

Comparing the Concept of Wisdom Tree to the Concepts of Economics, Public Administration, Social Development, and Human Resource Development

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Abstract—This research attempts to explore the concept of “Wisdom Tree” proposed by a group of Buddhist volunteers at BuddhadasaIndapanno Archives (or BIA - A Buddhist spiritual cultivation and edutainment center). The Wisdom Tree explains a simulated situation of having four groups of people living together on and under one big tree (the good and haves, the bad and have-nots, the good and have-nots, and the bad and have-nots). The concept is widely accepted among numbers of Buddhists participating in the BIA dharma activities. This concept is then compared to Economics, Public Administration, Social Development and Human Resource Development concepts and analysed to come up with its implication in developing human resources in Thailand. The research methodology involves focus groups of university professors and graduate students in economics, public administration, social development and human resource development fields. Findings reveal comparison of similarities and differences of those concepts and recommendations for applying the Wisdom Tree concept in developing human resources in Thailand.

Index Terms—BuddhadasaIndapanno, human resource development, wisdom tree.

I. INTRODUCTION

For the past ten years Thailand has faced many challenging issues in many areas including economics, social, politics, and environment. All these issues inevitably affect the well-being and happiness of its people. Many academicians and practitioners from various disciplines in Thailand have been working hard to propose and implement effective solutions to handle all those challenges. A group of Buddhist volunteers at BuddhadasaIndapanno Archives (or BIA - A Buddhist spiritual cultivation and edutainment center) has proposed a concept of “Wisdom Tree” as a model of explanation of what is actually happening in the society in terms of how people live together, consume and allocate resources. This model acts as a tool to simulate the situation for people to comprehend its complexity and find holistic solutions to problems. It is interesting and useful to see how we can compare this model to different areas of the country development.

II. OBJECTIVE

This study therefore aims to explore the concept of “Wisdom Tree” and comparing to Economics, Public

Administration, Social Development and Human Resource Development concepts and to come up with suggestion of how we can use the concept of “Wisdom Tree” to propose an approach in developing human resources in Thailand.

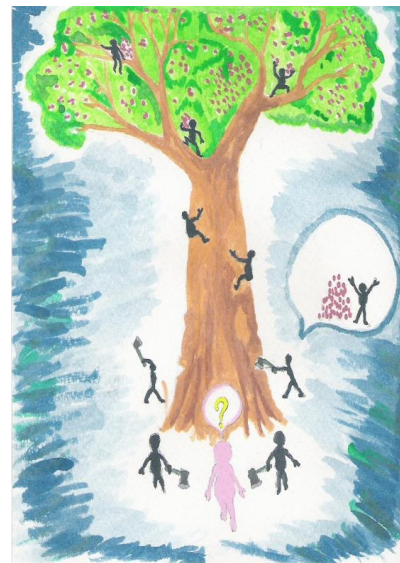


Fig. 1. The wisdom tree.

It is inevitable for the society where people from all walks of life living together to face with the issues of resources consumption, deterioration and inequality. To deal with the issues, the society needs to pay a very close attention to how we govern ourselves and live together. Who can be our representatives and how they can create a peaceful, balanced and sustained society for all become a critical focus.

The Wisdom Tree concept in Fig.1[1] is derived from the truth stating by the Lord Buddha regarding human’s endless desires. The statement analogizes as follows [2]:

“You Governor, there is a large forest located just off the village where there is one big fruitful tree situated. The tree bears plenty of fruits, all on the tree and none on the ground. And there is one man walking by seeking for ripe fruits. He thinks to himself he has spent too much time searching for fruits and now the tree full of fruits standing in front of him, why waste time standing and not climbing for the fruits as he has the ability to. He then climbs up the tree, eat many fruits with pleasure and wrap up some for later. While there is another man walking by seeking for the same ripe fruits and holding an axe in his hand. He thinks to himself he has spent too much time searching for fruits and now the tree full of fruits standing in front of him but no fruits on the ground. He doesn’t know how to climb a tree but he does know how to cut

Manuscript received December 21, 2016; revised May 1, 2017.

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down the tree. Therefore, in order to have some fruits to eat and some left for wrapping away he must cut down the tree, and finally he does.

You Governor, how do you react to the above incident? The man on the tree must hurry down otherwise he will break his arm, or his foot or other body parts when the tree falls down. And he will die or suffer the great pain, won't he?"

The above statement stresses the neverending needs and wants for living of human. The tree represents natural resources which are consumed by human. The man who knows how to climb trees represents the more fortunate class of people who can get access to all those resources. The man who does not know how to climb trees represents the less fortunate class of people who cannot get access to any resources. However, though the two aforementioned groups of people have different levels of accessibility to resources, they are the same in terms of having their basic needs. The tree concept also believes that human has desires or lusts that more or less he or she will take away the resources more than needed and will save some for the future consumption.

The "Wisdom Tree" brings up some interesting questions that need answers and rationality.

