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Transformative Learning Based on Philosophy of Sufficiency Economy : A Critical tool for Destructing Materialism during COVID-19

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Abstract

Shutdowns during the coronavirus situation create short-term cost for global economies both at the micro and macro level. The world population needs to adapt individual life and social life. Globalization has been leading to increase materialism. At the same time, values of goodness, morality and ethics of society are slightly declining as well. Transformative learning under ethical principles related to value of sufficiency called “Sufficiency Economism” is one of the critical tools to unlock and fully develop human potential. People will be able to lower material value and maintain the mental value of peaceful society. The ultimate target is to achieve global sustainable development. The article is willing to present a model of transformative learning on behalf of drawing much of their inspiration through “Sufficiency Economism” concepts. Conceptualization in transformative learning is resulted in outstanding learning outcomes focused on reducing materialism on modern society. New changes can form true happiness and world peace for others suffering from COVID-19 situation.

Keywords: Materialism, Sufficiency Economy, Transformative Learning, Wisdom process

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Introduction

The COVID-19 pandemic crisis affects the lifestyles of people and the economy of various countries worldwide to halt. Public health measures put the emphasis on self-prevention by wearing a cloth mask or a surgical mask, frequently washing hands, and living in the new normal that requires social distancing, avoids gathering, work from home, communication and online or hybrid learning instead of face-to-face communication. These are done altogether with the government measures to close places, close cities, and control travel among provinces and abroad. The country is closed to strictly control the spread of COVID-19 (Division of Communicable Disease, Department of Communicable Disease Control, Ministry of Public Health, 2021).

For self-prevention from COVID-19 infection, people have to change their lifestyles, do activities at home, use technology and use online applications to communicate more. These result in the phenomenon of digital business in the form of presenting products via online or internet systems via popular platforms such as Shopee, Lazada, etc. (Abdul-Rahaman, & Hongxing, 2020). The consumers can choose products, order food, shop online, and order home delivery services with the transportation system or with riders to deliver food products directly to consumers directly, conveniently, and timesaving. Thus, it meets the needs of consumers and gains popularity quickly during the COVID-19 pandemic situation. (Toh et al., 2021)

The crisis of the COVID-19 pandemic also affects the income of many occupations. People are unable to work, have no income, or have declined income. They are in financial difficulties. Individuals cope with threats by purchasing specific products, such as necessities. However, to better deal with future uncertainties and risks, individuals may also reserve resources and increase saving behavior. However, it is found that there is the rise in online sales to grow higher and higher because online products are cheaper and the consumers do not have to travel to the stores for buying (Gu et al., 2021). There are also the real time sales via face book, online media or You Tube channel. The sellers live for

selling and advertising products for sale in discounted prices, giveaways and praising product properties through various methods. This allows consumers to make purchase decisions based on their emotions and feelings to buy items regardless of necessity (Gu et. al., 2021). Their purchases satisfy unmet needs, such as for love and affection are prone to compulsive buying behavior or shopping addiction causing a person or society to develop materialistic values (Materialism). This is the belief to feel psychological of the individual with the desire to possess things, property, money, things that are tangible as well as various facilitation objects. Life is about pursuing and possessing properties. Materialism refers to a value orientation of an individual, which expresses the extent to which the individual takes the acquisition of material ownership as an indication of achieved life goals. Materialistic individuals achieve success and happiness by pursuing material wealth and focus their entire lives on the pursuit and acquisition of property. When individuals perceive the risk of the pandemic, individuals with high materialism always seek to own more things than others, as they believe goods can bring happiness. Therefore, they place more value on goods, and are more eager to acquire and retain properties (Toh et al., 2021) In addition, materialism is not only an individual characteristic but also a cultural value generally accepted by society. By supporting cultural values, materialist individuals can alleviate their mental insecurity in a risky environment and therefore, their money-saving behavior will decrease.

