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☞ Objective

Asian Journal of Humanities and Social Innovation (AJHSI) is a journal in the humanities and social sciences. It aims to promote research and publish research articles, academic articles, review articles, and book reviews for scholars, researchers, lecturers, students at all levels, and interested persons in the dimensions of Sociologies, Anthropologies, Humanities, Social Sciences, Education, Business Administration, Politics, Public Administration, Development, Tourism, and other areas in Social Sciences. Articles that are considered for publication must be reviewed by at least 2 out of 3 qualified persons (Peer Review). Only English articles are considered for publication. Submitted works must not have been published or are under consideration by qualified persons for publication in other journals. Authors must strictly comply with the criteria for submitting academic or research articles for publication in the journal, and the referencing system must be in accordance with the criteria of the journal.

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Editorial

Asian Journal of Humanities and Social Innovation (AJHSI) is the first issue of the year 2025 with a total of 5 articles, 2 research articles and 3 academic articles. The journal is currently developing and improving its format and main issues to meet the journal quality assessment criteria in the TCI database to support the assessment from the Thai Journal Citation Index (TCI). In order to ensure that the quality of the articles meets international conditions and rules, it provides opportunities for scholars, researchers, and students at all levels to publish academic articles, research articles, review articles, and book reviews. The editorial team has followed the principled process of publishing articles according to the criteria of the Office of the Higher Education Commission in all respects.

The editors of Asian Journal of Humanities and Social Innovation (AJHSI) would like to thank the authors, members and readers for their interest and trust in our journal. We sincerely hope that the selected articles will be of benefit to all readers. The editors would like to thank all the experts who have kindly read and suggested improvements to the research articles to improve their academic quality.

Finally, the editors sincerely hope that the contents of this journal will be of some use to readers. If readers have any suggestions for improving this journal to make it more complete, the editors will gladly accept them.

Editor-In-Chief

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Research Article

The Roles of Ecclesiastical Monastic Administrators in Promoting Democracy within the Sangha in Loei Province*

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Abstract

This research aims to 1) study the role and duty of the Sangha chief in promoting democracy of the Sangha (Thammayut) in Loei Province, 2) compare the Sangha chief with different ages, seniority, positions, religious education, general education, and Pali studies levels, and their opinions on their roles and duties in promoting democracy of the Sangha in Loei Province, and 3) study the problems, obstacles, and solutions regarding the role and duty of the Sangha chief in promoting democracy of the Sangha in Loei Province. This research is a mixed method research consisting of quantitative research and qualitative research. The sample group is 201 Sangha chiefs in Loei Province. The research instruments are a 5-level rating scale questionnaire and an interview form. Data are analyzed using frequency, percentage, mean, standard deviation, and one-way variance test.

The research results found that:

1. The role and duty of the Sangha in promoting democracy in Loei Province The research results found that overall, the average value of the role and duty of the Sangha in promoting democracy was at a high level, which was (mean = 3.6)

2. The aspect with the highest average value was the aspect of promoting democracy (mean= 4.25), while the aspect with the lowest average value was the aspect of educational welfare (mean = 2.65) 2. Comparative analysis of the role and duty of the Sangha in promoting democracy of the Sangha in Loei Province as a whole, classified by age, years of ordination, position, religious education, secular education, and Buddhist studies, found that there were statistically significant differences at the 0.05 level.

3. Problems, obstacles, and solutions regarding the role and duty of the Sangha in promoting democracy of the Sangha in Loei Province using the Content Analysis Technique, totaling 3 items. The results of the interviews As follows, the overall opinions of the Sangha leaders on the role and duty of promoting democracy of the Sangha in Loei Province have the same opinions, such as coordinating with local

Citation

BY NC ND

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agencies, participating in the development and renovation, everyone has the rights, freedom, equality of being a citizen in a democratic regime and unity, respecting the law of the country, the Sangha Supreme Council's rules, and following the Dharma and Vinaya.

Keywords: Role, Sanghadhikara, Democracy

Introduction

During the time of the Buddha, the Buddha used the system of unity as the main principle in governing the Sangha. He was the head or president of all monks. He granted equality to all monks. There was no discrimination for monks who had different statuses. There was no caste division. After the third Buddhist Council, King Ashoka the Great, the President of the Religious Patron, sent 9 great monks to proclaim Buddhism. Thailand in particular was affected by the proclamation of Buddhism at that time. Buddhism spread to every corner of the world and created important benefits, which was creating unity among the people of the nation. Because it relied on the principles of Buddhism as the main principle, Buddhism led people to live well and eat well. Thai people accepted Buddhism since the 2nd Buddhist century and considered it the national religion. Therefore, Buddhism played an important role as a spiritual leader, which was the center of the community. However, when the social conditions changed, it lost its role in the past several years. That is, the original education system was in the temple. The monks played a leading role. But later, the center of education was moved out of the temple's care. This caused less education for monks. This inevitably led to other impacts as well. However, The temple has not lost its role entirely. It still maintains its position as a spiritual leader and a refuge for Buddhists until the present day, with monks driving such role. Buddhism is one of the main institutions of Thai society. Thai people have accepted and respected it since ancient times and it has been passed down to the present day. According to Article 9 of the Constitution of the Kingdom of Thailand B.E. 2550, it states that the King is a Buddhist and the supreme patron of religion. The majority of Thai people are Buddhists, approximately 94.57 percent. Religious institutions are a subsystem of Thai society, with temples as religious places and monks as religious persons, representing religious activities that will make Buddhism help develop communities, society, and the country significantly. Since the beginning of Thai society, the majority of Thais have been Buddhists, since the Sukhothai period until the present day. It has become a cultural belief in the daily life of Thais. Approximately 95 percent of Thais are Buddhists and have applied the principles of Buddhist practice as a guideline for their lives, until it has become a cultural foundation and the identity of the Thai nation (Supattra Suphap, 1993: 106). Even all Thai kings are Buddhists and are Buddhists. He is a Buddhist patron. For this reason, Buddhism has become so involved with politics and governance that it is inseparable. In terms of creating political legitimacy and eliminating political conflicts, Buddhism has the characteristic of living together without holding absolute power of any one person. Normally, it adheres to the principle of reason. These characteristics are important characteristics of a democratic society, which is the ideology of the democratic system of government (Narong Puangphit, 2005: 85). Democracy is a great force for peaceful coexistence. In this world, there are dense populations in every perspective, and it causes crowding in housing, consumer goods,

and daily necessities. In addition, there are rules for living together between people and people, and people and objects, according to the appropriateness of the causes and effects that will be determined. When this is the case, no one wants to be under anyone's command. They want to be independent and do not want anyone to control them. Therefore, they must find a way to solve the problem in their communities, villages, districts, provinces, and even the country. The law provides protection and care for all citizens and gives equal rights to everyone, regardless of who they are. That is, people live well and eat well. If there is no democracy, there will be no independence. Democracy has many meanings, including political democracy, family democracy, and personal democracy.

Although the role and duty of the Sangha in promoting the democracy of the Sangha (Thammayut) in the administrative area of Loei Province is currently smooth, the researcher wants to study to develop the role and duty of the Sangha (Thammayut) in promoting the democracy of the Sangha in the administrative area in every district of Loei Province. Are there any obstacles or problems? In order to adjust and improve, and for the Sangha to adjust to work proactively to stimulate the work of the Sangha to be more efficient. The researcher sees the importance and is interested in researching the role and duty of the Sangha in promoting the democracy of the Sangha in Loei Province. The Sangha who have positions and duties in governing the Sangha in Loei Province have promoted and performed their duties in accordance with the Dhamma-Vinaya, the Sangha Act, and the regulations, rules, and rules of the Sangha Supreme Council.

Objective

1. To study the role and duty of the Sangha in promoting democracy of the Sangha (Thammayut) in Loei Province
2. To compare the opinions of Sangha leaders with different ages, seniority, positions and education levels on their roles and duties in promoting democracy of the Sangha in Loei Province
3. To study the problems and solutions regarding the role and duty of the Sangha leaders in promoting democracy of the Sangha in Loei Province

Literature review

The intersection of Buddhism and democratic governance has been the subject of scholarly interest across Southeast Asia. In the Thai context, the role of the Sangha—particularly ecclesiastical monastic administrators—has been increasingly examined for its influence on civic and political culture, especially in rural provinces like Loei.

1. Buddhist Doctrines and Democratic Principles

Buddhism's moral and philosophical teachings offer frameworks that align with democratic values such as participation, accountability, and ethical leadership. The concepts of *sangha-kamma* (community decision-making) and *kalyāṇamitta* (virtuous friendship) reflect participatory and dialogical approaches that are foundational to democratic governance (Keyes, 1999). Moreover, the principle of *upanissaya-paccaya* (indirect conditioning) in Theravāda Buddhism reflects how religious influence can shape civic attitudes over time (Swearer, 2010).

2. The Ecclesiastical Hierarchy and Local Governance

Thailand's Sangha Act (last revised in 2018) outlines a centralized hierarchy where ecclesiastical monastic administrators (*Phra Sangkhathikan*) hold both spiritual and administrative authority (Ishii, 1986). These monks are responsible not only for monastic discipline but also for public engagement through temple schools, moral teachings, and community development projects. In provinces like Loei, where state institutions have limited reach, these figures can be seen as moral leaders and informal political educators (Taylor, 2012).

3. Monastic Involvement in Civic Education and Democratic Norms

Several studies have documented the involvement of monks in civic education programs, especially through *Dhamma talks*, youth activities, and moral training. Charoensin-o-larn (2013) observed that Thai temples serve as spaces for cultivating *civil virtues*, such as tolerance, compassion, and mutual respect. Ecclesiastical leaders often facilitate community discussions and mediate local disputes, thereby fostering participatory decision-making at the grassroots level (Bowie, 2004).

4. Challenges to Monastic Engagement with Democracy

Despite these roles, the ability of monks to explicitly promote democratic principles is often constrained by political sensitivities and hierarchical control within the Sangha itself. The influence of state control through the Sangha Supreme Council and the risk of violating secular boundaries limits overt political participation (McCargo, 2009). In Loei province, which borders Laos and has a history of political conservatism, these limitations may be even more pronounced.

5. Case Studies in Rural Thailand

Empirical research in northern and northeastern Thailand shows that ecclesiastical administrators in rural provinces often take on expanded civic roles, particularly in areas lacking state infrastructure. For instance, Pinit (2016) found that monastic leaders in Isan provinces conducted forums for village consensus and promoted nonviolent principles during election periods. In Loei, similar patterns are likely, though under-documented, suggesting a research gap this study seeks to address.

Conclusion of the Literature Review

The reviewed literature affirms that ecclesiastical monastic administrators in Thailand, including in Loei Province, play nuanced roles in promoting democratic values—primarily through moral education, community engagement, and informal civic leadership. However, their capacity is constrained by institutional and legal boundaries. The need for empirical studies focused specifically on Loei is evident, as regional variation may significantly influence monastic-political dynamics.

Methodology

This is a quantitative research mixed with qualitative research. The population used in this study is 412 monks in Loei Province. The sample size was found using the Taro Yamane formula (Yamane, 1973; cited from Suwimol Thirakanan, 2003: 198). The sample size was 201 monks.

The research instrument is a questionnaire developed by the researcher according to the framework of the role and duty of the Sangha in promoting democracy of the Sangha in Loei Province to collect data from the sample group used in the research. It is divided into 3 parts as follows: Part 1 is a questionnaire about general information of the respondents, including age, years of ordination, position of the

Sangha, general education qualifications, religious education qualifications, and Buddhist studies qualifications, which is a multiple-choice questionnaire (Check List). Part 2 is a questionnaire about the role and duty of the Sangha in promoting democracy of the Sangha in Loei Province in 5 areas, which is a rating scale (Bunchom Srisat, 2545: 102-103). Part 3 is about problems, obstacles, and other suggestions in the role and duty of the Sangha in promoting democracy of the Sangha in Loei Province, which is an open-ended question. Part 4 and the interview guide are unstructured interview guides for interviewing the Sangha, which are flexible questions that require in-depth information from the interviewee. By interviewing 11 selected monks as the target group (Purposive Sampling)

Data collection The researcher conducted the data collection in the following steps: 1) Write a letter introducing the researcher and requesting permission to collect data for the research from Mahamakut Buddhist University, Srilanchang Campus, Chum Phae District, Khon Kaen Province to the Sangha chiefs in the Sangha administration area in Loei Province to request their cooperation in collecting data selected as a sample. 2) The researcher went to the Sangha administration area in Chum Phae District, Khon Kaen Province, explained and distributed the questionnaires to the Sangha chiefs to answer the questionnaires. Then, the information was sent back to the researcher. 3) The returned questionnaires were used to analyze the data.

Data analysis In this research, the data was analyzed by using a computer using a social science program. The statistics used in data analysis are as follows: 1) Data obtained from a checklist questionnaire were used to find the frequency and percentage and presented in a table. 2) The role and duty of the Sangha in promoting democracy of the Sangha in Loei Province by finding the mean (("X") ̄) and standard deviation (S.D.) and interpreting the meaning according to the specified criteria by considering the scope of the average score obtained from the questionnaire and the results of the interpretation (Samroeng Chan Suwan, 2004). 3) Comparative analysis of the roles of the Sangha in the administration of the Sangha under the democratic regime in the Sangha administration area in Chum Phae District, Khon Kaen Province, classified by age, years of ordination, position, and education level using the t-test. (Independentt-test) and one way ANOVA were significant at the 0.05 level. 4) Information about problems and obstacles, roles and duties of the Sangha in promoting democracy of the Sangha in Loei Province, which is qualitative information in the Sangha administration area in Loei Province, used content analysis, categorization and descriptive analysis (Descriptive Approach) and then presented in a narrative essay format (Chai Posita, 2013: 187).

Results

1. From the study of the role and duty of the Sangha chief in promoting democracy of the Sangha in Loei Province (Dhammayut), including all 5 aspects, the role and duty of the Sangha chief is at a high level. To consider each item, it is found that it is at a high level, consistent with the study results of Phra Khru Suchat Wutthikit (Chalermchai Aphichato) (2011) Research on the role of the Sangha chief in the administration of the Sangha in Maharat District, Phra Nakhon Si Ayutthaya Province. The objectives and results of the research are as follows: 1. The opinions of monks and novices on the role of the Sangha chief in the administration of the Sangha in Maharat District, Phra Nakhon Si Ayutthaya Province, in all 6 aspects, are at a high level overall

(mean = 3.54). When considering each aspect, it is found that opinions on governance, religious education, public utilities, and public welfare are at a high level. Opinions on educational welfare and the dissemination of Buddhism are at a moderate level.

2. From the results of the comparison in terms of age, it was found that the different ages of the Sangha leaders had a role in the level of the performance of the Sangha leaders' duties in promoting democracy of the Sangha in Loei Province (Thammayut) with statistical significance at the 0.05 level. This may be because the Sangha leaders who are not the same age have different opinions and knowledge, so their opinions are consistent with the research results of Phra Maha Monthian Wora Thammo (2013) who studied the topic of "The Role of the Sangha leaders in the Administration of the Sangha in Phang Nga Province". The research results found that the Sangha leaders who are different in age and number of years ordained have different roles in the administration of the Sangha with statistical significance at the .05 level. The results of the study in terms of years ordained found that the different years ordained of the Sangha leaders in the level of the performance of the role and duties of the Sangha leaders in promoting democracy of the Sangha in Loei Province (Thammayut) were different. This may be because the work, flexibility, and dissemination of knowledge, both in terms of monks with different years ordained, have different understandings in disseminating knowledge in detail, which is consistent with the research of Phra Maha Monthien Wora Thammo (2013) conducted a research study on "The Role of the Sangha Chiefs in the Administration of the Sangha in Phang Nga Province". The research result found that the role of the Sangha Chiefs in the administration of the Sangha in the province was significantly different at the .05 level. The study of the positions found that the positions of the Sangha Chiefs in the level of practice, roles, and responsibilities of the Sangha Chiefs in promoting democracy in Loei Province (Thammayut) were different. This may be because the knowledge and abilities of the Thammayut Sangha Chiefs in Loei Province are different. Some Sangha Chiefs have a higher level of education and therefore have different abilities. This is consistent with the research result of Phra Maha Anan Anando (Noramat) (2009) who conducted a research study on "The Administration of the Sangha in Chumphon Province and the Application of the 7 Bhikkhu Aparihaniyadhamma Principles". The study result found that: Comparison of the application level of the 7 Bhikkhu Aparihaniyadhamma principles in the administration of the Sangha of the Sangha leaders in Chumphon Province found that the positions of the Sangha leaders and the experience in performing the duties of the Sangha leaders were significantly different at the .05 level. The results of the study of religious education found that the religious education of the Sangha leaders in the level of practice, roles, and duties of the Sangha leaders in promoting democracy of the Sangha in Loei Province (Thammayut) was different, probably because the Sangha leaders had different levels of Dhamma education and thus had different understandings of the principles of Buddhist teachings, which was consistent with the research results of Phra Kasem Sak Worasakkho (Asanatong) (2012) who researched on "The Role of the Sangha Leaders in the Administration of the Sangha in Chumsaeng District, Nakhon Sawan Province" and found that monks with different levels of religious education had different opinions on the administration of the Sangha in Chumsaeng District, Nakhon Sawan Province, with statistical significance at 0.05. The results of the study of secular education found that: The secular education of the Sangha leaders at the level of practice, role and duty of the

Sangha leaders in promoting democracy of the Sangha in Loei Province (Thammayut), classified by secular education. The differences may be because the Sangha leaders have different levels of secular education, which causes their opinions on the roles and duties to be different. This is consistent with the research results of Phra Kasem Sak Worasakkho (Asanatong) (2012) who researched on "The Role of the Sangha Leader in the Administration of the Sangha Affairs in Chumsaeng District, Nakhon Sawan Province". The research results found that the administration of the Sangha affairs according to the principles of the performance of duties of the Sangha leaders in Chumsaeng District is at a high level in all aspects. When comparing opinions on the administration of the Sangha affairs in Chumsaeng District, Nakhon Sawan Province, it was found that ordinary education leaders have opinions on the administration of the Sangha affairs in Chumsaeng District, Nakhon Sawan Province. There is a statistically significant difference at 0.05. The results of the study of the level of Buddhist studies found that the level of Buddhist studies of the Sangha leaders in the practice level, role and duty of the Sangha leaders in promoting democracy of the Sangha in Loei (Thammayut) area are not different, which is consistent with the research results of Phra Maha Monthian Wora Thammo (2013) who studied the topic of "The role of the Sangha leaders in the administration of the Sangha affairs in Phang Nga Province". The research results found that the role of the practice in the administration of the Sangha affairs in Phang Nga Province found that the Sangha leaders with different levels of Buddhist studies have no different roles in the administration of the Sangha affairs.

