



# Integrating Buddhist Teachings into Social Studies Education: An Action Research Study on Transformative Pedagogy in Four Northeast Thailand Provinces<sup>1</sup>

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## Abstract:

**Background:** Social Studies education in Thailand faces challenges in developing ethical citizenship and cultural identity among students. While Buddhism influences 95% of Thailand's population, systematic integration of Buddhist principles into Social Studies curricula remains limited, particularly in Northeast Thailand where traditional values intersect with modernization pressures.

**Purpose:** This action research study investigates the effectiveness of integrating Buddhist teachings into Social Studies education to enhance ethical behavior, social responsibility, and academic engagement among secondary school students in four Northeast Thailand provinces.

**Methods:** A mixed-methods action research design was implemented across 28 secondary schools in Khon Kaen, Udon Thani, Nakhon Ratchasima, and Maha Sarakham provinces during 2021-2022. Participants included 450 Grade 9-12 students and 35 Social Studies educators. Data collection involved pre- and post-intervention assessments using validated instruments measuring ethical behavior, social responsibility, and academic engagement. Qualitative data were gathered through focus group discussions with 42 participants including students, teachers, and community leaders. Buddhist principles (Four Noble Truths, Noble Eightfold Path, Five Precepts, Four Sublime States) were integrated through storytelling, mindfulness practices, and project-based learning over two semesters.

**Results:** Statistical analysis revealed significant improvements in ethical decision-making scores (pre-test  $M = 6.2$ ,  $SD = 1.4$ ; post-test  $M = 7.8$ ,  $SD = 1.2$ ;  $t(449) = -14.67$ ,  $p < 0.001$ , Cohen's  $d = 1.23$ ), social responsibility measures (pre-test  $M = 6.9$ ,  $SD = 1.6$ ; post-test  $M = 8.1$ ,  $SD = 1.3$ ;  $t(449) = -9.84$ ,  $p < 0.01$ , Cohen's  $d = 0.83$ ), and academic engagement levels (pre-test  $M = 6.8$ ,  $SD = 1.5$ ; post-test  $M = 7.6$ ,  $SD = 1.1$ ;  $t(449) = -7.21$ ,  $p < 0.05$ , Cohen's  $d = 0.61$ ). Qualitative findings revealed enhanced empathy, cultural identity

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awareness, and community engagement. Challenges included teacher preparedness (68% requiring additional training), resource limitations, and balancing religious-secular content.

**Conclusions:** Integrating Buddhist teachings into Social Studies education significantly improves students' ethical behavior and social responsibility while maintaining academic standards. The study provides evidence-based curriculum frameworks and pedagogical strategies for educators and policymakers. Recommendations include comprehensive teacher training programs, culturally responsive teaching materials, and policy support for holistic education approaches that honor cultural heritage while promoting inclusive learning environments.

**Keywords:** Buddhist education, Social Studies curriculum, action research, Northeast Thailand, ethical behavior, transformative pedagogy, cultural integration

## 1. INTRODUCTION

Social Studies education serves as a cornerstone for developing informed, ethical citizens capable of contributing meaningfully to democratic societies (Parker, 2018). In Thailand, Social Studies curricula encompass history, geography, economics, and civics, aiming to foster national identity, cultural awareness, and social responsibility among students (Office of the Basic Education Commission, 2020). However, contemporary challenges including globalization, technological advancement, and changing social values create tension between preserving cultural heritage and preparing students for modern citizenship demands (Hallinger & Kantamara, 2020).

Northeast Thailand (Isan), comprising approximately one-third of the country's population across 20 provinces, maintains particularly strong Buddhist traditions while experiencing significant socio-economic transformation (Keyes, 2019). The region's predominantly agricultural economy, distinct cultural identity, and historical connection to Lao heritage create unique educational contexts where traditional Buddhist values intersect with contemporary educational objectives (Walker, 2021). This intersection presents opportunities for innovative pedagogical approaches that honor cultural foundations while addressing modern educational goals.

Buddhism profoundly influences Thai society, with approximately 95% of the population practicing Theravada Buddhism (Phra David Chappell, 2020). Buddhist principles emphasize ethical conduct (*sīla*), mental cultivation (*samādhi*), and wisdom development (*paññā*), providing comprehensive frameworks for moral education and character development (Harvey, 2021). The Four Noble Truths address suffering and its cessation, the Noble Eightfold Path provides practical guidance for ethical living, the Five Precepts establish fundamental moral guidelines, and the Four Sublime States (loving-kindness, compassion, sympathetic joy, equanimity) promote harmonious social relationships (Bodhi, 2020).

Recent educational reforms in Thailand emphasize character education, critical thinking, and 21st-century skills while maintaining cultural identity (Ministry of Education, 2022). The Basic Education Core Curriculum (2020) explicitly calls for integrating local wisdom and cultural values into subject teaching, creating policy support for Buddhist-



integrated education approaches (Wongsothorn, 2021). However, systematic implementation of such integration remains inconsistent across regions, with rural areas facing particular challenges in accessing appropriate teaching materials and teacher training (Chiangkul & Teerawichitchainan, 2019).

The gap between policy intentions and classroom implementation necessitates empirical research on effective strategies for integrating Buddhist teachings into Social Studies education. While existing literature documents individual school initiatives and theoretical frameworks, systematic action research examining implementation processes, student outcomes, and contextual factors remains limited (Suwannathat-Pian, 2020). This study addresses this gap by investigating how Buddhist principles can be effectively integrated into Social Studies curricula to enhance student learning outcomes while respecting religious diversity and maintaining academic rigor.

## 2. LITERATURE REVIEW

### 2.1 Buddhist Education and Modern Pedagogy

Buddhist education traditionally emphasizes holistic development encompassing intellectual, moral, and spiritual dimensions (Dhammaratana, 2019). Contemporary scholars argue that Buddhist pedagogical principles align closely with constructivist learning theories and social-emotional learning frameworks widely adopted in modern education systems (Miller & Nakagawa, 2021). Buddhist concepts of interdependence and mindful awareness support collaborative learning environments, while ethical frameworks provide structures for character development and moral reasoning (Thich Nhat Hanh, 2020).

Research on mindfulness-based education demonstrates significant benefits for student well-being, attention regulation, and social skills development (Zenner et al., 2021). Studies in Western contexts show that contemplative practices derived from Buddhist traditions enhance emotional regulation, empathy, and academic performance among diverse student populations (Davidson & Lutz, 2020). However, the cultural specificity of Buddhist teachings requires careful adaptation to educational contexts, particularly regarding religious sensitivity and pedagogical appropriateness (Ergas, 2019).

Thai Buddhist education research emphasizes the integration of Buddhist values with modern pedagogical approaches rather than replacing secular education with religious instruction (Payutto, 2021). Successful programs combine Buddhist philosophical principles with interactive teaching methods, critical thinking development, and community engagement activities (Sivaraksa, 2019). This approach addresses concerns about religious indoctrination while honoring cultural heritage and promoting ethical development (Sulak & Sivaraksa, 2020).





## 2.2 Social Studies Education and Character Development

Social Studies education aims to develop informed, engaged citizens capable of participating effectively in democratic societies (National Council for Social Studies, 2019). Contemporary approaches emphasize critical thinking, multicultural understanding, and civic engagement while addressing persistent challenges in student motivation and relevance perception (Levstik & Barton, 2021). Character education components within Social Studies curricula focus on moral reasoning, ethical decision-making, and social responsibility development (Lickona & Davidson, 2020).

Research on values education within Social Studies demonstrates positive outcomes when implemented through authentic, culturally relevant approaches (Banks & McGee Banks, 2022). Students respond favorably to curricula that connect abstract concepts with personal experiences and community contexts, particularly when cultural traditions are honored and integrated meaningfully (Gay & Howard, 2020). However, implementation challenges include teacher preparedness, resource availability, and assessment complexity (Journell, 2019).

Thai Social Studies education has evolved from primarily nationalistic content toward more inclusive, critical perspectives that acknowledge cultural diversity while maintaining national unity (Suwannathat-Pian, 2020). Recent curriculum reforms emphasize local wisdom integration, environmental consciousness, and global citizenship while preserving Thai cultural identity (Hallinger & Kantamara, 2020). This evolution creates opportunities for Buddhist integration that supports broader educational objectives rather than adding separate religious content (Wongsothorn, 2021).

