A MODEL DEVELOPMENT AND FEASIBILITY STUDY OF MINDFULNESS AND HUMAN DEVELOPMENT CURRICULUM FOR INTERNATIONAL MASTER DEGREE STUDENTS

[1]TEERAWAN TEERAPONG, [2]ARKOAM SANUWIT

[1,2]Faculties of Humanities, Chiang Mai University, Chiang Mai, THAILAND
E-mail: teerawan.teerapong@cmu.ac.th

Abstract - This study aimed to develop Mindfulness and Human Development curriculum model for international Master's Degree students, and to investigate the possibility to offer this degree program to the university. There were two phases: qualitative and quantitative methodsto examine model curriculum and its feasibility. Qualitative data were obtained by interviewing 12 key informants.Quantitative data were collected by using questionnaires. Participants for quantitative study were 1,089 individuals which was divided into three groups: (1)443 people working in human development areas, in both private and state organizations; (2)531 Thai students, as well as exchanged students and international students studying in fields related to human development; and (3)115 employers in the fields of human development. Findings from qualitative data revealed the blue-print for curriculum structure. The model curriculum consisted of 36 creditsof common core courses (12 credits), elective courses (12 credits) and Thesis (12 credits). The quantitative resultsshowed that participants understood the concept ofmindfulness and were well aware of its importance for daily life and works; but overall their interest in studying in this field wasminimal. Only 25% of Thai and international students were interested in pursuing this curriculum. Finally, the sample groups and experts suggested that it would be more desirable if the course was offered as a short course for training or as a certification.

Index Term - Mindfulness, Human Development, International Program, Feasibility Study

I. INTRODUCTION

During the past 30 years, people in the West began to interest in Buddhist wisdom and have adapted Mindfulness Meditation into personnel caretaking in both physical and psychological aspects. Providing a training program called Mindfulness-Based Stress Reduction (MBSR) and other trainings with similar forms for patients suffered physically and mentally. This is also available for people without sickness, too.They tried to promote the trainings to be non-religious and non-esoteric. Currently, the link between mindfulness and academic matter has become clearer. Mindfulness training appears more and more formal as part of Psychology and Medicine.[1], [2]. Numerous researchers and scholars pointed out that mindfulness training is necessary for psychologists in both professionally and personally. Moreover, they proposed that mindfulness training is effective when it is provided for clients in need of mental and physical symptom self-management. [3],[4]Not only for client, mindfulness training is also effective for human development professions such as social workers, [5] occupational therapist, [6] teachers [7], and lawyers. [8]
Thailand is known as the land of Buddhism sinceThai people are alwaysinvolved in mindfulness by Buddhist institutions and other training resources, but the practice is limited itself in the community. On the other hand, many universities and academic institutions in America and Europe have been alerted and developed curriculums of the mindfulness training, and the mindfulness training for systematic knowledge management. [9], [10]Even though Thai people have been continuously inherited mindfulness practices from generation to generation for a long time, Thai academic fields has neglected to create such vital curriculum.
As there is only one curriculum in the field of contemplative education at Mahidol University,it is interesting that whatthemodel curriculum should be like if Chiang Mai University, which has been established and deeply rooted in the society of the northern part of Thailand half a century ago, would create a curriculum related to mindfulness and human development. Furthermore, since the educational passage is wide open because of ASEAN Economic Community (AEC), there is a motivating question if the curriculum would attract the ASEAN community members and also Thai students.

II. OBJECTIVES

1. To examine and develop Mindfulness and Human Development curriculum structure for international Master's Degree students.
2. To investigate the feasibilities to offer this degree program.

III. RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

The study is divided into 2 phases. The details of the research procedures are as the followings.

Phase 1 The qualitative research is to examine and develop the Mindfulness and Human Development curriculum structure for international Master's Degree students. In order to gather information as a curriculum model, the researcher had in-depth interviews with domestic and international

individuals involved in Mindfulness and Human Development curriculums in this phase.