3. Interview Results from the interviews with the 3 questions from the Supreme Patriarch on the role and duty of the Sangha chief in promoting democracy of the Sangha in Loei Province (Dhammayut) in all 5 areas:

Government Overall, the Supreme Patriarch has the same opinion that they should study and follow the Dhamma-Vinaya, the Sangha Supreme Council's rules, regulations, or orders as the main principles of governing the Sangha and the laws of the country. Religious education Overall, they see the importance and should promote and support monks and novices to receive education at all levels, namely, Pariyatti Dhamma, General education, Pali studies, and finally higher education. The Supreme Patriarch shows the same importance in the same direction. In terms of overall educational welfare, the Supreme Patriarch has the same opinion in supporting and promoting the provision of funds to support both monks and novices, as well as underprivileged children and youth, so that they can study in existing schools for the welfare of the temple and to study at higher levels. In terms of overall propagation of Buddhism, The importance of important Buddhist days should be recognized and Buddhist activities should be organized within the temple, promoting and training ethics for children and youth, and the Supreme Patriarch has the same opinion. In terms of overall public utilities, the Supreme Patriarch has the same opinion on the management of renovation and restoration within the temple. It is necessary to coordinate with local agencies to participate in expressing opinions and finding factors to support the renovation and restoration to preserve Buddhism forever. In terms of promoting democracy, the Supreme Patriarch has the same opinion, which is to know how to exercise rights and freedoms, equality, giving importance to everyone, participation in expressing opinions, respecting the law of the country as citizens in a democratic regime. The role and duty of the Sangha in promoting democracy of the Sangha in Loei Province in 5 aspects as a whole, found to be at a high level. When

comparing age, seniority, position, and education level, it was found that opinions on the role and duty of the Sangha in promoting democracy of the Sangha in Loei Province were significantly different at a statistical level. 0.05 and from the interviews with 11 Sangha leaders, overall it was found that the leaders who answered the interviews had the same idea in all 5 areas, which can be summarized as follows: there must be coordination with local agencies, participation in the development of renovations, everyone has rights and freedoms, equality of citizenship in a democratic regime and unity, respect for the laws of the country, the Sangha Supreme Council's rules, and comply with the Dharma and Vinaya.

Discussion

1. Overall Role and Performance in Promoting Democracy

The findings indicate that the roles and duties of Sangha chiefs in Loei Province across five aspects—governance, religious education, educational welfare, propagation of Buddhism, and public utilities—are rated at a high level. These results align with **Phra Khru Suchat Wutthikit's (Chalermchai Aphichato, 2011)** study in Maharat District, which similarly found that the Sangha's administrative roles were performed effectively across various aspects, particularly in governance and public welfare.

This suggests a consistency in the ability of Sangha administrators across different regions of Thailand to act as moral leaders and community developers. Their integration of religious principles with civic duties highlights the Buddhist approach to ethical governance (*dhamma-nayaka*), which inherently supports democratic ideals such as fairness, transparency, and participation (Keyes, 1999; Swearer, 2010).

2. Demographic and Educational Factors Affecting Role Performance

The results further demonstrate statistically significant differences ($p < 0.05$) in the performance of democratic roles based on age, years of ordination, position, and educational background (both secular and religious). This is consistent with findings by **Phra Maha Monthian Wora Thammo (2013)**, who reported that age and seniority significantly influenced Sangha leaders' administrative roles in Phang Nga Province. Younger monks may exhibit different understandings or approaches to democratic principles than their older counterparts, possibly due to generational exposure to civic education or digital media.

Additionally, the study's findings on secular education influencing performance are in line with **Phra Kasem Sak Worasakkho's (Asanatong, 2012)** research in Nakhon Sawan, which revealed that monks with higher secular education demonstrated broader understanding and engagement with administrative tasks and civic-oriented responsibilities.

In contrast, Buddhist doctrinal education (Pariyatti studies) did not show a significant impact on the differences in democratic role performance. This corresponds to Phra Maha Monthian's conclusion that religious education level did not strongly differentiate the practical administrative roles among Sangha members.

3. Insights from Interviews with the Sangha Supreme Council Representatives

Qualitative interviews with Sangha leaders revealed strong consensus on the importance of democracy-compatible values such as equality, participation, and rule of law. All interviewees emphasized the integration of **Dhamma-Vinaya**, national laws, and the regulations of the Sangha Supreme Council as essential in governing the monastic community and interacting with lay society.

Their shared perspectives reinforce Buddhist democratic ethics, where communal harmony, participation, and moral responsibility are emphasized (Ishii, 1986; Charoensin-o-larn, 2013). The emphasis on education, propagation of moral values, and collaboration with local agencies for public works points to a model of engaged Buddhism that supports democratic culture from the grassroots level (Taylor, 2012).

The alignment in opinions from different levels of monastic leadership reflects the institutional strength of the Dhammayut order in Loei Province, particularly in harmonizing religious, legal, and democratic responsibilities.

Conclusion

The results reinforce the idea that ecclesiastical monastic administrators play a substantial role in promoting democratic values within Thai society, especially in rural areas such as Loei Province. Their moral authority, administrative role, and educational outreach contribute to cultivating civic virtues and supporting democratic engagement. However, demographic and educational differences among Sangha leaders do influence the extent and nature of this engagement. Continued support for religious and civic education, as well as policy encouragement for monastic involvement in community development, can further strengthen this synergy between Buddhism and democracy.

New knowledge

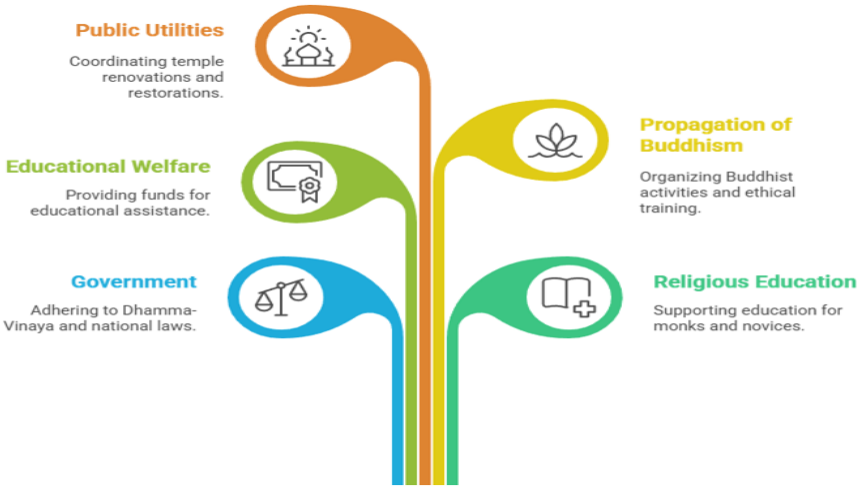

Figure 1 New knowledge, 2024

The image is a color-coded infographic designed in the shape of a stylized tree, representing the five key roles of ecclesiastical monastic administrators (Sangha leaders) in promoting democracy within the Sangha. Each branch of the tree symbolizes one specific area of responsibility, as follows:

1. Public Utilities (Orange)
    - Icon: Temple building with sparkles
    - Role: Coordinating temple renovations and restorations.
2. Educational Welfare (Green)
    - Icon: Certificate or diploma
    - Role: Providing funds for educational assistance.
3. Government (Blue)
    - Icon: Scales of justice
    - Role: Adhering to Dhamma-Vinaya and national laws.
4. Propagation of Buddhism (Yellow)
    - Icon: Lotus flower
    - Role: Organizing Buddhist activities and ethical training.
5. Religious Education (Teal/Light Green)
    - Icon: Open book
    - Role: Supporting education for monks and novices.

The visual presentation emphasizes growth, interconnectedness, and the holistic responsibilities of Sangha leaders, with each function branching from a common core—symbolizing unity of purpose in sustaining Buddhist values and democratic engagement.

Recommendation

Comparative Studies

1. Compare Dhammayut and Mahanikaya Sects

Examine how roles differ between Thailand's two major monastic orders in promoting democratic values, especially in rural vs. urban areas.

2. Cross-Provincial Analysis

Study differences in Sangha leadership roles between Loei Province and other provinces (e.g., Chiang Mai, Ubon Ratchathani) to see how local context affects democratic engagement.

Suggestions for future research

1 . There should be a joint agreement, emphasizing strictness in governance, especially compliance with the rules, regulations and orders of the Sangha Supreme Council.

2. There should be a fund to promote education for monks and novices, sending monks under the organization to receive training in computer use for the benefit of data preparation within **the temple and for the propagation of Buddhism using modern technology.**

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Research Article

Application of the Principles of Ditthadhammikattha-Samvattanika-Dhamma in the Work Performance of Personnel in Subdistrict Administrative Organizations, Phu Wiang District, Khon Kaen Province*

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Abstract

This research aims to 1) study the application of the principle of Ditthadhammikatthasangwattanikadham in personnel work 2) to compare the application of the principle of Ditthadhammikatthasangwattanikadham in personnel work classified by personal factors 3) to study the guidelines for applying the principle of Ditthadhammikatthasangwattanikadham in personnel work effectively. The researcher used a mixed research design using quantitative research and qualitative research. The population included: Personnel of the Sub-district Administrative Organization, Phu Wiang District, Khon Kaen Province, 400 people, by finding the appropriate sample group by opening the sampling table of Krejcie and Morgan, got a sample of 201 people and used the sampling technique of stratified random sampling and convenience random sampling and interviewed 5 executives of the Sub-district Administrative Organization, Phu Wiang District, Khon Kaen Province using the purposive random sampling technique. The data were collected from April 2016 to March 2017. The research instruments were questionnaires and interviews. Data were analyzed by finding frequency, percentage, mean, standard deviation, t-test (Independence Samples) and one-way analysis of variance (One Way ANOVA) and comparing the differences of the mean in pairs using the least significant difference method (Least Significant Difference: LSD.)

The research results found that:

1. The use of the principle of Ditthadhammikatthasangwattanikadham in the work of personnel under the sub-district administrative organization in Phu Wiang District, Khon Kaen Province, both overall and in each aspect, was at a high level (mean= 4.83). In each aspect, the highest to lowest average values were as follows: Arakkhasampatha (maintaining goodness) (mean = 4.85), Kalyanamittata (good friends) (mean = 4.84), Samajivata (living a simple life) (mean = 4.82), and Uthansampatha (diligence in earning) (mean = 4.80).

Citation

BY NC ND

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2. Personnel with different genders, ages, education, positions, and years of service did not differ in the use of the principle of Ditthadhammikatthasangwattanikadham in the work of personnel under the sub-district administrative organization in Phu Wiang District, Khon Kaen Province, which did not correspond to the hypothesis. Except for personnel of different ages, they use the principle of Ditthadhammikatthasangwattanikadhamma in terms of protection and sampada differently.

3. The guidelines for developing work performance according to the principle of Ditthadhammikatthasangwattanikadhamma are: In terms of diligence, executives should organize training to develop the potential of staff to be able to work efficiently. In addition, personnel should be diligent and adjust their work methods to be up-to-date and of maximum benefit. In terms of good maintenance, executives should create awareness for personnel to help take care of and maintain government property and know how to use available resources to benefit the government the most in a worthwhile and economical way. In terms of good friends, executives should take into account the teamwork of the agency. Personnel are those who serve the public and are those who have good human relations in providing services and coordinating, and can complete work according to the objectives. In terms of living a sufficient life, executives should provide advice by practicing and applying the philosophy of the Sufficiency Economy of His Majesty the King in their daily lives.

Keywords: Diññhadhammikattha-saṁvattanika-dhamma, Personnel, Sub-district Administration Organization

Introduction

All sub-district administrative organizations shall have independence in determining policies, administration, personnel management, finance and treasury, including having their own specific powers and duties in order to continuously develop decentralization to the local areas. There shall be a law specifying the plan and procedures for decentralization, specifying the powers and duties in organizing the public administration system, allocating the proportion of taxes between the state and the sub-district administrative organizations. Members and administrators of the local council shall be directly elected by the people and shall have a term of office of four years from the election date. They shall be responsible for preserving arts, traditions, local wisdom, good local culture, and shall have the duty to organize education, training and vocational training in such matters. They shall promote and preserve the environment by managing, maintaining and utilizing natural resources and the environment. The sub-district administrative organization is considered an organization that is dependent on the sub-district administrative organization. It has the status of a juristic person, has its own assets, budget and officials, and has independent powers to provide services in the area according to the powers and duties specified by law. Therefore, the sub-district administrative organization is considered a local government unit based on the principle of true decentralization, which occurred for the first time in Thailand. The Sub-district Administrative Organization Act B.E. 2496 is the master law that applies to 1,619 sub-district administrative organizations, divided into different regions throughout the country, in the Phu Wiang District area. Khon Kaen Province has 1 sub-district administrative organization, namely Phu Wiang Sub-district

Administrative Organization, with 21 personnel. Each personnel performs their duties in accordance with the government's policies. The sub-district administrative organization must perform its duties in accordance with the principles of good governance, which state that: 1. Sub-district administrative organization work cannot be successful without personnel. 2. Sub-district administrative organization personnel must be diligent, know how to look after assets, work as a team, and know how to spend sufficiently in order for the sub-district administrative organization to work efficiently. 3. This is in accordance with the Buddhist principles called the principles of Ditthadhammikatthasangwattanikadham, which consist of: 1. Utthansampatha, 2. Arakkhasampatha, 3. Kalyanamitta, and 4. Samacheetta. In order to study the integration of principles of Dhamma with work practices, public administration that aims to create benefits for the people by focusing on the people results in effective results in government missions and is worthwhile in terms of government missions. There are no unnecessary steps in the work processes. The missions of government agencies are adjusted to keep up with events. The people are facilitated and their needs are met, and their work performance is evaluated consistently."

Objective

1. To study the application of the principle of Ditthadhammikatthasang wattanikadham in the work of personnel of the Sub-district Administrative Organization, Phu Wiang District, Khon Kaen Province
2. The application of the principle of Ditthadhammikatthasangwattanikadham in the work of personnel of the Sub-district Administrative Organization, Phu Wiang District, Khon Kaen Province, classified by personal factors
3. To study the guidelines for applying the principle of Ditthadhammikattha sangwattanikadham in the effective work of personnel of the Sub-district Administrative Organization, Phu Wiang District, Khon Kaen Province

Literature review

1. Theoretical Foundation of Ditthadhammikattha-Samvattanika-Dhamma

The term *Ditthadhammikattha-Samvattanika-Dhamma* refers to a set of four Buddhist virtues conducive to prosperity in the present life: (1) diligence (*utthānasampadā*), (2) caution or vigilance (*ārakkhasampadā*), (3) association with good people (*kalyānamittatā*), and (4) balanced living (*samajīvita*) (P.A. Payutto, 1995). These principles are drawn from the *Anguttara Nikāya* and serve as practical ethical guidelines for laypeople and public servants alike.

According to Dhammananda (2002), these principles promote personal development and social harmony and are particularly relevant in administrative contexts, where ethical conduct, resource management, and interpersonal relationships are crucial.

2. Application in Public Administration and Local Governance

In the context of Thai local governance, integrating Buddhist principles has been viewed as a way to cultivate moral integrity and responsibility among public personnel (Chanchaochai, 2015). Subdistrict Administrative Organizations (SAOs), as grassroots-level governance units, play a pivotal role in delivering public services and engaging with communities. Therefore, ethical frameworks like *Ditthadhammikattha-*

Samvattanika-Dhamma provide a moral compass for decision-making, service delivery, and community engagement (Suksamran, 2011).

Research by Thongdee (2017) found that personnel who adhere to these principles demonstrate higher levels of job satisfaction, collaboration, and community trust. Specifically, *utthānasampadā* (diligence) enhances work productivity, while *ārakkhasampadā* (vigilance) encourages transparent resource management. Meanwhile, *kalyānamittatā* fosters teamwork, and *samajīvita* helps balance personal and organizational demands.

3. Buddhist Ethics and Contemporary Organizational Behavior

Several scholars have examined the intersection of Buddhist ethics and organizational performance. Kittisaro (2010) argues that mindfulness and moral discipline derived from Buddhist teachings can strengthen leadership, reduce corruption, and improve public accountability. In rural administrative contexts, where resources are limited and public expectations are high, these ethical orientations may serve as low-cost yet high-impact governance tools.

Moreover, Wiratchai and Niramitsantipong (2018) suggest that integrating Buddhist moral principles into professional development frameworks enhances not only technical competencies but also emotional intelligence, resulting in more compassionate and resilient public servants.

4. Studies in the Isan Region and Khon Kaen Context

Regionally specific studies, such as those by Boonmee (2020), highlight how cultural and religious identity in northeastern Thailand (Isan) influences local governance practices. In Phu Wiang District, the role of Buddhism remains strong, and the integration of Buddhist values into administrative practices aligns with community expectations and traditional leadership models.

Local case studies suggest that personnel in SAOs who practice these virtues are more effective in conflict resolution, responsive governance, and participatory development (Khampirat, 2021). The findings reinforce the relevance of *Ditthadhammikattha-Samvattanika-Dhamma* as a culturally grounded framework for enhancing administrative performance.

Methodology

In this research, the research is on the use of the principles of Ditthadhammikatthasangwattanikadham in the work of personnel of the Subdistrict Administrative Organization in Phu Wiang District, Khon Kaen Province, in order for the research to be in accordance with

For the purpose of the study, the researcher proceeded as follows:

1. Research Design This research used a mixed research design using quantitative research by using questionnaires and qualitative research by using in-depth interviews.

2. Population and Sample 2.1) Population: 420 personnel of the Sub-district Administrative Organization in Phu Wiang District, Khon Kaen Province. 2.2) The sample group that responded to the questionnaires included personnel, officers of the Sub-district Administrative Organization, Phu Wiang District, Khon Kaen Province, as well as people in the community in Phu Wiang Sub-district, totaling 420 people. The appropriate sample group was found by opening the Crazy and Morgan sampling table, totaling 201 people, and using the stratified random sampling technique by distributing

questionnaires to each personnel section in an appropriate proportion. 2.3) The sample group that was interviewed included executives of local administrative organizations in Phu Wiang District. Khon Kaen Province, 5 people: District Chief, District Local Administration, Subdistrict Administrative Organization Chief, Kamnan, Community Development

3. Research Instruments

3.1 Instrument Characteristics

3.1.1) The questionnaire is closed-ended and open-ended, divided into 3 parts as follows: Part 1 is a questionnaire about the personal factors of the respondents, consisting of 5 items: gender, age, education, work experience, and position. Part 2 is a questionnaire used to measure the level of performance according to the principles of the Ditthadhammakatthasangwattanikadhamma of personnel under the Subdistrict Administrative Organization in Phu Wiang District, Khon Kaen Province. It is a rating scale with 5 levels according to the Likert principle. The questions are divided according to the level of opinion into 4 aspects as follows: 1) Uthansampatha (diligence in earning) 2) Arakkhasampatha (maintaining goodness) 3) Kalyanamittata (good friends) 4) Samajivata (Living a Sufficient Life) 9 questions per section Part 3 is a questionnaire about problems, obstacles, and suggestions on working according to the principles of the Ditthadhammakatthasangwattanikadham of personnel under the Sub-district Administrative Organization in Phu Wiang District, Khon Kaen Province, which is an open-ended question (Open ended Questionnaire) to answer freely, 4 questions.

