

Building a Peace Organization: A Case Study of The Peace Studies Program in International Buddhist Studies College

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ABSTRACT

This qualitative and documentary research aims to explore the establishment and development of a peace organization within the Peace Studies Program at the International Buddhist Studies College (IBSC), Mahachulalongkornrajavidyalaya University (MCU). The study focuses on three main objectives: 1). to thoroughly examine the current state of the Peace Studies Program and its role as a peace organization; 2). to investigate the various roles and functions involved in the formation and operation of such an institution; 3). to explore the contributions of IBSC as a peace institution within the broader framework of MCU. This study employs qualitative research methods, gathering information from a diverse array of sources. Key informants, selected for their expertise in Peace Studies, were interviewed to provide valuable insights and perspectives. The strategic approach to enhancing the Peace Studies curriculum is deeply rooted in the teachings of Buddha's Dharma, aiming to identify and implement the most effective conflict resolution methodologies. Participants in this initiative must possess a comprehensive skill set, including strong leadership, negotiation, communication, mediation, teamwork, conflict resolution, and reconciliation promotion abilities. Additionally, they should exhibit creativity and visionary foresight to effectively assess and mitigate potential risks. Emphasis is placed on fostering a sense of both individual and collective societal responsibility for the establishment and maintenance of peace. The study underscores the importance of fostering a sense of individual and collective responsibility for the establishment and maintenance of peace.

Keywords: Peacebuilding; Social Responsibility; Peace Organization; Conflict Resolution; Reconciliation; Negotiations

Introduction

In the contemporary era, the prevalence of conflicts across political, economic, and environmental realms is increasing.¹ Simultaneously, multifaceted challenges related to ethnicity, religion, customs, and culture underscore the necessity of integrating Peace Studies Programs into university curricula.² Such programs are designed to cultivate peace specialists essential for modern society. These individuals are expected to develop novel frameworks for conflict resolution through nonviolent methods and to foster societal transformation.³ Peace professionals must exemplify the qualities of mediators, embodying ethical and moral principles, and acting as guiding forces towards establishing harmonious societies, drawing on Buddhist principles of peace⁴

As people transition from youth to adulthood, they often face increased responsibilities that lead to stress, worry, and fatigue⁵. This burden makes it difficult for them to relax, leading to perpetual stress, irritability, and physical and mental discomfort.⁶ Many find it challenging to attain peace and contentment, and often cannot identify effective self-help methods. However, some have found solace through mindfulness meditation, which helps in developing inner peace.⁷ This paper aims to describe the process of building peace to achieve inner tranquility.

Inner peace fosters internal development, providing a structured experience that helps individuals relax and explore their feelings (Siegel, 2010). It supports personal nurturing and keeps individuals in a safe, secure environment. Developing a peaceful life requires an experienced and reliable teacher to guide one's mind through training and meditation (Kabat-Zinn, 1994). Many people find mindfulness practice to be an oasis that taps into their inner peace, promotes a positive mindset, and enhances self-healing abilities (Davidson et al., 2003). Since humans are inherently social beings, they thrive on connections, sharing strong emotions and stories, and being led by charismatic

¹ Galtung, J. "Violence, peace, and peace research". *Journal of Peace Research*, Vol. 6 (No.3, 1969), 167-191.

² Barash, David P., and Charles P. Webel. *Peace and conflict studies*. Sage, 2013.

³ Lederach, John P., and Fen O. Hampson. "Building peace: Sustainable reconciliation in divided societies." *International Journal*. Vol. 53, No. 4 (1998): 799.

⁴ Kraft, Kenneth. "The wheel of engaged Buddhism: A new map of the path." (1999).

⁵ Kessen, Christine. "Living fully: Mindfulness practices for everyday life." *Mindfulness and social work*. (2009): 31-44.

⁶ Williams, Mark, and Danny Penman. *Mindfulness: An eight-week plan for finding peace in a frantic world*. Rodale, 2012.

