The Results of Learning Management Model with Contemplative Education for Developing Mental Quality, Interpersonal Skills and Responsibility of Undergraduate Students

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ABSTRACT

The objectives of the research were to study 1) mental quality, 2) interpersonal skills, and 3) responsibility of undergraduate students as the results of the implementation of a developed learning management model with contemplative education. The research used a quantitative method and a qualitative method which emphasized on the three circles of action research. The research instruments comprised 1) the developed learning management model and its 14 lesson plans based on contemplative education, 2) student behavior observation form, 3) student journals, 4) teaching logs, 5) mental quality assessment form, 6) interpersonal skills assessment form and 7) responsibility assessment form. The research findings revealed that the implementation of the three circles of the developed learning management model resulted in a positive tendency of the three dependent variables. Thus, the students’ mental quality, interpersonal skills, and responsibility were higher at the statistically significant level of 0.05.

INTRODUCTION

The 11th National Economic and Social Developmental Plan 2012 – 2016 specified strategies in developing quality for every age level of the Thai People to obtain immunity against changes, to be ready with fit and strong body, to be intelligent as well as knowledgeable and aware of ethics and morality, to be persistent, to have opportunities, and to be able to have lifelong learning, in aligned with enhance the social environment and institute to be strong and facilitate the human development (The National Economic and Social Development Board, 2012). Developing the Thai people through human development was a major integral technique.

This was stated in the National Education Act 1999 and the Revised Issue (the Second Issue) 2002. In Section 6, it was specified that “The educational management has to be performed for the Thai People to be perfect human beings in physical, mental, intellectual. They should have both knowledge and virtue, and morality as well as culture in their livelihood. They should be able to live with the others happily.” The goal of the educational reform was to construct the holistic knowledge so that students would be intelligent, good, and happy persons (Office of Legal Affairs, 2005) in every level of educational management.

The educational management of higher education in the former era reflected the crisis in quality of graduates whose qualifications could not serve the direction of the national development as well as the changes in the Thai society. Higher education institutes could not create in-depth intelligence as well as
intensive academic. The lack of virtue as well as morality, and the quality of graduates were not congruent with employers. There was a crisis of competency for competing in the international society. As a result, graduates in the present time often use their knowledge without intelligence or wisdom in distinguishing right or wrong. There was little building of new knowledge in educational institutes. In addition, there was no association of knowledge and real situations (The Office of National Education Committee, 2000). As mentioned earlier, education is not only teaching of content in subjects of curriculum, but also modifying so that students can achieve all of the 3 learning levels; (1) obtaining real knowledge in aligned with fact, (2) obtaining intelligence for associating different kinds of knowledge, and (3) obtaining awareness because self-understanding associates with various things (Wasi, 2006). All of the 3 learning levels of knowledge occur in the situation in which the mind is stress-free and relaxed. Then one can analyze and obtain internal understandings while associating with the environment as well as connecting with other persons (Amonwiwat, 2006).

The researcher conducted a preliminary survey of teacher’s opinions and directions to develop university graduates. The survey covered 136 teachers from 21 universities in the Northeast of Thailand. They were asked about needs for improvement of graduates’ qualifications. It was found that the qualification that needed the greatest improvement was ethical and moral development (96.92%). The following target qualifications included interpersonal skills and responsibility (95.38%), cognitive skills (94.62%), knowledge (90.77%), and analytical and communication skills (83.85%). However, the researcher chose to study interpersonal skills and responsibility as the second top qualifications. The importance of these two qualifications is that they are part of ethics and morality which are considered personal goodness. This positively affects desirable behavior, performance, determination, responsibility, and expression of thoughts and actions of individuals. Good interpersonal skills and responsibility can form a livable society. In addition to interpersonal skills and responsibility, one’s mental quality enables one to lead a good life for oneself and the society. Mental quality, as another part of ethics and morality, includes kindness, faith, self-esteem, creativeness, and enthusiasm of living (Mongkol, 2001). There has so far not been much research into mental quality, interpersonal skills, and responsibility. Hence, in education management, these three qualifications should receive greater attention. According to David’s direction to the education management of sociology (Armstrong, 2003), it must allow learners to understand lives, learn from direct experience, interact with other groups, link lives and religious beliefs, reflect value of social and group membership, and be aware of social problems and changes. The design of this sort of education management emphasizes on critical thinking, interpretation of emotional behavior, value and importance of circumstances that affect social behavior. The skills focused in the design include social skills and teamwork skills. These skills aim to prepare learners for the real world tasks.