3.1.2) The interview form is open-ended, divided into 2 parts as follows: Part 1 is an interview about the personal factors of the interviewees, 4 questions including name, surname, age, position, and work experience from the workers. Part 2 is a questionnaire about the guidelines for working according to the principles of the Ditthadhammakatthasangwattanikadham of personnel under the Sub-district Administrative Organization in Phu Wiang District, Khon Kaen Province, which is an open-ended question (Open ended Questionnaire) to answer freely, 4 questions.

4. Data collection

4.1 Questionnaire The researcher collected data

Questionnaires according to the following steps:

4.1.1) The researcher requested a letter of permission to distribute the questionnaires from the Director of the Graduate Center, Mahachulalongkornrajavidyalaya University, Khon Kaen Campus. To the supervisor (head of the research unit)

4.1.2) The researcher submitted the request letter to the head of the sub-district administrative organization in Phu Wiang District, Khon Kaen Province, which is the population used in this study.

4.1.3) Collect the questionnaires that the sample group has completed. 4.1.4) Check the correctness and completeness and then analyze the data.

4.2) Interview form The researcher collected the interview data according to the following steps:

4.2.1) The researcher requested a request letter to distribute the interview forms from the head of the Graduate Center, Mahachulalongkornrajavidyalaya University, Khon Kaen Campus to 5 interviewees.

4.2.2) The researcher presented the request letter to the interviewees.

4.2.3) Schedule an interview.

4.2.4) Conduct the interview.

4.2.5) Analyze the data obtained from the interviews.

5. Data analysis The researcher analyzed the data using a ready-made program for social science research. The statistics used to analyze the data are as follows:

5.1 Analysis of the questionnaire data After collecting the data from the questionnaires, the data obtained were analyzed using a computer. By using ready-made statistical programs for social science research as follows: Descriptive Statistics 1) Use statistics of frequency and percentage to explain the personal factors of the respondents. Analyze by presenting in a table to describe the results. 2) Use statistics to analyze by finding the mean (mean) Standard deviation (S.D.) to explain the data. The level of performance according to the principles of the Dhammakadhammikathasangwattanikadham of personnel under the sub-district administrative organization in Phu Wiang District, Khon Kaen Province, presented in a table to describe the results. Inferential Statistics 1) Use t-test statistics (Independence Samples) in the case of two independent variables. 2) Use one-way analysis of variance statistics (One Way ANOVA) in the case of more than two independent variables. When it is found that there is a difference, the difference of the mean will be compared in pairs using the least significant difference method (Least Significant Difference: LSD.)

5.2. Interview data analysis Interview data analysis was analyzed using the content analysis technique (Content Analysis Technique) to include the context and process it together. Including the use of concepts from related documents and research to support the analysis to provide an overall picture.

Results

The results of the data research study on "Using the principles of Ditthadhammikatthasangwattanikadham in the work of personnel under the Sub-district Administrative Organization in Phu Wiang District, Khon Kaen Province" according to the opinions of personnel of the Sub-district Administrative Organization, Phu Wiang District, Khon Kaen Province, are overall at a high level. There are discussion points classified by 4 aspects: Utthansampatha (diligence in earning), Arakkhasampatha (maintaining goodness), Kalyanamitta (good friends), Samajivata (living a simple life) to make the work of the Sub-district Administrative Organization, Phu Wiang District, Khon Kaen Province more efficient. The discussion points are as follows:

1. The use of the principle of Ditthadhammikatthasangwattanikadham in the work of personnel under the sub-district administrative organization in Phu Wiang district, Khon Kaen province. From the research, it was found that the use of the principle of Ditthadhammikatthasangwattanikadham in the work of personnel under the sub-district administrative organization in Phu Wiang district, Khon Kaen province was at a high level overall. It can be said that in terms of Kalyanamitta (Kalyanamitta), there is a coexistence like brothers and sisters, there is a bond of love in the group, there is kindness and help each other, which is consistent with the research work of Sukanlaya Sroifha who studied the research on "A study of the behavior of applying the principle of Ditthadhammikatthaprayot in the daily life of people in Na Yia sub-district municipality, Na Yia district, Ubon Ratchathani province". The research results found

that the behavior of applying the principle of Ditthadhammikatthaprayot in the daily life of people in Na Yia sub-district municipality, Na Yia district, Ubon Ratchathani province in all 4 aspects: Utthansampatha, the completeness of diligence, Arakkhasampatha, the completeness of preservation Kalyanamitta is having good friends, being content with life, and having a suitable life. Overall, all aspects are at a high level.

When considering the research results in each area, the results can be discussed as follows: 1. Uthansampatha (diligence) The research found that personnel use the principle of Ditthadhammikatthasangwattanikadham in their work. Personnel of local administrative organizations in Phu Wiang District, Khon Kaen Province, are at a high level overall. This can be said to be because they are enthusiastic because working in the civil service system has a time limit to work in helping those who come to contact for work with willingness, which is consistent with the interview of Mr. Chalermsak Saowaratphong who said that in the work, it is necessary to work as a team. It is a good characteristic of the agency and it creates a good attitude about patience and diligence in working for the success of the work. In order to be able to apply knowledge to work in the organization effectively and efficiently and consistent with the research results of Ms. Sukanlaya Soifa who studied the research on “Studying the behavior of applying the principle of Ditthadhammikatthaprayot in the daily life of people in Na Yia Subdistrict Municipality, Na Yia District, Ubon Ratchathani Province”. The research results found that the behavior of applying the principle of Ditthadhammikatthaprayot in the daily life of people in Na Yia Subdistrict Municipality, Na Yia District, Ubon Ratchathani Province in all 4 aspects: Uthansampatha, completeness of diligence Arakkhasampatha means being complete with maintenance, good friendship, having a good life, and being suitable. Overall, all aspects are at a high level. 2. Arakkhasampatha (maintaining well) From the research, it was found that the use of the principles of the view of the dhamma in the work of personnel under the local administrative organization in Phu Wiang District, Khon Kaen Province, is at a high level overall. It can be said that this is because they try to take care of and maintain government property so that it is not damaged. They know how to maintain government property by checking it regularly so that it is not lost. This is consistent with the interview of Mr. Wira Yut Buanong who said that all personnel in the agency love and cherish government property as if it were their own property. They know how to use and maintain it so that it can be used well. And the research work of Ratchapol Yotphromthong has researched on "Buddhist principles and community economic management: A case study of the Bang Chao Cha community, Pho Thong District, Ang Thong Province". The research results found that Buddhist principles and community economic management of Bang Chao Chang, Pho Thong District, Ang Thong Province According to the principle of the four Ditthadhammikatthasangwattanikadhamma (the heart of a millionaire), the aforementioned Buddhist principles have been applied to the administration of the community economy in all four aspects. The overall results in each aspect are at a high level in all aspects. 3. Kalyanamitta (good friends) From the research, it was found that the use of the Ditthadhammikatthasangwattanikadhamma principles in the work of personnel under the local administrative organizations in Phu Wiang District, Khon Kaen Province, was at a high level overall. This can be said to be the case that there is care and good human relations with everyone who comes to do business, not choosing to treat everyone equally with those who come to do business,

which is consistent with the interview of Mr. Wira Sak Saenkong who said that personnel and organizations have good human relations with everyone, whether they are coworkers or individuals/government agencies, or people who come to do business, which is part of performing their duties, and is consistent with the research results of Phra Khru Phothithammanukul (Battao Chutchin) who conducted a research on "Studying the approach to using the Ditthadhammikatthaprayot principle to solve the problems of life of Buddhists in present-day Thai society (2011)." The research results found that Ditthadhammikatthaprayot is a principle of Buddhism. That is, the four principles of present benefit, some call it the millionaire's heart, U A Ka Sa, it can be called for short as Dit-thammikattha (since Attha means benefit already, there is no need to repeat the word "benefit") or it can be called in full as Dit-thammikatthasangwattanikadhamma 4, meaning the Dhamma that is for present benefit, the principles of Dhamma that provide initial benefit and happiness, for the common benefit and happiness that can be seen in this life that people in general desire, such as wealth, rank, honor, friendship, etc., which will be accomplished by four principles of Dhamma: (1) Uṭṭhānasampatha, being complete with diligence, such as being diligent and persistent, making a living by diligently doing work, being diligent and not lazy in that work, possessing the wisdom of observation, which is a method for that work to be able to be completed. (2) Arakkhasampatha, being complete with protecting wealth (diligently and lawfully earned) He protected those assets completely, preventing them from being stolen or destroyed by any dangers. (3) Kalyanamitta, associating with good people, not associating with bad people, living in a house or community, conducting oneself, talking and conversing with people in that house or community who have pure conduct, who are complete in faith, morality, generosity and wisdom. And (4) Live a simple life, knowing the way to increase wealth and the way to decrease wealth, and making a reasonable living, not being too extravagant or too destitute, thinking that our income must be higher than our expenses and our expenses must not be higher than our income. 4. In terms of living a simple life (living a simple life), research found that the use of the principles of Ditthadhammakatthasangwattanikadhamma in the work of personnel under local administrative organizations in Phu Wiang District, Khon Kaen Province, is at a high level overall. This can be argued that civil servants live a simple life and apply the principles of the Sufficiency Economy Philosophy in their lives. This is consistent with the interview of Mr. Prayoon Promnon who said that all personnel must live simply and without extravagance by applying the royal words of His Majesty King Bhumibol Adulyadej to their daily lives and the research of Phra Maha Siriwat Ariyamethi (Chanta) who conducted research on "Analytical Study of the Sufficiency Economy Concept from the Buddhist Perspective (2004)". The research results found that Buddhism and the Sufficiency Economy are significantly related.

2. The results of the comparison of the use of the principle of the Ditthadhammakasangwattanikadham in the work of personnel under the local administrative organization in Phu Wiang District, Khon Kaen Province. The researcher found that personnel of different genders had no different opinions on the use of the principle of the Ditthadhammakasangwattanikadham in the work of personnel under the local administrative organization in Phu Wiang District, Khon Kaen Province. This can be discussed that the opinions of personnel of the Tambon Administrative Organization, Phu Wiang District, Khon Kaen Province who answered all types of questionnaires were not different. This may be because the basic factors of the respondents did not

directly affect the work according to the principle of the Ditthadhammakasangwattanikadham.

Personnel with different education levels had no different opinions on the work according to the principle of the Ditthadhammakasangwattanikadham of personnel under the Tambon Administrative Organization, Phu Wiang District, Khon Kaen Province. This can be discussed that the opinions of personnel of the Tambon Administrative Organization, Phu Wiang District, Khon Kaen Province who answered all types of questionnaires were not different. This may be because the basic factors of the respondents did not directly affect the work according to the principle of the Ditthadhammakasangwattanikadham.

Personnel with different positions There are no different opinions on working according to the principles of Ditthadhammikatthasangwattanikadham of the personnel of the Sub-district Administrative Organization, Phu Wiang District, Khon Kaen Province. This is because it can be argued that the opinions of the personnel of the Sub-district Administrative Organization, Phu Wiang District, Khon Kaen Province who answered all types of questionnaires are not different. This may be because the basic factors of the respondents do not directly affect working according to the principles of Ditthadhammikatthasangwattanikadham.

3. Guidelines for developing work performance according to the principles of the Ditthadhammikatthasangwattanikadham are: In terms of diligence, executives should organize training to develop the potential of staff to be able to work efficiently. In addition, personnel should be diligent and adjust their working methods to be up-to-date and maximize benefits. In terms of good maintenance, executives should create awareness for personnel to help take care of and maintain government property and know how to use available resources to maximize benefits for the government in a cost-effective and economical manner. In terms of good friends, executives should consider the teamwork of the agency. Personnel are those who serve the public and have good human relations in providing services and coordinating, and can complete work according to the objectives. In terms of living a sufficient life, executives should provide advice by practicing and applying the philosophy of the Sufficiency Economy of His Majesty the King in daily life.

Discussion

The study found that the overall application of the four aspects of *Ditthadhammikattha-Samvattanika-Dhamma*—**Utthānasampadā** (diligence), **Ārakkhasampadā** (preservation), **Kalyāṇamittatā** (association with good friends), and **Samajīvitā** (balanced livelihood)—among personnel in Subdistrict Administrative Organizations (SAOs) in Phu Wiang District is at a high level. The findings align with previous literature and highlight culturally relevant moral conduct within local governance.

1. Utthānasampadā (Diligence)

The personnel demonstrated a strong commitment to their duties, working efficiently and enthusiastically under time constraints. This reflects a moral sense of public service, emphasizing discipline and self-motivation. Chalermsak Saowaratphong emphasized teamwork and perseverance as crucial for administrative success,

supporting the Buddhist virtue of diligence in right livelihood. This aligns with Soifa's (2015) findings that individuals who applied *Ditthadhammikattha* in daily life were highly diligent in their responsibilities.

"Working diligently and with enthusiasm helps fulfill our role as public servants, bringing benefits to the community and personal development." (Soifa, 2015)

2. Ārakkhasampadā (Preservation)

The personnel demonstrated high levels of responsibility in maintaining government property, conducting regular inspections, and minimizing losses. This indicates not only moral awareness but also administrative integrity. Interviewee Wira Yut Buanong noted that staff treated public resources as their own, aligning with Yotphromthong's (2019) findings on Buddhist principles guiding responsible economic behavior in community settings.

"Respecting and preserving shared resources builds community trust and ensures sustainability." (Yotphromthong, 2019)

3. Kalyāṇamittatā (Good Companions)

Findings show strong interpersonal relationships and respectful communication among personnel and stakeholders. The participants displayed equality, cooperation, and kindness in public dealings, a characteristic echoed by Wira Sak Saenkong. This reinforces the social cohesion function of *kalyāṇamitta*, as noted by Phra Khru Phothithammanukul (2011), who observed that these moral friendships reduce conflict and promote shared values.

"Treating everyone with fairness, regardless of position or background, reflects the heart of Buddhist ethics in administration." (Phothithammanukul, 2011)

4. Samajīvitā (Balanced Livelihood)

Personnel reported practicing modest living, aligning with the Philosophy of Sufficiency Economy. This was emphasized by Prayoon Promnon and supported by Phra Maha Siriwat Ariyamethi (2004), who argued that Buddhist economics promotes sustainability, moderation, and rationality in personal and organizational resource use.

"Living simply allows us to serve with clarity and integrity, avoiding unnecessary burdens." (Ariyamethi, 2004)

5. Comparison by Demographic Factors

The results revealed **no significant difference** in the application of *Ditthadhammikattha* across gender, education, or position. This suggests that the practice of moral virtues transcends social status and educational background, resonating equally among all administrative staff. This observation supports the Buddhist notion of universal moral capacity (Payutto, 1995) and aligns with empirical findings by Soifa (2015), who found consistent application across demographic categories.

6. Recommendations for Organizational Development

Based on the findings, the following strategies are recommended:

- **Utthānasampadā**: Organize skill development programs and incentivize proactive work ethics.
- **Ārakkhasampadā**: Promote resource conservation and cost-effective management.
- **Kalyāṇamittatā**: Foster a collaborative team culture and client-friendly service delivery.
- **Samajīvitā**: Integrate the Sufficiency Economy Philosophy into personnel training and lifestyle guidance.

These align with the work of Chanchaochai (2015), who emphasizes that moral development rooted in Buddhist ethics enhances governance capacity and long-term institutional resilience.

New knowledge

Figure 1 New knowledge, 2024

The image is a **diagram** illustrating the four principles of *Ditthadhammikattha-Samvattanika-Dhamma*, each represented in a **colored quadrant of a Venn diagram** with brief descriptions:

1. **Diligence in Earning** *(blue, top-left)*
   - *Description:* "Diligence in earning is crucial for achieving organizational goals."
2. **Good Friendship** *(green, top-right)*
   - *Description:* "Good friendship significantly enhances workplace harmony and efficiency."
3. **Maintaining Goodness** *(yellow, bottom-left)*

- *Description:* "Maintaining goodness is essential for ethical workplace conduct."

4. **Living a Simple Life** *(light green, bottom-right)*
   - *Description:* "Living a simple life promotes personal well-being and contentment."

The central intersection of the four circles symbolizes the integrated application of these principles in organizational or personal development, especially within workplace settings like local administration. The design is clean and color-coded to help distinguish and understand each principle easily.

Recommendation

1. Policy recommendations

1.1 The organization should organize a sustainable performance development project using new public management approaches.

1.2 There should be a permanent savings project.

1.3 Organize joint activities or seminars to improve relationships between personnel.

1.4 Organize a project to apply the sufficiency economy philosophy in a tangible way in the area.

2. Practical recommendations

2.1 Personnel should regularly study rules, regulations, and laws to keep up with events and to correctly implement them.

2.2 There should be a discipline in saving by saving regularly and creating household accounts.

2.3 Help colleagues without taking advantage and share the burden with each other.

2.4 Apply the sufficiency economy philosophy and adjust it to daily life.

3. Recommendations for future research

3.1 There should be a study on knowledge development to create innovations in the operations of sub-district administrative organizations in Phu Wiang District, Khon Kaen Province.

3.2 There should be a study on teamwork of sub-district administrative organizations in Phu Wiang District, Khon Kaen Province.

3.3 There should be a study on the establishment of a fund to develop the quality of life of sub-district administrative organizations in Phu Wiang District, Khon Kaen Province.

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Academic Article

Integrating Religious Principles into Education for Enhancing Quality of Life in Contemporary Society*

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Abstract

This article explores the integration of religious and moral principles into contemporary educational systems as a means to enhance students' psychological well-being, moral development, and social cohesion. Through theoretical analysis, global case studies, and pedagogical models, the study highlights how shared ethical values across religions can be incorporated into curricula in inclusive and non-coercive ways. It addresses challenges such as pluralism, secularism, and the risk of indoctrination, and proposes policy reforms including teacher training, stakeholder engagement, and legal safeguards. The findings suggest that values-based education contributes meaningfully to holistic development and democratic citizenship.

Keywords: Religious education, Moral development, Curriculum, Policy reform, Spiritual intelligence

Introduction

In an era marked by material progress and technological innovation, modern education systems have increasingly prioritized cognitive and technical competencies while often neglecting the moral, emotional, and spiritual dimensions of human development. This trend has contributed to growing concerns about moral decay, social fragmentation, and diminished well-being, particularly among youth (Narvaez, 2008; Miller, 2007). Education, traditionally viewed as a means of transmitting not only knowledge but also values and ethical frameworks, must now re-engage with its holistic mission by integrating moral and spiritual principles that contribute to a meaningful and purposeful life (Hay & Nye, 2006).

Religious traditions across cultures have long offered comprehensive moral systems aimed at cultivating inner peace, social harmony, and compassionate action. In this context, religious education—defined not as proselytism but as the incorporation of ethical teachings rooted in religious worldviews—can play a vital role in enhancing students' quality of life. The term "quality of life" encompasses not only material well-

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being but also psychological resilience, social integration, and moral purpose (WHOQOL Group, 1995). When embedded thoughtfully into educational frameworks, religious principles can help develop virtues such as empathy, gratitude, responsibility, and mindfulness, which are increasingly recognized as key components of mental health and civic responsibility (Lickona, 1991; Zohar & Marshall, 2000).

