

The Development Of Systematic Thinking Based On A Buddhist Approach In The 21st Century

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Abstract

The research article entitled “The Development of Systematic Thinking Based on a Buddhist Approach in the 21st Century” is mixed research implementing quantitative, qualitative and documentary methods. The collected data is conducted with the international students from IBSC, MCU who are 40 in total, obtained from random sampling, as well as with five key informants from five countries. The data analysis employed descriptive statistics by means of t-test and one-way ANOVA test. The findings reveal that the groups of people who strongly agree on “The problems of systematic thinking” were 31-40-year-old female, 51-year-old and over, studying for an M.A. degree. There were no different opinions on such problems of systematic thinking between gender, age, and educational level. Groups of people who strongly agree on “The Buddhist principles for the development of systematic thinking” were 21-40-year-old females, 51-year-old and over, studying for an M.A. and Ph.D. degree. There was no difference in opinions on “The Buddhist Principles for the development of systematic thinking” between gender, age and educational level. The groups of people who strongly agree on “A Buddhist approach for the development of systematic thinking in the 21st century” were females, aged 51 years and over, and studying for an M.A. degree. There were no different opinions on “A Buddhist approach for the development of systematic thinking in the 21st century” between age and education level. There were gender differences in opinions on “A Buddhist approach for the development of systematic thinking in the 21st century.” Females agreed more than males at a significance level of 0.05. From the study there have clearly found the bodies of knowledge such as; 1) Systematic thinking results in good and efficient work. Systematic thinking is essential to life in the 21st century. 2) Systematic thinking is the key to effective management. 3) Yoniso-manasikāra (Wise Attention) is a systematic way of managing thinking leading to correct and effective problem solving. 4) Yoniso-manasikāra is the center of the development of systematic thinking based on a Buddhist approach.

Keywords: Systematic thinking, a Buddhist approach, the 21st century.

I. INTRODUCTION

Nowadays, people are stepping further into the digital age. The Internet is changing everything, including ways of thinking, ways of life, economy, society, and politics. The digital world 4.0, with its technological challenges ahead, has

created many large problems for every human being on the earth. Of course, the digital age has also brought many benefits to people. For example, from a religious perspective, the Internet can be used to get involved in spiritual issues and practices and it offers organized

religious groups an avenue by which to promote their faith and practices and indeed it can offer religion as refuge and anchor, reaching out to a large number of people. However, when science and hi-technology are overly influential in the daily lives of people, people then become overly interested in it; many become obsessed. Such people are always on the phone or computer, communicating through various online applications, and they become increasingly reluctant or unable to communicate with others face to face. They miss opportunities to discuss issues or share various stories, and do not have the chance to understand each other in a deeper way. Everyone is merely interested in his or her own story. Such behavior results in changes within family and social life.¹

Ven. Phra Brahmamagunapon (Bhikkhu P.A. Payutto) once remarked that “The more developed the high technology, the more likely it is to produce serious problems.” he meant that with the ongoing and relentless development of technology, and in particular, so-called ‘high technology’ that is concerned with information and communications, the negative forces of greed and hatred have acquired much more effective tools.² In other words, as the world of materials becomes much more developed, there is a tendency for the minds of the people remained undeveloped or even to ‘de-develop’, that is to regress. Technology becomes the tool of greed (lobha) and hatred (dosa), and technological progress, in the form of industrial development, serves to further their ends. Science, technology and the development of information and communications technology have been used to lull humanity into heedless consumption, dullness, and intoxication in various forms, rather than for the development of the human being or quality of life. They have been used as tools for nourishing greed and firing up hatred through the contention and dispute over material wealth. In the destruction which has resulted from racial and religious antagonism, hatred is already in abundance; and it has been further intensified by the influence of

greed and the struggle for material resources.³

Thinking involves gathering information into a center, analyzing it and then acting on it. Thinking provides the basis for physical and verbal expression as it the link between the systems of perception and action. Therefore, thinking is the center of the whole life, and it is at the heart of right lifestyle, or the noble life. This kind of careful and thorough thinking can be defined as ‘systematic thinking.’ If a person thinks in a systematic way, their speech and behavior will also be systematic, and they will be able to systematically solve both personal and social problems. They will also be better able to handle problems within their workplace organization and be equipped to deal with the constant changes that come up in today's world. Moreover, systematic thinking is a key skill that leaders need to possess if they are to succeed in the 21st century. Modern leaders must have the skills to make great decisions, manage change, and build teams and systematic thinking underlies all of these. According to Senge, systematic thinking is a conceptual framework, a body of knowledge and tools that has been developed over the past fifty years, to make the full patterns clearer, and to help us see how to adapt to them or change them effectively.⁴

