Impact of Teaching Morals and Ethics from Buddhist Doctrine to Buddhists: The Case Study of English for Banking and Finance

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Abstract
Discussion of instruction in Morals and Ethics using Buddhist teachings and the subsequent findings of a student survey. The teachings are a satisfactory method to satisfy the requirement to teach morals and ethics as required by Total Quality Framework.

The idea that Thailand is moving away from Buddhism is briefly examined. Further, the hypothesis that the teachings of Buddhism should be reinstated in the Thai primary school curriculum, and never should have been taken out in the first place is deliberated.

1. Introduction
Working at Bangkok University International College, the National Qualifications Framework for Higher Education in Thailand (TQF) was required in the Fall Semester of 2010. The first of the five very convenient TQF divisions of learning is Ethical and Moral Development. The others are 2. Knowledge, 3. Cognitive Skills, 4. Interpersonal Skills and Responsibility, and 5. Analytical and Communication Skills. Education is expected in all five areas. Curricular expectations were required before classes began, and their efficacy assessed after the course, by the students and teachers. Of the five areas, I was least comfortable teaching Ethical and Moral Development, and decided to meet it head-on.

The first of the four guidelines in Ethical and Moral Development in the National Qualifications Framework for Higher Education in Thailand Implementation Handbook, November 2006 reads; "Deals with ethical and professional issues involving values and moral judgments in ways that are sensitive to others and consistent with underlying basic values and relevant professional codes of practice."

One of my courses in the fall of 2010 was English for Banking and Finance. For 'relevant professional codes of practice' I taught His Majesty the King's Sufficiency Economy (slides available).

Let me explain "slides available." The following PowerPoint presentations were produced relating to this idea of giving instruction about Buddhist Teaching:

1. Sufficiency Economy 108 slides
2. The Basis for Success 42 slides
3. The Causes of Ruin 63 slides
4. The Company One Keeps 57 slides
5. The Learner 23 slides
6. The Educator  15 slides
7. Mangala Sutta  40 slides
8. The Eightfold Path  36 slides
9. The Worker and the Boss  17 slides

These PowerPoints are all available to you at MediaFire.com. The link below will take you directly to a folder containing the nine files above as well as three Acrobat files; one a 65 page treatment of The Eightfold Path, another an 89 page treatise on The Dhammapadda, The Buddha's Path of Wisdom, and the last a 70 page discourse on The Four Noble Truths.

http://www.mediafire.com/?4pcqa19059w93

Here is a story about a much earlier use of Buddhist Dharma in a BUIC classroom in 2004. Two sections of Reading for Business were getting practice using an old TOEFL reading test, which had been used before. TOEFL reading is a difficult test for the average BUIC junior. Nothing untoward happened in the earlier section, but something strange started happening in the later section. Twenty minutes into the test, which would be hard to finish in an hour, the least excellent student was done, handed in the test, and left. The teacher was puzzled, to say the least. Thirty seconds later, the least excellent remaining student was done. Now the teacher knew something was not right. He started marking X's in the corners of the OMR's as he got them, so he would know which students finished especially early.

Looking over the OMR's later, he discovered fifty students from both sections had the exact same answers. That would have been very suspicious if the answers were all correct, but these fifty had the same forty questions answered correctly and the same ten identical incorrect answers. The students knew the teacher would never believe perfection, and they knew from experience that forty correct would result in an A. It turns out (of course) that they had somehow determined which test would be used and prepared a key. Approximately fifty of eighty students participated in the conspiracy to cheat on a test worth five points. And not very clever cheating at that.

The test results were thrown out of course, but the teacher was outraged, so much so that he couldn't teach the next week. Instead he turned to Buddhist teaching for help. He found The Eightfold Path, in which Lord Buddha taught about honor. He prepared a PowerPoint (slides available). As you would imagine, cheating is very much discouraged in The Eightfold Path. The teacher didn't know if the students got anything from it. He liked to think so. If nothing else, his ire was impossible to miss. He thought it was a positive thing to let the students know exactly where he stood on that.

At the time he asked himself 'How did it fall to him, a foreigner, to have to teach this to those students then? Wasn't this somebody else's job?' He felt his students had been let down, that someone should have taught them about honesty and honor, and made it stick, long before
they got to him as juniors in college. With all due respect, he thought the students had been let down by their parents and the Buddhist Sangha.

