

A Model for Promoting the Development of Basic Dharma Traits in Preschool Children

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Abstract

The main purposes of this research were to investigate factors for the development of basic Dharma traits (BDT) in preschool children and to promote the BDT which is one of a number of identified topics concerning ethics and morality targeted for urgent presentation to children and youth in Thailand. The study was conducted in two phases using kindergarten students aged 5 and 6. In Phase 1, teachers evaluated the BDT in 1,088 preschool children throughout Thailand using cluster sampling. The confirmatory factor analysis found that the preschool children showed BDT in eight areas of Diligence, Saving, Honesty, Discipline, Politeness, Cleanliness, Unity, and Kindness. Most of the preschool children could express examples of each area by themselves or with the assistance of teachers or friends. In Phase 2, a model for promoting the BDT of preschool children was developed through learning activities using sets of fables. These learning activities comprised fable books, storytelling activities, and supplementary Dharma activities and were used by the teachers with 326 students selected from the sample of Phase 1 by purposive sampling. The results showed that the model for promoting the BDT could obviously promote higher scores both in general and for all the specific areas.

Keywords : development of basic dharma traits, model for promoting, preschool children

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Introduction

Background Information

Thailand has a policy on human development which places an emphasis on morals leading knowledge. This focus was included in the vision of the 10th National Economic and Social Development Plan by the National Economic and Social Development Board which states that “Thailand will be a green and happy society in which people have integrity and knowledge of world standards, and in which families are close, communities are strong, and society is peaceful” (Office of the National Economic and Social Development Board, 2007, p. 9). In addition, the Ministry of Education, in a directive announced in 2007, sought to accelerate the provision of children and youth with the “Eight Basic Morals”, comprising morals in the areas of diligence, saving, honesty, discipline, politeness, cleanliness, unity and kindness. These morals are the principles of merit, correct and proper behavior and duty which refer to one of the meanings of “Dharma” in Buddhism (Phrathamkittiwong, 2008).

One learning principle of Dharma places an emphasis on “Man” as the center of development. The learning process is therefore a process for the development of “Man” as an individual and as a group in order to help them live peacefully together. When “Man” is the most important focus of the learning, the training method is then the development of all aspects of “Man” (Phra Dhammapitaka P.A. Payutto, 2000; Sumon, 1999). Therefore, the development of the human characteristic of being good and valuable persons of society should be started in early childhood. The promotion of moral and ethic development is especially in the same way in which it should be cultivated when they are small. This idea is consistent with that of Morrison (2011) who stated that currently there are concerns about and interests in the promotion of moral development of children, starting from preschool level, especially about the desirable characteristics and moral behaviors (p. 339). The curriculum for early childhood education in Thailand proscribes an objective for the promotion of emotional, mental and social development, namely to promote children to be citizens with good mental health, happiness, morals, ethics, and good minds; and who can live contentedly with others and be good members of the society (Ministry of Education, 2003).

His Holiness Somdet Phra Nyanasanvara, Sangharaja (2006) summarized that a trait is a

habit from the stage of early childhood. The personality, habit or action of a person will be wholly dependent upon his or her traits. A trait of an individual is a combination of two things: instinctive behavior from birth and learned behavior. Therefore, the term ‘Dharma trait’ refers to self-conduct or practice which can be expressed.

Unfortunately, ethical and moral education does not have a clear structure, but yet relies on the teachers. Some teachers are not knowledgeable enough and cannot measure the extents of preparedness and willingness in the minds of students (UNESCO, 2000). The researcher is interested in this aspect of education and places a value on the promotion of Dharma traits to preschool children as determined in the national policy. This has been done by presenting preschool children with behaviors that are familiar. The children practice these behaviors until they become moral habits. The words ‘basic Dharma traits of preschool children’ of His Holiness Somdet Phra Nyanasamvara, Sangharaja have been used in the study. The eight basic morals policy of Ministry of Education (2007) has also been used as a guideline in promoting the development of basic Dharma traits (BDT) in Thai preschool children. In order to get the national policy into concrete action, we need to consider two issues:

- 1) What is the BDT of preschool children? Will the children express all eight areas of BDT, or what areas of BDT will they express and at what level?
- 2) For children with a low level of BDT, what kind of learning model should be promoted to help increase their BDT?

Research Questions and Objectives

According to the above issues, the research questions were determined as follows. 1) Will preschool children express the eight areas of BDT? Which areas of BDT will they express? At what level will they express each area of BDT?

2) What is the model for promoting the BDT in preschool children with learning activities through sets of fables? How successful will the model be?

Then, two main objectives of the research were established. They were:

- 1) to test whether preschool children express the eight areas of BDT and to study the level of expression in each area; and
- 2) to develop a model for promoting the BDT through learning activities through fable

books, storytelling, and supplementary Dharma activities, and to study the results of the promotion.

Basic Dharma Traits (BDT)

The researcher compiled operational definitions by reviewing related definitions, theories and research from several documents. Psychological theories involving the promotion of BDT in preschool children were investigated, for example, Piaget's theory of cognitive development and Kohlberg's theory of moral learning. Piaget studied the morals of children and explained that morals are the experimental features of humans and duties concerning rules of social involvement, and moral development must therefore involve the moral consideration of reasons according to the intellectual level of individuals (Spodek & Saracho, 2006).