⁷ Kabat-Zinn, J., & Hanh, T. N. (2009). *Full catastrophe living: Using the wisdom of your body and mind to face stress, pain, and illness*. Delta.

leaders who ensure safety and unity.⁸ This interconnectedness highlights the inevitability of communication and story exchange in solving stress and anxiety, thus contributing to a peaceful life.⁹ Many people find that when they leave behind the carefree days of their youth, they face increased responsibilities that burden them with stress, worry, and fatigue. They find it difficult to unwind, relax, and sleep. As a result, they are perpetually stressed-out and irritable and suffer from pain and discomfort in their minds and bodies and disharmony in their lives and relationships. They are overwhelmed and cannot find any peace and contentment. Furthermore, they cannot identify any means by which to help themselves. However, some fortunate ones have found a way to lessen their sense of hopelessness, reduce their levels of unnecessary stress, and get back in control of their lives, and that is the way of mindfulness meditation for developing inner peace. The aim of this paper is to clearly describe that process of using building a peace to help find inner peace¹⁰

At some point in their lives, individuals question their happiness and the direction of their lives. Mindfulness meditation can be invaluable in this regard, helping individuals understand their inner selves, clarify their values, and plan a life filled with joy.¹¹ This practice enables the development of positive habits and intentional living. It focuses on connecting with the authentic inner self, letting go of resistance, and nurturing inner peace.¹²

2. Developments that need to be considered for Curriculum Planning

Rapid changing world situations have impacted on the economic expansion leading to the rising level of the economic gap and social inequality in both economy and household sectors, which have given rise to structural conflicts of society. Thailand Economic Development Strategic plan then provided direction in policy on the reduction of economic and social gaps. It emphasized on the importance of developing peace innovation for conflict management to meet the requirements of the public and private sector organizations that need to

⁸ Keltner, Dacher. *Born to be good: The science of a meaningful life*. WW Norton & Company, 2009.

⁹ Hernez-Broome, Gina. "Social intelligence: the new science of human relationships." (2012): 75-78.

¹⁰ Curriculum Doctor of Philosophy Program in Peace Studies (International Program) New Curriculum 2017

¹¹ Brown, Kirk Warren, and Richard M. Ryan. "The benefits of being present: mindfulness and its role in psychological well-being." *Journal of personality and social psychology* 84, no. 4 (2003): 822.

¹² Kabat-Zinn, J., & Hanh, T. N. (2009). *Full catastrophe living: Using the wisdom of your body and mind to face stress, pain, and illness*. Delta.

facilitate the society in the current economy¹³, based on conflict management and peace building skill as well as the ability to integrate knowledge on Buddhism as inner peace development with conflict management tools-based on peaceful means. And also the leadership development that focuses on knowledge and skills in applying knowledge to find ways in resolving conflicts and peace building in society as well as reducing the economic inequity. Moreover, leading a life in accordance with the Sufficiency Economy theory is the significant foundation in developing Thailand's economy to strengthen national economy, building national immunity against the runaway consumerism and knowing how to keep pace with globalization for Thailand economic development based on the sufficiency economy theory. Therefore, it is crucial for Thai society to have a peace engineer (peacemaker), who understands the essence of conflict management and guidelines on peace-building. This will lead to social development based on the Sufficiency Economy theory on his/her own responsibility at community, society and national levels.

Developments that need to be considered for Curriculum Planning: The current challenges facing Thailand, apart from the preparedness for opening the gate to ASEAN community might make both creative and problematic impacts on the co-existence of member country of different ethnicity, culture, and language. So, Thai society must be prepared to cope with the problems that may occur because Thailand has been facing with internal conflicts caused by different political beliefs in the recent decades. Moreover, the impact of the Western cultural fusion polluted Thai wisdom and way of life. As structural problems in the policy, people have lost trust in the current Thai government. This has been reflected in the current violent situations and conflict present in Thai society. As a result of this conflict situation, there arises many social problems, including youth drug abuse, family violence, corruption, social inequality, unjustified law enforcement, lack of good governance in organization. The pathway to social and cultural development of Thai society is to enable organizations to move forward and institutions both in private and public sectors for resolving and preventing conflicts, and also for promoting social and cultural dimensions in the peaceful co-existence. This is why Thai society needs skilled peace engineer who can apply theoretical knowledge, research, new knowledge on conflict, based on Buddhism for the actual implementation as well as the solution to the above mentioned social and cultural conflicts.

Peace Studies program for inner peace is a meditative training practice that can be beneficial for all people. It can be especially helpful for people who have a range of stress-related problems. It has been used to decrease stress, to help

¹³ Curriculum Doctor of Philosophy Program in Peace Studies (International Program) New Curriculum 2017.

people cope with physical pain and to alleviate the distressing symptoms associated with more serious psychological problems such as persistent anxiety and depression. Peace studies program is very concerned with the development of an awareness of the present moment. It encourages people to re-evaluate their relationship with the here- and-now, and to better appreciate their very own here-and now.