A vast number of educators have been searching for learning management models to help learners achieve the above educational concept. A model that is currently getting great attention is contemplative education. This learning management model activates learners’ basic self-changing (Wasi, 2007). The so-called contemplative education focuses on the mind. The learning process of contemplative education incorporates contemplation, concentration, and consciousness. This learning process results in learners’ deep understanding of themselves, others, and the real world. Learners who learn with contemplative education can realize the relationships or links among all things. They learn to love, to give, to access the truth, and to accept differences of opinions. These skills lead learners to determination of making benefits for others. This develops sustainable inner qualifications of learners. Moreover, contemplative education promotes authentic experience, thoughts, feelings, and behavior. It can be stated that contemplative
education is an educational basis that promotes the appreciation and application of self-esteem (Hart, 2004; Haynes, 2010; Hladis, 2006 and O’Sullivan, 2003).

Due to the aforementioned importance and concepts of contemplative education, the researcher developed a contemplative education-based learning management model which was composed of six elements; 1) basic concepts and theories, 2) objectives, 3) learning management with five stages (O-Open mind, R-Refreshing ideas, P-Participation, L-Learning reflection, and A-Application), 4) social system, 5) responses, and 6) support system. The learning management process of the model comprised three key activities; contemplation, concentration and dialogue. The researcher strongly believed that the developed model could enhance mental quality, interpersonal skills, and responsibility of learners.

**METHODOLOGY**

**Research Question**

How would the results of the developed learning management model with contemplative education develop mental quality, interpersonal skills, and responsibility of undergraduate students?

**Research Purposes**

The investigation was conducted after the implementation of the developed model and its lesson plans in order to study undergraduate students’:

1) Mental quality
2) Interpersonal skills
3) Responsibility

**Scope of the Research**

**Population and Samples**

The population of the research was 135 undergraduate students of four and five year programs at Roi-Et Rajabhat University. They all were taking the “Psychology for Development of Humans” course in the academic year 2012.

The samples were 21 undergraduate students out of the population. The size of the sample group was set as 15% of the population, and the sampling method was purposive sampling (Tayraukham, 2010).

The research methodology was a quantitative method and a qualitative method which emphasized three circles of action research.

**Research Instruments**

The research instruments comprised 1) the developed learning management model based on contemplative education and its 14 lesson plans, 2) student behavior observation form, 3) student journals, 4) teaching logs, 5) mental quality assessment form, 6) interpersonal skills assessment form, and 7) responsibility assessment form.

**Data Analysis**

1. The qualitative data was analyzed through analytical induction which interpreted data from informal interviews and conversations with the samples, and through content analysis of data from student behavior observation form, student journals, and teaching logs. All the analyzed data was presented by description.
2. The quantitative data was analyzed through one way repeated measure ANOVA (Phusion, 2009) in order to compare means of mental quality, interpersonal skills, and responsibility of the students.

RESULTS

Qualitative Results
The results of the three circles of learning management revealed that the sample students generated contemplation, understood themselves and others, confided friends, become friendlier with peers and the teacher. They dared to express their ideas and feelings more as well as attentively accepted opinions of others. They were more responsible for both themselves and the public. Additionally, they listened and spoke consciously. They were more conscious of their work and study. They could reflect themselves. Also, they began thinking of adjusting themselves in a positive way and needed to be a good example for others.