2. Concept and Theory of Teaching:

Now let’s go to present time and let me use some first person please. Mainly because of the Ethical and Moral Development requirement in the National Qualifications Framework I decided to teach Buddhism to Buddhists. Approximately 90% of my students are Buddhist. Initially nine PowerPoints (slides available) were produced to show the students in IEN317 English for Banking and Finance. The five PowerPoints ultimately used were (1) The Company One Keeps, (2) The Basis of Success, (3) The Employee and Employer, (4) The Learner, and (5) The Causes of Ruin.

Some of the material for the PowerPoint lessons was found in text format on the following website: http://www.mbmciirt.net/books/bys001.htm. Another source was Payutto, P.A., Thēpwēthī, Phra, and J. Bruce (translation). A constitution for living: Buddhist principles for a fruitful and harmonious life.

The concept is straightforward. Total Quality Framework makes instructors responsible for teaching Morals and Ethics. The best instructions I can imagine are right here in Thailand in the Dharma. Our students are obliged to take a course in Ethics. They tell me it is about theory and that it is boring. I did not want my efforts in this area to be either theoretical or boring. You can see immediately from the slides that the admonitions are forthright and veracious. The counsel is perfectly proportional, appropriate and applicable. At the end of a lesson, if they paid attention, students have heard some potentially very beneficial ideas, which they can put to use at once. I thought practical application was more valuable than theory.

My understanding is that the amount of Buddhist teaching in the Thai primary school curriculum was reduced some time ago. Colleagues confirm this, but the Ministry of Education stonewalled when I tried to get details. I’m not out on a limb here - my own students confirm that they have received less education from the Dharma than their parents. With my own observation of how readily my students were willing to cheat, I began to think that this reduction was a bad idea. Education in Morals and Ethics should have been started long before students get to me as juniors in college. The following mindmap shows how vitally important morality is in Buddhism.
I chose to teach the concepts in my Banking and Finance course and not the other because morals and ethics are obviously important in that area. That course is also an excellent fit with His Majesty the King’s Sufficiency Economy (slides available).

... His Majesty the King of Thailand derived an economic program ... in which people and nations would be satisfied at a reasonable level of wealth and in which wealth would never be accumulated at the expense of others. All would have enough to live on and to live for. The King thereby has encouraged Buddhists at all levels - personal, community, and national to return to the values of Buddhism, and to base economic activity and policy on the Buddha’s teachings. In doing so His Majesty the King has shown that the Buddha’s teachings can be relevant in the contemporary world.

(http://www.dhammathai.org/e/thailand/contemporay.php)

3. Data and Research Methodology

   a) Research design using one group measured at one time, which is measured at the end, after the teaching process has finished. There is no comparison group because this step is under pilot study. This is an initial inquiry to determine if Teaching Buddhism to Buddhists is workable and efficacious.
For instance, I am confident to say that students could instantly see how their friends stack-up against the criteria in The Company One Keeps. I do not proselytize at all. The advice stands on its own two feet. The descriptions are in the third person. The proportional arrangement of them is helpful for remembering.

b) The teaching process and measurement used the PowerPoints cataloged above. Banking and Finance is a four-skills course so having the students read slides out loud in turn provided practice in reading and speaking, and at the same it kept the lesson moving. Students listened much more attentively this way than if I just read the slides to them.

We started with a PowerPoint called The Company One Keeps (True Friends and False Friends). I like this one. I like the symmetry of all the lessons. In this lesson, four types of true friends described, each with four identifying characteristics, and four types of false friends are delineated, each likewise with four identifying characteristics.

Next we saw The Basis of Success, which is actually a sermon called Iddhipada; the Four Virtues of Accomplishment. The Basis for Success is basically four words; will, effort, thoughtfulness, and investigation. Those essential ideas are expanded, with a few very specific exhortations for students. One of them is "When a student has assignments to do, he or she should exert himself or herself fully and continually to complete the work." Without thinking much about it, I left several Thai words in the slides. Another slide made the following direct reference to Lord Buddha; "Lord Buddha taught us ways to succeed in many of his sermons. Iddhipada is one of those sermons. Iddhipada tells of the Four Virtues that, when developed, lead to success and enable one to achieve goals in life."

A foreign student strenuously objected to being educated in anything involving Buddhism. The student was adamant to the point of walking out of class, after making the point that not all the students were Buddhist. After thinking about it quite a bit, I decided this student had a point. I went back to the PowerPoints and took out all Thai words and all references to Buddhism and Lord Buddha. It made almost no difference!