Mahachulalongkornrajavidyalaya University has a vision and firm intention to be an international Buddhist education center in order to produce capable and morally-smart persons, to conduct education and research to a standard level, to provide healthy academic service, and to have efficient management. Its mission is as following¹⁾ To produce quality graduates By producing quality graduates according to the Thai Qualifications Framework for Higher Education (TQF: HEd) through an application of the Buddhist doctrines integrated with the teaching and learning process are to achieve quality graduates and meet the goals of the National Education Development Plan, providing education as a mechanism for human resource development to have citizenship with characteristics of desirable graduates, consisting of 9 principles¹⁴:

M = Morality - to conduct oneself in a respectable way
 A = Awareness - to keep in pace with the changing world
 H = Helpfulness - to be helpful in dedicating oneself for Buddhism
 A = Ability - to be capable in problem solving
 C = Curiosity - to be curious in seeking for knowledge
 H = Hospitality - to have self-sacrifice for the society
 U = Universality - to be a person open to worldview
 L = Leadership - to have spiritual and intellectual leadership
 A = Aspiration - to be capable of self-development and fully conducted with virtues and ethics

2) To conduct research and development

Research and development refer to the study and research in order to create a body of knowledge and innovation in parallel with the teaching and learning process, emphasizing the development of knowledge in the Tipitaka through interdisciplinary methods and applying the discovered knowledge for solving the moral and ethical problems as well as developing the Buddhist academic quality by collaborating with renowned educational institutions both domestically and internationally in order to develop the quality of researchers and researches to have quality and universality.

3) To promote Buddhism and serve academic service to society

Promoting Buddhism and serving academic service to society based on the resolution of the university establishment by improving various activities to

¹⁴ “General information”, on online, <https://www.ibsc.mcu.ac.th/> (accessed on 14 February 2021)

be consistent with the promotion of Sangha affairs are to create knowledge and understanding in the Buddhist doctrines and raise awareness¹⁵ of morality and ethics for the people by organizing a conference and training in order to develop monks and religious personnel to have potential to maintain and disseminate the doctrines as a core to develop the mind in a wide area.

4) To support and maintain art and culture

The promotion and development of learning sources for supporting and maintaining arts and culture in order to facilitate education by using Buddhism as a mechanism, to raise awareness and the pride in being Thai, as well as to promote and support the use of local wisdom as the foundation for a balanced and sustainable development.¹⁶

3. The peace organization

In order to have a deep understanding of the issue, it is necessary to know its true meaning. Therefore, before knowing peace in various aspects, first of all, let us know the true meaning of peace. What is peace? The term peace is used in a wide sphere. It seems that peace has a variety of meanings that are different in accordance with the context of usage. Literally, the word peace is derived from the original Latin word, which means a pact, a control or an agreement to end war or 21 any dispute and conflict between two people, two nations or two antagonistic groups of people. According to the American military history, the word peace essentially means the absence of war II.

Therefore, by militaries views, they fight wars to win the peace, or they use force to maintain peace. In military paradigms, peace is seen as an ultimate or ideal goal rather than a means to an end. Historically and politically considering in accordance with the American military history's point of view, it is understood as to why peace is mostly defined as an absence of war. This is because in the history of human society, wars of various kinds were fought. Whenever wars occur, people need peace and ask for peace. Peace that people needed and asked for is the state of the absence of wars, the state of having no fights. However, many peace scholars do not agree with giving an emphasis on peace in the sense of an absence of war only. Peace, in their opinions, is something more meaningful, valuable and important than that.

4. The meaning of peace organization

However many peace scholar give different of meaning

¹⁵ "Admission", on online. <https://www.ibsc.mcu.ac.th/>, (accessed on 14 February 2021)

¹⁶ Webel, Charles, and Johan Galtung, eds. *Handbook of peace and conflict studies*. Vol. 7. London: Routledge, 2007.

According to Albert Einstein's view¹⁷, peace is not only an absence of war, but it means or includes the presence of justice, law, order or government in the society as he said Peace is not merely the absence of war but the presence of justice, of law, of order – in short, of government. Martin Luther King, Jr., a famous human rights activist is the one who was not satisfied with the definition of peace focusing only on the absence of the unhappy situations. In his view, peace must include justice in society too as in his saying True peace is not merely the absence of tension: It is the presence of justice².