(1) For what reasons that the people on the tree will have to share fruits with people under the tree? And if so, how many should they share?

(2) If we are one of the people under the tree and unable to climb up the tree, what will we do to get the fruits on the tree? How will we make the people on the tree share fruits with us and how many do we want?

(3) What will be the mutual agreement of how many fruits should be shared? What is the good ratio?

(4) Should we have a middleperson? Who should that be? And how should the middleperson go about it?

(5) What will be the main idea derive from answering the above questions? Will it help people in the society living together peacefully?

There will be no one universal right answer to each question. All depend on contexts of each society. But at least the concept makes us all see the bigger picture and how each small part or system relate and influence others. Therefore, it is believed that having a clearer and more holistic view will adjust our perception to be more rationale which will eventually lead to appropriate action.

According to the "Wisdom Tree," people in our society can be divided into 4 groups:

(1) The wealthy, have opportunity and ability and moral (for instance: good business owner, good employees).

(2) The poor, have no opportunity nor ability and moral (for instance laborer, less fortunate elder or youth)

(3) The poor, have no opportunity nor ability but immoral (for instance gangsters, heavy drinkers and gamblers)

(4) The wealthy, have opportunity and ability but immoral (for instance: corrupted politicians, bad and selfish business owner)

The grouping of 4 kinds of people leads us to the following questions to better comprehend the causes and effects related to the living together of human in our society [3]:

(1) Which group do the majority of people in our society belong to? And in which group do we want our people to be?

(2) Do our current social systems encourage our people to

be in the group that we want?

(3) If not, in which group our current social systems encourage our people to be?

(4) Which group do our representatives in governing our society belong to? And in which group do we want our representatives to be?

(5) If our representatives are not in the group we want them to, what should we do as a citizen?

It is believed that the ultimate goal of most society is to create more people in group 1. These people are happy and successful in life and will lead our society to be wealthy (physically and mentally). But the big question is how we can make it happen.

This Wisdom Tree concept has been introduced to Thai society through various activities at BIA using the communication technique of Kahane [4]: downloading, debating, dialoguing, and presencing. However, the understanding and applying of Wisdom Tree concept are still limited to certain group of people.

III. METHODOLOGY

Eight 2-hour sessions of focus group were used to gather information from 29 graduate students and 9 professors at the Graduate School of Development Economics, Graduate School of Public Administration, Graduate School of Social and Environment Development and Graduate School of Human Resource Development (SHRD) at the National Institute of Development Administration (NIDA), Bangkok, Thailand.

IV. FINDINGS

The following tables show the findings from the study:

TABLE I: COMPARING THE CONCEPT OF WISDOM TREE TO ECONOMICS

Discussed Issues	Details
Basic concept of economics	
Focusing on utilizing limited resources	The "Wisdom Tree" concept and Economics concern how human can utilize limited resources to serve unlimited human's needs in the society.
Unlimited human's needs	
People take extra fruits with them after they are stuffed	People consume much more than needed. When people have a chance to take more, they will. Some people say it is for the sake of "growth" and "development."
Sufficiency and sustainability	
People should learn to limit their needs and care for sustainability	People seek to satisfy their needs and satisfaction point is movable and seem to be endless however we need to take , sustainability issue into serious consideration
The middleperson who will manage allocation of fruits	
A middleperson is needed to handle the allocation of fruits as people can be irrational	people make ,According to economics concept ,However ,decisions using rationale or interest nd make people tend to be irrational a decisions for their own sake and that is why a middleperson will help create appropriate ,allocation of resources

From Table I, the main areas discussed included the focus of utilizing limited resources, the concern of unlimited human's needs, the importance of sustainability-mindedness, and the need of middleperson handling the allocation of resources which coincides with the concept of Economics that focuses on how people make their decisions regarding the use of limited resources [5]. We cannot concentrate only on

making use of resources but reserving and conserving them should be of concern to each and every one of us. Therefore, sustainability should be put into consideration especially at the policy level.

TABLE II: COMPARING THE CONCEPT OF WISDOM TREE TO PUBLIC ADMINISTRATION

Discussed Issues	Details
Basic concept of public administration	
Focusing on keeping the tree well and fruitful for the benefits of all	One main purpose of good public administration is to manage people and create systems for the benefits of all people living together
The need of good system	
In order to take good care of the tree for the benefits of all we need a good administration system.	A good system must be in place and people have to be informed and educated about the system.
Ownership of the tree	
We all have the ownership of the tree.	People should realize that we have the shared ownership of the tree and we need to take good care of it so that we can enjoy the fruits for as long as possible. However, some groups of people do not have that feeling of ownership.
The representatives	
Good representatives are also needed.	Living in a society with large population we need good representatives in administration for the benefits of all.