Quantitative Results
1. The comparison result of the means of the mental quality, interpersonal skills, and responsibility of the sample students before and during the implementation of the developed learning management is presented in Table 1.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Assessment</th>
<th>Mental Quality</th>
<th>Interpersonal Skills</th>
<th>Responsibility</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Pre-test</td>
<td>3.32</td>
<td>3.58</td>
<td>3.54</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Assessment 1</td>
<td>3.40</td>
<td>3.84</td>
<td>3.78</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Assessment 2</td>
<td>3.73</td>
<td>4.21</td>
<td>4.09</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Assessment 3</td>
<td>4.06</td>
<td>4.51</td>
<td>4.39</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 1 shows that the mean of the mental quality was at the “Medium” level in Pre-test ($\bar{x} = 3.32$, S.D. = 0.20), at the “Medium” level in Assessment 1 ($\bar{x} = 3.40$, S.D. = 0.26), at the “High” level in Assessment 2 ($\bar{x} = 3.73$, S.D. = 0.22), and at the “High” level again in Assessment 3 ($\bar{x} = 4.06$, S.D. = 0.21). The mean of the interpersonal skills was at the “High” level in Pre-test ($\bar{x} = 3.58$, S.D. = 0.18), at the “High” level in Assessment 1 ($\bar{x} = 3.84$, S.D. = 0.26), at the “High” level in Assessment 2 ($\bar{x} = 4.21$, S.D. = 0.25), and at the “Highest” level in Assessment 3 ( $\bar{x} = 4.51$, S.D. = 0.18). Meanwhile, the mean of the responsibility was only at the “High” level in Pre-test ($\bar{x} = 3.54$, S.D. = 0.19), Assessment 1 ($\bar{x} = 3.78$, S.D. = 0.29), Assessment 2 ($\bar{x} = 4.09$, S.D. = 0.27), and Assessment 3 ($\bar{x} = 4.39$, S.D. = 0.24).

2. The differences of the means in the four assessments are presented in Table 2, shows that the means of the mental quality, interpersonal skills, and responsibility from the four assessments were different at the significant level of 0.05. Furthermore, the means from each pair of the assessments were tested. The result of the test is presented in Table 3.

Table 3 shows that the sample students’ mental quality, interpersonal skills and responsibility from Assessment 3 were higher than those from Assessment 2, Assessment 1, and Pre-test at the significant level of 0.05.
Table 2: Differences of the means in the four assessments

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Assessment Method</th>
<th>Mental Quality</th>
<th>Interpersonal Skills</th>
<th>Responsibility</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Value</td>
<td>F</td>
<td>Hypothesis df</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pillai's Trace</td>
<td>0.913</td>
<td>63.188</td>
<td>3.000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Wilk's Lambda</td>
<td>0.087</td>
<td>63.188</td>
<td>3.000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hotelling's Trace</td>
<td>10.531</td>
<td>63.188</td>
<td>3.000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Roy's Largest Root</td>
<td>10.531</td>
<td>63.188</td>
<td>3.000</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Adjustment for multiple comparisons: Bonferroni; *mean difference is significant at the .05 level.

Table 3: Result of the test of the means from each pair of the assessments

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Test</th>
<th>Mental Quality</th>
<th>Interpersonal Skills</th>
<th>Responsibility</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Pre</td>
<td>Assessments 1</td>
<td>-0.088*</td>
<td>0.023</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Assessments 2</td>
<td>-0.411*</td>
<td>0.045</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Assessments 3</td>
<td>-0.750*</td>
<td>0.060</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Test 1</td>
<td>Assessments 1</td>
<td>0.088*</td>
<td>0.023</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Assessments 2</td>
<td>-0.324*</td>
<td>0.059</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Assessments 3</td>
<td>-0.663*</td>
<td>0.066</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Test 2</td>
<td>Assessments 1</td>
<td>0.411*</td>
<td>0.045</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Assessments 2</td>
<td>0.324*</td>
<td>0.059</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Assessments 3</td>
<td>-0.339*</td>
<td>0.052</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Test 3</td>
<td>Assessments 1</td>
<td>0.750*</td>
<td>0.060</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Assessments 2</td>
<td>0.663*</td>
<td>0.066</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Assessments 3</td>
<td>0.339*</td>
<td>0.052</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Adjustment for multiple comparisons: Bonferroni; *mean difference is significant at the .05 level.