In diverse societies, the integration of religious principles into education must be approached with sensitivity and inclusiveness. This is particularly crucial in pluralistic contexts, where multiple faith traditions coexist and where the secularization of public education may limit overtly religious content. Nonetheless, values-based education that draws upon shared ethical principles found across religions—such as compassion, honesty, and altruism—offers a promising model for enriching character development and promoting societal well-being (Jackson, 2004).

This article explores how religious principles can be constructively integrated into contemporary educational systems to enhance quality of life. It draws on theoretical perspectives, case studies from various cultural contexts, and practical models of curriculum integration. By examining both the potential benefits and challenges of such integration, the paper aims to provide insights for educators, policymakers, and communities seeking to promote holistic education that nurtures both intellect and character.

Historical Evolution of Religious Education

Religious education has undergone significant transformation across historical epochs, influenced by cultural, philosophical, and political developments. From its early role as the cornerstone of education to its modern, often contested presence in secular systems, the evolution of religious education reflects broader shifts in societal values and the relationship between religion and the state.

1. Ancient and Classical Periods

In ancient civilizations, religious instruction was often synonymous with education itself. In Egypt, Mesopotamia, and early India, priests served as both spiritual and educational authorities, teaching sacred texts, rituals, and moral codes. For example, the *Vedas* in ancient India were transmitted orally by Brahmin scholars as both religious scripture and educational curriculum (Muller, 1884). Similarly, in classical Greece, education was closely tied to civic religion and the cultivation of virtue (*aretē*), although Greek philosophy also introduced early secular thought (Marrou, 1956).

2. Medieval Era: Religious Dominance in Education

During the medieval period, particularly in Europe, religious institutions—primarily the Christian Church—exerted near-total control over education. Monasteries, cathedral schools, and later universities such as Paris and Bologna, were established to train clergy and preserve theological knowledge (Leff, 1968). The *Trivium* and

Quadrivium, foundational liberal arts curricula, were delivered within a religious worldview that saw knowledge as serving divine truth.

Outside of Europe, Islamic education developed robust systems through *madrasas*, focusing on the Qur'an, *Hadith*, jurisprudence (*fiqh*), and philosophy, contributing to the Golden Age of Islamic scholarship (Makdisi, 1981). In Buddhist traditions, monastic education flourished across South and Southeast Asia, teaching scripture, meditation, and moral discipline to both monks and laypeople (Gombrich, 1988).

3. Reformation and the Rise of National Education

The Protestant Reformation in the 16th century marked a major turning point. Martin Luther advocated for universal literacy so that individuals could read the Bible themselves, leading to increased emphasis on vernacular education and state involvement in schooling (Green, 2003). In Catholic regions, the Counter-Reformation spurred the Jesuit movement, which established rigorous educational institutions combining classical learning with Catholic doctrine (O'Malley, 1993).

This period also saw growing state interest in controlling education to support national identity, often using religion as a unifying force. For example, in England, the Anglican Church remained closely tied to public schooling well into the 19th century (Copley, 2005).

4. Enlightenment and the Secular Turn

The Enlightenment challenged the primacy of religious education by promoting reason, empiricism, and individual liberty. Thinkers like Rousseau and Locke advocated for education that nurtured rational autonomy rather than religious conformity (Gutek, 2005). Secular education systems began to emerge, especially in revolutionary France and later in Prussia, separating state schooling from ecclesiastical control while still maintaining moral instruction.

Despite this shift, religious education persisted, often redefined as moral or civic instruction. In many societies, churches adapted by founding private religious schools, and debates over the role of religion in public education intensified.

5. Modern and Contemporary Developments

In the 19th and 20th centuries, religious education underwent further change. In countries such as the United States, constitutional secularism limited overt religious instruction in public schools, but allowed for comparative religion courses or moral education rooted in religious ethics (Nord & Haynes, 1998). In contrast, countries like the United Kingdom retained religious education as a statutory part of the curriculum, albeit increasingly multifaith and inclusive (Jackson, 2004).

In the global South, postcolonial education systems struggled to reconcile indigenous religious traditions with Western secular models. In Muslim-majority countries, Islamic education was revitalized in response to both modernization and political Islam, often alongside secular schooling (Boyle, 2006).

Today, religious education is shaped by globalization, religious pluralism, and debates over identity, inclusion, and rights. UNESCO and other international bodies have promoted religious literacy and interfaith understanding as essential components of global citizenship education (UNESCO, 2006).

The history of religious education reveals a dynamic interplay between faith, pedagogy, and power. From being the sole source of learning to one voice among many in pluralistic education, religion continues to shape moral frameworks and societal values. Understanding its historical trajectory helps educators and policymakers navigate the challenges of integrating religious principles in diverse, modern educational contexts.

Comparative Religious Ethics and Common Values

In the discourse on integrating religious principles into education, one of the most compelling and pragmatic approaches lies in identifying shared ethical values across religious traditions. Comparative religious ethics—a field that examines moral teachings within and across religious systems—reveals a convergence of foundational virtues that transcend doctrinal boundaries. These common values, such as compassion, justice, honesty, respect, and responsibility, form a universal ethical framework that can inform inclusive and pluralistic educational models aimed at enhancing quality of life.

1. Theoretical Foundations of Comparative Ethics

Comparative religious ethics emerged as a response to the need for cross-cultural understanding in a globalized world. Rather than seeking doctrinal uniformity, it focuses on practical moral norms and virtues embedded within religious worldviews (Little & Twiss, 1990). This approach allows educators and policymakers to draw upon diverse spiritual traditions without privileging any one religion over others. Proponents argue that moral education rooted in shared values fosters empathy, civic responsibility, and intercultural respect—key elements of peaceful coexistence in pluralistic societies (Jackson, 2004; Halafoff, 2013).

2. Shared Moral Teachings Across Traditions

Despite their theological differences, major world religions express remarkably similar ethical imperatives. For instance:

- Compassion is central to Buddhism (*karuṇā*), Christianity (*agape*), and Islam (*rahmah*), promoting care for others and alleviation of suffering (Armstrong, 2010).
- Truthfulness is a core value in Hindu *satya*, the Jewish *emet*, and the Christian commandment against bearing false witness.
- Justice is emphasized in Islam (*adl*), the Hebrew Bible's concern for the oppressed, and Confucian ideas of social harmony.
- Respect for life and dignity appears in the Buddhist First Precept (non-harming), Christian human dignity doctrine, and the Sikh principle of equality.

These shared principles form what some scholars call an "overlapping moral consensus" (Rawls, 1993), enabling the design of value-based education that is culturally inclusive and ethically robust.

3. Educational Application and Interfaith Pedagogy

The identification of common ethical ground provides a foundation for interfaith education models that nurture moral reasoning without religious indoctrination. Such models use stories, rituals, and ethical dilemmas from various traditions to engage students in critical reflection and character development. For example, the *Golden Rule*—to treat others as one would like to be treated—is found in Christianity (Matthew 7:12), Confucianism (*Analects* 15:23), Islam (Hadith of Bukhari), and many other traditions. Teaching this principle across cultural contexts can help students internalize empathy and mutual respect.

Furthermore, UNESCO (2006) and the Council of Europe (2014) have advocated for religious literacy and ethical education that emphasize shared values as tools for social cohesion. Intercultural education programs in Finland, the United Kingdom, and Canada have successfully integrated comparative ethics to foster inclusion, tolerance, and global citizenship (Gearon, 2013; Ipgrave, 2015).

4. Cautions and Considerations

While focusing on shared values is advantageous, scholars caution against oversimplifying or essentializing religions. Ethical teachings are always situated within complex theological and historical contexts (Keown, 2005). Therefore, educators must approach comparative ethics with critical sensitivity, ensuring that diversity within traditions is acknowledged and that superficial generalizations are avoided. Moreover, ethical education must allow space for secular moral frameworks and indigenous knowledge systems, further enriching its inclusivity and relevance.

Comparative religious ethics offers a constructive framework for integrating moral instruction into education in a way that respects religious diversity while promoting shared human values. By emphasizing common virtues such as compassion, justice, and truthfulness, educational institutions can nurture ethical awareness, intercultural understanding, and holistic well-being. These values, rooted in both spiritual traditions and universal human experience, serve as essential building blocks for enhancing the quality of life in contemporary society.

The Role of Spiritual Intelligence in Education

In the quest for holistic education that fosters not only cognitive excellence but also emotional and moral development, the concept of spiritual intelligence (SQ) has emerged as a vital dimension of human learning. Spiritual intelligence refers to the capacity to access deep meaning, transcendence, and moral purpose in one's life and relationships (Zohar & Marshall, 2000). Distinct from religious dogma, SQ enables individuals to integrate personal values, cultivate inner peace, and make ethical decisions, thereby enhancing their overall quality of life. Within educational contexts,

spiritual intelligence offers a framework for nurturing self-awareness, empathy, and value-based thinking, aligning with contemporary goals of character education and well-being.

1. Conceptualizing Spiritual Intelligence

The term "spiritual intelligence" was popularized by Danah Zohar and Ian Marshall (2000), who argued that it is a fundamental capacity underlying the development of both intellectual (IQ) and emotional intelligence (EQ). They proposed that SQ enables individuals to solve problems of meaning and value, to envision higher goals, and to maintain inner harmony amid external challenges. King (2008) further defined SQ as comprising components such as critical existential thinking, personal meaning production, transcendental awareness, and conscious state expansion.

Unlike religious education, which often centers on specific doctrinal beliefs and practices, spiritual intelligence is non-sectarian and universal, making it suitable for diverse classrooms. It encourages students to explore questions such as "Who am I?", "What is the purpose of life?", and "How do I live ethically?", thereby engaging both their cognitive and affective domains.

2. Educational Benefits of Spiritual Intelligence

Integrating SQ into education has profound implications for student development. Research suggests that students with higher levels of spiritual intelligence exhibit stronger emotional resilience, greater self-regulation, and more compassionate social behavior (Vaughan, 2002; Amram & Dryer, 2008). These traits contribute not only to academic success but also to personal well-being and civic engagement.

Spiritual intelligence supports:

- Moral reasoning and ethical behavior (Gardner, 1999)
- Mindfulness and stress management (Singh & Singh, 2013)
- Purposeful learning and intrinsic motivation (Tirri, 2003)

In this sense, SQ aligns with the goals of 21st-century education to produce reflective, empathetic, and ethically responsible global citizens.

3. Pedagogical Strategies for Cultivating SQ

Educators can nurture spiritual intelligence through a variety of pedagogical methods that promote introspection, dialogue, and values-based inquiry:

- Reflective practices such as journaling, meditation, and silent contemplation.
- Philosophical questioning and discussions around existential and moral themes.
- Service learning that connects classroom knowledge with community engagement.
- Storytelling and literature that explore human dilemmas, virtues, and spiritual journeys.

These practices not only enhance student self-awareness but also create a classroom culture of empathy, openness, and trust. Crucially, educators must be trained

to facilitate these approaches in a way that is inclusive and respectful of different beliefs and worldviews (Hyde, 2008).

4. Relevance to Quality of Life and Social Cohesion

Spiritual intelligence contributes to students' quality of life by fostering a sense of inner fulfillment, life purpose, and moral integrity. In societies facing increasing mental health challenges, identity crises, and moral confusion, SQ can act as a stabilizing force that nurtures psychological well-being and ethical clarity (Emmons, 2000). Moreover, by encouraging empathy, compassion, and respect for others, it fosters social cohesion and intercultural understanding—key to peaceful coexistence in multicultural societies.

Spiritual intelligence bridges the gap between intellect and character, offering a transformative approach to education that empowers students to live meaningful, ethical, and emotionally balanced lives. As educational systems worldwide strive to cultivate well-rounded individuals, integrating SQ into the curriculum represents a critical step toward developing morally grounded and socially responsible citizens. While distinct from religious education, spiritual intelligence draws from humanity's shared ethical and existential heritage, making it a powerful tool for both personal development and social harmony.

Psychological and Social Benefits of Religious/Moral Education

In an increasingly complex and ethically ambiguous world, the integration of religious and moral education in school curricula plays a crucial role in shaping students' psychological well-being and social development. Moral and spiritual instruction—whether drawn from religious traditions or secular ethics—has been shown to promote emotional resilience, self-regulation, empathy, and prosocial behavior. These outcomes not only enhance students' quality of life but also contribute to healthier, more cohesive communities.

1. Psychological Development and Emotional Well-being

Religious and moral education fosters inner development by helping students make sense of personal experiences, confront ethical dilemmas, and cultivate virtues such as patience, humility, and forgiveness. These practices contribute to emotional intelligence, which is essential for stress management, healthy relationships, and personal growth (Goleman, 1995). Exposure to religious and moral narratives can also enhance moral identity, providing students with a stable foundation for ethical decision-making and self-worth (Hardy & Carlo, 2005).

Moreover, students engaged in value-based education report greater psychological well-being, including lower levels of anxiety and depression and higher levels of life satisfaction (King & Boyatzis, 2004). Practices such as prayer, meditation, and reflective journaling—common in religious contexts—are now also recognized in secular psychology for their benefits in reducing stress and increasing mindfulness (Koenig, 2012).

2. Development of Empathy and Prosocial Behavior

Religious and moral instruction often emphasizes empathy, altruism, and social responsibility, qualities that are foundational to civil society and global citizenship. Studies show that moral education, especially when tied to service learning and experiential ethics, enhances students' capacity to understand others' perspectives and act compassionately (Lickona, 1991; Nucci & Narvaez, 2008). Many religious traditions promote empathy through stories and parables—such as the Good Samaritan in Christianity or Jataka tales in Buddhism—encouraging students to identify with moral exemplars.

Furthermore, moral education contributes to the internalization of prosocial norms, such as helping behaviors, conflict resolution, and communal cooperation. This has been observed in both religious and non-religious schools where character education is implemented systematically (Berkowitz & Bier, 2005).

3. Social Cohesion and Ethical Culture in Schools

Moral and religious education fosters a positive school climate by promoting respect, tolerance, and integrity among students. Schools that embed shared values in their policies and teaching practices tend to report lower levels of bullying, greater student engagement, and stronger relationships among peers and between students and teachers (Noddings, 2005). In multicultural environments, inclusive moral instruction based on universal values—such as fairness, nonviolence, and honesty—can build bridges between diverse student populations, reducing prejudice and enhancing intercultural understanding (UNESCO, 2006).

This social dimension is particularly significant in divided or post-conflict societies, where religiously framed ethical education has been used to promote reconciliation, human rights, and democratic participation (Haydon, 2006).

4. Long-Term Impacts on Civic and Ethical Behavior

The benefits of religious and moral education extend beyond the classroom. Longitudinal studies indicate that students who receive consistent moral instruction are more likely to become ethically responsible adults, participate in civic activities, and demonstrate integrity in their professional and personal lives (Narvaez, 2008). By fostering a sense of moral agency, such education prepares learners not only to adapt to society but to contribute actively to its moral progress.

Religious and moral education serves as a powerful tool for nurturing psychological well-being, ethical reasoning, and prosocial behavior. It addresses the emotional and interpersonal needs of students while building inclusive and cohesive educational environments. In doing so, it contributes not only to individual flourishing but also to the moral fabric of society. Integrating such education—whether through religious traditions or secular ethics—remains essential for developing balanced, empathetic, and socially responsible individuals.

Case Studies in Religious Integration in Educational Systems

To understand the practical implications and challenges of integrating religious principles into education, it is essential to examine real-world models from diverse cultural and educational contexts. These case studies illustrate how religious values have been incorporated into formal curricula or school cultures in ways that support moral development, community cohesion, and quality of life. The following examples—from Thailand, Malaysia, and the United Kingdom—demonstrate different approaches based on dominant religious traditions, state policies, and pluralistic considerations.

1. Buddhist-Based Moral Education in Thailand

Thailand provides a significant example of religious integration in education through the incorporation of Buddhist ethics into national curricula. Rooted in the country's cultural and spiritual heritage, Thai education emphasizes the *Five Precepts*, the *Four Noble Truths*, and the *Noble Eightfold Path* as frameworks for character development and civic responsibility (Lovat & Toomey, 2007).

Many Thai schools, particularly those under the Office of the Basic Education Commission, include morning chanting, meditation, and Dhamma instruction to instill mindfulness, gratitude, and respect for others (Inthachot, 2014). These practices are designed not only to reinforce Buddhist values but also to reduce behavioral problems and enhance psychological well-being.

Research has shown that students participating in Buddhist-integrated programs demonstrate improved self-regulation, empathy, and academic engagement (Kittisuksathit et al., 2009). Importantly, while the majority of students identify as Buddhist, the national approach allows for flexible adaptation in regions with Muslim or Christian populations, reflecting Thailand's attempt to balance religious tradition with inclusivity.

2. Islamic Education in Malaysian National Schools

Malaysia offers a model of Islamic integration that combines religious instruction with state educational goals. The national curriculum includes compulsory Islamic education (*Pendidikan Islam*) for Muslim students and Moral Education (*Pendidikan Moral*) for non-Muslims (Rosnani, 2004). This dual-track system respects religious diversity while ensuring that all students receive values-based instruction.

Islamic education in Malaysia emphasizes the five pillars of Islam, moral conduct (*akhlaq*), and Qur'anic studies. It aims to develop spiritually balanced individuals who are socially responsible, honest, and respectful (Wan Daud, 1998). Instruction is delivered in formal classes and supported by co-curricular activities such as Quranic competitions, prayer assemblies, and community service.

Studies indicate that this approach fosters a strong sense of identity, community responsibility, and spiritual well-being among students (Hashim, 2004). However, critics have noted challenges related to inclusivity and the depth of critical moral

reasoning promoted in moral education for non-Muslims (Tan, 2011), suggesting a need for reform to foster interfaith understanding and shared ethical discourse.

3. Multifaith Religious Education in the United Kingdom

In contrast to monoreligious models, the United Kingdom has developed an inclusive, multifaith approach to religious education (RE), particularly in England and Wales. Since the 1988 Education Reform Act, RE has been a statutory subject in state schools, though not part of the National Curriculum. Local Standing Advisory Councils on Religious Education (SACREs) design syllabi that include Christianity and other major world religions, including Islam, Hinduism, Sikhism, Buddhism, and Judaism (Jackson, 2004).

The aim is not indoctrination but religious literacy, moral reflection, and intercultural dialogue. Students engage with diverse religious narratives, rituals, and ethical teachings to develop respect for pluralism and shared human values. Pedagogical methods include role play, ethical debates, and visits to places of worship, promoting experiential learning and empathy (Ipgrave, 2015).

Evaluations of the UK model show that multifaith RE contributes to tolerance, social cohesion, and moral awareness, especially in multicultural communities (Gearon, 2013). Challenges persist, however, including the inconsistent quality of delivery and tensions between religious freedom and state-mandated content.

These case studies reflect a spectrum of approaches to religious integration in education—from monoreligious frameworks rooted in national identity to pluralistic models designed for multicultural societies. Each demonstrates how religious values, when thoughtfully integrated, can enhance students' moral development and sense of purpose. At the same time, these examples highlight the need for careful policy design to ensure inclusivity, pedagogical effectiveness, and respect for diverse beliefs. Comparative insights from such cases provide valuable lessons for policymakers and educators seeking to balance spiritual and civic goals in contemporary education.