If the materialistic values gradually increase, people will buy products for pleasure. However, when they possess, the items do not cause satisfaction in real life. It causes bad effect to the society especially with children and youth or students who do not have income. It also increases luxury spending. Therefore, the guidelines or methods should be sought to modify ideas, values, materialism and promote savings on the economic condition of the family, society and the nation to be stable (Sanyawiwat, 2008) amid the COVID-19 pandemic crisis in order to help one another find a solution urgently (Department

of Communicable Disease Control, Ministry of Public Health, 2021). Children and youth should be taught on Transformative learning resulting in a change in thinking, sustainable feelings and actions (Schnepfleitner & Ferreira, 2021). In terms of education, developing students physically, emotionally, socially, and intellectually will help them reach the goals of society accompanied by carefulness (Banpasiri, 2003). The family institutes, schools, communities, or temples are important elements to nurture young seedlings to grow and become intelligent. They can learn to keep up with the changes such as in the COVID-19 situation encountered by everyone. They know how to live with self-sufficiency by adhering to the Philosophy of Sufficiency Economy (PSE) of His Majesty King Rama IX to put into practice (The Chaipattana Foundation, 2017).

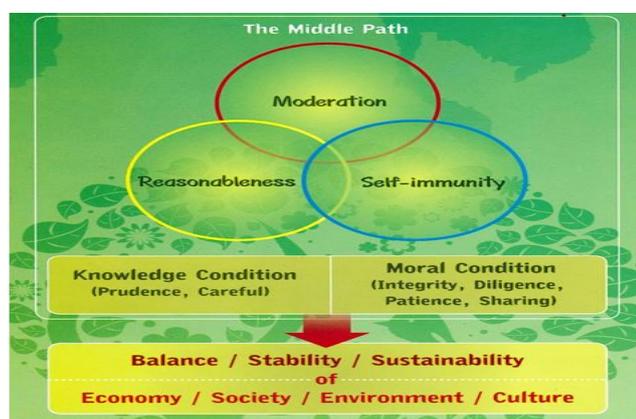
This article aims to present Transformative learning (Eschenbacher & Fleming, 2020) to inspire the conceptual change.

Philosophy of Sufficiency Economy

PSE was developed based on the Buddhist philosophical and moral principles, the agricultural characteristics of Thailand, and the fundamental principle of Thai culture's (The Chai Pattana, 2017; Heingraj & Amorpan, 2019). The philosophy consists of three interconnected principles which are moderation, reasonableness, and self-immunity, including two basic conditions- knowledge and virtue (The Chaipattana, 2017). It is a method for utilizing a balance way of life based on moderation, prudence, frugality, and social immunity in order

The learning dimension of people in Thai society during the economic crisis from the COVID-19 situation is used together with the adoption of the Philosophy of Sufficiency Economy of His Majesty King Rama IX as a base for thinking and leading to practice in reducing Materialism in the midst of the COVID-19 pandemic crisis. (Dao, 2020). Therefore, this article aims to present the Philosophy of Sufficiency Economy of His Majesty King Rama IX and transformative learning (TL). These concepts are base for thinking and leading to practice in reducing Materialism undertaking economic crisis from the COVID-19 situation in order to establish a balance way of life and consumption. This paper, therefore, presents content as follow: Philosophy of Sufficiency Economy (PSE), Philosophy of Sufficiency Economy: Leveraging materialism society, Learning dimension: Materialism in new normal, Transformative learning: Tool for wisdom process, Careless society with the wisdom process, respectively.

to better prepare individuals to be more efficient when facing any difficult situations, and other inevitable crisis (Heingraj & Amorpan, 2019). Hence, the PSE aims to promote self-realization, resilience, and sustainable development across the level of individuals, families, communities to the society at large through the emphasis on foundation building robust foundation, strengthening immunities, and resilience in economic conditions (Heingraj & Amorpan, 2019). Figure 1 shows the framework of the PSE.



Source: Royal Thai Embassy, Doha, Philosophy of “Sufficiency Economy”

Philosophy of Sufficiency Economy: Leveraging materialism society

PSE reflecting the sufficiency economy concept will be an important tool that can change the thinking system of people through wisdom processes leading to social values that are appropriate to the context of Thai people. While Thai society is following the global trend that focuses on the materialistic rather than the spiritual, there may be a question from another corner of society that “What kind of wisdom process will be used to mold people in society to have morality within and able to live with the world under the post-COVID epidemic conditions with awareness of the changes.” The author has a clear suggestion from lessons in Thailand and may reflect this new perspective on the world trend. Transformative learning can apply Sufficiency Economy Philosophy to significantly reduce materialism during the COVID situation (Chumtakhob, 2020).