Morrison (2011) stated that, according to Vygotsky, social interaction, like cognitive and development skills, provides children with opportunities for 'scaffolding' to higher levels of moral thinking and behaviors. Furthermore, Vygotsky mentioned that part of the professional's pedagogical role was to challenge and help children move to higher levels of thinking and, in this case, moral development. Kohlberg, a follower of Piaget, in his theory of moral learning (1927-1987), believed that children's moral thinking occurs at three developmental levels: preconventional, conventional and postconventional. Children in early childhood years are at the preconventional level, when morality is basically a matter of good or bad based on the direct consequences of the action. This perception is frequently based on, if not reinforced by, a system of punishment and rewards administered by adults in positions of authority. The preconventional level consists of the first and second stages of moral development. Children with preconventional morality do not internalize society's conventions regarding what is right or wrong, and so are egocentric in their perceptions of morality (p. 339). Allport's theory of traits explains the principle that the personality comes from the habits which make people express behaviors. This theory also proposes that the structure of personality comprises traits, intentions and self (Barkhuus, 1999).

References about Buddhism include His Holiness Somdet Phra Nyanasamvara, Sangharaja (2006), Phra Dhammapitaka P. A. Payutto (2000), Phutthathatpikkhu (2007), and

Prathamkittiwong (2008). Additionally, data were also collected from interviews and conversations about Dharma with these scholars of Dharma and education. From the study, these scholars believed in the principle of Buddhism that morals can be promoted in children from early childhood and that these morals will help children develop good habits and then become good members of society.

An operational definition for the BDT in preschool children was then determined. “Dharma traits” here means self-conduct and practice of preschool children expressed according to the eight basic morals as mentioned below:

Diligence. Diligence refers to intent, attempt and patience to work persistently. Diligence must be practiced together with the use of intelligence in order to solve problems successfully. The indicators are as follows: 1.1) intent, such as paying attention to the teacher, refraining from talking while the teacher is teaching, and showing interest by asking questions during teaching; 1.2) enthusiasm, such as working faster to complete a job by the deadline, desire to undertake activities with friends, and volunteering to work for the public activities; and 1.3) patience, such as trying to work until completion, concentrating on work for long periods, and being able to wait until play time.

Saving. Saving refers to knowing how to save and use of property and items with the greatest efficiency and without wastage. The indicators are as follows: 2.1) knowing how to use your own things, taking care of them and putting them away tidily for next use, refraining from discarding items that are still useful, and using things carefully to ensure that they last longer; 2.2) knowing how to use shared resources, such as keeping classroom equipment in its proper place, looking after and not damaging things in class, and turning off water and lights after every use; 2.3) knowing your own practice, such as finishing food and not leaving leftovers, finishing all the water or milk when drinking, and buying only healthy food.

Honesty. Honesty refers to sincerity and lacks of scheming, unfairness, and bias. Indicators are as follows: 3.1) being honest to yourself and speaking truthfully with friends, refraining from taking belongings of others to be yours, doing what one has promised; 3.2) being honest to others, such as accepting criticism or apologizing when making mistakes, finding missing

belongings of others and sending them to the teacher, and not taking advantage of others; and 3.3) being honest to the duty, such as following the rules of games, following the rules of the classroom, and completing the assignments of teachers.

Discipline. Discipline refers to adherence to rules and regulations both at individual and societal levels. The indicators are as follows: 4.1) self-control, such as arriving at school on time, queuing to receive things, and being responsible to do work until it is completed; 4.2) doing your own duty, such as putting away your items after using them, doing assignments without hesitation, and putting away equipment immediately after being told to stop; and 4.3) being punctual, such as joining activities in time as determined, drinking milk and having meals on time without delaying, and starting or stopping activities when the time is signaled.

Politeness. Politeness refers to polite conduct, moderate manner, good etiquette, and respect for others. The indicators are as follows: 5.1) showing respect, such as making a “wai” when seeing teachers, bowing when walking past adults, and sitting properly (without stretching the legs out) in front of adults; 5.2) using polite words and spoken manner, such as speaking with adults with a soft voice and polite final particles, refraining from using rude words with friends, and not shouting or making loud noises during class; 5.3) displaying a polite manner, such as walking or running without collision with others, refraining from running loudly during class, and not throwing things in class.

Cleanliness. Cleanliness refers to conduct without blemishes of body, mind and environment, and which causes contentment in those who observe. The indicators are as follows: 6.1) keeping the body and equipment clean, such as wearing clean clothes, keeping hair, hands and feet clean, and maintaining the sleeping set in a clean and tidy fashion; 6.2) practicing daily personal hygiene, such as brushing teeth after meals, washing hands before and after meals, and keeping the bathroom and toilets clean; and 6.3) keeping the environment clean, such as keeping the classroom clean, keeping the school clean and reducing the amount of waste.

Unity. Unity refers to harmony or reconciliation in order to achieve the work outcome according to requirements, to the production of creative work without quarrelling or scheming,

and accepting reasons, individual differences, a variety of ideas, and race diversity. The indicators are as follows: 7.1) cooperation during work, such as doing activities in groups, being kind to friends, and being willing to do activities with friends; 7.2) accepting each other, such as accepting the thoughts of others, being kind to others, and adjusting your manner to others; and 7.3) knowing how to solve problems, such as being flexible in reducing conflicts during group work, providing suggestions for activities with friends, and helping each other and sharing.