Curriculum and Pedagogical Models for Values Integration

The success of integrating religious and moral principles into education depends largely on how effectively they are embedded into curricula and pedagogical practices. A growing body of research supports the idea that value-based education, whether religious or secular, can be enhanced through intentional curriculum design and reflective pedagogy (Lovat & Toomey, 2007). This section examines several curricular frameworks and teaching methodologies that facilitate the integration of ethical and spiritual values into formal education.

1. Cross-Curricular Integration of Values

One of the most widely adopted strategies for values integration is the cross-curricular approach, wherein moral principles are infused across various subjects such as literature, history, science, and civic education. Rather than teaching values in

isolation, this model allows students to encounter ethical questions and religious perspectives in meaningful, context-driven ways.

For example, religious themes such as justice, compassion, and stewardship can be explored through environmental science (stewardship), social studies (human rights), or language arts (literature on empathy and forgiveness) (Halstead & Taylor, 2000). This approach aligns with constructivist theories of learning, which emphasize the integration of knowledge with personal meaning and lived experience (Noddings, 2005).

2. Stand-Alone Moral or Religious Education Courses

Another effective model is the implementation of stand-alone courses dedicated to moral, ethical, or religious education. These classes can take various forms, including:

- Comparative religion courses that explore major world faiths
- Moral philosophy or ethics courses
- Faith-based instruction in confessional schools

In pluralistic settings, stand-alone religious education is often non-confessional, focusing on understanding different belief systems and encouraging critical thinking rather than promoting any single doctrine (Jackson, 2004). Such courses allow for in-depth exploration of ethical dilemmas, spiritual narratives, and religious diversity.

3. Experiential and Reflective Pedagogy

Pedagogical practices are equally important in fostering moral development. Research shows that values are internalized most effectively through experiential learning, critical reflection, and dialogical engagement (Narvaez, 2006). Key pedagogical strategies include:

- Service learning: Linking classroom instruction with community service projects reinforces values such as altruism, civic responsibility, and compassion (Battistoni, 2002).
- Reflective practices: Meditation, journaling, and ethical self-assessment help students cultivate self-awareness and internalize moral reasoning (Hyde, 2008).
- Socratic dialogue and ethical inquiry: Classroom discussions that present moral dilemmas stimulate critical thinking and foster respect for multiple perspectives (Haydon, 2006).

In religious schools, these pedagogical tools are often complemented by rituals, prayers, or scriptural study that reinforce spiritual traditions and community identity.

4. Whole-School Ethos and Value Culture

Beyond the classroom, schools can promote values integration through the creation of a values-rich institutional culture. This includes leadership practices, codes of conduct, school-wide celebrations, and community engagement that reinforce ethical and spiritual norms (Lickona, 1991). Schools that explicitly model values such as

integrity, respect, and compassion—through both policy and practice—tend to produce more cohesive and morally aware student bodies.

In countries such as Australia and Finland, national initiatives have supported whole-school approaches to values education, resulting in improved student behavior, emotional health, and civic-mindedness (Australian Government, 2005; Sahlberg, 2011).

5. Teacher Preparation and Professional Development

Effective values integration requires that teachers are not only content experts but also moral exemplars. Educators must possess the skills to facilitate ethical dialogue, manage diverse worldviews, and model the virtues they teach. This necessitates professional development programs focused on character education, spiritual pedagogy, and inclusive religious literacy (Carr, 2003).

Furthermore, teachers working in religious or interfaith contexts need support in navigating the boundary between education and indoctrination, ensuring that students are invited to explore values critically rather than adopt them unreflectively.

Curriculum and pedagogy are central to the integration of religious and moral values in education. Whether through cross-curricular models, stand-alone ethics courses, or whole-school culture, successful implementation depends on thoughtful design and reflective teaching. By equipping both students and teachers with the tools to engage with ethical and spiritual questions, education can serve as a transformative force for personal growth and societal cohesion.

Challenges and Ethical Considerations in Religious Integration

While integrating religious and moral principles into education holds promise for holistic development and social cohesion, it also presents a range of complex challenges and ethical dilemmas. These include issues of pluralism, indoctrination, cultural sensitivity, secularism, and the balance between rights and responsibilities. Effective integration must be guided by ethical safeguards to protect individual autonomy and to ensure that religious values are taught in inclusive, non-coercive ways that respect the diversity of beliefs in contemporary societies.

1. Navigating Religious Pluralism and Diversity

One of the most pressing challenges in religious integration is the growing pluralism of modern classrooms. Students increasingly come from diverse religious, spiritual, and non-religious backgrounds. In such contexts, privileging one religious tradition over others may result in marginalization, exclusion, or cultural hegemony (Jackson, 2004). This is especially sensitive in multicultural societies or secular states where religious neutrality is expected in public institutions.

To mitigate this, educators must adopt inclusive frameworks that draw from a wide range of traditions while highlighting shared ethical values. Comparative religious education and interfaith dialogue are promising approaches that avoid exclusivity and promote respect for difference (Gearon, 2013).

2. The Risk of Indoctrination

Another ethical concern is the potential for indoctrination—the uncritical imposition of beliefs without encouraging reflection, autonomy, or informed choice. Education aims to develop critical thinking and moral agency, yet religious instruction that is dogmatic or authoritarian may suppress intellectual freedom (Levinson, 1999).

To avoid indoctrination, educators should emphasize dialogical teaching, ethical inquiry, and student voice. Students must be encouraged to explore, question, and interpret religious and moral teachings, rather than simply accept them. This aligns with the principles of deliberative democratic education, which values reasoned dialogue and respect for individual conscience (Gutmann, 1999).

3. Secularism and Legal Constraints

In many countries, particularly in Western democracies, the separation of religion and state imposes legal limitations on religious instruction in public education. The principle of secularism demands that schools remain neutral with regard to religion, protecting both freedom of religion and freedom from religion (Nord & Haynes, 1998). This poses challenges for integrating religious principles, even when the intention is ethical development rather than proselytization. However, courts and education policies in countries like the United States, Canada, and the UK have made distinctions between teaching religion (as cultural literacy) and teaching religiously (as devotion), with the former being generally permissible when handled objectively and inclusively (Moore, 2007).

4. Cultural Sensitivity and Contextual Relevance

Religious integration must also be culturally sensitive and relevant to the specific social context. In postcolonial societies, the legacy of religious education imposed by colonial powers may evoke resistance, especially if perceived as undermining indigenous or local traditions (Tan, 2011). Similarly, minority or indigenous spiritualities may be underrepresented in curricula, reinforcing cultural hierarchies.

Thus, curriculum developers must engage local communities, religious leaders, and marginalized voices to ensure that educational content is contextually grounded, equitable, and reflective of the society's full spiritual heritage.

5. Balancing Rights, Freedoms, and Educational Goals

Ethical tensions also arise in balancing the rights of parents to raise their children in accordance with religious convictions, the rights of children to develop autonomous moral judgment, and the educational responsibility of the state to promote civic values and social integration (Moulin, 2011).

When handled poorly, religious education can lead to conflicts between home and school values, or between individual freedoms and collective norms. Ethical integration requires that schools provide transparent opt-out policies, clear learning objectives, and pedagogical approaches that respect students' identities while fostering shared civic virtues.

Integrating religious principles into education offers significant benefits but must be approached with ethical care and pedagogical discernment. Key challenges include navigating pluralism, avoiding indoctrination, respecting secular frameworks, ensuring cultural relevance, and balancing competing rights. By grounding religious education in inclusive, critical, and dialogical frameworks, schools can uphold democratic values while fostering the moral and spiritual development of students. The path forward lies in cultivating both conviction and compassion, both diversity and dialogue.

Policy Implications and Educational Reform

As educational systems worldwide seek to cultivate responsible, ethical, and emotionally resilient citizens, the integration of religious and moral principles into education has re-emerged as a policy priority. However, translating these aspirations into coherent, inclusive, and actionable policies remains a complex task. Effective educational reform requires balancing religious plurality, constitutional mandates, global citizenship goals, and local cultural realities. This section explores key policy implications and reform strategies necessary for embedding values-based education—religious or otherwise—within contemporary educational frameworks.

1. Recognition of Religious and Moral Literacy as Core Competencies

One of the central policy implications is the formal recognition of religious literacy and moral reasoning as essential educational outcomes, alongside cognitive and technical skills. International bodies such as UNESCO and the OECD have increasingly emphasized the role of education in promoting ethical, intercultural, and human rights awareness (UNESCO, 2015; OECD, 2018). Policies should thus frame spiritual and moral development not as supplementary but as integral to the curriculum.

This requires the development of national standards or guidelines that articulate learning objectives related to ethical reflection, empathy, civic engagement, and spiritual inquiry—framed in non-dogmatic, inclusive terms (Haydon, 2006).

2. Curriculum Reform and Interdisciplinary Design

Curriculum policy must facilitate the integration of moral and spiritual values across disciplines. Ministries of education should encourage:

- Cross-curricular frameworks that embed values in literature, history, science, and civics.
- Optional and elective courses in comparative religion, philosophy, or ethics.
- Culturally responsive curricula that include indigenous belief systems and non-Western spiritual traditions.

Successful models, such as Finland's interdisciplinary "phenomenon-based learning" or the UK's locally developed Religious Education syllabi, show that curriculum reform can accommodate diversity while promoting moral development (Sahlberg, 2011; Jackson, 2004).

3. Teacher Training and Professional Development

Policy reform must prioritize teacher preparation. Teachers play a pivotal role in facilitating values education and must be trained to handle religious and ethical content with academic neutrality, cultural sensitivity, and pedagogical skill (Carr, 2003). This includes:

- Courses on comparative religions and moral philosophy in teacher education programs.
- Workshops on facilitating dialogue, managing controversial issues, and promoting empathy.
- Interdisciplinary collaboration between educators in humanities, ethics, and social sciences.

National teaching standards should include competencies related to moral and spiritual pedagogy, particularly in pluralistic classrooms (Hyde, 2008).

4. Stakeholder Engagement and Community Participation

Successful reform requires multi-stakeholder collaboration. Policymakers should engage:

- Religious and spiritual leaders,
- Civil society organizations,
- Parent associations,
- Youth representatives.

Such engagement helps ensure that policies are culturally grounded, socially legitimate, and contextually adaptable. Community participation can also support extracurricular programming—such as meditation clubs, service-learning projects, and interfaith dialogues—that complement classroom instruction (UNESCO, 2006).

5. Legal Safeguards and Rights-Based Approaches

In contexts with strong constitutional protections for religious freedom and secularism, policies must ensure non-coercive implementation. Key safeguards include:

- Clear distinctions between educating about religion and promoting religious adherence.
- Parental opt-out provisions.
- Transparent curricula and assessment methods.

A rights-based approach, grounded in international human rights law (e.g., Article 18 of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights), helps balance the rights of students, parents, and communities while fostering values that support democratic citizenship (Moulin, 2011).

Educational policy reform aimed at integrating religious and moral principles must move beyond rhetoric to establish clear, inclusive, and ethically sound frameworks. This requires embedding religious and moral literacy in national standards, redesigning curricula for interdisciplinary integration, empowering teachers, and fostering community engagement. When properly implemented, such reforms can

cultivate not only academic excellence but also ethical citizenship, social harmony, and personal well-being—core pillars of education for the 21st century.

Conclusion

Integrating religious and moral principles into education presents significant policy implications and reform opportunities aimed at fostering ethical citizenship, emotional resilience, and intercultural understanding. As global education systems shift toward holistic development, religious and moral literacy must be recognized as core competencies alongside academic and technical skills. International bodies such as UNESCO and the OECD emphasize these dimensions as essential to global citizenship and sustainable development. To implement such integration, curriculum reform is crucial. This includes cross-curricular designs that embed values in various subjects, elective courses on religion and ethics, and culturally responsive content that respects indigenous and non-Western traditions. Equally important is teacher training, as educators must be equipped to handle moral and religious content with neutrality, sensitivity, and skill. Policies should include professional development programs that cover comparative religion, dialogical pedagogy, and controversial issue facilitation. Furthermore, community engagement is vital. Effective reform depends on collaboration with religious leaders, civil society, and parents to ensure cultural relevance and public support. Legal safeguards are also necessary in contexts where secularism and religious freedom are constitutionally protected. These safeguards should distinguish between teaching about religion and promoting religious adherence, offering parental opt-outs and transparent learning goals. A rights-based approach, grounded in international human rights frameworks, can help balance individual freedoms with collective educational goals. Ultimately, policy reforms must strive for inclusive, flexible, and context-sensitive strategies that make religious and moral education a transformative force for both individuals and societies. Through well-designed policies, collaborative governance, and ethical safeguards, religious integration in education can enhance quality of life while upholding democratic values and social harmony.

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Academic Article

The Role of Religion in Promoting Morality and Ethics among Thai Youth in the Education System*

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Abstract

This article explores the role of religion in promoting morality and ethics among Thai youth within the education system. It examines how Buddhist, Islamic, and Christian teachings are integrated into curricula, school rituals, and national policy to shape character and civic values. The discussion highlights both the strengths of religious moral education and the challenges of ensuring inclusivity in a pluralistic society. The article concludes with recommendations for balanced, values-driven educational policies that respect cultural and religious diversity.

Keywords: Religion, Morality, Ethics, Thai Youth, Education

Introduction

In contemporary Thai society, morality and ethics are considered essential foundations for both personal conduct and national development. The cultivation of these values is particularly emphasized in the upbringing and education of children and youth, as they are regarded as future citizens responsible for maintaining cultural continuity and social harmony. Within the Thai education system, moral and ethical instruction is not only a pedagogical goal but a policy priority, embedded through civic education, religious studies, and national mandates such as the "Twelve Core Values" initiative introduced by the National Council for Peace and Order (NCPO) in 2014. These values, including loyalty, gratitude, self-discipline, and respect for elders, draw heavily from religious and cultural norms rooted in Thai traditions (Office of the Basic Education Commission [OBEC], 2014).

Religion plays a central role in shaping these moral ideals, particularly through the long-standing influence of Theravāda Buddhism, which permeates nearly every aspect of Thai cultural and educational life. As approximately 93% of Thais identify as Buddhist, the teachings of the Buddha—especially the Five Precepts (*pañca-sīla*), the Noble Eightfold Path, and the principles of *mettā* (loving-kindness) and *karuṇā* (compassion)—form a moral compass widely accepted by both families and schools (Keyes, 1983; Swearer, 2010). Buddhist monks often participate in school activities, and many educational institutions begin each day with prayer or chanting sessions.

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Additionally, Islam and Christianity, although minority religions in Thailand, play important roles in the moral and spiritual development of youth in their respective communities. In the southern provinces of Thailand, Islamic schools (*pondok* and *tadika*) combine general education with Qur'anic teachings, emphasizing discipline, modesty, and social responsibility (Liow, 2009). Christian institutions, particularly those run by Catholic missions, similarly promote ethical values such as humility, service, and integrity through religious instruction and community outreach (Sirikanchana, 2003).

Given this rich religious and cultural landscape, it is important to examine how religion contributes to the development of morality and ethics among Thai youth, particularly within formal educational settings. This article explores the integration of religious principles into the Thai education system and analyzes their role in shaping the moral character of students. It seeks to identify how Buddhism, Islam, and Christianity offer frameworks for ethical conduct and how these are reflected in school curricula, extracurricular activities, and broader socialization processes. The objective is to critically assess the role of religion as a moral agent in education, while also addressing contemporary challenges related to religious pluralism, secularism, and educational policy in Thailand.

Religion and Thai Moral Culture

Thailand is a multi-religious society with a dominant Buddhist majority and notable Muslim and Christian minorities. Each of these religious traditions offers a distinct yet overlapping moral framework that influences individual behavior, social expectations, and institutional practices, particularly in education. These frameworks are not confined to theological doctrines but are embedded in everyday cultural life, shaping notions of right and wrong, duty, and interpersonal responsibility among Thai youth.

1. Thailand's Major Religions and Moral Frameworks

Theravāda Buddhism is practiced by approximately 93% of the Thai population and has played a formative role in the country's moral landscape. Buddhist ethics emphasize personal responsibility, non-violence, mindfulness, compassion, and adherence to social harmony. The Five Precepts (*pañca-sīla*)—refraining from killing, stealing, sexual misconduct, lying, and intoxication—serve as the baseline for lay morality and are frequently taught to children both at home and in schools (Swearer, 2010). The Noble Eightfold Path, especially components such as right speech, right action, and right livelihood, offers a comprehensive guide for ethical living and is often integrated into character education curricula (Harvey, 2000).

Islam, practiced by approximately 5–6% of the population, is especially prominent in the southern provinces such as Pattani, Yala, and Narathiwat. Islamic moral instruction derives from the Qur'an and Hadith, emphasizing virtues such as honesty (*ṣidq*), modesty (*ḥayāʾ*), filial piety, justice (*ʿadl*), and submission to God's will. Islamic schools (*pondok* and *tadika*) operate parallel to the national curriculum but incorporate Islamic studies, Arabic language, and religious rituals, thereby nurturing a

sense of moral identity grounded in Islamic ethics (Liow, 2009). Teachers and religious leaders often function as moral exemplars and guide students through daily routines that reinforce religious discipline and ethical reflection.

Christianity, though practiced by a smaller segment of the population (roughly 1.2%), has made a significant impact through its missionary-led educational institutions. Catholic and Protestant schools have long emphasized values such as humility, service to others, honesty, and compassion through both formal instruction and community involvement. Biblical teachings, prayer, and the figure of Jesus as a moral role model are used to cultivate a strong sense of ethical responsibility among students (Sirikanchana, 2003). Christian schools are also known for high academic standards and a holistic approach to education that includes moral, spiritual, and emotional development.

2. Moral Education through Religious Instruction

In Thai public and private schools, moral education is often synonymous with religious education. Buddhist principles are formally taught during religion classes and are reinforced through daily rituals such as chanting, paying respect to the Buddha image, and participation in merit-making ceremonies. Schools often invite monks to deliver sermons on moral topics during special occasions like *Makha Bucha* or *Visakha Bucha* days (Mulder, 1996). Students are encouraged to internalize these teachings not just as doctrine but as practical guidelines for ethical living.

In Islamic and Christian schools, religious teachings are similarly positioned as core sources of ethical instruction. Islamic institutions integrate prayer, fasting during Ramadan, and lessons on the Prophet Muhammad's life into their moral education frameworks. Christian schools incorporate chapel services, Bible studies, and social service projects to instill values aligned with Christian ethics. In all cases, religion functions not merely as a subject of knowledge but as a formative influence on students' character and worldview.

The coexistence of these religious traditions within the Thai education system reflects a broader cultural consensus that moral development is both a personal and collective endeavor. While the content of religious ethics may vary, the shared emphasis on discipline, compassion, and social responsibility contributes to a moral culture that is pluralistic yet cohesive.

Religious Education in the Thai School System

Religious education in Thailand is a state-sanctioned and culturally embedded aspect of the national curriculum. It operates as a key vehicle for instilling moral and civic values among youth and reflects the country's deep-rooted relationship between religion, education, and national identity. While Thailand is officially secular in its constitutional framework, its educational philosophy heavily incorporates religious and moral instruction—most notably from Theravāda Buddhism, the majority religion.