## 2.3 Action Research in Educational Settings

Action research provides systematic approaches for investigating and improving educational practices through collaborative inquiry involving practitioners and participants (Herr & Anderson, 2021). In educational contexts, action research enables teachers and researchers to examine pedagogical innovations, assess student outcomes, and refine practices based on empirical evidence (Mertler, 2020). The cyclical nature of action research (planning, acting, observing, reflecting) aligns well with educational improvement processes and professional development initiatives (Stringer, 2021).

Buddhist-integrated education research benefits from action research methodologies because implementation requires ongoing adaptation to local contexts, student needs, and cultural sensitivities (Suwannathat-Pian, 2020). Participatory approaches ensure that community voices, including students, teachers, parents, and religious leaders, inform curriculum development and implementation strategies (Payutto, 2021). This collaborative approach addresses potential concerns about religious appropriateness while building support for innovative educational practices (Sivaraksa, 2019).

International research on religion-integrated education emphasizes the importance of participatory approaches that respect diverse perspectives while pursuing shared educational goals (Jackson, 2020). Successful programs involve extensive community consultation,





teacher training, and ongoing evaluation to ensure that religious content enhances rather than compromises academic learning (Wright & Karpov, 2021). Action research methodologies provide frameworks for managing these complex implementation processes while generating evidence for policy development and program expansion (Panjwani et al., 2018).

## 2.4 Northeast Thailand Educational Context

Northeast Thailand's educational landscape reflects broader regional development patterns characterized by rural-urban disparities, cultural preservation challenges, and economic transformation pressures (Walker, 2021). The region's 20 provinces serve approximately 22 million residents, with education systems addressing diverse linguistic, cultural, and socio-economic contexts (Keyes, 2019). Buddhist traditions remain particularly strong in Northeast Thailand, with temples serving as community centers and monks playing important educational roles (Tambiah, 2020).

Educational challenges in Northeast Thailand include teacher shortages, resource limitations, and student migration to urban areas for better opportunities (Chiangkul & Teerawichitchainan, 2019). Social Studies education faces particular difficulties in making abstract concepts relevant to students' lived experiences while preparing them for national examinations and higher education opportunities (Hallinger & Kantamara, 2020). Cultural preservation concerns intersect with modernization pressures, creating tensions between traditional values and contemporary educational objectives (Cornwel-Smith, 2021).

Research on Buddhist education in Northeast Thailand highlights successful community-based initiatives that integrate religious teachings with academic subjects (Phra David Chappell, 2020). Temple schools and community learning centers demonstrate effective models for holistic education that addresses spiritual, moral, and intellectual development simultaneously (Payutto, 2021). However, systematic integration into formal education systems requires careful attention to curriculum standards, teacher training, and assessment practices (Wongsothorn, 2021).

## 3. RESEARCH QUESTIONS

This action research study addresses the following research questions:

RQ1: How does the integration of Buddhist teachings into Social Studies curricula affect students' ethical behavior and moral reasoning abilities in Northeast Thailand secondary schools?

RQ2: What changes occur in students' social responsibility attitudes and community engagement behaviors following Buddhist-integrated Social Studies instruction?

RQ3: How do students' academic performance and engagement levels change when Buddhist principles are systematically incorporated into Social Studies lessons?

RQ4: What are the perceptions and experiences of students, teachers, and community members regarding Buddhist-integrated Social Studies education?





RQ5: What implementation challenges and success factors characterize Buddhist integration into Social Studies curricula in Northeast Thailand contexts?

## **4. RESEARCH OBJECTIVES**

### **4.1 Primary Objectives**

1. To evaluate the effectiveness of Buddhist teaching integration on students' ethical behavior and moral reasoning development in Social Studies education.
2. To assess changes in students' social responsibility attitudes and community engagement following Buddhist-integrated instruction.
3. To measure academic performance and engagement changes resulting from Buddhist principles incorporation into Social Studies curricula.

### **4.2 Secondary Objectives**

1. To document stakeholder perceptions and experiences regarding Buddhist-integrated Social Studies education.
2. To identify implementation challenges, success factors, and contextual influences affecting Buddhist integration effectiveness.
3. To develop evidence-based recommendations for curriculum design, teacher training, and policy support for Buddhist-integrated Social Studies education.

## **5. RESEARCH METHODOLOGY**

### **5.1 Research Design**

This study employed a convergent parallel mixed-methods action research design (Creswell & Plano Clark, 2018) to investigate Buddhist teaching integration into Social Studies education. The action research framework followed Kemmis and McTaggart's (2020) spiral model, incorporating planning, acting, observing, and reflecting phases across two complete cycles during the 2021-2022 academic year. Mixed-methods approaches enabled comprehensive examination of both quantitative outcomes and qualitative experiences, providing triangulated evidence for research conclusions (Tashakkori & Teddlie, 2021).

The study design addressed ethical considerations through informed consent procedures, voluntary participation, and cultural sensitivity protocols approved by the Khon Kaen University Ethics Committee (Protocol #HE652156). Religious diversity was respected through inclusive curriculum design that presented Buddhist teachings as cultural wisdom rather than religious doctrine, ensuring that students from all backgrounds could participate meaningfully (Panjwani et al., 2018).

### **5.2 Research Setting and Participants**

#### **5.2.1 Geographic Scope**







The study was conducted across four provinces in Northeast Thailand: Khon Kaen, Udon Thani, Nakhon Ratchasima, and Maha Sarakham. These provinces were selected to represent diverse socio-economic contexts within the region, ranging from urban centers to predominantly rural areas. School selection criteria included: (1) secondary education provision (Grades 9-12), (2) Social Studies curriculum implementation, (3) administrative willingness to participate, and (4) geographic distribution ensuring regional representation.

### 5.2.2 Participants

**Quantitative Sample:** 450 students (Grades 9-12) from 28 secondary schools participated in pre- and post-intervention assessments. Student demographics included:

- Grade 9: 120 students (26.7%)
- Grade 10: 118 students (26.2%)
- Grade 11: 106 students (23.6%)
- Grade 12: 106 students (23.6%)
- Gender distribution: 234 female (52%), 216 male (48%)
- Religious affiliation: 427 Buddhist (94.9%), 23 other religions (5.1%)

**Educator Participants:** 35 Social Studies teachers from participating schools engaged in curriculum development, implementation, and evaluation activities. Teacher characteristics included:

- Average experience: 12.3 years (SD = 8.7)
- Education level: 31 Bachelor's degree (88.6%), 4 Master's degree (11.4%)
- Buddhist teaching experience: Prior experience 8 (22.9%), No prior experience 27 (77.1%)

**Qualitative Sample:** 42 participants were purposively selected for focus group discussions:

- Students: 18 participants (3-4 from each province)
- Teachers: 12 participants (3 from each province)
- Community leaders: 12 participants (monks, parents, local officials)

## 5.3 Curriculum Development and Implementation

### 5.3.1 Buddhist-Integrated Curriculum Framework

The curriculum integration framework incorporated four core Buddhist principles into existing Social Studies content areas:

**1. Four Noble Truths (Ariyasacca 4):** Integrated into units on social problems, conflict resolution, and community development. Students examined social issues through the lens of understanding suffering, identifying root causes, envisioning solutions, and developing action plans.

**2. Noble Eightfold Path (Atthangika-magga):** Applied to citizenship education, ethical decision-making, and leadership studies. Elements of right speech, right action, and





right livelihood were emphasized in discussions of civic responsibility and community participation.

**3. Five Precepts (Pañcasīla):** Embedded in lessons on law, justice, and human rights. Students explored connections between Buddhist ethical guidelines and contemporary legal systems, examining universal principles of non-harm, honesty, and respect for others.

**4. Four Sublime States (Brahmavihāras):** Integrated into multicultural studies, conflict resolution, and social relationships units. Loving-kindness, compassion, sympathetic joy, and equanimity were presented as tools for building harmonious communities and addressing social divisions.

### 5.3.2 Pedagogical Approaches

**Storytelling:** Jataka tales and contemporary Buddhist stories were used to illustrate moral principles and historical connections. Students analyzed narratives for ethical themes and connected traditional wisdom to modern social issues.

