

# Peace Capacity Building and Sustainability of People living by Sufficiency Economy Philosophy

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Thanavadee Boonlue

## Abstract

As an education provider, it is our mission to create wisdom in the learning of students. Never before is there need to instill wisdom in people, as we are facing the intensity of globalization and borderless world. These happenings lead us to live with Diversity and the global civilization.

One well-known teaching in Thailand is sufficiency economy philosophy based on the foundation of knowledge and integrity. The strategy can be formulated on sufficiency with reason and carefulness. The concept would lead to sustainability of people living. Sufficiency Economy philosophy is Thailand's national agenda being included in curriculum at all educational levels and applied by farmers corporation, and entrepreneurs throughout the country. The United Nations prioritizes this philosophy at the center of its agenda. It's worth to share this philosophy with member universities worldwide by the following objectives.

1. Analyzing how the SEP transformable into wisdom toward peace
2. Finding out whether there is a teaching of economic sufficiency in the curriculum.
3. Building opportunity to produce online media for SEP learning.

**Key Word:** Sufficiency Economy Philosophy, Wisdom, Peace

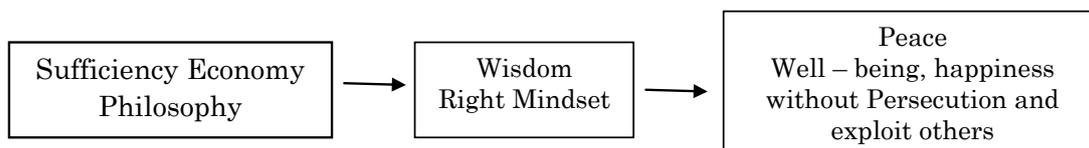
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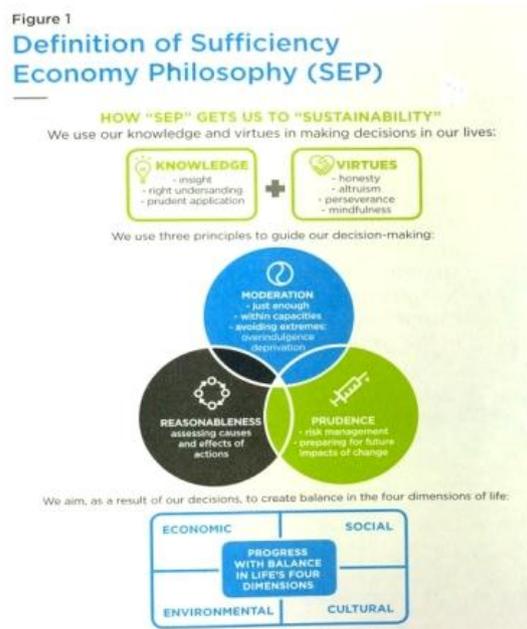
Gayle C. Avery and Harald Bergsteiner (2016) in their article “Thailand : An Unexpected Role Model” stated that Thailand is introducing sustainable thinking across the nation-from schools and universities to agriculture, community development, the environment, prisons, business and public policy. By implementing the Sufficiency Economy Philosophy (SEP) that the passed King Rama IX of Thailand bestowed on his people. This country is striving for outcomes of well-being, happiness and sustainability.

They further explained that sufficiency thinking within the Sufficiency Economy Philosophy seeks to balance the economic, societal, environmental and cultural spheres by following a middle path characterized by decisions and actions that are moderate, reasonable and prudent. The presumption is that individuals, families, communities and societies will embrace virtuous values that, when coupled with appropriate knowledge, enable them to decide and act with wisdom



In 1997, after an over a decade long period of high growth, Thailand’s economy experienced significant setback as the Thai baht, which was then fixed to a basket of foreign currencies comprising mainly the US dollar, was hit by massive speculative attacks. The resulting decision of the Royal Thai Government to float the baht, together with Thailand’s high level of foreign debt at that time, led to the collapse of the country’s financial system. There were massive layoffs. The stock market dropped sharply. The effect was felt everywhere. In the midst of economic turmoil, the country turned to its beloved monarch for royal advice. His Majesty King BhumibolAdulyadej, reiterating and expanding on a concept of balanced living he had propounded since 1973, advised that the Thai people follow closely the “Philosophy of Sufficiency Economy” (SEP) in living their lives (UNDP, 2007). Since then SEP has become a key principle behind Thailand’s national development plan and practices in coping with emerging challenges such as globalization (ORDPB,2015). The SEP neither denounces globalization nor reject general economic theory. In fact, SEP stresses the importance

of social welfare maximization and, therefore, interfere, internalization of all external benefits/costs such as moral values and environmental externalities, which are at the heart of public and environmental economics.