Kindness. Kindness refers to sincerity without selfishness, understanding the value of fellow humans, interest in others' needs, happiness and unhappiness, and readiness to provide assistance. The indicators are as follows: 8.1) helping others, such as forgiving friends without getting angry when they bully you or take things away, lending items to friends, and volunteering to help teachers and friends; 8.2) sharing, such as allowing friends to play with your toys, taking turns to play with friends, and giving your things to others; and 8.3) cooperating or getting involved, such as following the agreements of the group, being willing to perform the duty assigned by the group, and cooperating with friends to complete the activities.

The Promotion of Basic Dharma Traits through Sets of Fables

Buddhism is the religion of the vast majority of people in Thailand. Thai people are therefore familiar with the tales in Buddhism (Channgam, 2009, p.5). The fables are recognized as one element of the Buddhist canon, describing stories of Lord Buddha in his previous life when he was Phra Phothisat, human, unhuman, angel, and animal. When Lord Buddha gave a sermon, he always included fables. This approach of recounting fables is then a teaching method enabling comprehension for the listeners. The fables exemplify Buddhist doctrines, acting as guidelines for life, avoiding sin, and doing only good things (Phra Phadet Thattachiwo, 1988; Phrathamkittiwong, 2008; The Royal Institute, 2003). In this research, sets of fables were selected for use in learning activities. The sets of fables consisted of fable books, and involved storytelling activities and supplementary Dharma activities. Usage of fables to teach children is considered valuable. Morgan (1999) mentioned that young children like books being read to them, including those books which use pictures to tell stories.

Storytelling and fables have been an integral part of information sharing among individuals and groups, and are as old as civilization. Fables have been traced through the philosophies and folkway of human development. Like all Aesop's fables, other fables and myths more often than not have a moral statement at the end of the story. Thus, it is noteworthy that, over the years, they become staples in the lives of young children (pp.185, 187-188). These statements agree with Detlor (2001) who said that morals and ethics can be developed by using the shared context of stories. Children feel comfortable exploring the moral domain, developing critical thinking about ethical issues, and reflecting on their own values (p.5). They will then be interested in and understand the doctrines provided in the stories after listening to the tales. Therefore, supplementary Dharma activities arranged by the teachers would promote the application of those doctrines in their daily lives. Detlor (2001) also stated that children learn to listen to each other and express their own opinions about ethical behaviors. They learn to extract and generalize meaning from stories and discuss real-life issues using moral reasoning. Such reflection gives children an ethical grounding in the classroom as they explore themes and values that will help create a caring and ethical community. Moreover, children develop and apply critical thinking about events in stories to a variety of ethical issues and apply proverbs to a variety of real-world events (p.5).

Conceptual Framework

The conceptual framework of the research according to the research plan comprised two phases as follows.

Phase 1 involved the study and analysis of factors for the BDT in preschool children. The variables in the study were: 1) observed variables or manifest variables with 24 indicators as follows: 1.1) intent, 1.2) enthusiasm, 1.3) patience, 2.1) knowing how to use your own things, 2.2) knowing how to use shared resources, 2.3) knowing your own practice, 3.1) being honest to yourself, 3.2) being honest to others, 3.3) being honest to the duty, 4.1) self-control, 4.2) doing your own duty, 4.3) being punctual, 5.1) showing respect, 5.2) using polite words, 5.3) displaying a polite manner, 6.1) keeping the body and equipment clean, 6.2) practicing daily personal hygiene, 6.3) keeping the environment clean, 7.1) cooperation during work, 7.2) accepting each other, 7.3) knowing how to solve problems, 8.1) helping others, 8.2) sharing,

and 8.3) cooperating or getting involved; and 2) construct variables which were latent and unobservable variables for the BDT with 8 components as follows: 1) Intelligence, 2) Saving, 3) Honesty, 4) Discipline, 5) Politeness, 6) Cleanliness, 7) Unity, and 8) Kindness (see Figure 1).

