Academic Session Summary

Summary Plenary session with Group Presentations
At the 3rd International Conference on Gross National Happiness, World Views Make a Difference: Towards Global Transformation, 28th of November 2007 at Chulalongkorn University, Bangkok, Thailand.

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The academic session has been organized for the first time. We tried to meet the academic standard which is used in the mainstream. We used double blind review process in selecting the papers. We have gathered the papers through participatory process and we have gathered more than 40 researchers from all around the world.

We found that GDP growth does not lead to happiness. Uncontrolled growth in GDP leads to social and environmental degradation and also less unhappiness. Happiness can come from variety of sources such as urban and spatial planning, clean and cheap water, microfinance, sufficiency economy, self immunity philosophy, and civil engagement through participatory approach. Individual happiness can come from age, education, time use balance of work and life and right livelihood. For example one researcher recommended us to implement spiritual ideas at work.

There are two tools that we found through research. One of them is dialogue and promoting listening skills which can increase peace of mind and strengthen relationship. The second is storytelling.

Who can create happiness? Monastic body can promote happiness by playing role in teaching and having more engaged role in the society. Others include spiritually engaged social movements and teaches who should engage their hearts in teaching. Government bodies can promote happiness through for example civil service reform. Issues to be aware of is that social transformation is non linear process.

How do we measure it? GNH indicators should be multidimensional and should incorporate measurement of abstract values and human needs from very basic needs to spiritual needs. Indicators should also consider environmental issues, wellbeing which includes individual and societal happiness, lifetime satisfaction, mental quality and capacity.

What is next? We have five points. We need to strengthen research in relativities and subjectivities, we need to promote action research, promote common vocabulary to promote common understanding for building up knowledge. We need new knowledge creation. We need to bridge compartmentalized knowledge and promote multidisciplinary and even interdisciplinary research and cooperation which is difficult. We need to develop new research methods. Thirdly we need to promote cross cultural research. We have specific research streams in each discipline but we need to bridge some dimensions and utilize ideas from for example cross-cultural management. We can use these tools to enrich particularism and address local issues. We should work on not only particularism but also on globalism. Some of our researchers introduced multidisciplinary research not only ‘off line’ but also through
online communities to learn together and be together. Fifth and the last point is to do research for policy advocacy. We need to invite more stakeholders from the mainstream to talk and start projects together. One of the ways is to begin multistakeholder research with mainstream researchers and policy makers. We need to promote research which promotes cooperation among variety of stakeholders.