Sufficiency Economy Philosophy balance in life premeds sustainability for the world. Source: ORDPB (2015)

According to a synthesis of the philosophy provided by the government, (Wibulswadi, c.2014) SEP counsels moderation, reasonableness, and self-immunity. Moderation conveys the idea of taking the middle path in life as an overriding principle for everything we do. Reasonableness refers to awareness of the consequences of our actions on ourselves, as well as others. Self-immunity focuses on our ability to withstand shocks and put into place contingency plans. However, these three components must be met provided that “knowledge” and “morality” conditions are satisfied. In other words, theories and methodologies must be thoroughly examined and carefully utilized at each and every step of the way. At the same time, it is necessary that moral values such as honesty and integrity are fostered in all aspects of our society. By adhering to SEP, we should live a balanced and harmonious life; and be better able to withstand future socioeconomic and environmental challenges.

This kind of living does not go against the theory of comparative advantage and free trade, where people/countries gain from specialization and division of labor, in any way. (Aukayanakul.J.2014) Although the Sufficiency Economy Philosophy (SEP) advocates moderation and self-immunity, it does not signify self-sufficiency, where we live in autarky and relies on no one but ourselves to produce everything we need. In other words, sufficiency, in SEP context, does not mean we must grow our own food, make our own clothes, and so on. That is too much. In fact, people/countries are allowed to gain from trade by specializing in the goods/services in which they have comparative advantage as long as access to basic necessities, i.e. basic security, continues to be maintained. This is to ensure that the country can survive and would not lose its footing in times of crisis.

For its reasonableness principle, SEP stresses the importance of social welfare maximization over private welfare maximization. Individuals should care not only

about their private benefits/costs but also external benefits/costs. External benefits arise when an action generates positive spillovers for which the benefactor has no right to collect payment and the beneficiary has no obligation to pay. External costs arise when an action generates negative spillovers for which the impactor has no obligation to pay and from which the impacted has no right to claim damages. Given an initial allocation of resources, the society should move to a different allocation if at least one person can be made better off without making someone else worse off (i.e. if some of the benefits accrue to the winners can be used to compensate the losers). This is known as Pareto improvement in economics. (UNDP,2007)

By acknowledging the interdependency among people at all levels, SEP ensures that the social net benefit is always maximized and the allocation of resources is socially efficient. However, in economics, benefits/costs include also future and non-monetary values such as long – term impacts, option values, non – use values, moral values, and lost time. The knowledge condition and the morality condition, specified in SEP, ensure that all these future and non-monetary benefits/costs get included in our social welfare function. In this sense, SEP and general economic theory are said to be in line with one another. (Aukayanakul.J.2014)

The SEP teaches us to care not only about ourselves but also others in the society and to look at long – term impacts and moral values instead of just focusing on short – term, monetary benefits/costs, and its application shall lead to less conflict of interest in the society, fewer environmental problems, and more sustainable development. Farmers adhering to SEP shall practice sustainable farming. There will be no excessive land use and less water contamination due to pesticide residues. An example of sustainable farming practices, in SEP context, is His Majesty’s “New theory” agriculture which comprises the following three phases: the first phase is to manage

agricultural land and resources at the household level with respect to a set of personal constraints in a way that provides enough return to live comfortably and appropriately; the second phase is the formation of group in the form of cooperatives to produce goods, locate market, and help increase community welfare; and third phase is to build contacts and partnerships with outside institutions such as banks, businesses, government, and non-government organizations to obtain financial and technical support necessary for further development. (ONESDB, 2011) Businessmen adhering to SEP shall be concerned with long-term profits, conduct their business as ethically as possible, and always keep current in production technology. These are just a few examples of application of SEP.

As Thailand's answer to globalization, SEP has gained a lot of recognition both domestically and internationally. It is hailed by UNDP as key to fighting poverty, coping with economic risk, and promoting social responsibility (Ministry of foreign Affairs) and, if followed closely, should make the world a more pleasant place to live for everyone. As His Majesty stated in a Royal Speech on December 4, 1998, "If one is moderate in one's desires, one will have less craving. If one has less craving, one will take less advantage of others. If all nations hold this concept of moderation, without being extreme of insatiable in one's desires, the world will be a happier place."

### **To conclude, SEP have six main features as follows**

1. Moderation within reason
2. Prudence and risk management
3. Pursuit of knowledge;
4. Ethics and moral consideration as well as the spiritual dimension
5. Foundation – building and bottom up approach
6. Philosophy that can be used as a guiding principle.

Two main groups of applications (Wibulswadi, c.2014) are 1) ways of life or our daily activities to answer

questions such as How should we act? Which items should we buy? How should we live our lives? 2) The application concerns issues on a larger scale, i.e. how we should develop our country, especially in terms of applications for business practices; implications for government policies; agricultural and community development.

