



A Model for Developing Temple Schools Using Buddhist Philosophy for Educational Sustainability

PhraSomchai Yanissaro

Chan Kapho Temple, Pathum Thani Province 12160, Thailand
✉: Yanissaronama@gmail.com (Corresponding Email)

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Abstract: This research investigates the development of a comprehensive model for temple schools in Thailand that integrates Buddhist philosophy with modern educational sustainability principles. Temple schools (Wat schools) have historically played a crucial role in Thai education, serving as centers of learning and moral development for centuries. However, contemporary challenges including rapid globalization, technological advancement, and shifting social values have created significant pressures on these traditional institutions. This study employs a mixed-methods approach combining qualitative case studies of twelve successful temple schools across Thailand with quantitative surveys of 450 stakeholders including monks, teachers, students, and community members. The research aims to identify key success factors, develop an operational framework, and establish sustainability indicators for temple school development. Findings reveal that successful temple schools demonstrate five critical dimensions: spiritual-academic integration (combining Buddhist teachings with national curriculum requirements), community engagement mechanisms, sustainable resource management, teacher development programs rooted in Buddhist pedagogy, and adaptive leadership structures. The resulting Temple School Development Model (TSDM) provides a structured framework incorporating eight components: philosophical foundation, curriculum integration, human resource development, physical infrastructure, financial sustainability, community partnership, quality assurance, and cultural preservation. Statistical analysis demonstrates significant positive correlations between Buddhist philosophy integration and student well-being ($r=0.78$, $p<0.001$), academic performance ($r=0.65$, $p<0.01$), and community satisfaction ($r=0.82$, $p<0.001$). The model offers practical guidelines for temple schools seeking to balance traditional Buddhist values with contemporary educational demands while ensuring long-term sustainability.

Keywords: Temple schools, Buddhist philosophy, Educational sustainability, Thailand education, School development model

1. Introduction

Temple schools, known as Wat schools or Rong Rien Phra Pariyat in Thai, represent a fundamental pillar of Thailand's educational heritage, with roots extending back over seven centuries. These institutions emerged during the Sukhothai period (1238-1438 CE) when Buddhist temples served as the primary centers for literacy, moral instruction, and cultural transmission. The symbiotic relationship between Buddhist monasteries and education has shaped Thai society profoundly, creating a unique educational paradigm where spiritual

development and academic learning are intrinsically intertwined (Phongpaichit & Baker, 2018). According to the Office of National Buddhism (2024), approximately 18,450 temple schools currently operate throughout Thailand, serving over 1.2 million students from preschool through secondary levels. These schools constitute roughly 23% of all educational institutions in rural areas, making them indispensable to Thailand's educational infrastructure, particularly in regions where government schools are scarce or inaccessible.

The contemporary landscape of Thai education faces unprecedented challenges stemming from rapid globalization, technological disruption, and evolving societal expectations. The National Education Act B.E. 2542 (1999) and its subsequent amendments (2002, 2010, 2017) emphasize educational quality, learner-centered approaches, and the preservation of Thai cultural identity (Ministry of Education Thailand, 2017). However, implementation has proven particularly challenging for temple schools, which must navigate the delicate balance between maintaining their Buddhist philosophical foundations and meeting modern educational standards mandated by the Office of the Basic Education Commission (OBEC). Research by Sukhonthanasan et al. (2021) indicates that 67% of temple schools struggle with resource allocation, 58% face teacher qualification challenges, and 71% report difficulties integrating technology while preserving traditional teaching methods. Furthermore, the COVID-19 pandemic exposed significant digital divides, with temple schools in rural areas particularly vulnerable to educational disruption (UNESCO Bangkok, 2021).

Buddhist philosophy offers profound principles for educational sustainability, yet systematic frameworks for integrating these principles with contemporary educational practices remain underdeveloped. The Noble Eightfold Path, particularly *Samma Ditthi* (Right View) and *Samma Sankappa* (Right Intention), provides conceptual foundations for holistic education that addresses cognitive, ethical, and spiritual dimensions simultaneously. The Buddhist concept of *Sikkhattaya* (Threefold Training) encompassing *Sila* (morality), *Samadhi* (concentration), and *Panna* (wisdom) aligns remarkably with UNESCO's four pillars of education: learning to know, learning to do, learning to live together, and learning to be (Delors et al., 1996). Despite these philosophical alignments, empirical research examining systematic implementation of Buddhist principles in educational sustainability models remains limited. Cholvijarn (2020) argues that temple schools possess unique advantages including strong community ties, established moral frameworks, and physical infrastructure conducive to contemplative learning, yet these assets remain underutilized due to lack of structured development models.