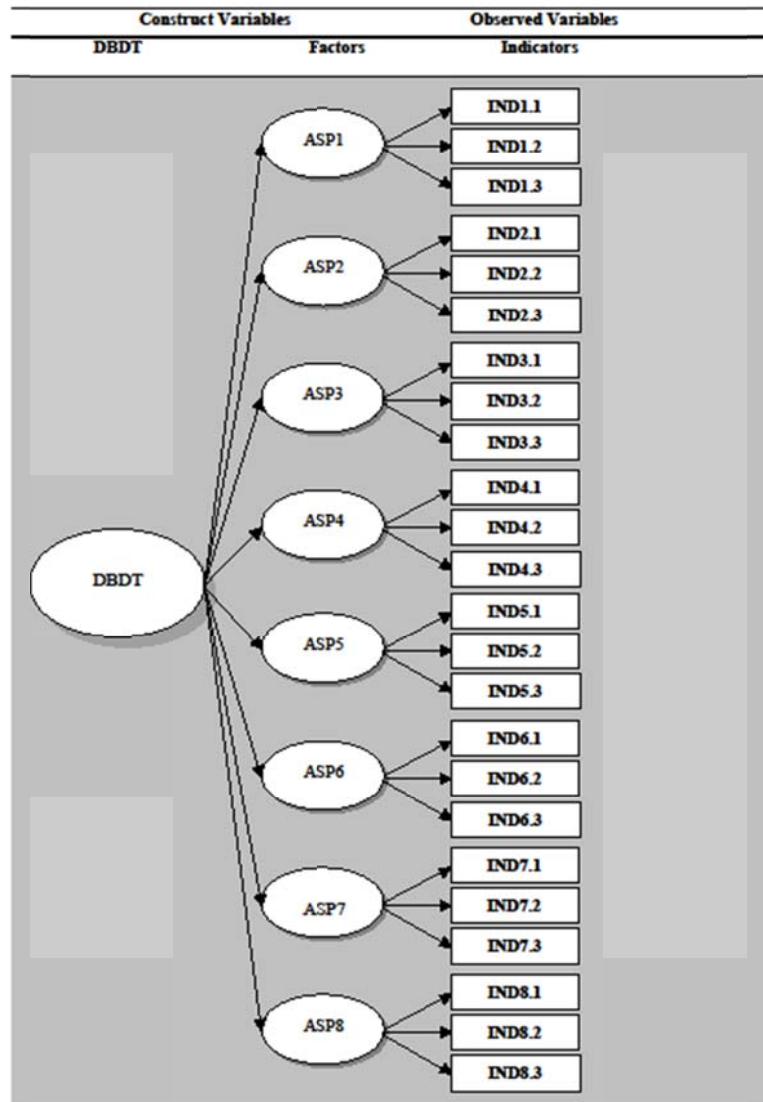


Figure 1. Conceptual Framework of the Model for Measuring the BDT

Phase 2 involved the promotion of the BDT in preschool children. The variables in the study were 1) independent variables or manipulated variables which were the model for the promotion of the BDT in preschool children using sets of fables; and 2) dependent variables which were the BDT both in general and in the eight individual areas (see Figure 2).

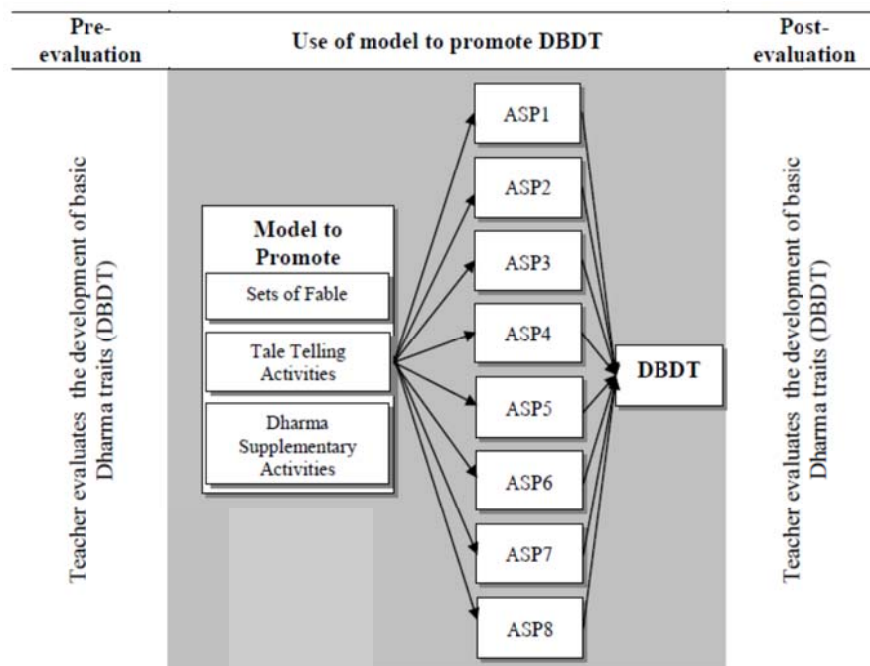


Figure 2. Conceptual Framework for the Model for Promoting the BDT

Methods

Sample

Since the study was designed as “research and development” (R&D), the research was therefore divided into two phases with two sets of samples. The sample of Phase 1 was used with the first objective of research obtained by cluster sampling of 11 provinces in all the regions of Thailand. The sample was then selected by purposive sampling from the schools and early childhood teachers who were willing to join the research to evaluate the BDT in

preschool children and also to trial the model for promoting the BDT. The sample of 13 teachers from 13 schools was finally obtained. After that, the teachers selected the sample of 1,088 children for the evaluation. The sample for Phase 2 was used with another objective of the research and was obtained using purposive sampling. The teachers in the schools sampled in each province for Phase 1 selected children from the class with average scores lower than other classes in the evaluation. Thus, a total number of 326 children from 11 classes with scores from the evaluation both before and after the experiment attained.

Research Instruments

The instrument used for collecting data was an evaluation kit for the BDT. It consisted of a handbook, a form to evaluate development, and a form to record the scores. The handbook described in detail the purpose and the components of the form, definitions of the Dharma traits, scoring rubric, and an evaluation form with explanation and samples. The form for evaluating development used a rating scale with three levels: low, when the children did not perform or express the Dharma trait; medium, when the children performed or expressed the Dharma trait with the assistance of teachers or friends; and high, when the children performed or expressed the Dharma trait by themselves.

The form was divided into eight parts and each part was used to evaluate the development in each area. There were three indicators in each area and three items in each indicator respectively. The total numbers were 24 indicators and 72 items. Regarding the form to record the scores, the teachers who performed the evaluation had to fill out names and surnames, both of their own and of the children who were evaluated. The results from the evaluation were recorded on the form alongside the items. Most statement items indicating development had corrected item-total correlations of more than .60. This showed that these items could discriminate between good and very good development. Cronbach's alpha coefficient for all areas was .99 which was higher than the criterion of .70. This indicated that the reliability of scores from evaluation was at a high level.