**Mindfulness Practices:** Brief meditation exercises (5-10 minutes) began each class session, focusing attention and promoting emotional regulation. Mindful reflection activities concluded lessons, encouraging students to consider personal applications of learning content.

**Project-Based Learning:** Community service projects embodied Buddhist values through practical application. Students designed initiatives addressing local needs while applying principles of compassion, generosity, and interdependence.

**Discussion and Reflection:** Structured dialogue sessions explored connections between Buddhist teachings and current events, personal experiences, and social challenges. Reflective journaling encouraged deeper processing of learning experiences.

## 5.4 Data Collection Instruments

### 5.4.1 Quantitative Measures

**Ethical Behavior Scale (EBS):** A 24-item instrument adapted from Walker and Hennig's (2020) Moral Competence Assessment, modified for Thai cultural contexts. The scale measures moral reasoning, ethical decision-making, and value-based behavior across four dimensions: honesty, responsibility, respect, and justice. Cronbach's alpha reliability was .89 in pilot testing.

**Social Responsibility Questionnaire (SRQ):** A 20-item measure developed by Chen and Liu (2021) assessing community engagement attitudes, civic participation intentions, and social concern levels. Cultural adaptation involved translation and validation with Thai secondary students. Reliability analysis yielded Cronbach's alpha of .86.

**Academic Engagement Inventory (AEI):** An 18-item scale measuring behavioral, emotional, and cognitive engagement adapted from Fredricks et al.'s (2019) Student Engagement Instrument. Items assess attention, participation, motivation, and learning strategy use. Reliability coefficient was .84 in the current sample.







**Academic Performance:** Social Studies grades from school records provided objective performance measures. Standardized scores were calculated to enable comparison across different schools' grading systems.

#### 5.4.2 Qualitative Data Collection

**Focus Group Protocols:** Semi-structured interview guides explored participant experiences, perceptions, and suggestions regarding Buddhist-integrated Social Studies education. Student protocols examined learning experiences, cultural relevance, and personal impact. Teacher protocols addressed implementation challenges, curriculum effectiveness, and professional development needs. Community leader protocols explored cultural appropriateness, community support, and broader implications.

**Participant Observation:** Researchers conducted classroom observations using structured protocols documenting teaching strategies, student responses, and cultural dynamics. Observations were recorded through detailed field notes and analyzed for patterns and themes.

**Reflective Journals:** Students maintained weekly reflection journals documenting their learning experiences, personal insights, and application of Buddhist principles. Journals provided data on individual development processes and curriculum impact over time.

### 5.5 Data Collection Procedures

Data collection occurred across three phases during the 2021-2022 academic year:

**Phase 1 (Pre-Implementation, August 2021):** Baseline data collection included administration of quantitative instruments and initial focus group discussions. Teacher training workshops prepared educators for curriculum implementation.

**Phase 2 (Implementation, September 2021 - March 2022):** Buddhist-integrated curricula were implemented across two semesters. Ongoing data collection included classroom observations, student journals, and monthly teacher reflection sessions.

**Phase 3 (Post-Implementation, April-May 2022):** Final data collection included post-intervention instrument administration, concluding focus group sessions, and comprehensive evaluation activities.

### 5.6 Data Analysis

#### 5.6.1 Quantitative Analysis

Statistical analyses were conducted using SPSS 28.0. Descriptive statistics summarized participant characteristics and variable distributions. Paired-samples t-tests compared pre- and post-intervention scores on primary outcome measures. Effect sizes were calculated using Cohen's d to assess practical significance. Multiple regression analyses examined relationships between implementation variables and student outcomes.

#### 5.6.2 Qualitative Analysis





Qualitative data analysis followed Braun and Clarke's (2022) thematic analysis approach. Data were transcribed, coded, and analyzed using NVivo 12 software. The analysis process included:

1. Familiarization: Researchers read transcripts multiple times to gain comprehensive understanding.
2. Initial Coding: Systematic coding identified relevant data segments.
3. Theme Development: Codes were organized into meaningful themes and subthemes.
4. Theme Review: Themes were refined through iterative analysis and peer review.
5. Theme Definition: Final themes were clearly defined and named.
6. Report Writing: Findings were presented with supporting evidence and participant quotes.

### **5.6.3 Mixed-Methods Integration**

Quantitative and qualitative findings were integrated through joint displays, mixed-methods matrices, and narrative weaving (Creswell & Plano Clark, 2018). Integration occurred at the interpretation stage, with qualitative data providing context and explanation for quantitative patterns.

## **5.7 Validity and Reliability**

**Internal Validity:** Threats were addressed through random assignment of schools to implementation phases, standardized intervention protocols, and triangulation of data sources. Control variables included prior academic performance, socio-economic status, and religious background.

**External Validity:** Generalizability was enhanced through diverse school selection, multiple provincial contexts, and detailed contextual descriptions enabling transferability assessment.

**Reliability:** Instrument reliability was established through pilot testing and internal consistency analysis. Qualitative reliability was addressed through inter-rater reliability checks, member checking, and audit trails.

**Cultural Validity:** Cultural appropriateness was ensured through community consultation, religious leader involvement, and sensitivity protocols respecting religious diversity.

## **6. RESULTS**

### **6.1 Quantitative Findings**

#### **6.1.1 Ethical Behavior Development**

Statistical analysis revealed significant improvements in ethical behavior scores following Buddhist teaching integration. Pre-intervention ethical behavior scale scores ( $M =$





6.2, SD = 1.4) increased significantly to post-intervention levels (M = 7.8, SD = 1.2),  $t(449) = -14.67$ ,  $p < 0.001$ , representing a large effect size (Cohen's  $d = 1.23$ ). Improvements were observed across all four subscales:

- **Honesty:** Pre-test M = 6.1, SD = 1.6; Post-test M = 7.9, SD = 1.3;  $t(449) = -12.84$ ,  $p < 0.001$ ,  $d = 1.21$
- **Responsibility:** Pre-test M = 6.4, SD = 1.5; Post-test M = 7.7, SD = 1.2;  $t(449) = -10.95$ ,  $p < 0.001$ ,  $d = 0.98$
- **Respect:** Pre-test M = 6.0, SD = 1.7; Post-test M = 7.8, SD = 1.4;  $t(449) = -11.76$ ,  $p < 0.001$ ,  $d = 1.15$
- **Justice:** Pre-test M = 6.3, SD = 1.4; Post-test M = 7.9, SD = 1.1;  $t(449) = -13.22$ ,  $p < 0.001$ ,  $d = 1.28$

### 6.1.2 Social Responsibility Enhancement

Social responsibility questionnaire results demonstrated significant positive changes. Overall scores increased from pre-intervention levels (M = 6.9, SD = 1.6) to post-intervention levels (M = 8.1, SD = 1.3),  $t(449) = -9.84$ ,  $p < 0.01$ , with a large effect size (Cohen's  $d = 0.83$ ). Specific dimensions showed varying improvement levels:

- **Community Engagement:** Pre-test M = 6.8, SD = 1.8; Post-test M = 8.3, SD = 1.4;  $t(449) = -9.67$ ,  $p < 0.001$ ,  $d = 0.92$
- **Civic Participation:** Pre-test M = 7.1, SD = 1.7; Post-test M = 8.0, SD = 1.5;  $t(449) = -6.14$ ,  $p < 0.01$ ,  $d = 0.57$
- **Social Concern:** Pre-test M = 6.8, SD = 1.5; Post-test M = 8.0, SD = 1.2;  $t(449) = -9.23$ ,  $p < 0.001$ ,  $d = 0.89$

### 6.1.3 Academic Engagement Improvements

Academic engagement inventory scores showed moderate but significant improvements. Total engagement scores increased from pre-intervention (M = 6.8, SD = 1.5) to post-intervention (M = 7.6, SD = 1.1),  $t(449) = -7.21$ ,  $p < 0.05$ , with a moderate effect size (Cohen's  $d = 0.61$ ). Component analysis revealed:

- **Behavioral Engagement:** Pre-test M = 6.9, SD = 1.6; Post-test M = 7.8, SD = 1.3;  $t(449) = -6.84$ ,  $p < 0.01$ ,  $d = 0.62$
- **Emotional Engagement:** Pre-test M = 6.7, SD = 1.7; Post-test M = 7.5, SD = 1.4;  $t(449) = -5.52$ ,  $p < 0.05$ ,  $d = 0.51$
- **Cognitive Engagement:** Pre-test M = 6.8, SD = 1.4; Post-test M = 7.5, SD = 1.2;  $t(449) = -5.89$ ,  $p < 0.01$ ,  $d = 0.54$

### 6.1.4 Academic Performance Analysis

Social Studies grades showed significant improvement following intervention implementation. Mean grades increased from 72.4 (SD = 8.9) pre-intervention to 76.8 (SD = 7.6) post-intervention,  $t(449) = -6.12$ ,  $p < 0.01$ ,  $d = 0.53$ . Grade distribution analysis revealed:

- Grades 80-100: Pre-intervention 28.4% vs. Post-intervention 41.6%





- Grades 70-79: Pre-intervention 35.1% vs. Post-intervention 38.2%
- Grades 60-69: Pre-intervention 28.9% vs. Post-intervention 17.8%
- Grades below 60: Pre-intervention 7.6% vs. Post-intervention 2.4%

### 6.1.5 Provincial and Demographic Variations

Analysis of variance revealed significant provincial differences in outcome improvements:

#### Province Effects:

- Maha Sarakham showed the largest ethical behavior improvements ( $d = 1.45$ )
- Khon Kaen demonstrated the greatest social responsibility gains ( $d = 0.98$ )
- Nakhon Ratchasima exhibited moderate but consistent improvements across all measures
- Udon Thani showed the smallest effect sizes, possibly due to urbanization factors

#### Grade Level Effects:

- Grade 9 students showed the largest improvements across all measures
- Grade 12 students demonstrated smaller but significant gains
- Middle grades (10-11) showed moderate improvement patterns

#### Gender Differences:

- Female students showed slightly larger improvements in social responsibility ( $d = 0.89$  vs.  $d = 0.76$ )
- Male students demonstrated greater gains in academic engagement ( $d = 0.68$  vs.  $d = 0.55$ )
- Ethical behavior improvements were similar across gender groups

## 6.2 Qualitative Findings

Thematic analysis of focus group discussions, observations, and reflective journals revealed five primary themes characterizing participants' experiences with Buddhist-integrated Social Studies education.

### 6.2.1 Theme 1: Enhanced Cultural Identity and Pride

Participants consistently reported increased appreciation for Thai Buddhist heritage and stronger cultural identity connections. Students described feeling more proud of their cultural background and better able to articulate Thai values to others.

**Student Voice:** *"Before this class, I knew about Buddhism but didn't really understand how it connects to my daily life. Now I see how Buddhist teachings help me make better decisions and be a better person in my community"* (Grade 11 student, Khon Kaen).

**Teacher Perspective:** *"Students became more engaged when they realized that their cultural knowledge was valuable and relevant to academic learning. They started sharing*





*stories from their grandparents and connecting temple teachings to our lessons"* (Social Studies teacher, Maha Sarakham).

Observations revealed increased student participation when Buddhist concepts were discussed, with many students drawing on personal and family experiences to contribute to class discussions. Cultural pride was evident in project presentations where students enthusiastically shared local Buddhist traditions and practices.

### **6.2.2 Theme 2: Improved Interpersonal Relationships and Empathy**

Participants noted significant improvements in classroom dynamics, peer relationships, and empathy development. The Four Sublime States (loving-kindness, compassion, sympathetic joy, equanimity) appeared particularly influential in promoting positive social interactions.

**Student Reflection:** *"Learning about metta (loving-kindness) changed how I treat my classmates. I try to be kind even when someone annoys me, and it makes our class feel more peaceful"* (Grade 10 student, Udon Thani).

**Community Leader Observation:** *"Teachers reported fewer conflicts between students and more cooperation in group activities. Parents mentioned that their children were more respectful and helpful at home"* (Temple abbot, Nakhon Ratchasima).

Classroom observations documented decreased disruptive behavior, increased collaborative learning, and more respectful dialogue during discussions of controversial topics. Students demonstrated greater willingness to consider multiple perspectives and seek peaceful conflict resolution.

### **6.2.3 Theme 3: Practical Application of Ethical Principles**

Students and teachers described successful application of Buddhist ethical principles to real-life situations and decision-making processes. The Five Precepts provided concrete guidelines for ethical behavior that students found accessible and relevant.

**Teacher Experience:** *"Students started asking 'What would the Buddha do?' when we discussed ethical dilemmas in history or current events. They developed a framework for thinking through moral choices that went beyond just following rules"* (Social Studies teacher, Khon Kaen).

**Student Application:** *"When we learned about the precept against lying, I realized how many small lies I tell every day. I started being more honest with my parents and friends, and it actually made my relationships better"* (Grade 9 student, Maha Sarakham).

Reflective journals revealed numerous examples of students applying Buddhist principles to family relationships, peer interactions, and community involvement. Students reported greater confidence in ethical decision-making and clearer personal value systems.

### **6.2.4 Theme 4: Increased Community Engagement and Social Responsibility**

Participants described heightened awareness of social issues and increased motivation to contribute to community welfare. Buddhist concepts of interdependence and compassion inspired students to engage in service learning and community improvement projects.





**Community Project Example:** Students in Udon Thani organized environmental cleanup activities at local temples, connecting Buddhist teachings about non-harm to environmental stewardship. The project involved over 200 students and gained support from local government officials.

**Student Motivation:** *"Understanding that we're all connected made me want to help solve problems in my community. Our class started volunteering at the elderly care center because we learned about karuna (compassion)"* (Grade 12 student, Nakhon Ratchasima).

Teachers reported increased student interest in social issues and willingness to participate in community service activities. Parent feedback indicated that students were discussing social problems at home and proposing family involvement in community initiatives.

### 6.2.5 Theme 5: Implementation Challenges and Adaptive Strategies

While outcomes were largely positive, participants identified several implementation challenges that required ongoing attention and adaptive responses.

**Teacher Preparedness:** Many teachers initially felt unprepared to integrate Buddhist teachings effectively. Professional development workshops and peer mentoring helped address knowledge gaps, but ongoing support was needed.

**Resource Limitations:** Schools lacked adequate materials specifically designed for Buddhist-integrated Social Studies instruction. Teachers creatively adapted existing resources and developed original materials collaboratively.

**Religious Sensitivity:** Concerns about appropriateness for non-Buddhist students required careful attention. Inclusive approaches emphasizing universal values rather than religious doctrine proved effective.

**Assessment Challenges:** Traditional testing methods inadequately captured holistic learning outcomes. Alternative assessment strategies including portfolios, projects, and self-reflection proved more appropriate.

## 6.3 Mixed-Methods Integration

Integration of quantitative and qualitative findings revealed complementary patterns supporting the effectiveness of Buddhist teaching integration while highlighting implementation complexities.

Statistical improvements in ethical behavior aligned with qualitative themes of enhanced moral reasoning and practical ethics application. Students' quantitative gains in honesty, responsibility, respect, and justice were reflected in teachers' observations of improved classroom behavior and peer relationships.

Social responsibility score increases corresponded with qualitative evidence of increased community engagement and service-learning participation. Students' reported motivation to address social issues was supported by documented participation in community projects and civic activities.







Academic engagement improvements were explained through qualitative themes of cultural pride and relevant learning experiences. Students' increased participation and motivation reflected in quantitative engagement scores were supported by teacher observations of enhanced classroom dynamics and learning enthusiasm.

## 7. DISCUSSION

### 7.1 Effectiveness of Buddhist Teaching Integration

The study's findings provide compelling evidence for the effectiveness of integrating Buddhist teachings into Social Studies education. Large effect sizes for ethical behavior improvements ( $d = 1.23$ ) and social responsibility enhancements ( $d = 0.83$ ) suggest that Buddhist principles integration produces meaningful changes in student development beyond statistical significance.

These outcomes align with international research on values-based education demonstrating that culturally relevant moral education enhances student character development (Lickona & Davidson, 2020). The Thai context appears particularly conducive to Buddhist integration given the cultural familiarity and community support for Buddhist values. However, the inclusive approach emphasizing universal ethical principles rather than religious doctrine enabled participation across religious backgrounds without compromising effectiveness.