The means of the mental quality, interpersonal skills, and responsibility from the four assessments are illustrated in Figure 1.

![Figure 1: Progress of mental quality, interpersonal skills, and responsibility](image-url)
DISCUSSIONS

The discussions of the results of implementing the developed learning management model with contemplative education are as follows:

1. The implementation of the developed learning management model with contemplative education caused a positive tendency of mental quality. This might be due to the learning management process which implanted inner qualifications in learners. The learning activities in the process activated the students’ contemplation and reasoning through authentic practice. In the practice, the students contemplated by monitoring and directing their actions, speeches, and thoughts. They also practiced hourly contemplation, concentration and dialogue. This practice helped them concentrate the presence. This skill could be achieved with peaceful mind. Besides, the students’ reflection of experiences and study of example realistic stories led them to realization of life. They, as a result of this skill, learned how to accept and apply the reality of life. According to Wasi (2008) Contemplative education is a type of education that enables learners to understand their inner qualifications, become conscious, and access the reality of life. Their viewpoints towards the real world and other people are changed. They have freedom, happiness, wisdom, and great love of mankind and creations. In other words, with contemplative education, learners are built complete humans. The completeness is built inside and further developed. Wongpiromsarn (2012) adds that contemplation and concentration play a role as tools to develop intrinsic value, which helps build important qualifications such as sympathy, responsibility, etc. Moreover, teamwork needs deep listening and dialogue skills. These skills can easily be reached by practice of contemplation and concentration. It can be said that consciousness is a basic element to contemplate and develop mental quality. The higher the mental quality is, the better the interpersonal skills and responsibility are. This was confirmed by the research of Sri-Ampai (2011) who studied the effects of the learning management based on an application of contemplative education concepts on emotional quotient of first year Early Childhood Education major students. The learning management included 14 lesson plans two hours each lesson plan emphasized on contemplative, concentration, dialogue and deep listening. The research findings revealed that 1) The mean of the sample students’ EQ became higher than norm in all aspects (moral, intelligent, and emotional quotient), 2) The mean of the sample students’ post - EQ was higher than that of the pre - EQ at the significant level of .01, and 3) The sample students expressed positive opinions towards the learning management based on the application of contemplative education concepts. They stated that this sort of learning management was very beneficial. It supported their self-control. They became more sympathetic, responsible, and motivated to study and work. Also, they realized intrinsic value, felt proud of them, satisfied with their lives. They possessed peaceful mind. They added that they would apply the contemplative education concepts to their daily lives.

2. After the implementation of the model, a steady increase of the interpersonal skills was found across the four assessments. This finding might be due to the fact that the learning process emphasized on the roles of the teacher and the students. It created a comfortable learning atmosphere; as a consequence, the teacher and the students had a good relationship. Likewise, the students interacted well among one another. This supported the good atmosphere in the learning process. As a result, the students learned happily and got ready to behave and build a good relation with their peers. The atmosphere of the learning process created a state of love, kindness, trustfulness, understanding, acceptance, and assistance between the teacher, as the leader of the process, and the students, and among the students themselves. With the mentioned state, the students fully dared to express themselves through opinions and feelings. They were also encouraged and supported to change themselves. This finding of the present research was consistent
with the summary of a previous study about learning for changes in other countries. The focus of that study was paid to trustfulness, openness, security, sincerity, and empathy among one another (Nilchaikovit, 2009). The present research finding was also consistent with that of Pongpakatien (2007) who studied and developed contemplative education of higher education institutes in Thailand. The purpose of the study was to compile and analyze bodies of knowledge about contemplative education that the higher education institutes were managing. The researcher conducted research and developed a learning process based on contemplative education at Mahidol University. It was found that various factors were important to support contemplative education management. Internal factors included love, kindness, awareness, authentic experience, contemplation, linking, and critical thinking. In contrast, external factors were friendly holistic learning and the teacher’s role model. Some additional supportive factors were learning circumstances, course contents, organizational cultures, and learning management.