The instrument used in the experiment was a model for promoting the BDT which referred to the learning activities with sets of fables comprising fable books, storytelling activities, and supplementary Dharma activities.

Results

The results from analysis can be summarized according to the two main objectives of the study as follows:

Part 1. Regarding the confirmatory factor analysis and the evidence for construct validity and reliability of the scores of the BDT, the second order factor analysis was carried out in order to assess whether the measurement model (which comprised factors of eight areas from 24 indicators) fit the empirical data. The goodness of fit statistics used (Hooper, Coughlan, & Mullen, 2008) were as follows: the Chi-square (χ^2) value should be low with an insignificant p value ($p > .05$), the relative chi-square (χ^2/df) should range from a high level of 5.0 to a low level of 2.0, the Root Mean Square Residual (RMR) should be less than .05, and the Standardized Root Mean Square Residual (SRMR) should be less than .08. For the Goodness of Fit Index (GFI) and Adjusted Goodness of Fit Index (AGFI), it is generally accepted that values of .90 or greater indicate models with a good fit (pp. 53-55, 58).

The measurement model was evaluated by how much the indicators could measure the factors by considering validity and reliability. Validity here refers to the ability of indicators to measure the latent or construct variables considered from the implication of factor loading which should be high and with a statistical significance at $p < .05$ (t-value more than 1.96). Furthermore the importance of indicators could be compared using the standardized loading (λ), variables with more importance having a high standardized loading. Reliability refers to the level of indicator without an error. This was considered from the prediction coefficients (R^2), which should be more than .50, and from the construct reliability (CR, P_c) which was squared multiple correlations and the variance proportion of the indicator. The explanation could be done by construct variables which should be more than 0.60 (Fornell & Larcker, 1981) and by the average variance extracted (AVE, P_v) which should be more than .50 indicating adequate convergent validity (Fornell & Larcker, 1981).

According to the results of second order factor analysis after modifying the model as shown in Table 1, it was found that the measurement model attained a goodness of fit statistically as follows: χ^2 was 444.52, the probability (p) was .00, and the degree of freedom (df) was 182

Table 1. Results from the Second Confirmatory Factor Analysis of the BDT in Preschool Children

Construct	Indicating Statement	λ	R^2	P_C	P_V
Diligence		.80		.88	.72
	1.1) Intent	.79	.63		
	1.2) Enthusiasm	.86	.74		
	1.3) Patience	.89	.79		
Saving		.83		.88	.72
	2.1) Knowing how to use your own things	.89	.79		
	2.2) Knowing how to use shared resources	.90	.82		
	2.3) Knowing your own practice	.74	.55		
Honesty		.96		.87	.69
	3.1) Being honest to yourself	.81	.67		
	3.2) Being honest to others	.85	.72		
	3.3) Being honest to the duty	.84	.70		
Discipline		.89		.90	.74
	4.1) Self-control	.81	.65		
	4.2) Doing your own duty	.89	.79		
	4.3) Being punctual	.88	.77		
Politeness		.89		.87	.69
	5.1) Showing respect	.78	.61		
	5.2) Using polite words	.85	.71		
	5.3) Displaying a polite manner	.86	.74		
Cleanliness		.95		.82	.61
	6.1) Keeping the body and equipment clean	.74	.55		
	6.2) Practicing daily personal hygiene	.77	.59		
	6.3) Keeping the environment clean	.83	.68		
Unity		.95		.90	.75
	7.1) Work cooperation	.85	.72		
	7.2) Mutual acceptance	.92	.85		
	7.3) Knowing how to solve problems	.83	.69		
Kindness		.95		.89	.72
	8.1) Helping others	.84	.71		
	8.2) Sharing	.84	.71		
	8.3) Cooperation/Involvement	.87	.76		
Goodness of Fit Statistics					
Chi-Square = 444.52 df = 182, P = .00					
Chi-Square/df = 2.44					
RMR = .04, SRMR = .02, GFI = .97, AGFI = .94					

which was different from zero with statistical significance. Other statistics were as follows. χ^2/df was 2.44 which followed the criterion <5.0 . The root mean square residual (RMR) was .04 and the standardized RMR (SRMR) was .02 which followed the criteria $<.05$ and $<.08$ respectively. The goodness of fit index (GFI) was .97 and the adjusted goodness of fit index (AGFI) was .94 which followed the criterion $>.90$.

The construct validity of each factor of development in eight areas was high at .80, .83, .96, .89, .89, .95, .95, and .95 respectively which were higher than the criterion of .50 in all areas. The construct reliability was .88, .88, .87, .90, .87, .82, .90, and .89 which were higher than the criterion of .60 in all areas. The average variance extracted in each area was .72, .72, .69, .74, .69, .61, .75, and .72 which were higher than the criterion of .50 in all areas. For those 24 indicators, the construct validity (λ) was high, being between .74-.92, and the reliability (R^2) was between .55-.85, which was higher than the criterion of .50.

These results showed that the measurement model for the BDT in the children in eight areas comprising Diligence, Saving, Honesty, Discipline, Politeness, Cleanliness, Unity, and Kindness. Each factor could be measured by three indicators of development which fit the empirical data. In addition, the three indicators for each factor measured that factor as valid.