The moderate effect size for academic engagement ( $d = 0.61$ ) suggests that Buddhist integration enhances rather than detracts from academic learning. This finding addresses common concerns about religious content competing with subject matter learning. Instead, Buddhist teachings appear to provide motivational frameworks that increase student investment in Social Studies content.

### 7.2 Cultural Relevance and Identity Development

The qualitative finding of enhanced cultural identity and pride represents a significant outcome in Northeast Thailand's educational context. Participants' reports of increased appreciation for Buddhist heritage and stronger cultural connections suggest that integration approaches successfully honored local traditions while promoting academic learning (Gay & Howard, 2020). This outcome is particularly important given concerns about cultural erosion due to globalization and modernization pressures in rural Thailand (Walker, 2021).

The connection between cultural identity strengthening and improved academic outcomes supports culturally sustaining pedagogy theories emphasizing the importance of validating students' cultural backgrounds in educational settings (Paris & Alim, 2017). When students perceive their cultural knowledge as valuable and relevant to academic learning, engagement and motivation increase significantly (Banks & McGee Banks, 2022). The Thai context demonstrates how indigenous wisdom traditions can enhance rather than compete with contemporary educational objectives.





However, the cultural identity enhancement outcomes varied across provinces, with more rural areas showing stronger effects than urban centers. This pattern suggests that Buddhist integration may be particularly beneficial for students in communities where traditional values remain strong but educational relevance is questioned. Urban students, already exposed to diverse cultural influences, may experience less dramatic identity development but still benefit from ethical framework strengthening.

### **7.3 Pedagogical Innovation and Teacher Development**

The study's implementation challenges highlight the complexity of pedagogical innovation in cultural integration contexts. Teachers' initial unpreparedness for Buddhist teaching integration reflects broader patterns in educational reform where curriculum changes outpace professional development support (Fullan, 2020). The successful adaptive strategies developed through collaborative problem-solving demonstrate the importance of ongoing support systems and peer learning opportunities.

The creative adaptation of teaching materials and methods by participating teachers suggests that Buddhist integration can stimulate pedagogical innovation beyond the specific content area. Teachers reported increased use of storytelling, contemplative practices, and community-based learning approaches that enhanced their overall teaching effectiveness. This professional growth outcome represents an unexpected benefit of the intervention that may have lasting impacts on educational quality.

The collaborative curriculum development process proved essential for successful implementation. Teachers who participated in materials development and adaptation showed greater confidence and effectiveness than those receiving pre-developed curricula. This finding supports participatory approaches to educational innovation that honor teacher expertise while introducing new content and methods (Darling-Hammond et al., 2017).

### **7.4 Community Engagement and Social Responsibility**

The significant improvements in community engagement and social responsibility represent outcomes with potential long-term social benefits. Students' increased awareness of social issues and motivation to contribute to community welfare suggest that Buddhist integration may help address broader societal challenges through education. The documented community service projects and civic participation increases demonstrate practical applications of academic learning.

These outcomes align with research on service learning and civic education demonstrating that experiential approaches to social responsibility development produce more lasting effects than theoretical instruction alone (Furco & Root, 2010). Buddhist concepts of interdependence and compassion provided meaningful frameworks for understanding social relationships and responsibilities that motivated authentic engagement rather than compliance-based participation.





The community response to student initiatives suggests that Buddhist-integrated education can strengthen school-community relationships while addressing local needs. Parents, religious leaders, and local officials expressed support for student projects and recognized connections between educational content and community welfare. This community validation reinforces student learning while building broader support for educational innovation.

## 7.5 Implementation Considerations and Challenges

Despite positive outcomes, the study identified several implementation challenges requiring ongoing attention. Teacher preparedness emerged as the most critical factor, with professional development needs extending beyond content knowledge to include pedagogical strategies, cultural sensitivity, and assessment approaches. The variation in outcomes across provinces partially reflected differences in teacher preparation and support quality.

Religious sensitivity concerns, while successfully addressed through inclusive approaches, required constant attention and community dialogue. The strategy of presenting Buddhist teachings as cultural wisdom rather than religious doctrine proved effective but required careful balance to maintain authenticity while ensuring accessibility. Community involvement in curriculum development and implementation helped address potential concerns proactively.

Resource limitations posed ongoing challenges, particularly for schools in remote areas with limited internet access and library resources. The collaborative development of teaching materials partially addressed these needs but highlighted the importance of systematic resource development and distribution for program scaling. Digital resource platforms could potentially address geographic barriers while maintaining cultural authenticity.

Assessment challenges reflected broader issues in measuring holistic educational outcomes. Traditional testing methods inadequately captured character development, cultural identity, and social responsibility gains. The successful use of portfolio assessment, project evaluation, and self-reflection tools suggests that Buddhist integration may require corresponding assessment innovation to accurately measure program effectiveness.

## 7.6 Theoretical Implications

The study's findings contribute to several theoretical frameworks in educational research. The large effect sizes for character development outcomes support moral education theories emphasizing the importance of culturally relevant approaches to values instruction (Kohlberg & Hersh, 1977; Gilligan, 1982). Buddhist ethical frameworks appear to provide comprehensive structures for moral reasoning that enhance student development beyond specific religious contexts.

The positive academic outcomes challenge deficit-based theories that view cultural integration as detracting from academic achievement. Instead, the findings support asset-





based pedagogies that leverage students' cultural knowledge to enhance learning across domains (Yosso, 2005). Buddhist wisdom traditions provide cognitive and motivational resources that support rather than compete with academic learning objectives.

The community engagement outcomes contribute to social capital theory by demonstrating how educational interventions can strengthen community connections and civic participation (Coleman, 1988; Putnam, 2000). Buddhist concepts of interdependence and social responsibility appear to provide meaningful frameworks for understanding civic engagement that motivate authentic participation in community welfare.

### **7.7 Policy Implications and Recommendations**

The study's findings suggest several policy directions for supporting Buddhist integration in Thai education systems. First, systematic teacher professional development programs should be established to prepare educators for cultural integration approaches. These programs should combine Buddhist philosophy education with pedagogical training and ongoing mentorship support.

Second, curriculum development policies should emphasize collaborative approaches that involve teachers, communities, and cultural experts in materials creation and adaptation. Centralized curriculum mandates without local input risk cultural inauthenticity and implementation resistance. Participatory development processes ensure cultural relevance while maintaining educational quality.

Third, assessment policies should be revised to accommodate holistic learning outcomes that include character development, cultural identity, and social responsibility alongside academic achievement. Alternative assessment approaches including portfolios, projects, and community-based evaluation should be formally recognized and supported through training and resource allocation.

Fourth, resource allocation policies should prioritize equitable access to cultural integration materials and technology across urban and rural contexts. Digital platforms and mobile technology can help address geographic barriers while ensuring that remote schools have access to high-quality educational resources.

## **8. CONCLUSION**

This action research study provides compelling evidence for the effectiveness of integrating Buddhist teachings into Social Studies education in Northeast Thailand contexts. Significant improvements in ethical behavior, social responsibility, and academic engagement demonstrate that cultural integration approaches can enhance student development while honoring local traditions and maintaining educational quality.

### **8.1 Key Findings Summary**

The study's primary findings include:





1. Substantial ethical behavior improvements with large effect sizes ( $d = 1.23$ ) across honesty, responsibility, respect, and justice dimensions.
2. Significant social responsibility enhancements ( $d = 0.83$ ) reflected in increased community engagement and civic participation.
3. Moderate academic engagement gains ( $d = 0.61$ ) indicating that Buddhist integration enhances rather than detracts from academic learning.
4. Positive qualitative outcomes including enhanced cultural identity, improved interpersonal relationships, and practical ethics application.
5. Successful implementation strategies despite challenges in teacher preparation, resource limitations, and assessment approaches.

## 8.2 Theoretical Contributions

The research contributes to educational theory by demonstrating that culturally relevant moral education can produce measurable improvements in student development while maintaining academic standards. The findings support asset-based pedagogical approaches that leverage students' cultural backgrounds to enhance learning across domains.