According to His Holiness, the 14th Dalai Lama, said Peace, in the sense of the absence of war is of little value...peace can only last where human rights are respected, where people are fed, and where individuals and nations are free. From his point, we can say that peace means respect for human rights, well-being of people and freedom of individuals and nations.

According to Johan Galtung, Norwegian peace scholar, the term peace and violence are linked. Peace is the absence of violence and should be used as the social goal.⁸ Galtung further stated that like a coin peace has two sides: negative peace and positive peace. Negative peace is the absence of personal violence; positive peace is an absence of structural violence or social justice³.

The meanings of peace in accordance with the peace scholars¹⁸, obviously, are same in some point and different in another point depending on their own personal views.

The importance of peace organizations

Generally, peace is classified into two types: Internal peace and External peace. Internal peace is called by another word inner peace is peace of mind or soul. It is a state of calm, serenity and tranquility of mind that arise due to having no sufferings or mental disturbances such as worry, anxiety, greed, desire, hatred, ill-will, delusion and/or other defilements. Internal peace is peace within oneself; it is derived from practicing or training of mind of an individual⁴.

External peace is peace that occurs in society, nations and the world; it is a normal state of society, countries and the world and it is a state of peaceful and happy co-existence of people as well as nature. External peace, in order to see it clearly, can be described in its negative and positive.

¹⁷ John Rawls, *A Theory of Justice* (revised edn, Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1999, Nickel, James, *Human Rights*|| *Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy*, (Stanford University, 2009

¹⁸ "Concept of peace "on online <http://www.uop.edu.pk/ocontents/concept> (accessed on 20 August 2021)

Internal peace and external peace are interrelated. Both are inter-dependent and help support each other. However, types of peace, according to the World Council of curriculum and instruction, can be sub-classified into nine as follows:

1. Intrapersonal peace: the state of peace within man himself that means there is no conflict inside one's mind.
2. Interpersonal peace: the state of peace between a man and men; there are no conflicts between a man and men or one another.
3. Intragroup peace: the state of peace within groups; the state of having no conflicts in groups.
4. Intergroup peace: the state of peace between group and group; the state of having no conflicts among groups.
5. Intracranial peace: the state of peace within race; the state of having no conflicts in each race.
6. Interracial peace: the state of peace between race and races; the state of having no conflicts among races.
7. Intranational peace: the state of peace within nations or countries; the state of having no conflicts in each nation or country.
8. International peace: the state of peace between a nation and the nations; the state of having no conflicts among nations.
9. World peace: peace of the world. It means that the countries throughout the world are said to be in the state of normalcy, absence of wars and conflicts, presence of justice and balance of control.

5. Conclusion

This research summary fulfils the primary objective of the Peace Studies programme within the International programme, which encompasses Theravada Buddhism, Mahayana Buddhism, and Vajrayana Buddhism. The distinguishing factor is the examination of the diverse perspectives on the manifestations of peace and conflict on a global scale. The analysis extends beyond the domestic sphere, offering a nuanced examination of peace dynamics. Furthermore, this programme is distinctive in comparison to other academic institutions in that it bestows accolades upon researchers who have demonstrated a mastery of the requisite qualifications outlined in the curriculum, culminating in the successful completion of research within the realm of Peace Studies. The overarching objective of this programme is to cultivate individuals who possess a comprehensive understanding of the fundamental principles of peace and are proficient in conducting research that integrates Buddhist teachings with the scientific principles of peacebuilding. It is therefore essential that the faculty

comprises subject matter experts who are able to impart comprehensive knowledge and foster a culture of rigorous academic inquiry.

The pursuit of peace through this programme emphasises the importance of internal tranquility as a foundation for external harmony. It is proposed that the cultivation of inner peace is a prerequisite for societal change. An individual lacking inner peace is unable to engender peace in the broader community. This philosophy provides the rationale for enrolling in the Peace Program, whether it be the Thai, English, or international variant, with a particular focus on the Peace Studies International Program within the realm of IBSC. The interdisciplinary field of Peace Studies encompasses a wide array of subjects, including Conflict Analysis and Resolution, Peace and Justice Studies, and the broader domain of Peace and Conflict Studies.

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