Participants: The 12 informants are consisted of 3 mindfulness practice experts, 3 international curriculum supervisors, 3 lecturers from faculties of the Contemplative Education Center and 3 final-year students of the Contemplative possibility Education course.

Data analysis: The content analysis was used. The analysis results provided a draft of the curriculum structure. Three experts, who had experiences in teaching or training the mindfulness practices, considered the propriety of the curriculum structure. Consequently, the results became the important contents for designing the questionnaires of the research in the phase 2.

Phase 2 This part is the quantitative research with the purpose of examining the feasibility to offer the Mindfulness and Human Development curriculum, which was developed in the phase 1. In phase 2, there are three sub-objectives: (1) to explore how the target groups aware of the importance of mindfulness practice for professional and personal life, (2) to survey the interest in taking the course and the opinions toward the course, and (3) to inspect the stakeholder's requirements and opinions of the curriculum.

Samples: Participants from the purposive sampling in the quantitative study were consisted of (1) 443 Thai and foreign people working in human development areas from private and state organizations both profit and non-profit; (2) 531 undergraduates including exchanged students and international students studying in the fields related to human development and (3) 115 employers in the fields of human development, from private and state organizations.

Instruments: A survey form was employed to explore the interest and awareness of the importance of mindfulness practice in profession and life style including the demand for taking the course as the international Master's Degree. The survey form was divided into three sets for students, workers,and stakeholders.

The researcher developed the questionnaires, according to references, the research results in phase 1 and interviews with mindfulness practice experts, with contents covering all the matters needed to be studied.

IV. RESULTS

Phase 1

Model curriculum of Mindfulness and Human Development Program for International Master's Degree Students, this program equips the learner with a multidisciplinary, 21st-century framework for understanding the profound and varied applications of mindfulness. Through contemporary scientific research and applied mindfulness practice, learners will deepen and broaden their understanding of individual and social development across a variety of contexts.

Together, students and our international staff of lecturers explore a meaningful comprehension of human suffering and growth while exploring grounded alternatives for mindful living. Each course includes academic and applied components; students will both learn about and directly practice different forms and applications of mindfulness. Each learner will significantly enhance their knowledge and skills while achieving personal and professional growth. One of our goals is for learners in this program to become key agents for promoting successful human development and well- being worldwide.

Curriculum

Degree Requirements:	a minimum of	36 credits
Core Courses	a minimum of	12 credits
1. Mindfulness and Human Development I		3 credits
2.Mindfulness and Human Development II (Advance)		3 credits
3. Research Methods in Mindfulness		3 credits
4. Mindfulness Practicum		3 credits
Elective Courses	a minimum of	12 credits
Select courses below		
1. Mindful Leadership: Creating Mindful Organization		3 credits
2. Mindfulness Peace & Conflict Resolution		3 credits
3. Mindful Teaching & Facilitating: Helping Others to Learn Mindfully		3 credits
4. Advanced Seminar in Mindfulness: Open Topic		3 credits
5. Advanced Practicum: Mindful Community Service		3 credits
6. Mindfulness for Helping Profession		3 credits
7. Mindfulness and Acceptance Based Therapy		3 credits
8. Creativity, Mindfulness, The Arts and Healing		3 credits
Thesis		12 credits

Phase 2

1. The meaning of mindfulness: the students,the workers and the stakeholders understanding.

Meaning of mindfulness	The frequencies of the samples understanding			
	Students n = 443	Workers n = 531	Steak holdersn = 115	Total n = 1,089
1. Not being forgetful	115	127	52	294
2. Not being careless, tumbling, falling or damaging things	168	177	49	394
3.The process of knowing new things enthusiastically	124	135	40	299
4.The awareness of what is happening inside and around us	418	367	97	882
5.The perception of phenomena or conditions appeared in the body and the mind	279	306	83	668
6.The awareness of what is going on at the present moment with the eyes that see things as what they truly are without judgement	272	262	72	606
7.Other...	18	22	2	42

2. The survey results of the students, the workers and the stakeholders, in theaspect of the interest and awareness of the importance of mindfulness practice in profession and life style