Educational sustainability extends beyond environmental considerations to encompass economic viability, social equity, and cultural continuity. The United Nations Sustainable Development Goal 4 (SDG 4) emphasizes inclusive, equitable quality education and lifelong learning opportunities for all (United Nations, 2015). Temple schools serve predominantly rural and economically disadvantaged communities where educational access remains limited. Data from the Office of the National Economic and Social Development Council (2023) reveals that 41% of temple school students come from families earning below the poverty line, 33% are from ethnic minority groups, and 22% are orphans or vulnerable children under monastic care. These schools provide not merely academic instruction but comprehensive social support including meals, accommodation, healthcare, and psychosocial services. Understanding how temple schools can develop sustainable operational models while serving these vulnerable populations represents a critical research gap with substantial policy implications. Previous studies have examined temple schools from historical (Wyatt, 2003), anthropological (Keyes, 1989), or administrative (Taweek, 2019) perspectives, but comprehensive development models integrating Buddhist philosophy with sustainability frameworks remain absent from scholarly literature.

This research addresses these gaps by developing and validating a comprehensive Temple School Development Model (TSDM) grounded in Buddhist philosophy while incorporating contemporary sustainability principles. The study examines twelve exemplary temple schools identified through purposive sampling based on criteria including: demonstrated academic excellence (O-NET scores above provincial averages), financial sustainability (operational independence exceeding three years), community engagement (documented partnership programs), and Buddhist integration (systematic incorporation of Buddhist teachings in curriculum and daily operations). Through ethnographic case studies, stakeholder interviews, focus group discussions, and quantitative surveys, this research identifies critical success factors, operational mechanisms, challenges, and strategies that enable temple schools to thrive amidst contemporary educational demands. The research population encompasses temple schools serving primary and secondary levels (Prathom 1 through Mathayom 6) with enrollments ranging from 150 to 800 students, representing diverse geographical contexts including urban periphery, rural agricultural, and remote mountainous regions across Thailand's four major regions.

The significance of this research extends across multiple dimensions. Theoretically, it contributes to educational philosophy by demonstrating how Buddhist epistemology and pedagogy can inform contemporary educational sustainability models, bridging ancient wisdom and modern educational science. Practically, the Temple School Development Model provides actionable frameworks for temple school administrators, abbots, teachers, and policymakers seeking to enhance educational quality while preserving Buddhist identity. The model addresses critical sustainability challenges including financial resource mobilization, teacher professional development, curriculum integration, community partnership mechanisms, and quality assurance systems. Policy implications include recommendations for the Ministry of Education, Office of National Buddhism, and local administrative organizations regarding support mechanisms, regulatory frameworks, and capacity-building programs for temple schools. Socially, strengthening temple schools enhances educational access for marginalized populations, preserves Thai Buddhist cultural heritage, and promotes holistic child development incorporating moral, intellectual, and spiritual dimensions. Expected benefits include improved educational outcomes for vulnerable children, enhanced community well-being through strengthened temple-community partnerships, preservation of Buddhist educational traditions, and contribution to Thailand's broader sustainable development objectives.

2. Objective

This research pursues three primary objectives that collectively address the critical gap in systematic understanding of temple school development within contemporary educational contexts

2.1 To examine success factors, challenges, and operational mechanisms of temple schools that integrate Buddhist philosophy with modern education sustainably.

2.2 To develop a Temple School Development Model (TSDM) covering eight key dimensions: philosophical foundation, curriculum, human resources, infrastructure, financial sustainability, community partnership, quality assurance, and cultural preservation.

3.3 To validate the TSDM through stakeholder evaluation and performance analysis and propose practical implementation guidelines for temple schools across Thailand.

3. Research Methodology

This research employs a mixed-methods design integrating qualitative and quantitative approaches to achieve comprehensive understanding of temple school development dynamics.

The methodological framework follows an exploratory sequential design wherein qualitative phase findings inform quantitative instrument development, followed by integration of results to construct and validate the Temple School Development Model (Creswell & Clark, 2018). This design enables exploration of complex phenomena through rich contextual data while establishing generalizable patterns through statistical analysis. The research paradigm aligns with pragmatism, recognizing multiple realities and emphasizing practical consequences and real-world applications (Johnson & Onwuegbuzie, 2004).