As we are now well into the 21st century, the benefits of systematic thinking need to be seriously discussed. In which direction should systematic thinking be developed? Looking at how the material world has developed so far, and how fast it is changing, it might be easy to just allow human thinking to stay tuned in with wrong ways of technology devices. Online applications are so easily used, and little thinking is required. Next, we might ask how the doctrines of the Buddha be adapted to dealing with the big issue of wrong thinking and how proper consideration can be introduced at a deeper level and more frequently. Ultimately, the development of systematic thinking leads to freedom from the internal enemies of the mind. It can assist people to become completely free of

the oppressive influences of greed, hatred and delusion, which are the main causes of the human problems within the physical and social environment. In this era when technology has rapidly developed, systematic thinking can bring many advantages to human beings. However, its development needs training. The development of reasoned thinking requires a systematic and skillful system of education.

According to Buddhism the unsystematic thinking that has arisen due to the lack of wise attention has inevitably brought problems to global society in the 21st century. Such unwise attention is the starting point of a path that leads to unsystematic thinking, which in turn is linked to poor physical and verbal actions.

The Buddha taught various ways to develop thinking and train the mind, the purpose of which is to get the mind working in the right way, encouraging the development of wisdom so that people can see things as they naturally are and live their lives with happiness. Buddhism paves the way for this to happen with its principle of *yoniso-manasikara*, which is translated as wise attention; systematic attention; analytical thinking; critical reflection; thinking in terms of specific conditionality; and thinking by way of causal relations or by way of problem-solving.⁵

The Buddhist principle of *yoniso-manasikara* enables those who seek true happiness in their lives in the 21st century to systemize their thinking, which helps them to live their lives correctly and relate to things properly. They can better manage their personal lives, their society, new technology, and their natural environment. To understand and practice these various aspects of life properly is referred to as living one's life correctly, knowing how to live, or being skilled at conducting one's life.⁶

Systematic thinking, which involves the skill of reflection is the seat of administration regarding correct living in its entirety. It is the leader, guide, and director for all other aspects of right practice. When one can think correctly, one can speak, act, and solve the issues correctly. Therefore, a skill in thinking and reflection leads

to a meritorious life.⁷ Therefore, for people who live their lives in the world today, which is materialistic, fast paced and increasingly tied up with ever evolving technology, systematic and correct is most necessary. It is sometimes said that the Buddha's teachings general, and the development of *yoniso-manasikara* in particular, provide the basis of a thinking system based on Buddhist approach that is a mental vaccine or digital vaccine for the 21st century's world.

II. RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

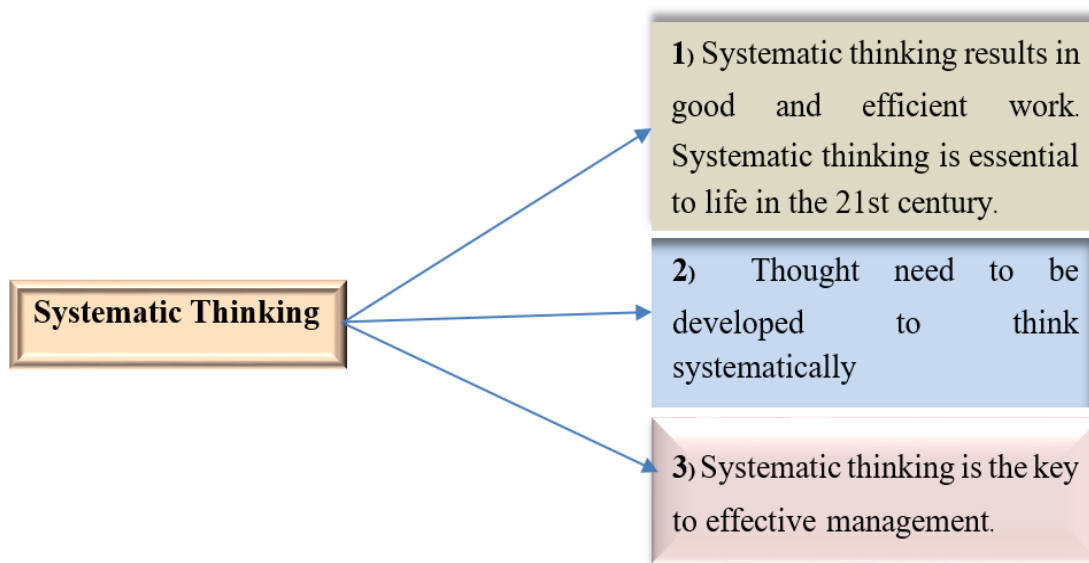
This is mixed research implementing the quantitative, qualitative and documentary methods. The quantitative research was focused on the international students from IBSC, MCU who are thirty-eight in total, the instrument used in this research was questionnaires. The statistics for data analysis were descriptive by using frequency, percentage, mean, assumptions by testing values (t-test) and one-way analysis of variance (One way ANOVA-test). The qualitative research was conducted by the in-depth interviews with five key informants from five countries. For the documentary research the materials were collected from primary sources and secondary sources.