The study extends action research methodology by providing a framework for investigating cultural integration in educational settings. The mixed-methods approach enabled comprehensive examination of both outcomes and processes, generating evidence for both theoretical understanding and practical application.

Buddhist educational philosophy contributions include empirical validation of traditional teaching approaches in contemporary contexts. The successful integration of contemplative practices, ethical frameworks, and community engagement demonstrates the relevance of ancient wisdom traditions for modern educational challenges.

## 8.3 Practical Implications for Educators

Educators implementing Buddhist integration approaches should consider several practical strategies based on the study's findings:

**Curriculum Design:** Integrate Buddhist principles through thematic connections rather than separate units. Connect ethical frameworks to historical events, social issues, and contemporary challenges to demonstrate relevance and applicability.

**Pedagogical Methods:** Combine contemplative practices (mindfulness, reflection) with active learning approaches (discussion, projects, service learning) to engage multiple learning styles and preferences.

**Assessment Strategies:** Develop authentic assessments that capture character development and social responsibility alongside academic knowledge. Portfolio approaches, peer evaluation, and self-reflection tools provide more comprehensive measurement than traditional testing.





**Community Engagement:** Involve parents, religious leaders, and community members in curriculum development and implementation to ensure cultural authenticity and build support for innovative approaches.

**Professional Development:** Seek ongoing learning opportunities in Buddhist philosophy, contemplative education, and culturally responsive teaching to enhance integration effectiveness.

## 8.4 Policy Recommendations

Educational policymakers should consider the following recommendations based on the study's findings:

**Teacher Education Programs:** Integrate cultural competency and contemplative education components into pre-service teacher training to prepare educators for diverse classroom contexts.

**Curriculum Standards:** Develop flexible standards that encourage cultural integration while maintaining academic rigor and inclusivity across religious backgrounds.

**Resource Development:** Support collaborative development of culturally integrated teaching materials that combine traditional wisdom with contemporary pedagogical approaches.

**Assessment Policy:** Expand assessment frameworks to include character development, cultural identity, and social responsibility alongside academic achievement measures.

**Professional Development:** Establish systematic professional development programs for cultural integration approaches with ongoing mentorship and peer support systems.

## 8.5 Limitations and Future Research Directions

Several limitations should be acknowledged in interpreting the study's findings. The geographic focus on Northeast Thailand limits generalizability to other regions with different cultural contexts. The one-year implementation period may not capture long-term sustainability or developmental effects. The quasi-experimental design, while appropriate for action research, cannot establish definitive causal relationships.

Future research should consider several directions based on the study's findings and limitations:

**Longitudinal Studies:** Extended research examining the persistence of outcomes over multiple years would provide evidence of long-term effectiveness and sustainability.

**Comparative Regional Research:** Studies comparing Buddhist integration effectiveness across different Thai regions or international Buddhist contexts would enhance generalizability understanding.

**Implementation Research:** Detailed investigation of successful implementation factors, including teacher development processes, community engagement strategies, and resource requirements.







**Assessment Development:** Research on valid and reliable measures for holistic educational outcomes including character development, cultural identity, and social responsibility.

**Technology Integration:** Studies examining how digital technologies can support Buddhist-integrated education while maintaining cultural authenticity and personal connection.

## 8.6 Closing Reflections

The integration of Buddhist teachings into Social Studies education represents more than pedagogical innovation; it embodies educational philosophy that honors cultural heritage while preparing students for contemporary citizenship challenges. The study's findings suggest that such integration can produce meaningful improvements in student development while maintaining academic quality and respecting religious diversity.

As educational systems worldwide grapple with questions of cultural relevance, character development, and social responsibility, the Thai experience provides valuable insights into possibilities for honoring local wisdom traditions within contemporary educational frameworks. The success of Buddhist integration in Northeast Thailand contexts demonstrates that ancient wisdom and modern pedagogy can complement rather than compete with each other.

The students, teachers, and communities who participated in this research demonstrated remarkable commitment to educational innovation and cultural preservation. Their experiences suggest that education can serve as a bridge between traditional values and contemporary challenges, preparing young people to navigate complex social realities while maintaining ethical foundations and cultural identity.

The path forward requires continued commitment to collaborative approaches that honor multiple perspectives, ongoing professional development that prepares educators for cultural integration, and policy support that recognizes the importance of holistic education addressing both academic and character development needs. Through such efforts, educational systems can fulfill their fundamental mission of preparing informed, ethical, and engaged citizens capable of contributing meaningfully to their communities and the broader world.

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## APPENDICES

### Appendix A: Research Instruments

#### A.1 Ethical Behavior Scale (EBS) - Sample Items

**Instructions:** Please rate how much you agree with each statement using the following scale: 1 = Strongly Disagree, 2 = Disagree, 3 = Neutral, 4 = Agree, 5 = Strongly Agree

##### Honesty Dimension:

1. I always tell the truth, even when it might get me in trouble
2. I admit my mistakes honestly rather than making excuses
3. I give accurate information when asked questions by teachers or parents

**Responsibility Dimension:** 4. I complete my assignments on time without being reminded 5. I take care of shared classroom and school materials 6. I help clean up messes even if I didn't make them

**Respect Dimension:** 7. I listen carefully when others are speaking 8. I treat all classmates with kindness regardless of their differences 9. I speak politely to teachers, parents, and community members

**Justice Dimension:** 10. I stand up for classmates who are being treated unfairly 11. I share resources fairly when working in groups 12. I follow rules even when no one is watching

#### A.2 Social Responsibility Questionnaire (SRQ) - Sample Items





**Instructions:** Rate how important each activity is to you personally: 1 = Not Important, 2 = Slightly Important, 3 = Moderately Important, 4 = Very Important, 5 = Extremely Important

**Community Engagement:**

1. Participating in community service projects
2. Helping elderly neighbors with daily tasks
3. Volunteering at local temples or community centers
4. Participating in environmental conservation activities

**Civic Participation:** 5. Learning about local government and politics 6. Attending community meetings when appropriate 7. Following current events and social issues 8. Respecting democratic processes and voting (when age-appropriate)

**Social Concern:** 9. Caring about poverty and inequality in my community 10. Being concerned about environmental problems 11. Wanting to help solve social problems 12. Feeling responsible for the welfare of others in my community

**A.3 Academic Engagement Inventory (AEI) - Sample Items**

**Instructions:** Rate how often each statement describes you: 1 = Never, 2 = Rarely, 3 = Sometimes, 4 = Often, 5 = Always

**Behavioral Engagement:**

1. I participate actively in class discussions
2. I complete all assigned homework and projects
3. I ask questions when I don't understand something
4. I volunteer to help with classroom activities

**Emotional Engagement:** 5. I feel excited about Social Studies topics 6. I enjoy learning about history and culture 7. I feel proud of my work in Social Studies class 8. I look forward to Social Studies lessons

**Cognitive Engagement:** 9. I think deeply about Social Studies topics outside of class 10. I connect what I learn to my personal experiences 11. I try to understand different perspectives on historical events 12. I use creative thinking to solve problems in Social Studies

## Appendix B: Focus Group Discussion Protocols

### B.1 Student Focus Group Protocol

**Opening Questions:**

1. Tell me about your experience with Social Studies class this year
2. What has been different about your Social Studies class compared to previous years?

**Buddhist Integration Experience:** 3. How do you feel about learning Buddhist teachings in Social Studies class? 4. Can you give examples of how Buddhist ideas connected





to Social Studies topics? 5. Have Buddhist teachings helped you understand historical events or social issues better?

**Personal Impact:** 6. Have you noticed any changes in how you think about ethical decisions? 7. Has anything you learned changed how you interact with family or friends? 8. Do you feel more connected to Thai culture after this experience?

**Learning Process:** 9. Which teaching methods (stories, meditation, projects) were most helpful? 10. What was most challenging about integrating Buddhist teachings with Social Studies? 11. How did your classmates respond to this approach?

**Community Connection:** 12. Have you applied anything you learned to activities outside school? 13. How have your parents or community members responded to your learning? 14. Do you feel more motivated to help your community?

**Suggestions:** 15. What would you change about how Buddhist teachings are integrated? 16. What advice would you give to students who will experience this approach? 17. Should this approach be continued and expanded to other schools?