1. Religious and Moral Content in the National Curriculum

The formal Thai school curriculum, overseen by the Ministry of Education, includes religion, morality, and ethics as a core learning area from primary through secondary education. Students are required to study religious principles, moral reasoning, ethical behavior, and civic responsibilities, with content adapted to suit diverse regional and religious demographics. Although Buddhist teachings dominate the textbooks and class discussions, provisions exist to accommodate students of Islamic and Christian backgrounds, especially in the southern provinces and in mission-run schools (Office of the Basic Education Commission [OBEC], 2008).

Curriculum materials typically focus on the Five Precepts, the Noble Eightfold Path, the virtues of the Buddha's teachings, and moral parables drawn from the *Jātaka* tales. Instruction emphasizes qualities such as self-discipline, gratitude, honesty, and compassion. In Islamic schools (*rong rian islam*), additional instruction in Qur'anic teachings, Shariah principles, and Arabic language is integrated into the standard curriculum. Similarly, Christian schools, particularly those managed by Catholic or Protestant institutions, blend biblical ethics and Christian worldview into moral education (Sirikanchana, 2003; Liow, 2009).

2. Integration of Religious Activities in Schools

Beyond classroom instruction, Thai schools often incorporate religious practices into daily routines and special ceremonies. A typical school day may begin with a morning assembly that includes chanting Buddhist prayers, listening to moral sermons, or participating in guided meditation. On Buddhist holy days—such as *Makha Bucha*, *Visakha Bucha*, and *Asalha Bucha*—schools organize temple visits, merit-making activities, and almsgiving ceremonies where students offer food to monks (Mulder, 1996). These practices are designed not only to reinforce religious instruction but to cultivate experiential morality and emotional connection with spiritual values.

In predominantly Muslim provinces, school routines include the daily recitation of Qur'anic verses, Friday prayers, and observance of Ramadan. In Christian schools, prayer sessions, chapel services, and religious festivals like Christmas or Easter are integrated into the academic calendar, serving as opportunities for ethical reflection and community bonding.

Monks, imams, priests, and religious teachers often serve as moral exemplars and provide spiritual guidance within the school setting. In some institutions, monks are formally invited to teach classes or offer weekly sermons. This collaboration between religious figures and educational institutions reflects a communal approach to ethical development, where the cultivation of virtue is seen as a shared societal responsibility (Swearer, 2010).

3. The "Twelve Core Values" Policy and Religious Ideals

In 2014, the Thai government—under the National Council for Peace and Order (NCPO)—introduced the "Twelve Core Values of Thai People" policy as part of a national agenda to foster patriotism, discipline, and moral integrity in Thai youth.

These values, such as love for the nation, respect for parents and teachers, self-discipline, moderation, and upholding the monarchy, were officially mandated across all schools (OBEC, 2014). While the policy is framed in secular language, many of its values draw directly from Buddhist teachings and traditional Thai customs influenced by religion.

For instance, the promotion of gratitude (katanyu), self-control (santosa), and respect for elders are congruent with core Buddhist moral principles. The values also reflect the Confucian and Buddhist influence on Thai educational philosophy, where ethical conduct and social harmony are paramount (Keyes, 1983). Teachers are instructed to integrate these values into classroom lessons, school events, and extracurricular activities through storytelling, group discussions, moral games, and community service.

Critics, however, have pointed out that the policy emphasizes conformity and top-down moral instruction, potentially marginalizing diverse ethical perspectives and non-Buddhist worldviews (Vichit-Vadakan, 2016). Nonetheless, the initiative remains influential in shaping how morality and religion are intertwined in Thai education, especially in the formation of youth identity and civic consciousness.

Religion as a Vehicle for Ethical Development

Religious traditions have long served as potent sources of moral and ethical guidance. In the context of education, religion functions not only as a body of doctrine but also as a mechanism for moral formation, shaping youth behavior through teachings, rituals, and community norms. This role is reinforced through various theoretical models of moral education, including virtue ethics, character education, and religious socialization—each offering a framework for understanding how religion fosters ethical development in young learners.

1. Moral Education Theories and Religious Influence

The foundation of virtue ethics, rooted in Aristotelian philosophy and widely aligned with Buddhist and other religious traditions, centers on the cultivation of moral character through the habitual practice of virtues such as honesty, generosity, patience, and self-control. In Thai Buddhist education, this manifests through the encouragement of sīla (moral discipline) and bhāvanā (mental cultivation), both of which foster ethical mindfulness and personal integrity (Harvey, 2000). In Islamic education, similar emphasis is placed on the development of akhlaq (moral character), reinforced by prophetic traditions and legal obligations (Liow, 2009).

Character education builds on this by institutionalizing moral values into curricula and school culture. In religious schools—whether Buddhist, Muslim, or Christian—values such as compassion, justice, respect, and gratitude are explicitly taught and modeled. Educators serve as moral role models, and moral lessons are conveyed through religious texts, stories, and daily practices. As Lickona (1991) argues, character education is most effective when it involves cognitive understanding,

emotional engagement, and behavioral reinforcement—all of which are inherent in religious pedagogy.

Religious socialization, meanwhile, views moral development as a product of social learning within religious contexts—family, community, and school. Through repeated exposure to moral teachings, religious ceremonies, and intergenerational transmission, children internalize ethical norms. In Thailand, for example, youth participating in temple activities or *dhamma* camps report higher levels of empathy, altruism, and self-regulation compared to those without such exposure (Swearer, 2010; Siriphadung, 2022).

2. Reinforcement of Ethical Behaviors through Religious Teachings

Religious teachings across traditions promote ethical behaviors that contribute to individual character and social cohesion. In Buddhism, the Five Precepts and the Brahmavihāra (four divine abodes)—mettā (loving-kindness), karuṇā (compassion), muditā (sympathetic joy), and upekkhā (equanimity)—are used to cultivate pro-social behavior and reduce aggression (Mulder, 1996). Students learn not only to avoid wrongdoing but to actively cultivate virtue, especially through merit-making and mindfulness practices.

In Islamic education, children are taught the importance of accountability to God and society, instilling values like honesty, humility, and respect for others. Moral obligations are derived from Qur'anic injunctions and the Sunnah (Prophetic traditions), and students often participate in community service, daily prayers, and lessons in ethical jurisprudence (*fiqh al-akhlāq*) (Liow, 2009).

Christian ethics, commonly taught in mission schools in Thailand, emphasize virtues such as charity, forgiveness, and moral courage. Stories of Jesus and the parables of the New Testament are used to encourage youth to act with compassion and integrity. Religious events and outreach programs further reinforce the values of service, social justice, and care for the marginalized (Sirikanchana, 2003).

These teachings go beyond abstract principles; they are embedded in routines, rituals, and community practices, making moral behavior tangible and repeatable for students.

3. Comparison with Secular Moral Education

While secular moral education also seeks to instill values such as respect, responsibility, and empathy, it often does so through rationalist or humanist frameworks, emphasizing moral reasoning, civic duties, and universal human rights. Thai public schools use civic education and the "Twelve Core Values" to promote morality independently of any one religion, although these values often reflect Buddhist and traditional cultural influences (OBEC, 2014; Vichit-Vadakan, 2016).

What distinguishes religious moral education is its ability to invoke transcendental authority, integrate ritual and emotional experience, and promote moral identity through belonging to a faith community. Religious narratives offer existential meaning, and rituals provide embodied experiences of virtue—factors that deepen

internalization of moral values (Lickona, 1991; Swearer, 2010). Furthermore, religious education often emphasizes self-regulation, spiritual discipline, and moral exemplars, offering holistic development that encompasses mind, body, and spirit.

Nonetheless, both religious and secular moral education face the challenge of pluralism in modern societies. While religious frameworks offer depth and tradition, they must be applied inclusively in diverse educational settings to respect multiple worldviews. Conversely, secular moral education must grapple with the risk of abstraction and lack of emotional engagement when disconnected from cultural and religious contexts.

Challenges and Considerations

Despite the moral and ethical benefits often associated with religious education, its implementation within state education systems—especially in pluralistic societies like Thailand—presents several complex challenges. These include tensions between secular governance and religious influence, the risk of indoctrination or exclusion of minority faiths, and the struggle to balance national unity with respect for religious diversity. Addressing these challenges is essential for ensuring that religious education contributes to ethical development while respecting the rights and identities of all students.

1. Secularism and Religious Pluralism in State Education

Thailand's constitutional framework identifies the country as a secular state that guarantees religious freedom to its citizens. However, in practice, the educational system reflects a predominantly Buddhist ethos, especially in public schools, where Buddhist rituals, imagery, and teachings are widely present (Keyes, 1989; Swearer, 2010). While this reflects the demographic majority and cultural tradition, it creates an inherent tension between state neutrality and cultural-religious preference.

Religious pluralism is acknowledged in policy—Muslim and Christian students are permitted to receive religious instruction aligned with their beliefs—but implementation remains uneven. In predominantly Buddhist regions, students of minority faiths may experience limited access to tailored moral instruction, or be indirectly pressured to participate in Buddhist ceremonies. This raises concerns about the role of the state as a neutral guarantor of diverse religious and moral worldviews in public education (Vichit-Vadakan, 2016).

2. Risks of Indoctrination and Religious Bias

A second concern relates to the risk of indoctrination—the use of religious education not as a tool for critical moral reflection, but as an authoritative imposition of belief systems. In some cases, the lack of critical pedagogy or pluralistic engagement may lead to a dogmatic moral framework, where ethical reasoning is replaced by uncritical obedience to religious authority (Lickona, 1991). This may hinder students' capacity for autonomous moral judgment—a key goal of education in democratic societies.

Moreover, religious education, if uncritically designed, may reinforce majority bias, leading to the marginalization of religious minorities. For example, the overrepresentation of Buddhist symbolism and values in public schools may unintentionally exclude Muslim, Christian, Hindu, or secular students from full participation in school life (Liow, 2009). Such exclusion can perpetuate feelings of alienation and weaken social cohesion, particularly in multi-ethnic and multi-religious areas like Thailand's Deep South.

Efforts to make moral education "universal" by abstracting religious content into generalized values—such as the "Twelve Core Values" policy—while attempting to avoid favoritism, have also been critiqued. These values, though framed in secular terms, still reflect predominantly Buddhist and monarchist ideals, raising concerns about cultural hegemony under the guise of neutrality (Mulder, 1996; OBEC, 2014).

3. Balancing National Unity and Religious Diversity

Finally, Thailand faces the broader challenge of how to foster national unity through shared moral values without undermining religious diversity. Religious education, if inclusively designed, can serve as a platform for promoting mutual understanding and ethical solidarity across faiths. However, this requires a pedagogical shift—from promoting one dominant religious worldview to encouraging interfaith dialogue, comparative ethics, and civic pluralism (Chaiwat, 2015).

Promoting shared moral values—such as compassion, honesty, and respect—across religious lines may offer a way forward. But this approach must be grounded in inclusive curriculum design, teacher training in intercultural competence, and policy safeguards that protect freedom of belief. A pluralistic moral education should not dilute religious identity but should instead promote ethical dialogue and cultural empathy, reinforcing democratic citizenship in a diverse society.

Policy and Pedagogical Implications

In light of the challenges posed by religious diversity, secularism, and national unity in Thai education, it is essential to reimagine religious and moral education as a platform for inclusive ethical development rather than doctrinal instruction. This requires educational policies and pedagogical strategies that are sensitive to religious pluralism, culturally grounded yet interfaith-aware, and oriented toward civic and moral development for all youth, regardless of religious background.

1. Inclusive Moral Education for All Youth

To ensure that moral education serves all students equitably, Thai policymakers must adopt a framework of inclusive religious and ethical education. This involves shifting from a mono-religious model—often implicitly Buddhist in public schools—to a pluralistic approach that respects and reflects the religious diversity of Thai society. In practice, this means that the curriculum should integrate ethical teachings from major world religions represented in the student body, including Buddhism, Islam, Christianity, and others, while also allowing room for secular moral reasoning.

Such an inclusive approach does not require religious relativism, but rather the recognition of shared moral principles—such as honesty, compassion, and justice—that can be expressed through diverse traditions. This fosters ethical literacy, allowing students to appreciate both the distinctiveness and the commonality of different moral frameworks (Jackson, 2004). Countries like the UK and Indonesia offer useful models, where religious education is taught comparatively and analytically, aiming to develop moral reasoning and intercultural understanding, rather than personal belief systems (Gearon, 2013; Zuhdi, 2005).

In the Thai context, this means revising textbooks, lesson plans, and school rituals to ensure they reflect multifaith perspectives, particularly in regions with high concentrations of Muslims or Christians. State-mandated programs such as the "Twelve Core Values" should be revisited to ensure that they are inclusive not only in language but also in philosophical origin and pedagogical implementation (OBEC, 2014; Vichit-Vadakan, 2016).

2. Teacher Training for Values-Based and Multifaith Education

Teachers play a critical role in the success of inclusive moral education. However, many educators in Thailand are trained primarily within Buddhist ethical frameworks, with limited exposure to the teachings or practices of other religions. This can lead to unintentional religious bias or pedagogical rigidity when dealing with diverse classrooms. To address this, teacher training programs must be reformed to include courses on comparative religion, intercultural education, and inclusive pedagogy.

Such training should emphasize not only content knowledge but also pedagogical skills in values-based education: facilitating ethical discussions, managing interfaith dialogue, and teaching moral dilemmas in a way that encourages critical thinking rather than rote acceptance. Teachers must learn to create safe, respectful, and reflective learning environments that allow students from all backgrounds to express and explore their values (UNESCO, 2014). Furthermore, collaboration with religious leaders from various communities can help educators better understand the cultural-religious contexts of their students and integrate relevant perspectives into classroom instruction.

3. Promoting Interfaith Understanding through Ethics Education

An inclusive moral education model must go beyond religious tolerance toward interfaith engagement. This means encouraging students not only to learn about other religions but to engage in ethical discussions across religious boundaries, fostering empathy and respect. Schools can incorporate interfaith projects, dialogue circles, and community service initiatives that bring students of different faiths together around shared values and social concerns.

In multicultural regions of Thailand—such as the southern provinces where Buddhist, Muslim, and Christian youth often study in separate institutions—this approach has the potential to build social cohesion and reduce intergroup mistrust. Pilot

programs promoting peace education and interfaith dialogue, such as those supported by civil society organizations and faith-based NGOs, have demonstrated that youth can serve as ambassadors of coexistence when given the right educational tools (Chaiwat, 2015; Yousuf, 2018).

In policy terms, the Ministry of Education should develop a national framework for ethics education that explicitly supports interfaith understanding, integrates moral reasoning with religious diversity, and aligns with Thailand's commitments to inclusive and quality education under the UN Sustainable Development Goals (UNESCO, 2014).

Conclusion

Religion plays a central role in shaping the moral and ethical development of Thai youth within the national education system. Through the teachings of Buddhism, Islam, and Christianity, young learners are introduced to values such as compassion, honesty, self-discipline, and respect for others, which contribute to their personal growth and social responsibility. In Thailand, religious education is embedded in both curriculum and daily school life, with activities like prayer, merit-making, and religious observances reinforcing ethical behavior through practice. The government's Twelve Core Values policy further institutionalizes these moral principles, although it reflects predominantly Buddhist ideals. While religious education offers deep cultural and spiritual benefits, it also presents challenges, particularly in a diverse society. Tensions arise between secular educational goals and the religious character of moral instruction, as well as concerns about the exclusion of minority faiths and the risk of indoctrination. To address these issues, educational policies must be inclusive and balanced, promoting interfaith understanding and ensuring that all students feel respected and represented. Teacher training should focus on comparative ethics and inclusive pedagogy, equipping educators to foster moral reasoning and cultural empathy. Ultimately, religion remains a vital source of moral education in Thailand, and with thoughtful integration, it can continue to guide youth toward becoming ethical and responsible citizens in a pluralistic society.

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Academic Article

Buddhist-Based Learning as a Tool for Building a Peaceful Society*

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Abstract

This article explores Buddhist-based learning as a holistic approach to peacebuilding at both individual and societal levels. By integrating mindfulness, ethical conduct, and compassion into educational settings, it fosters inner peace, social harmony, and moral responsibility. Case studies from Thailand and international contexts highlight successful applications, while the discussion addresses challenges related to pluralism, pedagogy, and policy. Recommendations emphasize inclusive curriculum development, teacher training, and alignment with global peace education frameworks.

Keywords: Buddhism, Peace education, Mindfulness, Ethics, Social harmony

Introduction

In the 21st century, societies around the world continue to grapple with escalating conflicts, polarization, and moral crises. These global challenges have sparked renewed interest in the role of education in fostering peace, tolerance, and mutual understanding. Peace education—defined as the process of promoting knowledge, skills, attitudes, and values needed to bring about behavioral changes that enable individuals to prevent conflict and violence—has emerged as a key pedagogical response (UNESCO, 1998). It aims not only to cultivate external social harmony but also to nurture inner peace and self-regulation among learners.

Religious and ethical teachings have historically served as moral compasses for human societies. In particular, Buddhism offers a rich philosophical and educational foundation for peacebuilding, emphasizing non-violence (*ahiṃsā*), compassion (*karuṇā*), mindfulness (*sati*), and ethical living (*sīla*) as essential to individual and collective well-being (Harvey, 2000). The integration of such teachings into educational curricula can play a transformative role in conflict resolution and community building by encouraging introspection, emotional regulation, and prosocial behavior (Weber, 2011).

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This article explores the role of Buddhist-based learning as a mechanism for building a peaceful society, with an emphasis on both individual transformation and social cohesion. It examines how Buddhist principles—such as the Noble Eightfold Path and the cultivation of *mettā* (loving-kindness)—can be operationalized in educational settings to develop peaceful mindsets and harmonious communities. The article also analyzes pedagogical models that incorporate Buddhist practices, including mindfulness training and contemplative education, and evaluates their effectiveness in fostering empathy, resilience, and ethical consciousness.

The research is guided by the following key questions:

1. How do Buddhist principles contribute to peace education at the individual and societal levels?
2. What models of Buddhist-based learning have been implemented, and with what outcomes?
3. What are the challenges and policy considerations in applying Buddhist-based learning in diverse educational contexts?

By addressing these questions, the study seeks to demonstrate that Buddhist-based learning is not only compatible with modern educational goals but also essential for cultivating the internal and external conditions necessary for sustainable peace.

Theoretical Framework

Buddhism offers a deeply rooted and holistic conception of peace that extends beyond the mere absence of conflict. In the Buddhist worldview, peace begins with the transformation of the mind. The attainment of inner peace (*ajjhatta santi*)—characterized by mindfulness, detachment from craving, and emotional balance—is seen as the foundation for social harmony (*bahiddhā santi*) and non-violent living (*ahiṃsā*) (Galtung, 1996; Thich Nhat Hanh, 1991). In contrast to Western models that often focus on institutional frameworks for peace, Buddhism emphasizes the cultivation of individual ethical behavior and mental discipline as prerequisites for sustainable societal peace.