According to the level of expression, it was found that the mean of the BDT in general was 1.48 while the means in individual areas of Diligence, Saving, Honesty, Discipline, Politeness, Cleanliness, Unity, and Kindness were 1.37, 1.47, 1.52, 1.52, 1.45, 1.59, 1.48 and 1.49 respectively. The standard deviation was between .39-.49. These results indicated that

Table 2. *Levels of BDT of Preschool Children in General and in Individual Areas*

BDT	<i>M</i>	<i>Rank</i>	<i>SD</i>
1. Diligence	1.37	8	.46
2. Saving	1.47	6	.45
3. Honesty	1.52	2	.44
4. Discipline	1.52	2	.45
5. Politeness	1.45	7	.44
6. Cleanliness	1.59	1	.41
7. Unity	1.48	5	.45
8. Kindness	1.49	4	.49
BDT Total	1.48		.39

preschool children on average expressed BDT by themselves both in general and in individual areas of Cleanliness, Honesty, Discipline, Kindness, Unity, Saving, Politeness, and Diligence respectively as shown in Table 2.

Part 2. A model for promoting the BDT in preschool children was devised. It was constructed from three database sources: the results of factor confirmatory analysis, data from interviews with resource persons, and the results from the analysis of documents, fable books for children available in the marketplace, as well as related research concerning the promotion of morals and ethics. All data were gathered and summarized as shown in Table 3.

The scores of the basic Dharma traits in preschool children in general were analyzed and compared both before and after applying the model for promoting the BDT through the sets of fables. The scores were analyzed for means and standard deviations (*SD*). The means were then compared by using paired sample t-test. From the test, it was found that the means of the BDT in preschool children in general before and after the experiment were 1.21 and 1.81 respectively. The mean deviation (*MD*) was -0.60 and the standard error mean (SE_{Mean}) was 0.02 which was different with statistical significance at the level of .01 ($t_{(325)} = -37.72$; $p = .00$). These results indicate that the scores of the BDT in general after the experiment were clearly higher than those from before the experiment as shown in Table 4 and Figure 3.

The scores of the BDT in preschool children in individual areas were analyzed and compared both before and after the experiment. The scores were analyzed for means, standard deviations (*SD*), and two-way repeated ANOVA in individual areas before and after the experiment. It was found that the prepost* aspect of the development in individual areas and the evaluation before and after the experiment got $F = 13.98$ ($df_{Hypothesis} = 6.28, df_{Error} = 319$; $p = .00$) with statistical significance at $p = .00$. These results indicate that the BDT in preschool children in individual areas evaluated before and after the experiment were significantly different. It was found that the means of the development in all individual areas after the experiment were higher than those from before the experiment (-.62, -.60, -.59, -.52, -.64, -.57, -.67 and -.64 respectively) with statistical significance at the level of .05 ($t_{(325)} = -29.82, -27.00, -29.80, -27.41, -34.26, -31.45, -34.56$ and -31.53 , $p = .00$). These results indicate that, after the experiment to develop the preschool children, the scores of the BDT in all individual areas were clearly higher than those of before the experiment as shown in Table 5 and Figure 4.

Table 3. *Constructed Model for Promoting the BDT in Preschool Children*

Structure	Details
1. Objective	To promote the BDT in eight areas.
2. Components	Part 1 Fable books Part 2 Storytelling Activities Part 3 Supplementary Dharma activities
3. Fable Books	These are books relating biographical tales about Lord Buddha in his previous life when he was PhraPhothisat when he performed meritorious acts to become enlightened. Lord Buddha himself related stories to monks on various occasions. The contents were revised to be suitable for preschool children. They comprise eight sets of four titles each. The total is 32 titles with illustrations and Buddhist doctrines at the end of each book. The sets of fables for each area are: Diligence: The Merchant in the Desert, Earning a Living Using Only One Rat, Young Diligent Deer, and PhraMahachanok Who Practices Diligence. Saving: The Gold of the Farmer, Good Deeds from Feeding Fish, h, The Elephant King as an Ascetic, and Female Cat and Four Rats. Honesty: Golden Tray, Dam - an Honest Dog, The King and a Price Fixing Worker, and The Pigeon and the Dishonest Crow. Discipline: Animals Respecting Seniority, Baby Deer and Father Deer, Theekhawut Obeys His Father's Words, and Water Lacking a Path. Politeness: NanthaWisan Cow, Golden Hamsa King Finds a Spouse for the Child, Golden Deer King and Hunter, and Deer Meat of the Hunter. Cleanliness: The Clean Horse, Queen Sirisaiyat, Clever Dog, and Three Wild Deer Brothers. Unity: Friendship of Four Animal Fellows, A Friend with Firm Kindness, Ricebirds with Broken Unity, and Fox Eats Middle Part of Fish. Kindness: Golden Deer King, Intelligent Fish, Lion King and Fox, and Horse-Riding Expert.
4. Storytelling Activities	These were activities for teachers used for arranging experience during supplementary activities. The sets of fables for promoting Dharma traits in eight areas were used over a period of 10 weeks. Four fable titles were used in each week and the total was 32 titles. On days one to four of every week, the teachers arranged activities by using the sets of fables with Buddhist doctrine. A tale from one area was told to the children each week, told in sequence. Each week, the tale focused on a different moral principle. However, in each instance the teachers always added other morals in order to promote the development of Dharma traits in all areas for children to follow or practice. In the last two weeks, the children and teachers summarized and reviewed the tales and the moral principles from the eight areas.
5. Supplementary Dharma Activities	These were activities that teachers additionally organized for the children, requiring the involvement of the community. Teachers and parents provided cooperation, connection or communication. The teachers and parents performed activities together to promote the eight areas of Dharma traits to their children. The sample activities of diligence were Small Children are Able Too, Clever Thought Clever Use, Good Concentration and Happy Life, and Be Happy Through Diligence.