III. RESULTS OF THE RESEARCH

This research was analyzed by using descriptive statistics. Its analytical method employed T-test and One-way ANOVA-test. The results of research analysis are divided according to research objectives: 1. The problems of systematic thinking in the 21st century, 2. The Buddhist principle for the development of systematic thinking in the 21st century and 3. A Buddhist approach for the development of systematic thinking in the 21st century. The results of research analysis are described below.

1. Systematic Thinking

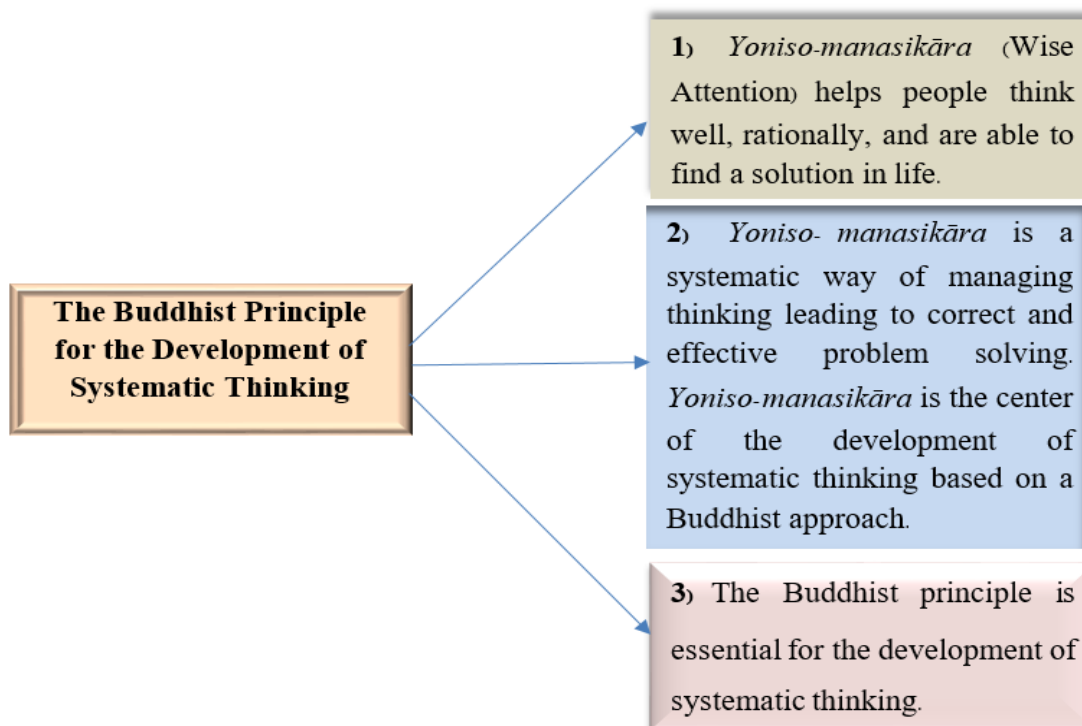
Regarding this point there were totally nine levels of opinion of the respondents who found "Somewhat agree." Among nine opinions, the top three were as the diagram shown below:



2. The Buddhist Principle for the Development of Systematic Thinking

According to this point there were totally eight levels of opinion of the respondents who found

“Strongly agree.” Among eight levels, the top three were sequent below:



3. A Buddhist Approach for the Development of Systematic Thinking in the 21st Century

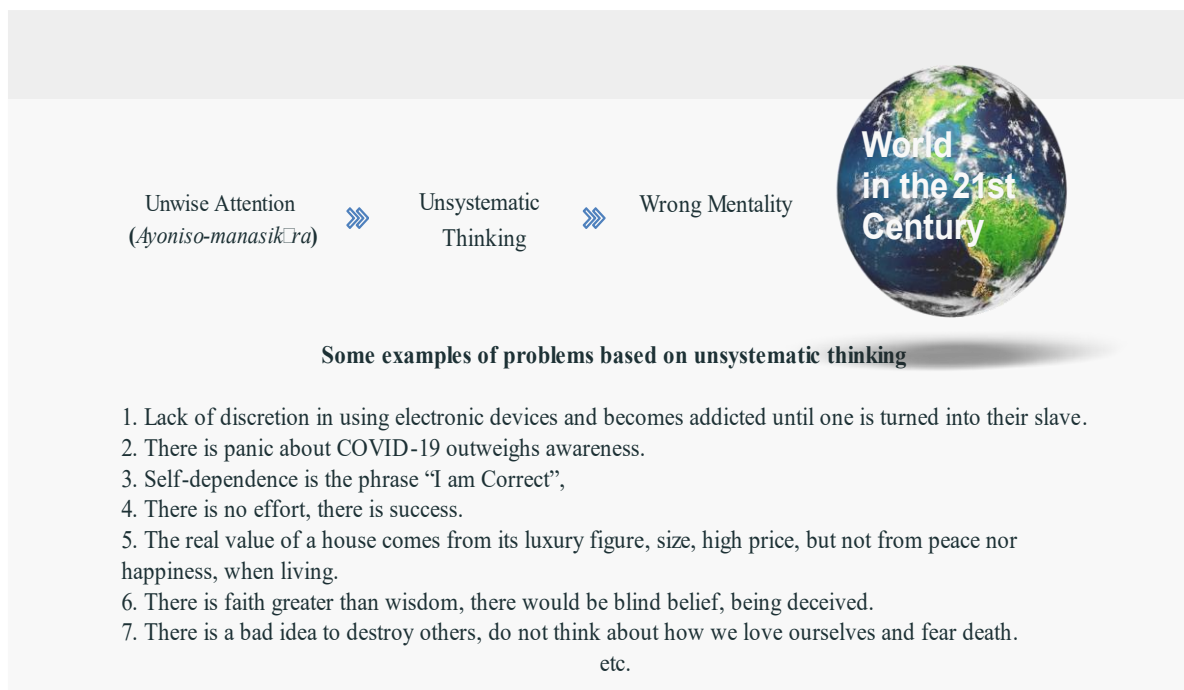
Related to this section there were twenty-two opinions of the respondents who found

“Somewhat agree.” In order of the most popular opinions, the top three were: **Firstly**, when there are “I”, “You”, “Mine”, or “Your”, there is also suffering. When there is no “I”, “You”, “Mine”, or “Your”, there is no more suffering, etc. online

social media have great advantages and disadvantages, and if used with discretion they will bring advantages, but lack of discretion in using them will bring disadvantages. When seeing the dead, always thinking to yourself that you will be like this someday, so non-carelessness in life will arise, etc. **Secondly**, when faith is greater than wisdom, there would be blind belief, being deceived, wrong worshiping (things that are not the Triple Gem), etc.; but when faith and wisdom are equal, the problems are therefore resolved. When there is no effort, there is no success. When there is effort success is there. Every human being has both advantages and disadvantages. One should choose to keep the good part of oneself. Electronic devices have both advantages and disadvantages. They have advantages if one knows how to use them in a creative way. They have disadvantages if one lacks discretion in using them and becomes addicted until one is turned into their slave, etc. **Thirdly**, when there is a lack of morals, there is no normal happiness

in the world. When morality returns, there is peace and normal happiness in the world, etc. Wealth has both advantages and disadvantages. It has advantages if one knows how to be generous and spread that wealth to others. It has disadvantages if one lacks wisdom in using it and becomes enslaved through stinginess. Therefore, one should know how to share, etc. When there is a bad idea to destroy others, think about how we love ourselves and fear death. Other people and animals also love themselves and also fear death just like us, etc.

To make clearer in term of systematic thinking, unsystematic thinking is necessary to be a bit described. Unsystematic thinking which based on *ayoniso-manasikāra* – Unwise attention, is the unmethodical brain process that try to produce the opinions, ideas, logic, intelligence, creativity, and so on, through touching, perception, gathering, remembering, and recalling old information or experiences; of which not systematically done or has not executed properly which may lead to errors.