Thai society during the COVID situation can go through hardships. People of all ages embrace qualities, moderation, reasonableness, preparedness for change to become immune as well as using knowledge as a basis for planning an appropriate life combined with virtue along with life. Thus, cultivating the community and society away from material values can be

Learning dimension: Materialism in new normal

Learning at all ages has values involving in the implementation of the expression of feelings, beliefs with family and society. In addition, values determine human behaviors and have characteristics that can be passed on from one generation to another. The values are divided into 3 types; material values such as dress, housing, etc., psychological values such as religious beliefs, manners, etc., and behavioral values. The values that are the goal of life are the ideal values that need to be based on priorities, such as helping others without expecting anything in return, being praised by society, having good friends, living a reasonably comfortable life, having lovers, having religious principles to rely on, having interpersonal relationship, having pride in honor and dignity, having peace of mind, having happiness in family life, being successful in life, etc. The material values here are defined

achieved through proper education using the sufficiency economy philosophy to encourage families, communities to be satisfied and sufficient with what is available. It can reduce demand and desire to have material things by having “consciousness, wisdom and persistence” that will lead to “happiness” in real life (Gardner, 2021).

Political and governance policies that emphasize Thai identity is another lever that will help supporting not to let people take over universal values. Adaptation to the conditions of family and community for Thai society to be able to coexist with other countries, religion, culture, and Thai traditions are important strengths (Chamnong, 1978) focusing on conveying Thai culture. This is passed on from the first generation to the next generation through the use of psychology in training raised in foster care. The emphasis is on life security rather than Life prosperity according to the social context in the past and before the consumerism Materialism into foreign culture (Tinnakul, 2006). In a nutshell, PSE emphasizes a balanced way of living and consumption. Therefore, individuals should incorporate this knowledge into consideration to mitigate excessive materialism.

as having feelings, needs, demands, preference, and inclinations that are both rational and irrational. It follows the family, community, and society’s pattern of material consumption significantly (Suphap., 2000).

Therefore, the values of Thai people that should be analyzed and should be corrected are such as accepting merit without argument, trusting in luck and gambling, being generosity without expecting something in return, being awe of those who have money and power, loving solitude, contentment with what one has. There is a lack of enthusiasm for improving work, sharing for progress regardless of performance, extravagance in various rituals, making merit too much for the hope of the next life, brotherly love leading to patriarchy, high taste with low economic status, etc. Although there are many Thai values, what are most noticeable nowadays

are the new western values, such as praising knowledgeable people, respecting relatives, easy-going, being westernized, especially the reception of western culture from various media of adolescents in this era. From the identity of Thai people of loving to imitate, the imitation in the right way will help enhancing the prosperity of Thai culture. On the contrary, Thai culture is being erased from Thai youth themselves. Thus, the family should be the first model and example in the conservation of Thai culture, environment, society, and media in various fields, especially the generation of grandparents who considered the role models in enhancing the appropriate values of Thai youth (Tinnakul, 2006).

As a result of the behaviors of the family, community, society with material values, there may be many reasons including a problem appearing in society. It is the education as a guiding tool for material values today (Office of the Education Council Secretariat, Ministry of Education, 2017). This is multi causation phenomena which consist of formal education that was instilled in accordance with the policy of the state (Office of the Education Council

Secretariat, Ministry of Education, 2017). It is determined by the methodology of the Ministry of Education or non-formal education. The economy focuses on consumerism and materialism according to the global trends affecting families, communities, society (Chakphisut, 2005). At present, political policies that govern, support, promote capitalism trends, consumerism and materialism according to the values of the leaders of the minority countries set the policies according to their own needs. Technological modernization from the western trend affects the community and Thai society. In terms of culture, belief, thinking systems, and value systems are still the factors that affect the community and society inclining towards materialism (Perry, 2021).

Values, belief, and knowledge promote materialism. To diminish materialism, knowledge represents one of the basic conditions of PSE. This knowledge encompasses process of learning and accumulate insights, information and experiences (Heingraj & Amornpan, 2019). Learning is a key process when learners perceive and understand the real world with consciousness and re-evaluate beliefs, value, and assumptions.

Transformative learning: Tool for wisdom process

The process of globalization in the education system is defined by international political forces. Superpowers can extend their political power to dominate other countries' societies using the introduction of school system or their own educational system to convince others to conform to. For example, Thai society has changed the process of Internationalization of Global Languages that affects education management. In the past, the universality of languages was determined by natural factors such as population growth or the migration of the population. Later, international political power became more important in defining universal language. The languages of superpowers tend to be international ones. The Western cultural system, therefore, plays a role in defining international languages such as English, French and German. The advancement of information

technology further enhances the internationalization of the English language.