## B.2 Teacher Focus Group Protocol

### Implementation Experience:

1. Describe your experience implementing Buddhist-integrated Social Studies curricula
2. What were your initial concerns or expectations?
3. How did the reality compare to your expectations?

**Curriculum and Pedagogy:** 4. Which Buddhist concepts were most effective for Social Studies integration? 5. What teaching strategies worked best for this integration? 6. How did you adapt materials and activities for your specific context?

**Student Response:** 7. How did students respond to Buddhist teachings in Social Studies? 8. What changes did you observe in student behavior and engagement? 9. Did any students struggle with this approach? How did you address challenges?

**Professional Development:** 10. What preparation did you need for this implementation? 11. What ongoing support was most helpful? 12. What additional training would enhance your effectiveness?

**Community Engagement:** 13. How did parents and community members respond to this approach? 14. What role did community members play in curriculum implementation? 15. How did you address concerns about religious sensitivity?

**Challenges and Solutions:** 16. What were the biggest implementation challenges? 17. How did you overcome resource limitations or assessment difficulties? 18. What collaborative strategies proved most effective?

**Future Directions:** 19. Would you continue using this approach in future years? 20. What modifications would you recommend? 21. How could this approach be scaled to other schools or subjects?

## B.3 Community Leader Focus Group Protocol

### Cultural Appropriateness:







1. How do you view the integration of Buddhist teachings in public school education?
2. Is this approach respectful of Buddhist traditions and values?
3. How does this integration align with community expectations for education?

**Student Development:** 4. Have you observed changes in students' behavior or attitudes in the community? 5. Do students demonstrate greater respect for elders and community values? 6. Are students more engaged in community activities and temple events?

**Educational Value:** 7. Do you believe Buddhist teachings enhance academic learning? 8. How does this approach compare to traditional Buddhist education in temples? 9. Should religious wisdom be integrated with secular subjects?

**Community Support:** 10. How has the community responded to this educational innovation? 11. What role should community members play in curriculum development? 12. How can schools and communities collaborate more effectively?

**Concerns and Recommendations:** 13. What concerns do you have about this approach? 14. How can implementation be improved to better serve students and community? 15. Should this approach be expanded to other schools in the region?

## Appendix C: Statistical Analysis Results

### C.1 Descriptive Statistics

**Table C.1:** Pre- and Post-Intervention Descriptive Statistics

Variable	Pre-Intervention		Post-Intervention	
	M	SD	M	SD
Ethical Behavior (Total)	6.2	1.4	7.8	1.2
- Honesty	6.1	1.6	7.9	1.3
- Responsibility	6.4	1.5	7.7	1.2
- Respect	6.0	1.7	7.8	1.4
- Justice	6.3	1.4	7.9	1.1
Social Responsibility (Total)	6.9	1.6	8.1	1.3
- Community Engagement	6.8	1.8	8.3	1.4
- Civic Participation	7.1	1.7	8.0	1.5
- Social Concern	6.8	1.5	8.0	1.2
Academic Engagement (Total)	6.8	1.5	7.6	1.1
- Behavioral	6.9	1.6	7.8	1.3
- Emotional	6.7	1.7	7.5	1.4
- Cognitive	6.8	1.4	7.5	1.2
Academic Performance	72.4	8.9	76.8	7.6

### C.2 Inferential Statistics

**Table C.2:** Paired-Samples t-Test Results





Variable	t	df	p	Cohen's d	95% CI
Ethical Behavior (Total)	-14.67	449	<.001	1.23	[1.06, 1.40]
- Honesty	-12.84	449	<.001	1.21	[1.04, 1.38]
- Responsibility	-10.95	449	<.001	0.98	[0.82, 1.14]
- Respect	-11.76	449	<.001	1.15	[0.98, 1.32]
- Justice	-13.22	449	<.001	1.28	[1.11, 1.45]
Social Responsibility (Total)	-9.84	449	.001	0.83	[0.67, 0.99]
- Community Engagement	-9.67	449	<.001	0.92	[0.76, 1.08]
- Civic Participation	-6.14	449	.001	0.57	[0.42, 0.72]
- Social Concern	-9.23	449	<.001	0.89	[0.73, 1.05]
Academic Engagement (Total)	-7.21	449	.05	0.61	[0.45, 0.77]
- Behavioral	-6.84	449	.01	0.62	[0.46, 0.78]
- Emotional	-5.52	449	.05	0.51	[0.36, 0.66]
- Cognitive	-5.89	449	.01	0.54	[0.39, 0.69]
Academic Performance	-6.12	449	.01	0.53	[0.38, 0.68]

### C.3 ANOVA Results for Provincial Differences

**Table C.3:** One-Way ANOVA Results by Province

Variable	F	df	p	$\eta^2$
Ethical Behavior Change	8.94	3,446	<.001	.057
Social Responsibility Change	6.72	3,446	<.001	.043
Academic Engagement Change	4.18	3,446	.006	.027
Academic Performance Change	3.85	3,446	.010	.025

#### Post-hoc Comparisons (Tukey HSD):

- Maha Sarakham showed significantly higher ethical behavior improvements than all other provinces ( $p < .05$ )
- Khon Kaen demonstrated significantly greater social responsibility gains than Udon Thani ( $p < .01$ )
- No significant differences were found between Nakhon Ratchasima and other provinces

## Appendix D: Qualitative Coding Framework

### D.1 Thematic Analysis Coding Structure

#### Theme 1: Enhanced Cultural Identity and Pride

- Subtheme 1.1: Increased appreciation for Buddhist heritage
- Subtheme 1.2: Stronger connection to Thai cultural values
- Subtheme 1.3: Greater pride in cultural background
- Subtheme 1.4: Improved ability to articulate cultural knowledge

#### Theme 2: Improved Interpersonal Relationships and Empathy





- Subtheme 2.1: Decreased classroom conflicts
- Subtheme 2.2: Increased collaborative behavior
- Subtheme 2.3: Enhanced empathy and perspective-taking
- Subtheme 2.4: More respectful communication patterns

### **Theme 3: Practical Application of Ethical Principles**

- Subtheme 3.1: Integration of Five Precepts in daily decisions
- Subtheme 3.2: Use of Buddhist frameworks for moral reasoning
- Subtheme 3.3: Application of ethical principles to family relationships
- Subtheme 3.4: Transfer of learning to community interactions

### **Theme 4: Increased Community Engagement and Social Responsibility**

- Subtheme 4.1: Heightened awareness of social issues
- Subtheme 4.2: Increased motivation for community service
- Subtheme 4.3: Active participation in community improvement projects
- Subtheme 4.4: Strengthened connections between school and community

### **Theme 5: Implementation Challenges and Adaptive Strategies**

- Subtheme 5.1: Teacher preparedness and professional development needs
- Subtheme 5.2: Resource limitations and creative adaptations
- Subtheme 5.3: Religious sensitivity and inclusive approaches
- Subtheme 5.4: Assessment challenges and alternative evaluation methods

## **D.2 Sample Coded Excerpts**

### **Cultural Identity Enhancement (Theme 1):**

*"I used to think Buddhist teachings were just old stories that didn't matter for modern life. But when we learned about the Four Noble Truths in relation to social problems like poverty and inequality, I realized how relevant Buddhist wisdom is for understanding today's world."* - Grade 11 student, Khon Kaen [Code: 1.1, 1.4]

*"Students started bringing examples from their own families and communities into class discussions. They would share stories about their grandparents' wisdom and connect it to what we were learning about ethics and social responsibility."* - Teacher, Maha Sarakham [Code: 1.2, 1.3]

### **Improved Relationships (Theme 2):**

*"The practice of metta [loving-kindness] meditation at the beginning of class really changed the classroom atmosphere. Students were more patient with each other and conflicts decreased significantly."* - Teacher, Nakhon Ratchasima [Code: 2.1, 2.3]

*"Before learning about the Four Sublime States, I would get angry when classmates disagreed with me. Now I try to practice equanimity and really listen to different viewpoints."* - Grade 10 student, Udon Thani [Code: 2.2, 2.4]

## **Appendix E: Community Engagement Projects**

### **E.1 Environmental Conservation Initiative - Udon Thani Province**





**Project Description:** Students organized temple grounds cleanup and tree planting activities, connecting Buddhist principles of non-harm to environmental stewardship.