### **How has education done so far?**

The impact of the SEP over the long term depends on embedding the thinking in the culture of development within the country. The emphasis is on changing mindsets from the level of kindergarten up to university and the general public. The Ministry of Education integrated SEP as a framework for thinking and action into the school curriculum from primary to higher education since 2009. The SEP framework will be taught within the subjects of society, religion and culture. (UNDP, 2007)

Teachers of other subjects such as mathematics, history, science and languages will also integrate the SEP way of thinking into their teaching. The emphasis is on learning from practical experience based on reasonable thinking, prudent and morality. The process will form the mindset and train students for sufficiency as a way of life.

The online media dominates all other visual experiences in the world because of its ubiquity and 24-hour news cycle of transferring media content. According to Barbara Diggs-Brown, Associate Professor Emerita, American University School of Communication the efficient and effective transferring of knowledge depends on people's participation and engagement in an interesting communication and uses multiple channels. With today's web technology, multimedia involves numerous software applications that allow viewer engagement. User-generated content (UGC) website and the popularity of social networking have opened new vehicles and opportunity for education institutes and the government to take advantage and the popularity of social networking to reach its audiences to promote the philosophy.

As for opportunity to produce online media for SEP learning, traditional channels such as television, radio and digital billboards have done a good job in making people aware of SEP. It is undeniable that SEP is well-known among people of all ages, including younger generations and students. As it has been included in curricula at all levels. People know SEP as King BhumibolAdulyadej’s philosophy by traditional media and new media.

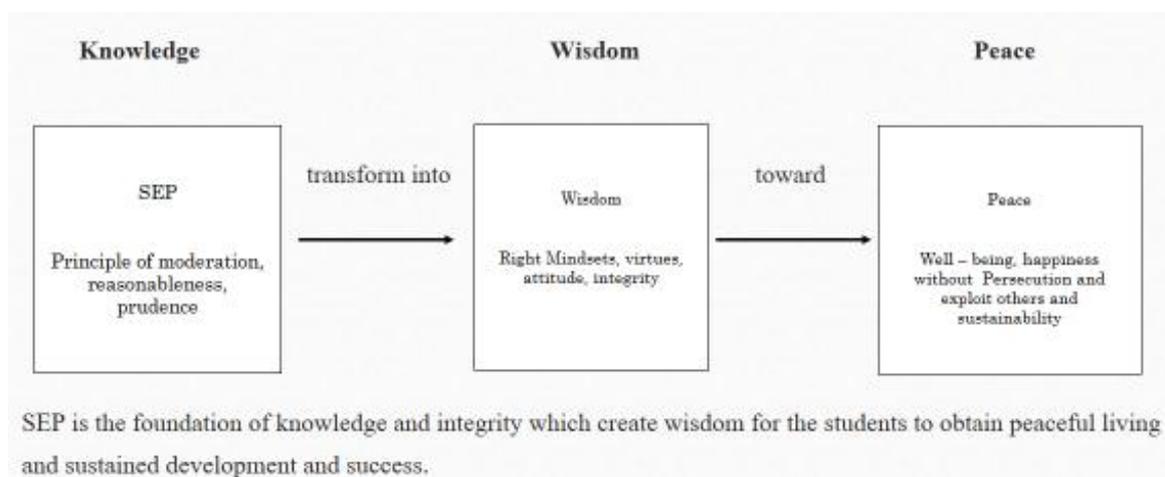
Students today are always connected to their social network and so will need little motivation to get them engaged with social media in the classroom.

There is an array of free online learning tools available. Students can use free online learning tools to create mind maps, flashcards, quizzes, course and flowcharts.

Internet content of SEP is considered plenty. All government agencies, majority of public and private organizations as well as a number of famous figures’

websites have included the definition of SEP and cases when SEP is applicable to their respective businesses. Clearly, when you type in “sufficiency economy” or “King Bhumibol philosophy”, search engines will return a long list of results.

Social media is the fastest way to convey messages to thousands of users around the world. However, it can do a better job in how to engage and urge younger students to apply SEP in their daily lives. When you search Instagram, for example, for “Sufficient Economy Philosophy”, you will see a lot of pictures of rice fields with the “New Theory” or those of His Majesty King BhumibolAdulyadej himself. Social media content can be more about an application of SEP in daily life of those students. For example, how a person applies SEP in preparing for examination or how to manage their expense. When younger generations apply SEP in their daily routines, this will make SEP even more sustainable.



**Source :** Boonlue, T. Peace Capacity Building by Higher Education  
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## **Sufficiency Economy Philosophy (SEP) highlights**

- A happiness development approach
- A peace building approach
- Emphasizing the middle path as an overarching principle for appropriate conduct by people at all levels.
- A Thai solution to economic sustainability
- True happiness attained when a person is fully satisfied with what he or she has and is at peace with the self – satisfy with basic need not greed.