Table 4. Comparison of the BDT Total Scores Before and After the Experiment (n=326)

Basic Dharma Traits	Mean	SD	MD	SE _{Mean}	df	t	Sig.
Before the activities	1.21	.31	-.60	.02	325	-37.72	.000
After the activities	1.81	.15					

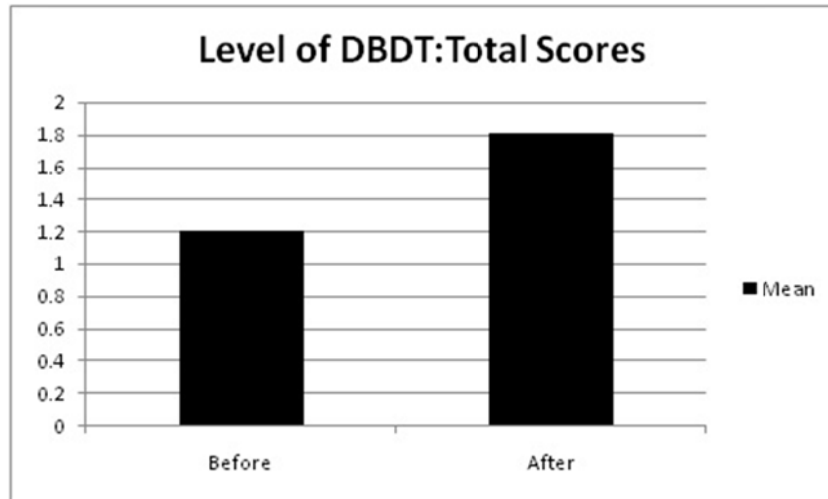


Figure 3. Level of BDT: Total Scores

Table 5. Comparative Analysis of the BDT Scores Before and After the Experiment

Basic Dharma Traits	M _{pre}	M _{post}	MD	SE _{Mean}	df	t	Sig.
1. Diligence	1.09	1.71	-.62	.02	325	-29.82	.00
2. Saving	1.20	1.80	-.60	.02	325	-27.00	.00
3. Honesty	1.25	1.83	-.59	.02	325	-29.80	.00
4. Discipline	1.27	1.79	-.52	.02	325	-27.41	.00
5. Politeness	1.15	1.78	-.64	.02	325	-34.26	.00
6. Cleanliness	1.31	1.88	-.57	.02	325	-31.45	.00
7. Unity	1.18	1.85	-.67	.02	325	-34.56	.00
8. Kindness	1.23	1.86	-.64	.02	325	-31.53	.00

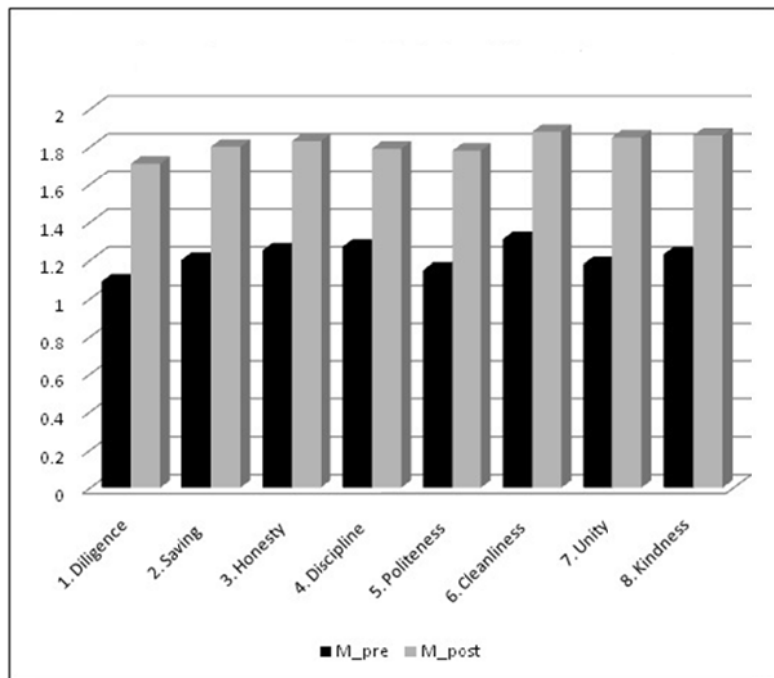


Figure 4. Level of BDT: Scores in Individual Areas before and after the Experiment