The Employee and Employer, also known as The Worker and the Boss, is a short group of slides involving five obligations those two owe to each other. My favorite two are; An employee helps his employer by: 1. Starting work before him and 2. stopping work after him.

The Learner is comprised of 23 slides directed at students. It contains one instruction that I stress; "This also entails being selective about the use of mass media." (http://www.mahidol.ac.th/budsir/Part2_4.htm) One would need to read Thai, or better yet Pali, to know where that reference to mass media came from 2553 years ago.

I put the slides for The Causes of Ruin on black backgrounds. Of course those ideas are dark. Want to destroy your life? Easy - just engage in sexual misconduct, drunkenness and harmful drugs, habitual gambling, and/or associate with bad companions. Of course each path is enumerated. The presentation ends on a positive note with detailed descriptions of the qualities of good friends. I personally think that the importance of the friends students make cannot be overstated. I have seen those associations work both ways. Once in a great while I arrange a meeting between two students if sure it will be a good one.
His Majesty the King's Sufficiency Economy was a natural choice for Banking and Finance because the book I used contains interviews with one hundred contemporary businesspersons using Sufficiency Economy. The 104 slides were presented over five weeks; about twenty slides per week, so as not to get boring. The length of text on each slide was kept short, and students took turns reading them. I taught phonetics and vocabulary on the fly, but did not let either get in the way. Also, I thought it fair to put questions from it on the midterm and announcing that fact increased attention.

I have a fear that students, in their move away from Buddhist values, will move toward Western ones, especially American consumerist values. In my opinion that 'adds insult to injury.' I will spare you a rant on the collusion between American banking the government. Let's just say that Sufficiency Economy stands in stark contrast. I'm afraid my students consider it old-fashioned, but at least I get it on the record in class, and again on review for the midterm. The tenets are too many to recount here.

Second of the Two Conditions for Sufficiency Economy is; *Morality: embracing the four virtues; namely kindness, unity, honesty, and justice that if practiced will bring peacefulness and prosperity to the individual and also the public.* (เศรษฐกิจพอเพียง: ปรัชญาใหม่ในยุคโลกาภิวัตน์ 17) I felt on safe ground teaching Sufficiency Economy in English for Banking and Finance. It was not, however, my impression that the students particularly embraced the precepts of Sufficiency Economy.

c) Measurement was by means of a survey, conducted near the end of the semester. The first ten questions relate to the thesis that these teachings are a satisfactory manner to educate students on morals and ethics.

4. Results and Discussion

Question One - Which of the following are you? 90% of respondents are Buddhist.
Question Two - *Please check the ones you remember seeing:* The most memorable by far was *The Basis of Success* - as stated before, actually Iddhipada.

![Bar chart showing the results]

Question Three - *Please check the ones you enjoyed:* The *Basis of Success* was likewise by far the one most enjoyed.

![Bar chart showing the results]

Question Four - *Can you rank them with 1 to 5 (1 as Best):* *Basis of Success* scored highest, while *The Causes of Ruin* lowest.

![Bar chart showing the results]
Question Five - *Did you learn anything from them?* 100% claimed to have learned something.

![Bar chart showing 100% for Yes, 0% for No, and 0% for Don't know.]

Question Six - *Should Morals and Ethics be taught in IEN317?* 68% answered ‘yes’

![Bar chart showing 35% for Yes, 10% for No, and 5% for Don't know.]

Question Seven - *Have you seen these teachings before?* 54% had seen at least some of the teachings before.

![Bar chart showing 25% for Yes, 15% for No, and 5% for Don't know.]
Question Eight - *Would you like to see more of them? 66% 'Yes' and only 8% 'No'.*

Question Nine - *Have you thought about your friends as a result of The Company You Keep? Over half had.*

Question Ten - *Have you thought about your studies as a result of The Learner? 78% had.*
Question Fourteen - If you know anyone on a Path to Ruin, would you try to change (help) them? 64% would try.