“To strive to consume more (=greed) leads to unhappiness if consumption is not satisfied or falls short of expectation” \*\*\*

- Integrating the concept of SEP into our worldview will give us a different perspective that promotes gradual development based on self-reliance and the principle of having “enough”

Three main tenets of this philosophy (moderation, reasonableness and self-immunity) try to change people’s attitudes, behaviors, and the way of living at both micro and macro level.

## **SEP at the Individual and Family Level:**

- Living a simple life
- Living within one’s means
- Refraining from taking advantage of other people.
- Middle path is a way of thinking in which no one lives too extravagantly or too thrifty.

## **At the Community Level to Solve Problems:**

- Joining together to participate in decision – making.
- Developing mutually – beneficial knowledge and appropriately applying technology.
- Coordination is mechanism.

## **At the National Level :**

- A holistic approach with an emphasis on appropriateness, complete advantage, low risk, and avoiding over – investment.
- Keeping abreast with what is happening elsewhere in the world.
- Hedging investment and reducing imports and over dependence on other countries.

## **The Benefit of Sufficiency Economy Philosophy:**

1. Encouraging people to live in a way where they consume only what they really need, choose product carefully.
2. Enhancing national ability to modernize without defying globalization.
3. Providing a mean to respond to negative outcomes caused by rapid economic transitions.
4. Guiding to make decisions that will generate outcome that are beneficial to the development of the country
5. Helping to prevent another economic collapse such as the one that occurred during the mid – 90’s
6. To be a powerful tool for moving the nation overall economic upward.
7. Thailand values this philosophy as a practical tool to effectively manage capitalism in a way that aligns and engages it with social sustainable development.
8. The main goal of SEP is to measure economic development to reduce social inequality and poverty.

## **SEP curriculum :**

- Transferring SEP emphasizes on changing mindsets.
- Integrating SEP as framework for thinking and action

- Being a subject in general education (GE)
- Integrating SEP way of thinking into other subjects for teachers of other subjects.

\* Choices made should be justified by ethics, law, justice, and social norm \*

### Content of Teaching at University Level:

1. Way of lives : How should we live our lives ?  
: How should we achieve harmony and stability in finance and life ?
2. Daily activities : How should we act?  
: Which items should we buy?  
: Why seeking knowledge is necessary?
3. Planning & decision making : Why planning is important?  
: What plans should we make?
4. Self and country : Why we must care not only about ourselves?  
Development : What is social responsibilities?  
Social engagement?  
: How should we develop our country?  
: What is SDG ?  
: What should be in all aspects of our society?
5. Our culture and culture of : Why should we understand and respect our nation other nations?  
culture and culture of other nations?
6. Being moderate : How most financial troubles are avoidable?
7. Reasonableness : How choices should be made?

8. Self-immunity : How to develop the strength and resources to survive?  
\* Avoid debt and buy things that you can afford\*  
\* All planning should be based on gathered knowledge.
9. Elements of immunity to change in material circumstances  
: Having enough savings to cover all expenses.  
: Having sufficient insurance  
: Engaging in long term planning
10. Immunity to : How to develop a sense of inner peace  
social changes : How to control one's anger learning not to take offense at insults ?
11. Immunity to : How to live in harmony and learn not to harm the environment ?  
environmental changes  
: What is protection, conservation, reservation and prevention?
12. Immunity to : Why should we understand, appreciate, and value our culture, cultural changes history, and heritage ?  
: Why should we learn and value other nations and peoples.

### **Foundation of All Achievement: (require 3 behaviors)**

1. Accumulation of knowledge (ingredient of decision making)

2. Ethics and virtue (all decision's i.e. financial ones should be based on ethics + values) Ethics should be applied to all business decision, every purchase, etc.

3. Foundation building (a nation, business, household must have a firm foundation to stand strong.)

### **Survey on Teaching and Learning Methods. (30 universities were surveyed)**

- SEP emphasizes
- Learning from practice
  - Changing mindsets
  - Developing public mind, social responsibility
  - Inspiring, motivating and encouraging
  - Using interactive techniques
  - Integrating many techniques :

### **Lecture Method with Some of the Followings.**

1. Problem-based techniques (real life case)
2. Place-based, community engagement
3. Topic-based
4. Project-based
5. Discussion
6. Always asking questions and give correct answers.
7. Inspiring
8. Conducting research as based information
9. Edutainment
10. Game (gamification)
11. Storytelling
12. Field trip and plenty of examples.
13. Free online tools
14. Self-exploring
15. Social media
16. Encouraging group/team work
17. Plenty of practice
18. Giving individual feedback, and group assessment.

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