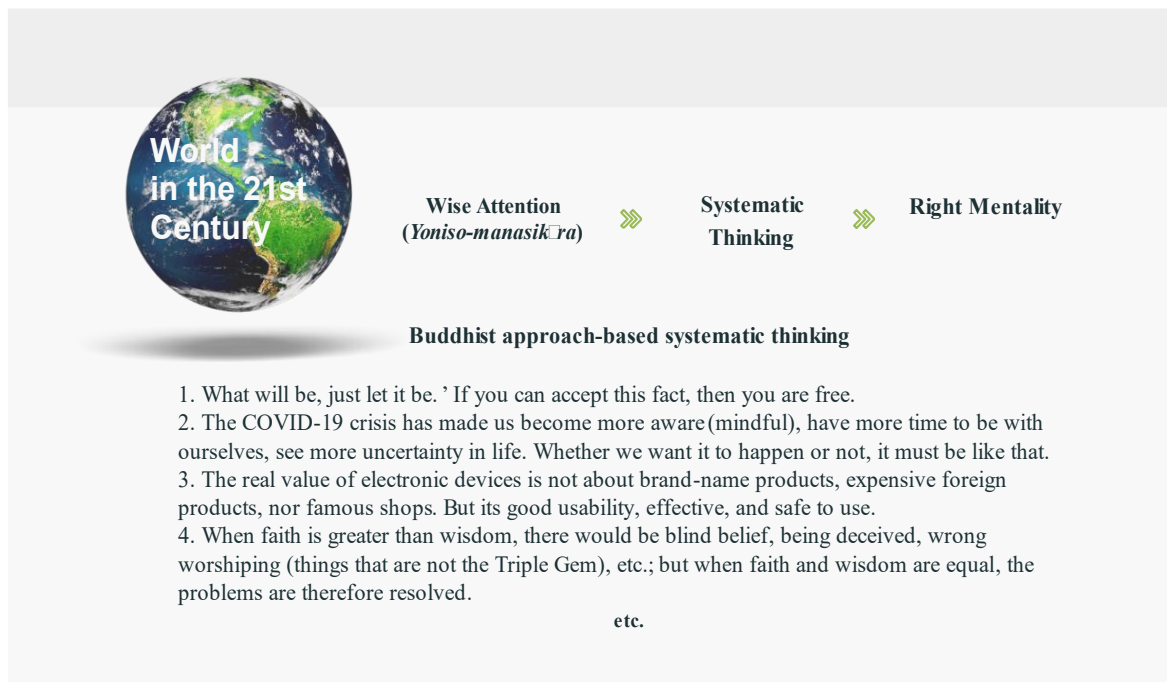


The diagram explained in order to make clear picture of it, as well as to reveal that wrong directions mostly found in unsystematic thinking.

On the contrary, the Buddhist principle of *yoniso-manasikāra* – Wise attention can enable those who seek true happiness in their lives in the 21st century to systemize their thinking, which helps them to live their lives correctly and relate to things properly. They can better manage their

personal lives, their society, new technology, and their natural environment. To understand and practice these various aspects of life properly is referred to as living one's life

correctly, knowing how to live, or being skilled at conducting one's life. This link manifests in in problem-solving of thinking based on Buddhist approach:



This shows thinking systemized is a mental vaccine for the world today.

IV. CONCLUSION

This research article reveals that systematic thinking based on the Buddhist principle of yoniso-manasikāra (Wise attention) is found to be essential to life of people in the 21st century. It is considered as the center point of right mental action, right physical action, and right verbal action that led to its expression in the form of systematic behavior. If a person thinks in a systematic way, their mental, bodily and verbal behavior will also be systematic, and they will be able to systematically solve both personal and social problems. They will also be better able to handle problems within their workplace organization and be equipped to deal with the constant changes that come up in today's world. In addition, systematic thinking based on a Buddhist approach provides a powerful tool that can facilitate the visualization and understanding of individuals, groups of people, and all kinds of natural and man-made systems. It can help people better communicate with others and can assist them improve their business, company, school, or environment. In order to manage

problem solving effectively, systematic thinking can be used to design things of excellence; things that perform well. Systematic thinking enables people to observe and act honestly and clearly. Therefore, to cope with the 21st century's problems, concept of a Buddhist approach-based systematic thinking of yoniso-manasikāra (Wise attention) is very important and necessary for life of people to develop. Because it is likening a rudder of thinking, leading thinking to the right goals, helps people think well, rationally, and be able to find a solution in life. It is a systematic way of managing thinking leading to correct and effective problem solving. In short, what ought to be done, what ought to be spoken and what ought to be thought, systematic thinking based on yoniso-manasikāra (Wise attention) paves the way to proceed people's life, works etc., systematically and efficiently.

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