Every sample group recognized the association between mindfulness and human development as that mindfulness was associated with work and education the most (13.30%). The students recognized that mindfulness was necessary to living in a high level (M = 8.62/10) and had a demand for mindfulness practices in a moderate to moderately high level (M = 7.40). The workers in the fields related to human development recognized mindfulness as necessary to living in a very high level (M = 9.01) and had a demand for mindfulness practices in a high level (M = 8.32). Meanwhile, the stakeholders recognized that mindfulness was necessary to living in a very high level (M = 9.33), had a demand for mindfulness practices in a high level (M = 8.41), and recognized that mindfulness was necessary to personnel development in a high level (M = 9.12).

3. The survey results of the interest in taking the course

Twenty-five percent of Thai and foreign students wanted to pursue further study in this curriculum, 18% of them did not want to pursue further study in this curriculum, and 57% of them were not certain if they would pursue further study in this curriculum. While, 16.50% of Thai and foreign workers in the fields related to human development wanted to pursue further study in this curriculum, 30.90% of them did not, and 52.60% of them were not certain.

4. The survey results of the stakeholder's demand for personnel's further study in this curriculum

Some of the stakeholders, 29.82%, wanted their personnel to pursue further study in this curriculum, 14.92% of them did not want their personnel to pursue further study in this curriculum, and 55.26% of them were unsure. The sample group's reasons for the demand for taking this course were respectively as follows: 22.60% of them wanted self-development, 20.40% of them wanted to apply to daily life, 19.90% of them wanted to use it in work and education, to reduce mistakes and to work effectively, and 14.50% of them thought that the curriculum contents were interesting.

V. DISCUSSION

This research found that the sample groups of students and workers in the fields related to human development understood the importance of the mindfulness in a high level (M = 8.62 and 9.01/10). Perhaps, it was because that most of the sample groups were Thai with familiarity to the word Sati (mindfulness in Thai language) through Buddhist teachings including school subjects related to religious doctrines and through the old people's words admonishing over and over until the word Sati or the mindfulness became very familiar. Moreover, the sample groups had a profound understanding of the mindfulness.

The research results revealed that every sample groups understood the meaning of Sati as the awareness of what is happening inside and around us the most (27.70%). Such meaning, which was agreed by most of the sample groups member, was according to how the scholars in the field of mindfulness have defined as [11], [12],not the meaning that people in general would understand.

In the aspect of the demand for pursuing further study in this curriculum, the study found that most of the sample group members decided not to take the course. This might be derived from various factors.

The first factor: The sample groups were so familiar with the word Sati or the mindfulness that they regarded it as a basic practice in daily life, not a profession or an academic education. This is reflected from some of the sample group members' words, "Mindfulness practice can be done by one's self. If a person has an interest in self-development, one can learn. So, one thinks it is not necessary to pursue further education at present." "…practice every day already." "To have dharma principals and to persist in the religious doctrines in living life, there might not be any necessity to learn that from a curriculum, but from other ways."These research results were also confirmed by Mirabai Bush[9] he said that "…I thought there would be tremendous resistance to offering practices from the religious traditions to students in secular institutions"

The next factor: The sample groups saw Sati or the mindfulness as a personal matter. This means that whoever wants to practice, only he/she would earn the benefits. It would be none of organizations' business. This is reflected fromsome of the sample group members' words, "…seems beneficial and to increase knowledge, but not relevant to the job." "The curriculum is not accordance with the current work field development" Some of the stakeholder sample group members,14.92%, did not want their personnel to pursue further education in this curriculum and 55.26% of them were uncertain. The factor that affected such decision might be that the sample group regarded the curriculum as a new field of study and irrelevant to their organizations' policies. Again, this is reflected from some of the sample group members, "As an organization, the hospital's consideration might not approve because the hospital needs the personnel to be developed according to the hospital's main vision and mission which focus on hospital-based psychiatry."