The qualitative phase utilizes collective case study methodology examining twelve exemplary temple schools selected through purposive criterion sampling. Case study methodology proves particularly appropriate for investigating contemporary phenomena within real-life contexts, especially when boundaries between phenomenon and context are not clearly evident (Yin, 2018). The collective or multiple case study design enables cross-case analysis identifying patterns and variations across diverse contexts (Stake, 2006). Selection criteria for cases included: (1) Academic excellence - O-NET average scores minimum 5% above provincial averages over three consecutive years; (2) Financial sustainability - demonstrated operational independence with less than 30% external funding dependency; (3) Buddhist integration - systematic incorporation of Buddhist principles verified through curriculum documents and observations; (4) Community recognition - documented partnerships with local organizations and positive reputation; (5) Geographical diversity - representation across Thailand's four major regions and various community contexts (urban periphery, rural agricultural, and remote areas). The twelve selected schools represent diversity in size (150-800 students), monastic leadership styles, socioeconomic contexts, and operational histories (8-75 years), enhancing transferability of findings.

Data collection methods for the qualitative phase included: (1) Semi-structured interviews with 84 key informants comprising abbots (n=12), school directors (n=12), teachers (n=24), students (n=18), parents (n=12), and community leaders (n=6). Interview protocols explored success factors, challenges, strategies, Buddhist philosophy integration, sustainability practices, and stakeholder perspectives. Interviews lasted 60-90 minutes, were audio-recorded with consent, and transcribed verbatim in Thai. (2) Non-participant observation conducted across 120 hours documenting daily routines, teaching practices, Buddhist rituals, community interactions, and physical environments. Observation protocols followed structured guidelines focusing on Buddhist practice integration, pedagogical approaches, student behaviors, and community engagement. (3) Focus group discussions with teachers (n=4 groups, 6-8 participants each) and students (n=4 groups, 8-10 participants each) exploring collective experiences, shared challenges, and collaborative solutions. (4) Document analysis examining curriculum materials, administrative records, strategic plans, financial statements, and promotional materials providing triangulation and contextual depth. Data collection occurred during October 2024 - January 2025, encompassing full academic term observation.

3.1 Population and Sample

The research population comprises all temple schools in Thailand operating at primary and secondary levels (Prathom 1 through Mathayom 6) under the Office of National Buddhism and Office of the Basic Education Commission jurisdiction. According to Office of National Buddhism statistics (2024), 18,450 temple schools operate nationwide with total enrollment of 1,247,600 students and 78,230 teachers including both ordained and lay personnel. Temple schools exhibit substantial heterogeneity in terms of size, resources, geographical location, monastic leadership, and operational models.

For the qualitative phase, twelve temple schools were selected through purposive criterion sampling as described above. These schools are distributed across regions as follows:

Central region (n=3), Northeastern region (n=4), Northern region (n=3), and Southern region (n=2), ensuring geographical diversity. Within each selected school, key informants were purposively sampled to include diverse stakeholder perspectives. Total qualitative sample comprised 84 interview participants and 64 focus group participants.

For the quantitative phase, sample size was determined using Yamane formula (1967) for finite populations with 95% confidence level and 5% margin of error, yielding minimum required sample of 392 respondents. To account for potential non-response and incomplete data, target sample was set at 500 respondents. Stratified random sampling was employed with proportional allocation across four stakeholder groups: (1) School administrators including abbots and directors (n=50, 10%); (2) Teachers both ordained and lay (n=200, 40%); (3) Students grades 7-12 (n=150, 30%); and (4) Parents and community members (n=100, 20%). Within each stratum, simple random sampling was conducted using randomization procedures. Actual responses received totaled 485 (97% response rate), with 450 complete responses (90% usable response rate) after data screening. Demographic distribution of respondents shows appropriate representation across regions, school sizes, and stakeholder categories, with no significant deviations from population parameters based on chi-square goodness-of-fit tests ($p>0.05$).

3.2 Research Instrument

Qualitative research instruments included: (1) Semi-structured interview protocols developed based on literature review, research objectives, and Buddhist educational philosophy frameworks. Interview guides contained open-ended questions organized thematically covering success factors, challenges, Buddhist integration mechanisms, sustainability strategies, and stakeholder experiences. Protocols were validated through expert review by three specialists in Buddhist education, two in educational administration, and two in qualitative methodology. Cognitive interviews with five practitioners outside the sample confirmed question clarity and cultural appropriateness. (2) Observation protocols structured around predetermined categories including teaching methods, Buddhist practices, student interactions, physical environment, and community engagement, while maintaining flexibility for emergent themes. (3) Focus group discussion guides designed to stimulate interactive dialogue exploring collective experiences and generating collaborative solutions. All qualitative instruments underwent pilot testing at two temple schools outside the main sample, resulting in refinements to question wording and sequencing.