Central to the Buddhist path are the threefold trainings: Paññā (wisdom), Sīla (moral conduct), and Samādhi (concentration or mental discipline). These are not only spiritual pursuits but also educational ideals. *Paññā* involves critical thinking and insight into the nature of reality, helping learners to understand the causes of suffering and the interdependent nature of life. *Sīla* refers to ethical behavior, including values such as non-violence, honesty, and respect for others—qualities essential for peaceful coexistence. *Samādhi* cultivates mental concentration and mindfulness, enabling individuals to act with clarity, compassion, and self-control (Rahula, 1974).

The Four Noble Truths provide the philosophical foundation of Buddhism, outlining the existence of suffering (*dukkha*), its origin in craving (*taṇhā*), the cessation of suffering (*nirodha*), and the path leading to cessation (*magga*). The Noble Eightfold Path operationalizes these insights into practical conduct, divided into three categories: wisdom (*right view*, *right intention*), ethics (*right speech*, *right action*, *right livelihood*), and mental discipline (*right effort*, *right mindfulness*, *right concentration*). These

elements provide an integrated pedagogical framework that not only fosters intellectual development but also moral and emotional maturity (Harvey, 2000).

The concept of Engaged Buddhism, popularized by Thich Nhat Hanh, extends this framework to social transformation. It emphasizes applying Buddhist principles to address contemporary issues such as violence, injustice, environmental degradation, and social inequality. Engaged Buddhists advocate for compassionate action in society, community service, and non-violent activism, reflecting the belief that peace must be lived and enacted, not merely theorized (King, 2009). Education grounded in this perspective encourages learners to see themselves as agents of change who contribute to peace not only through contemplation but through compassionate engagement with the world.

By synthesizing these teachings, Buddhist-based learning serves as both a spiritual practice and a practical strategy for nurturing the values and competencies essential to peaceful living. This theoretical framework lays the foundation for examining educational applications that promote peace at both the individual and collective levels.

Buddhist-Based Learning: Definitions and Pedagogical Approaches

Buddhist-based learning refers to an educational paradigm that incorporates the principles, values, and practices of Buddhism—such as mindfulness, ethical discipline, compassion, and insight—into learning processes and environments. It is not limited to religious instruction but extends to holistic human development, aiming to cultivate both cognitive understanding and moral-ethical consciousness (Somboon, 2012). The essence of Buddhist-based learning lies in its transformative objective: the alleviation of suffering and the realization of wisdom through direct experience, ethical behavior, and mental training.

Across Buddhist societies, various educational models have emerged to integrate these teachings. The monastic education system represents the oldest and most formalized model. In countries like Thailand, Sri Lanka, and Myanmar, monastic schools provide instruction not only in Pali and Buddhist scriptures but also in general subjects, offering disadvantaged youth access to basic education grounded in moral discipline (*sīla*) and mindfulness (Thanissaro Bhikkhu, 2010). These institutions emphasize a disciplined lifestyle, community service, and meditative practice as core components of learning.

Lay-based education models have also gained prominence, especially in modern contexts. These include Sunday Dhamma schools, community-based learning centers, and adult education programs that offer Buddhist ethical training, meditation workshops, and life-skills education rooted in compassion and non-attachment. These lay institutions serve as bridges between spiritual traditions and secular life, promoting ethical citizenship and social responsibility (Suksamran, 2003).

In recent decades, school-based programs have emerged that incorporate Buddhist principles into mainstream education. For instance, in Thailand, the "Sufficiency Economy Philosophy" (SEP), inspired by Buddhist moderation and self-reliance, has been adopted in public school curricula to promote sustainable living and

moral reasoning (UNESCO, 2014). Other examples include the integration of Buddhist moral teachings into values education and character development modules within both public and private schools.

A defining feature of Buddhist-based learning is its emphasis on mindfulness and meditation (*sati* and *samādhi*) in educational settings. These practices are used to train attention, develop emotional awareness, and cultivate calm and clarity—qualities conducive to peaceful learning environments and social empathy (Kabat-Zinn, 2003). Studies show that mindfulness-based interventions in schools can enhance students' emotional regulation, reduce aggression, and improve focus and interpersonal relationships (Zenner, Herrnleben-Kurz, & Walach, 2014).

Finally, experiential and contemplative pedagogy forms the backbone of Buddhist-based learning. Unlike didactic instruction focused solely on rote knowledge, Buddhist education promotes direct experience, reflection, and insight through lived practice. Learning is viewed as an inward journey as much as an intellectual endeavor. Methods such as journaling, silent sitting, storytelling, group reflection, and compassionate action projects are commonly used to engage both head and heart in the learning process (Zajonc, 2013). This approach encourages learners to internalize values, question assumptions, and apply teachings in daily life.

In sum, Buddhist-based learning encompasses a broad array of models and methods that place human development, ethical mindfulness, and social harmony at the core of educational practice. These approaches provide meaningful pathways for peace education by fostering self-awareness, compassion, and moral clarity in learners of all ages.

Buddhist Learning and Peacebuilding at the Individual Level

At the heart of Buddhist education is the belief that peace in society begins with peace in the individual. Buddhist learning emphasizes inner transformation through mental discipline, ethical conduct, and contemplative practice. This process fosters not only personal well-being but also contributes to reducing violence, prejudice, and social tension at the communal level.

One of the most widely recognized tools in Buddhist education for cultivating inner peace is the practice of mindfulness (*sati*) and meditation (*bhāvanā*). These practices aim to develop awareness of the present moment, observe thoughts and emotions non-reactively, and train the mind to be calm and focused. Daily mindfulness helps individuals recognize and interrupt negative thought patterns before they manifest in harmful behavior (Kabat-Zinn, 2003). Through sustained practice, learners develop the capacity for patience, forgiveness, and emotional balance, which are essential for peaceful interaction with others.

Additionally, Buddhist learning fosters self-awareness and ethical discipline (*sīla*) as mechanisms for reducing ego-driven behavior and aggression. The Five Precepts, commonly taught in Buddhist education, encourage abstention from violence, dishonesty, and harmful speech—creating moral boundaries that guide personal conduct (Rahula, 1974). Self-awareness nurtured through meditation leads to insight into the causes of suffering, especially the role of ego, attachment, and aversion. As

individuals begin to recognize the impermanent and interdependent nature of all phenomena (*anicca* and *paṭiccasamuppāda*), they develop humility and lessen the grip of pride, anger, and selfishness (Harvey, 2000).

Moreover, Buddhist practices promote psychological and emotional well-being, which is increasingly validated by contemporary research. The cultivation of compassion (*karuṇā*) and equanimity (*upekkhā*) through loving-kindness meditation (*mettā bhāvanā*) has been shown to reduce anxiety, improve interpersonal relationships, and increase life satisfaction (Fredrickson et al., 2008). These emotional qualities not only help individuals respond to personal challenges with greater resilience but also foster empathy, tolerance, and non-retaliatory responses in social settings.

By nurturing peaceful individuals—mindful, morally grounded, and emotionally stable—Buddhist learning contributes directly to peacebuilding. The internalization of values like non-violence, compassion, and self-restraint ensures that peace is not merely imposed externally but arises authentically from within. This internal peace becomes the seed for broader societal harmony and nonviolent cultures.

Buddhist Education for Social Harmony

While inner transformation is foundational, the true societal value of Buddhist education lies in its capacity to extend those internal virtues outward—into families, communities, and broader social systems. Buddhist-based learning fosters values and behaviors that underpin social harmony, such as tolerance, compassion, empathy, and non-discrimination, which are essential in increasingly pluralistic and conflict-prone societies.

First, Buddhist education actively promotes tolerance (*khanti*), compassion (*karuṇā*), and non-discrimination, by cultivating the understanding that all beings are interconnected and possess the potential for enlightenment (*Buddha-nature*). Teachings such as *mettā* (loving-kindness) and the Four Brahmavihāras (divine abodes: loving-kindness, compassion, sympathetic joy, and equanimity) instill in learners a sense of universal goodwill that transcends caste, ethnicity, religion, and social class (Harvey, 2000). These values are not taught merely as abstract ideals, but as lived principles to be practiced through speech, action, and social engagement.

In addition, Buddhist teachings provide a philosophical foundation for restorative justice and reconciliation, focusing not on punishment but on healing, accountability, and transformation. The principle of kamma (karma) encourages individuals to take responsibility for their actions, while the practice of confession and forgiveness in monastic and lay contexts demonstrates a non-punitive, redemptive approach to wrongdoing (Loy, 2008). Buddhist education, therefore, prepares individuals to resolve interpersonal and community conflicts through dialogue, mutual understanding, and ethical reflection rather than retribution. These principles align closely with contemporary restorative justice models now being adopted in schools and juvenile systems worldwide (Braithwaite, 2002).

Moreover, Buddhist-based learning emphasizes the development of empathy and altruism in social relations. Through mindfulness and meditative reflection, learners become more attuned to the suffering of others and more inclined to act with generosity

(*dāna*) and kindness. Programs that integrate *mettā bhāvanā* (loving-kindness meditation) have been shown to enhance pro-social behavior and reduce prejudice and aggression (Hofmann et al., 2011). In educational settings, this fosters a culture of care, mutual respect, and cooperation—key elements of peaceful and inclusive communities.

Thus, Buddhist education supports not only the personal cultivation of ethical values but also the shaping of collective norms and systems that affirm justice, compassion, and coexistence. It transforms schools and learning environments into spaces of peacebuilding, where social harmony is not simply taught but practiced and embodied.

Case Studies and Practical Applications

The principles of Buddhist-based learning are not merely theoretical; they are actively applied in educational and community settings across the world to promote peace, social inclusion, and moral development. A review of diverse case studies—from Thailand to Vietnam to the United States—demonstrates how Buddhist pedagogy has been practically implemented and how it contributes to building cultures of peace.

In Thailand, Buddhist schools and temples have long played a central role in community education, particularly in rural areas. Institutions such as Wat Pah Nanachat, a forest monastery in Ubon Ratchathani, and schools affiliated with the Dhammajarinee Witthaya School in Ratchaburi integrate Buddhist teachings into daily routines, emphasizing mindfulness, moral behavior, and social responsibility (Numrich, 2008). At these schools, meditation is part of the curriculum, and students are encouraged to practice the Five Precepts, contribute to community service, and resolve conflicts through dialogue and empathy. These programs help reduce behavioral issues, strengthen ethical decision-making, and foster harmonious peer relationships.

Beyond Thailand, there are successful interfaith Buddhist-led peace education programs in Southeast Asia. For example, in Myanmar and Sri Lanka—countries with histories of ethno-religious conflict—Buddhist monks and educators have led efforts to bring Buddhist, Christian, Hindu, and Muslim students together through joint peace education initiatives. Organizations such as The Metta Development Foundation and Sarvodaya use Buddhist principles of compassion and reconciliation to facilitate interfaith dialogues, conflict resolution workshops, and youth leadership training (Harris, 2004). These initiatives highlight the adaptability of Buddhist-based learning in promoting peace across religious divides.

Globally, internationally renowned centers such as Plum Village in France and Deer Park Monastery in California, founded by Zen master Thich Nhat Hanh, serve as leading examples of global Buddhist peace education. These centers offer retreats, youth camps, and mindfulness training to both monastics and laypersons from diverse backgrounds. Educational programs emphasize mindful breathing, deep listening, ethical speech, and loving-kindness meditation—all aimed at cultivating peace within individuals and in their communities (Thich Nhat Hanh, 2007). Participants frequently report increased emotional resilience, reduced stress, and greater empathy after participating in these programs.

Outcomes and assessment data from such programs indicate promising results. For instance, a study evaluating mindfulness-based education at Plum Village found that participants demonstrated improved self-regulation and reduced interpersonal conflict (Lamb, 2014). In Thailand, schools that integrate Buddhist ethics into the curriculum show statistically significant improvements in student behavior, emotional regulation, and civic responsibility (Sittiprapa, 2015). These findings reinforce the effectiveness of Buddhist-based learning not only in academic environments but also in peacebuilding and emotional development.

In sum, these case studies demonstrate that Buddhist-based learning—whether in monastic schools, secular institutions, or international retreat centers—can be adapted across contexts to cultivate peaceful individuals and inclusive communities. These practical applications underscore the potential of Buddhist education to serve as a viable and effective approach to peace education in both local and global settings.

Challenges and Limitations

While Buddhist-based learning presents significant potential for promoting inner peace and social harmony, its integration into contemporary educational systems—especially in pluralistic or secular environments—is accompanied by a set of complex challenges and limitations that must be critically addressed.

A key challenge lies in integrating religious content in secular or multi-religious contexts. In many countries, particularly those with legal frameworks emphasizing religious neutrality in public education, incorporating Buddhist teachings into curricula may raise concerns about bias, proselytization, or the infringement of religious freedom (Jackson, 2004). Even in predominantly Buddhist societies such as Thailand, the growing presence of other faiths and increasing secularization call for inclusive pedagogical strategies that respect diverse worldviews while retaining the ethical and contemplative strengths of Buddhist education.

There is also the risk of dogmatism or exclusion of non-Buddhist perspectives if Buddhist teachings are presented rigidly or without critical reflection. Educational programs rooted in religious worldviews must guard against transforming values-based education into indoctrination. Without intercultural and interfaith dialogue, Buddhist-based learning may inadvertently reinforce majority dominance or overlook the needs and identities of minority groups (Gearon, 2013). To be effective in peacebuilding, Buddhist education must model openness, humility, and cross-cultural sensitivity.

Another limitation is the lack of adequate policy support and teacher training for the systematic integration of Buddhist-based approaches. In many educational systems, teachers are under-equipped to teach contemplative practices, emotional regulation, or ethical reflection in ways that align with both Buddhist principles and contemporary pedagogical standards. Most teacher training programs emphasize standardized testing and cognitive outcomes, often at the expense of moral and emotional development (UNESCO, 2014). Without institutional support, Buddhist-based learning remains marginal or dependent on individual educators' initiatives.

Lastly, the tension between traditional monastic education and modern pedagogies presents an ongoing dilemma. Monastic education often emphasizes rote

memorization of scriptures, strict discipline, and hierarchical relationships between teacher and student. While these methods have preserved Buddhist teachings for centuries, they may be less effective in fostering critical thinking, creativity, and learner-centered approaches valued in contemporary education (Numrich, 2008). Efforts to modernize Buddhist education must therefore balance fidelity to tradition with pedagogical innovation—ensuring that students not only absorb doctrine but also internalize values and apply them meaningfully in modern life.

In summary, while Buddhist-based learning holds considerable promise, its success depends on how well educators and institutions navigate the challenges of pluralism, inclusivity, pedagogical relevance, and systemic support. Recognizing these limitations is essential to developing effective, context-sensitive models of peace education grounded in Buddhist wisdom.

Policy Implications and Recommendations

Given the increasing demand for values-based education that promotes social cohesion and peaceful coexistence, Buddhist-based learning offers a culturally rooted yet globally relevant model for policy development in the education sector. For such approaches to be effectively institutionalized, a range of strategic, curricular, and systemic reforms must be undertaken.

One key strategy is the integration of Buddhist values into civic and moral education frameworks. Rather than treating Buddhism as a religious subject alone, policymakers should support the infusion of its universal values—such as compassion (*karuṇā*), mindfulness (*sati*), generosity (*dāna*), and ethical conduct (*sīla*)—into general moral and citizenship education. For example, the Thai education system's "Sufficiency Economy Philosophy," inspired by Buddhist teachings, has been implemented to promote responsible decision-making, moderation, and resilience among students (UNESCO, 2014). These principles are particularly compatible with democratic education, encouraging ethical reasoning and active, empathetic citizenship.

Secondly, interfaith and intercultural collaboration should be prioritized in peace education policy. In multicultural societies, exclusively Buddhist models may risk exclusion or backlash. Therefore, educational programs should draw from shared moral values across religious traditions, encouraging students to explore similarities and differences through respectful dialogue. Interfaith peacebuilding projects—such as joint workshops or community service initiatives—can help foster empathy and reduce prejudice among students of different backgrounds (Jackson, 2004). Buddhist institutions can take leadership roles in these collaborations by demonstrating humility, openness, and commitment to universal ethical principles.

In terms of implementation, concrete recommendations for curriculum development, teacher preparation, and community involvement are essential. Curriculum guidelines should include age-appropriate modules on mindfulness, emotional intelligence, conflict resolution, and ethical decision-making grounded in Buddhist frameworks. Teacher education programs must provide training in contemplative pedagogy, classroom mindfulness practices, and intercultural competence to ensure that educators can deliver these modules with sensitivity and skill

(Zajonc, 2013). Furthermore, community involvement—including engagement with temples, monastic teachers, and lay Buddhist scholars—can strengthen the cultural legitimacy and grassroots support for such initiatives. Schools that function as centers of community peacebuilding can extend learning beyond the classroom into homes and neighborhoods.

Finally, Buddhist-based learning should be aligned with UNESCO's peace education framework, which promotes learning to live together, respect for human rights, cultural diversity, and global citizenship (UNESCO, 1998). Buddhist teachings resonate strongly with these goals, offering experiential tools for self-regulation, empathy, and nonviolent communication. By aligning local religious wisdom with global educational standards, Buddhist-based learning can contribute meaningfully to international peacebuilding efforts while retaining cultural specificity.

In conclusion, the successful integration of Buddhist-based learning into national education systems requires inclusive and adaptive policy strategies. With thoughtful design and collaboration, it is possible to harness the ethical depth of Buddhist teachings to build compassionate citizens and peaceful societies.

Conclusion

Buddhist-based learning serves as a powerful tool for building a peaceful society by cultivating inner transformation, ethical consciousness, and compassionate engagement. Rooted in the principles of mindfulness, moral discipline, and wisdom, this educational approach nurtures peace from within and extends it outward into communities. At the individual level, Buddhist practices such as meditation and loving-kindness help foster emotional stability, reduce aggression, and enhance empathy. These internal shifts contribute to social harmony by encouraging tolerance, non-discrimination, and altruism in interpersonal relationships. Buddhist teachings also align closely with restorative justice principles, promoting healing, accountability, and reconciliation over punitive responses to conflict. Across various contexts, including Thai monastic schools, interfaith programs in Southeast Asia, and global centers like Plum Village, Buddhist-based education has been successfully implemented to foster ethical development and nonviolent behavior. However, the approach faces challenges, particularly in secular or pluralistic societies where integrating religious content must be done with sensitivity and inclusivity. Risks of dogmatism, lack of teacher training, and tensions between traditional and modern pedagogies further complicate implementation. To address these issues, policy strategies must promote the integration of universal Buddhist values into civic and moral education, encourage interfaith collaboration, invest in teacher preparation, and align efforts with global peace education frameworks. Through thoughtful application, Buddhist-based learning offers a culturally grounded and universally relevant path toward creating compassionate individuals and harmonious societies.