Conclusion

This research is an implementation of accelerated education reform policy on the eight basic morals of the Ministry of Education (2007), put into practice by constructing an evaluation form for teachers to evaluate the BDT in preschool children. The instruments consisted of a handbook, a form to evaluate the development, and a form to record the scores. From the survey and the factor confirmatory analysis, it was found that the BDT in preschool children comprised eight factors according to the conceptual framework. It was concluded that the preschool children could express eight areas of the basic Dharma traits. The study revealed that the preschool children expressed basic Dharma traits by themselves both in general and in specific areas. Cleanliness scored the highest and diligence the lowest. This result was not unexpected since the Ministry of Education (2003) had placed an emphasis on cleanliness as a desired characteristic of children. Furthermore, this emphasis on cleanliness

has been a prime objective of early childhood education for some time, striving to promote good habits concerning health and hygiene, in particular keeping the body clean at all times, and knowing how to look after one's health (Sirima, 2007). To this end, the daily schedule in the morning, after the children had reached school, was to perform a body and clothing check before starting class, the teachers using it as an important guideline to educate and train children in daily practice. Also, concerning activities in the classrooms, the children have been trained about keeping things tidy by putting things in their proper places every time after using them. This was consistent with the study of Hashimoto et al. (2012) who stated that clean up time in early childhood classrooms is scheduled as one classroom routine in which teachers and children simultaneously engage in tidying up their classrooms before proceeding to the next scheduled activity (p.141). As for diligence, it is a characteristic that the children have to rely on for their learning. The learning of children is the result from modeled experience and then practice until it becomes a habit. Diligence is rather a mental moral in which the children express it least by themselves. However, His Holiness Somdet Phra Nyanasamvara, Sangharaja (2006) suggested that, as the growth of children involves both body and mind, they should be educated with both easy and difficult morals as stimuli for their minds. This agrees with Phra Mitsuo Khavesko (2009) who states that small children must be patient so that their lives will develop. They start to be trained according to times to eat, defecate, and sleep. After that, they will be trained with disciplines in life about, for example, managing their time for study, play, watching TV and housework. They should be trained to wait and be patient. For the sake of their good behaviors or practice, they have to be trained, educated and guided.

The findings above were then combined with data from interviews with the resource persons and the analysis of documents about fables for children and research related to the promotion of morals in order to construct a model for promoting the BDT in preschool children. The model contained three parts. Part 1 comprised sets of fables, being eight sets with four titles each, thus totaling 32 titles with illustrations and Buddhist doctrines at the end of each book. Part 2 concerned storytelling activities. The children listened to the tales read by the teachers. Each week, the tale focused on a different moral principle. However, the teachers always added other morals in order to promote the development of Dharma traits in all areas for children to follow or practice. Part 3 involved supplementary Dharma activities

which were activities that teachers additionally organized for the children. These activities needed the involvement of the community, being a connection between school and the homes of the children. Teachers and parents provided cooperation, connection or communication. They did activities together to promote the eight areas of Dharma traits to their children.

The model was carried out with appropriate approach and responded to an important education reform policy on eight basic morals of the Ministry of Education (2007) which emphasized that “morals lead knowledge and develop men” as a basis of learning development.

The results clearly show that use of the model boosts the BDT scores of preschool children, both in general and in specific areas. This might be because the model used fable books with Buddhist doctrine to teach children. This powerful learning mechanism is used for the learning that humans develop during very early childhood, namely symbolic behavior. Stories are symbolic and stand for things. They help to make the abstract and intangible more concrete and tangible (Woolf, & Belloil, 2005, pp.82-83).

Furthermore, teachers related to the children the tales from the tale books using the illustrations and the supplementary Dharma activities, which were organized to reinforce the application of morals into practice. The methods and materials used in this research were appropriate to the BDT in children as stated in Bruce (2006), who said that telling stories is a powerful way of engaging with children as a group. The world can readily be adjusted for the audience, and the story can be paced just right more easily. Children often delight in having a go at telling stories too, free from the constraint that they cannot read fluently yet. Picture books are also a traditional and time-honored way of telling stories with great subtlety. Children learn to read the symbolic aspects of the picture, and delight in talking with others about what they see. Picture books offer children beautiful visual experiences by illustrators, and demonstrate that stories can be told without words, as they can through dance, mime and music (p.83).

The findings were consistent with the statements gained from interviews with Phra Thepsitthachan, Phra Achan Kukrit Sotthiphalo, Phra Khru Thammathonphairat Woratho, and Associate Professor Dr. Phra Mahachatri, and from Professor Dr. Aree Sanhachawee (personal communication, April, 2010) whereby the training of Dharma traits for preschool children can occur because human minds are good deeds and the minds of children are the

same. When children listen to Dharma, the Dharma traits can be developed and an effective way is the use of tales as a medium for children.

These fables are stories of Lord Buddha in his previous lives. The stories provide good instances from the characters in terms of morals. When children listen to the fables, they will gain points of view about morals and consider them at the same time. Fables are then a type of tale which is well suited to preschool children.

Moreover, other activities should also be added to help the children put into practice the morals heard from the tales. Phra Brahmaganabhorn P. A. Payutto (2009) stated that educating and looking after children must be in tandem with learning processes and the training of mind and intellect.

When children learn, they will want to know. When they receive responses from their need to know, they will be happy from learning what they like to know. Training children to practice morals until they become habitual is then an important matter which should be promoted.

Therefore, the model of BDT is an effective way to motivate preschool children to be ready and to know how to learn and practice moral behavior using good examples which can be used as a guideline to lead them in an appropriate direction. These things, along with activities regarding Buddhist fables, will increase awareness of basic Dharma traits in eight areas in preschool children.

Acknowledgement

The research was funded by the annual government budget of Thailand in 2009 (Srinakharinwirot University Contract No. 007/2009).

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