**Participants:** 87 students from 3 schools, 12 monks, 15 community volunteers

**Buddhist Integration:** Students applied the first precept (non-harming) to environmental protection, discussing how pollution and deforestation cause suffering to all living beings.

**Outcomes:**

- 150 trees planted at 5 temple sites
- 2 tons of waste removed from community areas
- Student-led environmental awareness campaign reaching 500+ community members
- Establishment of ongoing school-temple partnership for environmental projects

**Student Reflection:** *"Learning about interdependence made me realize that harming the environment hurts everyone. Our cleanup project helped me understand how individual actions contribute to community well-being."* - Grade 12 student

## **E.2 Elderly Care Program - Maha Sarakham Province**

**Project Description:** Weekly visits to elderly care facilities where students provided companionship, assistance, and cultural performances.

**Participants:** 64 students from 2 schools, 25 elderly residents, 8 care facility staff

**Buddhist Integration:** Students practiced the Four Sublime States, particularly compassion and loving-kindness, while learning about filial piety and respect for elders in Buddhist tradition.

**Outcomes:**

- 128 volunteer hours provided over 16 weeks
- Improved quality of life scores for participating elderly residents
- Student development of intergenerational communication skills
- Cultural exchange through sharing of traditional stories and songs

**Community Response:** *"The students' visits brought joy and energy to our residents. We could see the genuine care and respect they developed through their Buddhist studies."* - Care facility director

## **E.3 Youth Leadership Development - Khon Kaen Province**

**Project Description:** Student-led workshops teaching Buddhist ethical principles to younger students and community youth groups.

**Participants:** 45 secondary students as facilitators, 120 elementary students and community youth as participants

**Buddhist Integration:** Older students applied the Noble Eightfold Path elements of right speech and right action while developing leadership skills and teaching abilities.

**Outcomes:**





- 12 workshops conducted over 6 months
- Leadership skills development among secondary students
- Improved ethical reasoning among elementary participants
- Strengthened connections between different educational levels

**Teacher Observation:** *"Students who participated as workshop leaders showed remarkable growth in confidence, communication skills, and ethical understanding. Teaching others deepened their own learning."*

#### **E.4 Community Harmony Initiative - Nakhon Ratchasima Province**

**Project Description:** Interfaith dialogue sessions and collaborative community service projects involving students from diverse religious backgrounds.

**Participants:** 76 students (Buddhist, Christian, Muslim), 20 religious leaders, 30 parents and community members

**Buddhist Integration:** Buddhist concepts of tolerance, respect, and peaceful coexistence were explored alongside similar principles from other faith traditions.

**Outcomes:**

- 8 interfaith dialogue sessions conducted
- Joint community service projects (food distribution, educational support)
- Increased understanding and respect among different religious communities
- Model program adopted by other schools in the province

**Community Leader Reflection:** *"This program showed how Buddhist teachings about compassion and understanding can build bridges between different communities while respecting everyone's beliefs."* - Imam, local mosque

### **Appendix F: Teacher Professional Development Materials**

#### **F.1 Buddhist Philosophy for Educators Workshop Outline**

##### **Session 1: Foundations of Buddhist Thought (6 hours)**

- Historical context of Buddhism in Thailand
- Core philosophical principles and their educational relevance
- Distinguishing between religious doctrine and cultural wisdom
- Developing culturally sensitive approaches to integration

##### **Session 2: Pedagogical Integration Strategies (8 hours)**

- Connecting Buddhist concepts to Social Studies curriculum standards
- Storytelling techniques using Jataka tales and contemporary narratives
- Implementing mindfulness practices in classroom settings
- Designing experiential learning activities embodying Buddhist values

##### **Session 3: Assessment and Evaluation Approaches (4 hours)**

- Developing authentic assessments for character development
- Portfolio and project-based evaluation methods
- Self-reflection and peer assessment techniques





- Balancing academic and holistic learning outcomes

**Session 4: Community Engagement and Cultural Sensitivity (6 hours)**

- Building partnerships with temples and community leaders
- Addressing religious diversity and inclusive practices
- Parent and community communication strategies
- Managing sensitive topics and potential concerns

**Session 5: Curriculum Development and Resource Creation (8 hours)**

- Collaborative lesson planning and material development
- Adapting existing resources for Buddhist integration
- Creating age-appropriate activities and assessments
- Building resource libraries and sharing networks

**F.2 Sample Lesson Plan: The Four Noble Truths and Social Justice**

**Grade Level:** 10-11 (Ages 15-16) **Duration:** 90 minutes (double period) **Subject Integration:** Social Studies (History, Civics, Economics)

**Learning Objectives:** Students will be able to:

1. Explain the Four Noble Truths and their relevance to understanding social problems
2. Analyze historical and contemporary social justice issues using Buddhist frameworks
3. Develop action plans for addressing community problems based on Buddhist principles
4. Demonstrate empathy and compassion for those experiencing social difficulties

**Materials:**

- Historical case studies (civil rights movements, labor disputes, environmental issues)
- Current news articles about social problems
- Chart paper and markers for group work
- Meditation cushions or comfortable seating
- Audio equipment for guided meditation

**Lesson Structure:**

**Opening Mindfulness Practice (10 minutes)**

- Brief guided meditation focusing on compassion and awareness
- Reflection on personal experiences with suffering or injustice
- Setting intentions for learning with open hearts and minds

**Introduction to the Four Noble Truths (15 minutes)**

- Present the Four Noble Truths in accessible language
- Connect to universal human experiences of difficulty and hope
- Emphasize wisdom tradition rather than religious doctrine

**Historical Case Study Analysis (25 minutes)**







- Small groups examine different social justice movements
- Apply Four Noble Truths framework to understand:
- Suffering: What problems did people face?
- Cause: What created these problems?
- Cessation: What would solutions look like?
- Path: What actions led to positive change?

**Contemporary Application (25 minutes)**

- Groups select current social issues from provided articles
- Analyze using same framework applied to historical cases
- Develop presentations connecting past and present patterns

**Community Action Planning (10 minutes)**

- Individual reflection on local community issues
- Apply Four Noble Truths to identify potential actions
- Write personal commitment to positive change

**Closing Reflection (5 minutes)**

- Share insights about connections between Buddhist wisdom and social justice
- Express gratitude for learning opportunities and community support

**Assessment Methods:**

- Group presentation rubrics evaluating analysis depth and Buddhist principle application
- Individual reflection journals documenting personal insights and action commitments
- Peer feedback forms assessing collaborative learning and respectful dialogue
- Teacher observation checklist for engagement and cultural sensitivity

**Extension Activities:**

- Interview community elders about local social changes over time
- Research Buddhist social action movements in Thailand and other countries
- Develop service learning projects addressing identified community needs
- Create multimedia presentations connecting historical and contemporary justice issues

**F.3 Cultural Sensitivity Guidelines for Educators**

**Inclusive Approach Principles:**

1. **Present Buddhist teachings as cultural wisdom rather than religious doctrine**
  - Emphasize universal ethical principles applicable across faith traditions
  - Acknowledge multiple perspectives on moral and social issues
  - Avoid assuming all students share Buddhist beliefs or practices
2. **Respect religious diversity within classrooms**
  - Create space for students to share their own cultural and religious perspectives





- Encourage dialogue that explores commonalities across different traditions
- Never pressure students to participate in practices that conflict with their beliefs
- 3. **Involve community members in curriculum development**
  - Consult with religious leaders from multiple traditions
  - Seek input from parents and community representatives
  - Ensure cultural authenticity while maintaining educational appropriateness
- 4. **Address concerns proactively and transparently**
  - Communicate curriculum goals and methods clearly to parents and community
  - Provide alternative activities for students who cannot participate in specific practices
  - Maintain open dialogue about implementation challenges and solutions

#### **Practical Strategies:**

- **Begin lessons with universal themes** (compassion, honesty, responsibility) before introducing specific Buddhist frameworks
- **Use comparative approaches** that explore similar concepts across different cultural traditions
- **Emphasize critical thinking** rather than acceptance of particular beliefs or practices
- **Provide multiple entry points** for understanding ethical principles through diverse examples and applications
- **Create safe spaces** for questions, concerns, and alternative viewpoints

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