3. Similar to the interpersonal skills, a steady rise of the responsibility occurred across the four assessments. This finding might result from the learning process being inserted with activities that enhanced responsibility for the students themselves and the public. This was found through the students’ reflection saying, “This type of learning enables peers to help and work one another. We can generate ideas and learn on our own. We become more responsible. Some of us have not helped peers on assignments. Now, we want to help our peers on homework or assignments. We feel good toward doing so. Apart from that, we enjoy the activities at the beginning of the class period. We like making a meditation, listening to music, keeping calm, and getting ready for the new lesson. These activities help us pay greater attention to the class. Last but not least, we are more punctual, coming to the class on time.” This confirmed the concept of Atthakorn (1981) in that responsibility is generated by indoctrination at early age. It is then developed until the age of adolescence. Adults have to understand the nature of children. They should give advice and support on doing right things. Children should be implanted on problem-solving and responsibility. Responsibility can be promoted through teaching and practicing with surrounding people. This is the law of nature of living together. Responsibility is not a qualification with which humans are born, but a qualification which humans must directly learn to have. However, the teaching of responsibility has an effect on the quality of outcome responsibility. That is the more forceful the teaching of responsibility is, the tenser the children’s outcome responsibility is. Stress and anxiety generated from the forceful teaching can prevent children from adjusting themselves. In turn, the weaker the teaching of responsibility is, the weaker the children’s outcome responsibility is. The findings on responsibility in the present research also accorded with the previous research of Prasertsang (2013). The purpose of that previous research was to develop a service learning instructional model. The research methodology was “research and development.” The research process was divided into three phases. In phase one, the researcher studied the existing context and needs of the community, concepts, theories, and related research on developing a service learning instructional model. In phase two, the researcher developed a service learning instructional model. In phase three, the researcher studied the results of the actual implementation of the developed model into a course. The sampling method was Cluster Sampling. The sample group was consisted of 74 pre-service teachers who were second year students enrolled in semester 2 of the academic year 2012. For data analysis, a comparison of social responsibility behavior and perception of self-efficacy before and after the implementation of the model was done. The statistical method for the comparison was t-test Dependent Samples. The results of the research unveiled that the developed service learning instructional model improved the students’ social responsibility behavior and perception of self-efficacy; as a result, both social responsibility behavior and perception of self-efficacy were higher.

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CONCLUSION

The developed learning management model with contemplative education together with its learning process was consisted of six elements; 1) basic concepts and theories, 2) objectives, 3) learning management with five stages (O–Open mind, R–Refreshing ideas, P–Participation, L–Learning reflection, and A–Application), 4) social system, 5) responses, and 6) support system. There were three key activities done in each lesson plan (contemplation, concentration, and dialogue). This kind of learning management model could yield positive results of the students’ mental quality, interpersonal skills, and responsibility which were explicitly indicated by their means through all the assessments.

RECOMMENDATIONS

1. Recommendations for Further Implementation

Before implementing the developed learning management model of the research, a study of the elements of the model as well as its lesson plans and learning process should be done. Clear understanding of every implementation step is required. This leads to an accurate and effective implementation. According to the results of the research, the learning management model verified the development of the mental quality interpersonal skills and responsibility of the students. Thus, educational organizations are suggested to consider applying the model to the field of education.

2. Recommendations for Further Research

2.1 A comparison between the result of contemplative education-based learning management model and those of other learning management models is recommended.

2.2 Long-term research should be conducted. In this type of research, continuous follow-ups should be made. In so doing, changes during the progress of mental quality, interpersonal skills and responsibility can be more clearly noticed.

REFERENCES