From the fact that Thailand has adopted the western trend, education learning in the correct way for Thai youth, especially adolescents, is that there should be a complete learning process at all three levels starting from the reception from various sources of perception through ears, eyes, nose, tongue, body and mind. This is accumulated as their own experiences. The next step is Comprehension which is an important step. The experience must be able to explain, analyze, distinguish, and logically link. The final step is where the real learning process takes place. (Owen, 2021) When they are properly understood, it brings about a change in us including the Conceptualization and / or changing the Values and attitudes until the behaviors change in living altogether in society (Sirasunthorn, 2009).

Careless society with the wisdom process

If we look at the education system through the view of an economist in connection with the era of consumerism, such materialism

will find that education becomes a product. Originally, education was a social culture served as an intermediary in conveying the way of life of

the uneducated people to find the wisdom creation how the wisdom can be used in life (Office of the Secretariat of Education, Ministry of Education, 2560). This will be passed on to the next generation of youth through a learning process that has evolved from sharing. It is recorded in writing until making the textbook used for teaching in the education system (Sternberg R. J., 2021). From the statement “Pay in full for sure completion”, it is the view that education which is truly just a product. The students are under competition in capitalism and consumerism. They want to graduate in order to get only a degree despite having to invest in any amount of study or having to hire someone else to do the thesis. They are also willing to spend a lot of money on tutoring, etc., with the goal of allowing themselves to go out and pursue a career that earns a lot of money. This meets material needs such as having a house, a car, a high salary, shopping for things that they want easily, etc.

Thai society went through a situation of negligence in living during the first wave of COVID-19 for a while when people learned to be ready for change causing the wisdom process to occur. The wisdom process consists of 5 components; learning based on the lifestyle, having the right worldview and way of thinking, using integrated scientific processes. This wisdom development promotes individuals and society to reach the wisdom readiness in being able to come up with solutions to various problems. They will

Conclusion

Adopting the Sufficiency Economy Philosophy of His Majesty the King Rama IX is the only way of salvation for Thai people in the situation of the COVID-19 pandemic. It can be clearly seen that the use of PSE principles which are moderation, reasonableness, and self-immunity, including two basic conditions-knowledge and virtue can encourage people to adapt staying at home, self-catering, saving money, reflecting moderation with moderate consumption. They can make rational choices in living a New normal life (The Chaipattana, 2017; Sangsawangwathana et al., 2020). People are able to cope with changes with knowledge of what will happen by applying knowledge conditions such as lockdown announcements and curfew

be truly happy and prosperous. The first component is way of life which is the core of learning reform without focusing on academic matters. The main interest is in lifestyle. The second component is the way of thinking about seeing the world. Learning reform must foster new worldviews and ways of thinking (Wasi, 2001). The third component is the integrated scientific process. It is a scientific process that integrates other elements, meaning integration of way of life, worldview, and way of thinking, mindfulness, and spiritual development. The fourth element is consciousness which allows us to perceive things as they really are and think independently. The fifth element is spiritual development to become truly human without being enslaved to material values despite the stimuli of any environment (Wasi, 2001). Learning and seeing changes in the external factors such as the situation and dangers of COVID-19 and internal factors such as attitudes and creativity have a new perspective on solving problems that are different from the old methods familiarly to the society (Perry, 2021). This will make learning development be elevated to a higher level. Finally, it will be the moral courage to stand up for ethical correctness even during many people who disagree. Therefore, the Thai education system must be able to respond to the era in which knowledge is needed to be put into practice in the community and society (Banphasirichot, 2003).

time that is modified from time to time when the situation gets better or worse again. The learning process is ready to deal with changes that combine with awareness of morality, honesty, tolerance, and intelligence in living together carelessly. Thus, enabling Thai people to move through the COVID-19 situation which is violent until now, people can live altogether with the COVID situation through a middle way at the individual, family, society and country levels to cope with the economic recession. (Office of the National Economic and Social Development Board, 2017) Carefulness and self-reliance is, therefore, another option being a way to survive for both Thai people and the world during the COVID-19 crisis.

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