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Author Guidelines
Asian Journal of Humanities and Social Innovation (AJHSI)

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1. Publication Policy in Asian Journal of Humanities and Social Innovation

Asian Journal of Humanities and Social Innovation (AJHSI) is a journal in the humanities and social sciences. It aims to promote research and publish research articles, academic articles, review articles, and book reviews for scholars, researchers, lecturers, students at all levels, and interested persons in the dimensions of Sociologies, Anthropologies, Humanities, Social Sciences, Education, Business Administration, Politics, Public Administration, Development, Tourism, and other areas in Social Sciences. Articles that are considered for publication must be reviewed by at least 2 out of 3 qualified persons (Peer Review). Only English articles are considered for publication. Submitted works must not have been published or are under consideration by qualified persons for publication in other journals. Authors must strictly comply with the criteria for submitting academic or research articles for publication in the journal, and the referencing system must be in accordance with the criteria of the journal.

The views and opinions expressed in journal articles are the responsibility of the authors of the articles and are not the opinions of the editorial team. The editorial team does not reserve the right to copy but requires references to show the source.

Publication Frequency

Release scheduled of four issues per year (Biweekly 3 months per time):

Issue 1 January – March

Issue 2 April – June

Issue 3 July - September

Issue 4 October – December

2 . Types of works published in the Asian Journal of Humanities and Social Innovation

1. Research Article is a report of the results of a systematic study, research, or development.

2. An Academic Article is a work of writing an interesting topic in which the author presents new knowledge by using theories, concepts, and related research results as information sources.

3. Review Article is an article that combines theories, concepts, and research results on many subjects, the author will synthesize the literature to compile it into a conclusion or argument on a particular matter, which is a review of the academic progress of that matter.

3. Guidelines for Manuscript Preparation and Submission

Research Articles

Title

The title should be precise, concise, and accurately reflect the article's content and focus. Clearly specify the title: AJAJ - Writing Article Titles with Initial Capital Letters. (Times New Roman, 14 pt, Bold)

Author's name and surname

Full names of all authors, without including any titles, ranks, or honorifics. For multiple authors, separate the names with commas, and for the last author, use "and." (Times New Roman, 12 pt, Bold)

Full Address

Affair and country
E-mail:
Received xx/xx/20xx Revised xx/xx/20xx Accepted xx/xx/20xx
(Times New Roman, 11 pt, Italic)

Abstract

The abstract should succinctly summarize the article, including its objectives, methodology, key findings, and discussion, all within 300-400 words. The abstract must be written as a single, coherent paragraph. Text (Times New Roman, 11 pt, Tab 0.5 cm)

Keywords: Keyword, keyword, keyword
Authors should provide a minimum of three keywords and a maximum of five, reflecting the core themes of the study. (Times New Roman, 11 pt; 5 keywords/phrases

Introduction

The introduction of a research paper is a crucial component, as it is the first section that readers encounter to understand the topic under investigation. A well-written introduction should begin by presenting the general background of the issue or topic, gradually narrowing down to the specific problem that the researcher intends to explore. It should also highlight the significance and necessity of conducting the research.

Furthermore, the introduction should point out the gap in existing knowledge that the research aims to fill. It must clearly state the objectives of the study to ensure that readers can comprehend the rationale, importance, and direction of the research. A well-structured and thoughtful introduction not only enhances the credibility of the

study but also engages the reader's interest to continue exploring the entire research paper. Text (Times New Roman, 11 pt, Tab 0.5 cm)

Objectives

1.
2.
3.

Text (Times New Roman, 11 pt, Tab 0.5 cm)

Literature review

The literature review is a crucial component of the research process. Its primary purpose is to explore relevant information, concepts, theories, and previous studies related to the research topic. A thorough literature review helps researchers understand the current state of knowledge, identify academic trends, and recognize gaps that need further investigation.

A high-quality literature review involves the careful selection of credible, up-to-date, and directly relevant sources. Researchers should analyze, synthesize, and compare information from various references to establish a clear conceptual framework or research hypothesis. Moreover, the literature review enhances the credibility of the study and demonstrates that the researcher has a deep and comprehensive understanding of the topic being studied. Text (Times New Roman, 11 pt, Tab 0.5 cm)

Methodology

The methodology section is a critical part of a research study that outlines the systematic process for data collection, analysis, and presentation of research findings. A well-written methodology clearly specifies the type of research—whether it is quantitative, qualitative, or mixed-methods—and explains the sampling procedures, research instruments, data collection steps, and data analysis techniques.

An appropriately designed methodology ensures that the research questions can be accurately addressed and enhances the **credibility** and **reliability** of the study. Furthermore, a clear methodology provides a framework that allows other researchers to replicate the study if they wish to explore the same topic in future research. Text (Times New Roman, 11 pt, Tab 0.5 cm)

Results

The results section presents the findings derived from the analysis of collected data based on the established research methodology. At this stage, no interpretations or personal opinions from the researcher should be included. The presentation of results must be clear, organized, and aligned with the research objectives.

Results can be conveyed through narrative descriptions, tables, charts, or figures to make the information easier to understand and compare. The language used should be neutral and objective, avoiding any exaggeration or interpretation beyond what the data reveals.

A well-structured results section enables readers to connect the findings directly with the research questions and objectives. It also lays the foundation for the discussion and interpretation that follows in the next section of the research paper. Text (Times New Roman, 11 pt, Tab 0.5 cm)

Discussion

The discussion section is a vital component that demonstrates the researcher's ability to interpret and critically analyze the findings in relation to the research objectives, hypotheses, and relevant literature or theories. The researcher should connect the results to theoretical frameworks and explain whether the findings support or contradict previous studies.

This section should include logical reasoning, possible explanations, and factors that may have influenced the results. It is also important to address any limitations of the study that could affect the accuracy or applicability of the findings.

A well-written discussion reflects academic depth and shows that the researcher understands the broader context of the research. It bridges the gap between raw findings and the implications they may have for theory, practice, or future studies. Text (Times New Roman, 11 pt, Tab 0.5 cm)

Conclusion

The conclusion of a research paper provides a concise, clear, and complete summary of the key findings in alignment with the study's objectives. It should not introduce any new information or data, but rather synthesize what has already been discussed to highlight whether the research questions were effectively answered or the research goals were achieved.

A strong conclusion also includes practical implications or recommendations based on the findings, and often suggests directions for future research to expand upon areas that remain unexplored or insufficiently studied. A well-crafted conclusion helps readers quickly grasp the core contributions of the study and appreciate its academic value. Text (Times New Roman, 11 pt, Tab 0.5 cm)

Recommendation

The **recommendation** section is an important component of a research paper, demonstrating how the findings can be applied in practice or used to inform future research. Recommendations should be based on the results and conclusions of the study, focusing on areas that can be developed, improved, or addressed more effectively.

Recommendations are typically divided into two categories:

1. **Practical or policy-related recommendations** – for implementation by organizations, institutions, or stakeholders.

2. **Recommendations for future research** – for exploring unresolved issues or expanding on the current study's findings.

Effective recommendations should be **clear, feasible, and relevant** to the context of the research problem, offering meaningful guidance for both practitioners and future scholars. Text (Times New Roman, 11 pt, Tab 0.5 cm)

References
References must adhere to the *APA 7th Edition* guidelines. All cited works should follow the *American Psychological Association* referencing style, particularly for articles in foreign languages.
Text (Times New Roman, 11 pt, Tab 0.5 cm)

Academic Articles:

Title
The title should be precise, concise, and accurately reflect the article's content and focus. Clearly specify the title: AJAJ - Writing Article Titles with Initial Capital Letters. (Times New Roman, 14 pt, Bold)

Author's name and surname
Full names of all authors, without including any titles, ranks, or honorifics. For multiple authors, separate the names with commas, and for the last author, use "and." (Times New Roman, 12 pt, Bold)

Full Address
Affair and country
E-mail:
Received xx/xx/20xx Revised xx/xx/20xx Accepted xx/xx/20xx
(Times New Roman, 11 pt, Italic)

Abstract
The abstract should succinctly summarize the article, including its objectives, methodology, key findings, and discussion, all within 300-400 words. The abstract must be written as a single, coherent paragraph. Text (Times New Roman, 11 pt, Tab 0.5 cm)

Keywords: Keyword, keyword, keyword
Authors should provide a minimum of three keywords and a maximum of five, reflecting the core themes of the study. (Times New Roman, 11 pt; 5 keywords/phrases

Main Text
The manuscript should be structured into an introduction, followed by the main body, with clear subheadings or sections to enhance readability. Authors' identities must not

be discernible from the text; any self-references should use the term "author(s)" instead of personal names.
Text (Times New Roman, 11 pt, Tab 0.5 cm)

Conclusion
Text (Times New Roman, 11 pt, Tab 0.5 cm)

Acknowledgments
This section should acknowledge sources of research funding, institutional or personal support, and any contributions from generative AI tools, if applicable**.**
Text (Times New Roman, 11 pt, Tab 0.5 cm)

References
References must adhere to the *APA 7th Edition* guidelines. All cited works should follow the *American Psychological Association* referencing style, particularly for articles in foreign languages.
Text (Times New Roman, 11 pt, Tab 0.5 cm)

Appendix
If applicable, supplementary materials or data may be included as appendices.
Text (Times New Roman, 11 pt, Tab 0.5 cm)

Highlight
Authors are requested to provide a concise summary that encapsulates the key arguments and significance of their article. This summary should not exceed 50 words and should effectively convey the central themes and contributions of the study, enabling readers to quickly understand the article's primary focus and relevance.

Graphical Abstracts
A graphical abstract is a single, concise, and pictorial summary of the article's main findings. It may be the concluding figure from the article or a specially designed image.

1. **Image Size:** Provide an image with a minimum resolution of **531 × 1328 pixels** (height × width) at **300 dpi**. For larger images, maintain the same aspect ratio (e.g., **200 × 500**).
2. **File Type:** Preferred formats include **TIFF, PNG, and JPEG**.
3. **Content:** Do not include additional text, outlines, or synopses outside the image. Any text or labels must be integrated within the image itself.

*** (Attached as a separate file) Name the file **Graphical Abstracts)**.

Figure X Text (Source: XXXXX) (Times New Roman, 10 pt, Align Text Left)

Figure 1 Asian Journal of Humanities and Social Innovation (AJHSI), 2024

Figure 1 Asian Journal of Humanities and Social Innovation (AJHSI), 2020

Table 1 Table Title

No.	Name	Mean
1	A	0.00
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Table 1 Experts specializing in the Nora performance

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References

Cite references in APA 7th edition in the manuscript
Standard references and referencing methods in APA - American Psychological Association for Foreign Language

Reference example APA (American Psychological Association) 7th
Include the complete citation at the end of your paper in a **references** section. References are organized by the author's last name in alphabetic (A-Z) order. Use an hanging indent to separate each list item.

Basic Format:
Author, A. A., & Author, B. B. (Date). Title of the work. *Source where you can retrieve the work*. URL or DOI if available

Journal Article

Author(s). Note: List each author's last name and initial as Author, A. A., Author, B. B., & Author, C. C. Use an ampersand (&) before the final author's name. Read more from the APA Style website if there are 21 or more authors.

1. **(Year).**
2. **Title of the article.** Note: For works that are part of a greater whole (e.g. articles, chapter), use sentence case. Only the first word of the title and subtitle and proper nouns are capitalized.
3. ***Title of the Journal*,** Note: Italicize and capitalize each word in the journal.
4. ***Volume*** Note: Italicize the journal volume. If there is no issue, include a comma before the page range.
5. **(Issue),** Note: If there is a issue number in addition to a volume number, include it in parentheses.
6. **Page range.** Note: If there is no page range within the journal volume/issue, this can be excluded.

7. **DOI (Digital Object Identifier)** Read more about DOIs from the APA Style wesbite.

Phathong, K., & Kenaphoom, S. (2024). Changes in Family Structure and Social Roles in Thai Rural Communities. *Asian Journal of Humanities and Social Innovation*, *1*(1), 1–15. https://doi.org/10.

Online News/Magazine Article

1. **Author(s).** Note: List each author's last name and initials as Author, A. A., Author, B. B., & Author, C. C. Use an ampersand (&) before the final author's name.
2. **(Year, Month Date).** Note: You do not need to abbreviate the month.
3. **Title of the article.** Note: For works that are part of a greater whole (e.g. articles, chapter), use sentence case. Only the first word of the title and subtitle and proper nouns are capitalized.
4. ***Title of the online newspaper or publication*.** Note: Capitalize each word in the publication and italicize. If the publication has an associated newly newspaper in print, use the newspaper article reference example .
5. **URL**

Phathong, K. (2021, December 30). Educational Inequality Between Urban and Rural Communities: A Case Study in Northeastern Thailand. https://so14.tci-thaijo.org/index.php/AJHSI

Book

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2. **(Year).**
3. ***Title of the book.*** Note: For works that stand alone (e.g. books, reports), italicize the title. Only capitalize the first word of the title and subtitle and any proper nouns.
4. **(Edition).** Note: If there is an edition or volume, include it in parentheses and use abbreviations of ed. or vol.
5. **Publisher.** Note: You do not need to include the publisher location or databases where you retrieved it.

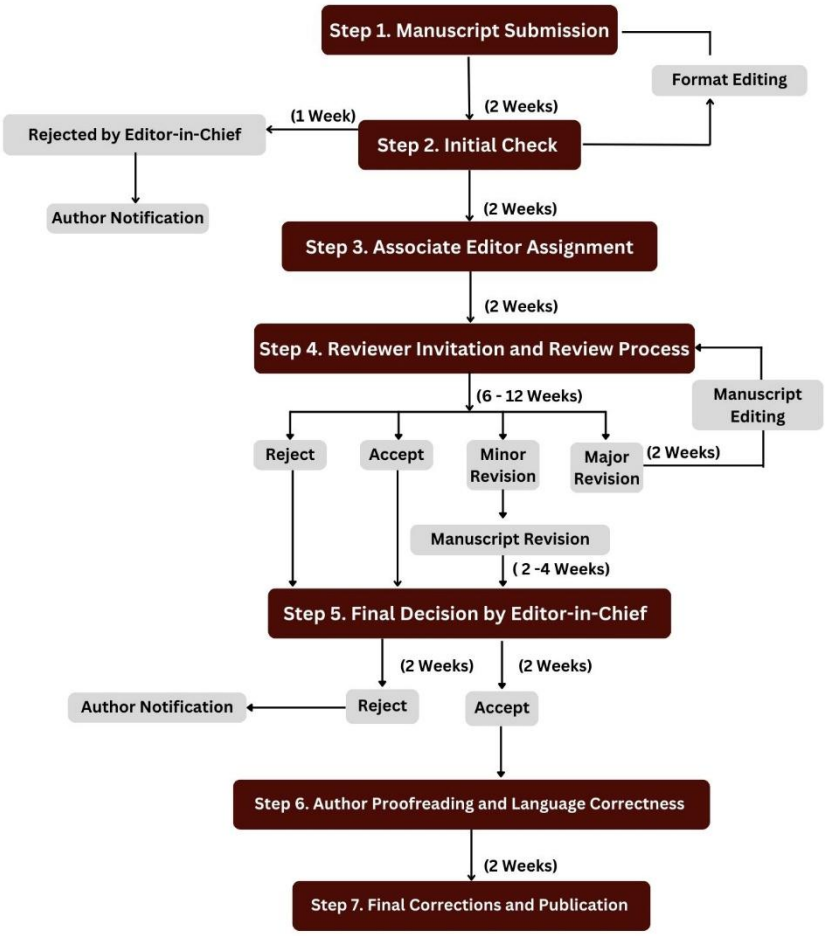
Phathong, K. (2021). *Analyzing Income Disparities and Social Mobility in Developing Economies.* Asian Journal of Humanities and Social Innovation Publishing.

Book Chapter with Editor(s)

1. **Author(s).** Note: List each chapter author's last name and initials as Author, A. A., Author, B. B., & Author, C. C. Use an ampersand (&) before the final author's name.
2. **(Year).**
3. **Title of the chapter.** Note: For works that are part of a greater whole (e.g. articles, chapter), use sentence case. Only the first word of the title and subtitle and proper nouns are capitalized.
4. **In Editor(s),** Note: List each editor's last name and initials as A. A. Editor, B. B. Editor, & C. C. Editors, include (Ed.) or (Eds.) in parentheses, and end with a comma.
5. ***Title of the book*** Note: For works that stand alone (e.g. books, reports), italicize the title. Only capitalize the first word of the title and subtitle and any proper nouns.
6. **(pp.xx-xx).**
7. **Publisher.** Note: You do not need to include the publisher location or databases where you retrieved it.

Hattha, K.(2012). Three southern border provinces, Thai history before the Sukhothai period to the present. In Thepthai,K. (Eds.), Dimensions of culture, history, and visions of the future: Restoring peace to the southern border provinces. (pp. 1-19). Ministry of Culture.

The process of reviewing articles in the Asian Journal of Humanities and Social Innovation



Peer Review Process

Step 1. Manuscript Submission

Authors begin by preparing their manuscripts according to the ACAJ format and submitting them through the user-friendly ThaiJO online system. This system ensures the smooth receipt, processing, and review of manuscripts by the AJAC editorial team. The streamlined process maintains order and consistency, enabling efficient review and publication.

Step 2. Initial Check (2 Weeks)

Upon receipt of the manuscript, the editorial team conducts an initial assessment to ensure that the submission aligns with the journal's scope and complies with publication

requirements. Manuscripts that fail to meet these criteria are rejected without further review. Submissions with a similarity index exceeding 30% are also rejected at this stage. Additionally, the editorial team also checks the article's formatting and citation style according to the specified author guidelines. Manuscripts that do not meet these requirements are returned to authors for reformatting and resubmission. If approved, the manuscript proceeds to the review stage.

Step 3. Associate Editor Assignment (2 Weeks)
Following the initial review, the Editor-in-Chief assigns an Associate Editor with relevant expertise to oversee the review process. The Associate Editor identifies and invites three qualified reviewers with expertise in fields related to the manuscript's scope. If the initial invitations are not accepted, additional reviewers are invited. This process typically takes 2 weeks**.**

Step 4. Reviewer Invitation and Review Process (6-12 Weeks)
ACAJ employs a double-blinded review system with a minimum of 3 expert reviewers. Authors' names, affiliations, email addresses, and acknowledgments are anonymized by the editor before inviting reviewers. Invited reviewers should be affiliated with institutions distinct from the corresponding author. This step generally takes 6-12 weeks.

Step 5. Final Decision by Editor-in-Chief (2-4 Weeks)
The Editor-in-Chief, along with the Associate Editors, reviews the evaluation reports, comments, and recommendations provided by the reviewers. A final decision is made, which may be one of the following: Accept Submission, Revisions Required, Resubmit for Review, or Decline Submission. The final decision is communicated to the author via the ThaiJO system. If the decision is "Revisions Required" or "Resubmit for Review," the author has 2-4 weeks to submit the revised manuscript.

Step 6. Author Proofreading and English Editing (2 Weeks)
The author(s) engage in proofreading and ensure language accuracy through a professional editor. They must respond to queries from the language editor and improve any low-quality figures. The corresponding author signs the copyright transfer form on behalf of all co-authors to ensure completion within approximately 2 weeks.

Step 7. Final Corrections and Publication (2 Weeks)
After the final manuscript is submitted, it is sent to the Assistant Editor for formatting and article design in accordance with the journal's guidelines. A CrossRef DOI is assigned, and the article is published on the journal's website. This final stage typically takes 2 weeks.