VI. SUGGESTION

Suggestion of applying the research results. According to the research results, the possibility of offering a curriculum on mindfulness and human development recently to fulfill the needs of the people who are interested in taking the course is that there should be a non-degree curriculum and, to satisfy the students' various demands, may be offered as an online curriculum as well. A short course is another choice which many people are interested in especially a course that can be finished within three months. Another possibility is that there could be an establishment of a mindfulness and human development academic center to act as a hub for academic knowledge development and academic service. This way, it would be free to manage the non-degree curriculum or the training and to manage the parts that associate with private and state organizations related to human development.

Suggestionsfor further study.

1. This research results were found that most of the sample groups' members knew Sati very well and saw the importance of mindfulness practices. Anyhow, when asked about the demand for practicing, only a few of them were found wanting to practice mindfulness. Consequently, there should be some further research on factors which affect a person's mindfulness practice.
2. 2.From the research fact that the sample groups expressed opinions contrarily into 2 opinions. While one wanted the class proceeded as a non-religious class, the other wanted the class to be taught by religious teachers focusing on religious practices. Therefore, there should be some further comparative study to investigate any similarity and dissimilarity in the aspects of format, content, and religious practical and academic educational mindfulness practice.
3. Do examine the meaning of Sati which is part of a subject appearing in every school grade or year to be comprehended about the teaching of the mindfulness in Thai society.
4. There might be a comparative study on how Thai and foreign people understand the mindfulness to examine points of view towards the mindfulness from different regions and cultures.
5. There might be some examination of the suitable definition or direction of mindfulness practice for Thai society by setting up a public hearing or taking opinions from the experts, who has a very rich knowledge in the mindfulness, in the society in order to find the lucid conclusion on the appropriate mindfulness practice for Thai people. Moreover, there might be a comparative study on resemblance or difference between the concepts of mindfulness in Thailand and in the modern world, so that it would be beneficial as a fundamental to be used in teaching in educational system.

REFERENCES

[1] Godfrin, K.A. &Van Heeringen, C. (2010). The effects of mindfulness-based cognitive therapy on recurrence depressive episodes, mental health and quality of life: A randomized controlled study. Behav Res Ther. 48, 738-746.

[2] Kingston,T., Dooley, B., Bates, A., Lawlor, E., & Malone K. (2007). Mindfulness-based cognitive therapy for residual depressive symptoms. PsycholPsychother, 80, 193-203.

[3] Stauffer, M.D. &Pehrsson, D. E. (2012). Mindfulness competencies for counselors and psychotherapists. Journal of Mental Health Counseling, 34(3), 227-239.

[4] Brown, K. W., & Ryan, R. M. (2003). The benefits of being present: Mindfulness and Its role in psychology well-being.

Journal of Personality and Social Psychology, 84 (4), 822-848.

[5] Lynn, R. (2010). Mindfulness in Social work education. Social Work Education, 29(3), 289-304.

[6] Gura, S. T. (2010). Mindfulness in occupational therapy education. Occupational Therapy in Health Care, 24(3), 266-273.

[7] Roeser, R.W., Skinner, E., Beers, J. & Jennings. (2012). Mindfulness training and teachers' professional development: An emerging area of research and practice. Child Development Perspectives, 6(2), 167-173.

[8] Halpern, C. (2012). The mindful lawyer: why contemporary lawyers are practicing meditation. Journal of Legal Education, 6(4), 641-646.

[9] Bush, M. (2011). Mindfulness in higher education. Contemporary Buddhism, 12(1), 183-197.

[10] Napora, L. (2011). Meditation in higher education: the question of change, a current problem, and evidence toward a solution. Biofeedback, 36(2), 64-66.

[11] Langer, J. E., &Moldoveanu, M. (2000). The construct of mindfulness. Journal of Social Science Issues, 56(1), 1-9.

[12] Siegel, R. D.; Germer, C. K. &Olendzki, A. (2009). Mindfulness: What is it? Where did it come from? In Clinical handbook of Mindfulness, New York: Springer Science & Business Media, 17-35.

★★★