5. Conclusion Thesis One

It is difficult to quantify the effectiveness of teaching these ideas precisely. One possible measure (aside from the survey above) would be the student’s answers on the course evaluation. Here is one section of a course evaluation, from one of the two classes that had this tuition, that comes as close as any to asking them about how well they were instructed in morals and ethics. The leftmost column is Excellent, followed by Good, Average, Poor, Needs improvement, and No comment. Hats-off to any teacher who (1) gets all students to do the survey and then (2) gets 5.0 on this.

| 1. Appropriate understanding and conduct as a well-behaved student | 9   | 4   | 1   | 0   | 0   | 0   | 4.57 (A) |
| 2. Honesty in studying and living | 8   | 4   | 2   | 0   | 0   | 0   | 4.43 (B) |
| 3. Responsibility for mistakes caused by the student’s conduct or word-use, without any exception | 7   | 6   | 1   | 0   | 0   | 0   | 4.43 (B) |
| 4. Adjustment of lifestyle in situations of conflict regarding social values | 7   | 7   | 0   | 0   | 0   | 0   | 4.50 (B) |
| 5. Consideration of common interest over individual interest | 7   | 7   | 0   | 0   | 0   | 0   | 4.50 (B) |

It is confirmed by the survey and these marks that using these PowerPoints is a perfectly appropriate method to instruct about Morals and Ethics. I do however, think it’s a little late in the game to be teaching these ideas. In my opinion, my students should have learned these concepts when they were children.

Questions Eleven, Twelve and Thirteen relate to the second thesis - the idea that Thailand is moving away from Buddhism. Or at least to the idea that the students polled are. Not every student answered every question.
Question Eleven - Did your parents have more Buddhist teaching than you have had, when they were your age? 85% answered 'Yes.' Only 10% answered 'No.'

Question Twelve - Did your grandparents have more Buddhist teaching than your parents? Trying to ask the question another generation back proved more problematic. Still, almost half answered 'Yes'. Almost half the other half answered 'Some did.'

Question Thirteen - Do you think Buddhist teaching should have been left in the primary school curriculum? 76% answered 'Yes.'
This chart compares #6 - Should Morals and Ethics Be Taught in IEN317? with #7 - Have you seen these teachings before? 34 of 50 answered ‘Yes’ that Morals and Ethics should be taught in Banking and Finance. Of those - 16 had not seen the teachings before and 12 had.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>#6 Should Morals and Ethics Be Taught in IEN317?</th>
<th>Yes</th>
<th>No</th>
<th>Don’t Know</th>
<th>TOTAL</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>16</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>27</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Don’t Know</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>TOTAL</td>
<td>34</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>50</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

This chart compares #7 Have you seen these teachings before? with #8 Would you like to see more of them? The majority of students either had not seen the teachings before, or did not know. 33 of 50 (66%) would like to see more. The most had not seen before but would like to see more.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>#7 Have you seen these teachings before?</th>
<th>Yes</th>
<th>No</th>
<th>Don’t Know</th>
<th>TOTAL</th>
</tr>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>33</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Don’t Know</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>13</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>TOTAL</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>27</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>50</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

This chart compares #6 - Should Morals and Ethics Be Taught in IEN317? with #13 Do you think Buddhist teaching should have been left in the primary school curriculum? 34 of 50 (68%) answered ‘Yes’ that Morals and Ethics should be taught in Banking and Finance. Of those; 21 (62%) thought ‘Yes’ Buddhist teaching should have been left in the primary school curriculum.

#13 Do you think Buddhist teaching should have been left in the primary school curriculum?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>#13 Do you think Buddhist teaching should have been left in the primary school curriculum?</th>
<th>Yes</th>
<th>No</th>
<th>Don’t Know</th>
<th>TOTAL</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>21</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>24</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>22</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Don’t Know</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>TOTAL</td>
<td>34</td>
<td>21</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>59</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
6. Conclusion Thesis Two

Parenthetically and anecdotally, I have observed a change in student behavior. One duty I have at BUIC is to proctor exams. Part of that job is to check IDs and get student signatures. Eight years ago (I make this up roughly and unscientifically) one-third of students would ‘wai’ after signing. Another third would say “thank you,” and the final third would smile. This year the majority do none of the above when signing-in; merely pushing the sheet back without looking up. In my opinion, the old ways were much more pleasant.

In my opinion, there is no doubt that Thailand is moving away from Buddhism and that decreasing the moral and ethical teachings in the primary school curriculum was a bad idea. The survey confirms the fact (that anyone can tell you) that the prior generations had more education from the Dharma than the generation in college now.

7. References


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The Midwest Meditation Center. (n.d.). *Buddhism for young students*. สืบค้นเมื่อ 28 มีนาคม 2554, จาก http://www.mbmc.iirt.net/books/bys001.htm