From Table II, the areas of discussed included the focus of good administration for the wealth of public, the sense of ownership, and the need for good representatives which agrees with the principle of Thai public administration that focuses on rule of laws, ethics, transparency, participation, accountability, and value for money [6]. The wealth of public is one major concern of public administration, however, we should define wealth as not only in terms of amount of earnings nor living accessories but also quality of living such as physical and mental health of the public. Moreover, how we can select good representatives of the public should be of major concern.

TABLE III: COMPARING THE CONCEPT OF WISDOM TREE TO SOCIAL DEVELOPMENT

Discussed Issues	Details
Basic concept of social development	
Focusing on morality in order to live together peacefully	Social development recognizes the importance of morality as a crucial factor in living together peacefully.
Developing people to have a mind of giving and sharing	
A peaceful society lives through giving and sharing	We need to develop people of all groups at all levels to have a mind of giving and sharing as it is a crucial factor for any society to be peaceful and sustainable.
Selfishness and self-centeredness	
People have a tendency to be selfish and self-centered	It is an inconvenient truth that people have a self-centered-tendency to be selfish and self society must promote and support caring and dedicate people
The patron-client (feudalism) system	
The patron-client or feudalism system is a big problem in social development	Thai people value gratitude. However, paying back can be exploited in the patron-client or feudalism system. We need merit system.

From Table III, the discussion emphasized the morality of people, the focus of creating giving and sharing mind, and the need for merit system rather than patron-client or feudalism

system which coincides with the main focus of social development principle that includes creation of social values through socialization and the need of system and stability [7]. For developing our society we are living in to be a much better one, we need to concentrating on developing people rather than infrastructure. Mindset and paradigm of its people reflect sovereignty and peacefulness of the country.

TABLE III: COMPARING THE CONCEPT OF WISDOM TREE AND HUMAN RESOURCE DEVELOPMENT

Discussed Issues	Details
Basic concept of human resource development	
Focusing on developing people to be moral and ethical	The “Wisdom Tree” concept and HRD stress the same critical point on developing people to be moral and ethical, to have good citizenship as a citizen of one’s society or of one’s organization
Developing people to have social responsibility mindset	
How we can encourage people not to cut down the fruitful tree	One of HRD concerns is to develop people to have social responsibility mindset and people with social responsibility mindset will not cut down the fruitful tree only for the satisfaction of themselves. Instead they will care more for the benefits of the society as a whole. However, that is the ideal situation which can rarely be the case in reality. People are carrying axe looking for fruitful trees and ready to cut them down.
The middleperson who realizes the absolute truth	
The middleperson (in pink color) is the person our society needs	We are looking for the middleperson who realizes the absolute truth of managing the s needs limited resources to satisfy everyone and bring about sustainability to the society t be the most favorite The middleperson may no person of any group of people
The system	
The distribution system is needed to handle the allocation of fruits to every part of the society	Living in a forest where there are plenty of fruitful trees is comparable to living in a society comprising of many small sectors. The effective distribution system must be put in place to handle the allocation of fruits to every sector of the society. While focusing on creating welfare the middleperson must bring about peace and sustainability to the society.

From Table IV, the discussion focused on the importance of developing people to be moral, ethical and social responsible, and the need of having a group of good middlepersons and a good distribution system which agrees with the main focus of human resource development concept that includes needs fulfillment and development of knowledge, skills, ability, and other characteristics of human [8]. As people has been recognized to be the heart of all developmental schemes, therefore, to create a peaceful and serene society where we all live in, developing people must be our major concern. Not only skills and knowledge, but other areas of competencies including self-concept, personality, beliefs, attitudes, values and life perspective must be rightfully groomed or developed.

The above findings confirm the similarity between the concept of “Wisdom Tree” and Economics, Public Administration, Social Development and Human Resource Development concepts. Though each discipline focuses on different areas yet similar terminal goals are being achieved. Moreover, there are some comments toward a few points of the assumption of the “Wisdom Tree” concept. These include the difficulty in measuring wealth and morality and the difficulty in classifying each person to each group of people.

- 1) The results also suggest the following implications to developing human resources in Thailand:
- 2) Developing people by focusing on laying the solid ground on morality
- 3) Educating people before empowering them

Encouraging people to search for happiness basing upon the balance of wealth, health and sustainability of the society. The Wisdom Tree concept is one good alternative model that can get people involve in thinking and considering about how we should live our lives when we are classified in groups and live together in this world of inequality.

V. CONCLUSION

This research paper reports the results from the exploration of the concept of “Wisdom Tree” proposed by a group of Buddhist volunteers at BuddhadasaIndapanno Archives (or BIA - A Buddhist spiritual cultivation and edutainment center) and the comparison of this concept to Economics, Public Administration, Social Development, and Human Resource Development concepts. The findings find similarities between the model and other four disciplines, namely, economics, public administration, social development, and human resource development and suggest that we must develop people by focusing on laying the solid ground on morality, educate people before empowering them and encourage people to search for happiness basing upon the balance of wealth, health and sustainability of the society.

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