBE is an educational approach that positions the local community as the foundation of the curriculum, with the primary aim of strengthening learners' connections to the places, cultures, economies, and histories that shape their lived experiences. These approaches are also aligned with SDG Target 4.7, which seeks to ensure that, by 2030, all learners acquire the knowledge and skills necessary to promote sustainable development. This includes education for sustainable development and sustainable lifestyles, human rights, gender equality, a culture of peace and non-violence, global citizenship, and an appreciation of cultural diversity and the contribution of culture to sustainable development (United Nations, 2015; Khan et al., 2025). This alignment is particularly evident in Approaches 1, 2, and 10, which engage learners in field-based historical investigations, the preservation of local traditions, and student-led community research. Through these experiences, learners develop a deeper understanding of local history, culture, and community identity while fostering a strong sense of belonging and attachment to the Dok Khamtai community. Such outcomes reflect the central goals of Place-Based Education by connecting learning directly to local contexts and promoting meaningful engagement with community life.

Furthermore, approaches 3, 7, and 8, which emphasize leadership development and community service, align closely with Gruenewald's (2003) concept of the Critical Pedagogy of Place. Gruenewald argued that education should promote "reinhabitation," a process through which learners come to view themselves as integral members of their communities and assume responsibility for community well-being and development. This process is fostered through critical problem analysis, participatory planning, and collaborative action with community organizations. As a result, learners develop leadership capacities, civic-mindedness, and a sense of social responsibility, all of which are deeply embedded in the values and traditions of the Dok Khamtai community.

With respect to Approaches 4 and 9, which focus on community product development and entrepreneurship promotion, the findings are consistent with Smith's (2002) assertion that effective place-based education should bridge indigenous knowledge and entrepreneurial competencies, enabling learners to transform cultural capital into sustainable economic value. This is reflected in learners' application of traditional knowledge, such as pottery making at Ban San Chok Pok, the preparation of Dok Khamtai chili paste, and the development of other products that embody local identity, to create value-added goods and services. Through these activities, learners not only develop entrepreneurial and financial management skills but also recognize the importance of balancing economic development with social and environmental responsibility.

Approaches 5 and 6, which promote community-based tourism and the communication of local identity through digital media, align with the findings of Flanagan et al. (2019), who demonstrated that place-based educational experiences in which learners serve as representatives of their communities to public

audiences contribute significantly to the development of communication skills, local pride, and active citizenship competencies. These approaches also reflect the principles of the area-based education policy framework promoted by the Equitable Education Fund of Thailand (EEF, 2023), which aims to address educational inequities and reduce disparities in Phayao Province through the development of learner competencies that are responsive to community context and identity. By engaging learners in authentic communication and community engagement activities, these approaches strengthen learners' capacity to communicate local knowledge, promote community assets, and contribute to sustainable local development.

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Conclusion

This study demonstrates that a community-grounded, place-based competency framework can be systematically developed through the integration of the Community Capitals Framework and participatory research methods. The five competency domains and ten developmental approaches derived from the Dok Khamtai community provide a potentially replicable approach for other communities seeking to align educational outcomes with local identity, resources, and aspirations.

The findings also suggest that place-based competency development can serve as an effective mechanism for strengthening the connections among education, community development, and cultural sustainability. By drawing upon local capitals and engaging diverse community stakeholders in the educational process, the framework promotes learning experiences that are meaningful, context-responsive, and relevant to the needs of the community.

Recommendations for the Application of Research Findings

The findings of this study on approaches to developing place-based learner competencies in the community of Dok Khamtai Sub-district, Phayao Province, may be applied to the concrete advancement of local-level education across three principal dimensions: (1) local curriculum development, (2) contextually responsive instructional management, and (3) the promotion of learner identity.

Recommendations for Future Research

1.1 A study should be conducted to examine the development of place-based learner competencies across the Dok Khamtai community at the district level.

1.2 Research should be undertaken to investigate mechanisms for income generation within the Dok Khamtai community through the utilization of indigenous knowledge and local resources.

1.3 A study should be conducted to identify the key success factors of school administrators in promoting place-based learner competencies within the Dok Khamtai community.

1.4 Research should investigate the longitudinal effects of implementing place-based competency development approaches on learner achievement, community engagement, cultural sustainability, and local development outcomes.

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