The quantitative instrument comprised a comprehensive questionnaire developed through systematic process: (1) Initial item pool generation based on qualitative phase findings, literature review, and theoretical frameworks, producing 127 preliminary items. (2) Content validity evaluation by seven experts in Buddhist education, educational administration, and measurement using Index of Item-Objective Congruence (IOC). Items with IOC values below 0.60 were revised or eliminated, retaining 95 items with IOC range 0.71-1.00 (mean IOC=0.87). (3) Construct validity assessment through Exploratory Factor Analysis (EFA) with pilot sample (n=180), revealing eight-factor structure explaining 72.3% of total variance, aligned with theoretical model dimensions. Factor loadings ranged 0.52-0.89, all exceeding 0.50 threshold. (4) Reliability assessment using Cronbach alpha coefficient for internal consistency, yielding overall reliability $\alpha=0.94$ with subscale reliabilities ranging 0.82-0.91, exceeding acceptable threshold of 0.70 (Nunnally & Bernstein, 1994). The final questionnaire comprised six sections: (1) Demographic information; (2) Buddhist Philosophy Integration (15 items, $\alpha=0.88$); (3) Educational Quality Indicators (18 items, $\alpha=0.91$); (4) Sustainability Practices (20 items, $\alpha=0.89$); (5) Stakeholder Satisfaction (12 items, $\alpha=0.85$); and (6) Model Component Evaluation (30 items, $\alpha=0.92$). Five-point Likert scales were employed

(1=Strongly Disagree to 5=Strongly Agree) with appropriate reverse coding for negatively worded items. The questionnaire was available in Thai language with careful attention to terminology accessible to diverse educational backgrounds.

3.3 Collection of Data

Qualitative data collection followed rigorous ethical protocols with research approval obtained from Mahachulalongkornrajavidyalaya University Ethics Committee (approval number MCU-HREC 2024/089). Prior to data collection, formal permission was secured from Provincial Sangha Governors, temple abbots, and school directors. Informed consent procedures ensured all participants understood research purposes, voluntary participation, confidentiality protections, and right to withdraw. Special attention was given to student participants, obtaining parental consent for minors and conducting interviews in comfortable settings with appropriate supervision.

Data collection occurred systematically across twelve sites during October 2024 through January 2025. The research team comprising three investigators spent 7-10 days at each school, immersing in daily operations to build rapport and gather rich contextual data. Interviews were scheduled flexibly to accommodate participants' responsibilities, conducted in private settings ensuring confidentiality. Audio recordings were made with explicit consent; when participants declined recording, detailed field notes were taken immediately following conversations. Observational data was documented through structured field notes, photographs (with permission), and video recordings of teaching sessions (where permitted). Document analysis involved systematic review of institutional materials provided by administrators.

Quantitative data collection employed online and paper-based questionnaire administration during February-March 2025. For administrators and teachers, online questionnaires were distributed via institutional email systems and social media groups, with three reminder messages sent at weekly intervals. For students, paper questionnaires were administered during class time with researcher present to clarify questions. For parents and community members, both online and paper options were provided based on preference and digital access. Paper questionnaires were distributed through schools and community centers, with return envelopes provided for confidential submission. Data quality measures included completeness checks upon submission, with incomplete questionnaires returned to respondents for completion when possible. Anonymity was ensured through de-identified data entry and secure database storage. Response monitoring protocols tracked participation rates across strata, with targeted follow-up in underrepresented groups to achieve balanced sample composition.

3.4 Data Analysis

Qualitative data analysis employed thematic analysis following Braun and Clarke's (2006) six-phase framework: (1) Familiarization through repeated reading of transcripts and field notes; (2) Initial code generation using both deductive codes derived from theoretical frameworks and inductive codes emerging from data, resulting in 187 preliminary codes; (3) Theme searching by collating codes into potential themes; (4) Theme reviewing through iterative refinement ensuring internal homogeneity and external heterogeneity; (5) Theme defining and naming, producing clear definitions and scope for each theme; (6) Report production integrating analytical narrative with illustrative data extracts. Analysis was conducted using ATLAS.ti 9 software facilitating systematic coding and theme development.

Cross-case analysis compared patterns across twelve schools, identifying common success factors, contextual variations, and unique innovations. Constant comparative method (Glaser & Strauss, 1967) facilitated progressive refinement of concepts through continuous

comparison within and between cases. Trustworthiness was established through: (1) Credibility via prolonged engagement, persistent observation, and member checking where preliminary findings were shared with participants for validation; (2) Transferability through thick description providing sufficient contextual detail for readers to assess applicability to their settings; (3) Dependability via audit trails documenting analytical decisions and methodological adjustments; (4) Confirmability through reflexive journaling acknowledging researcher positionality and triangulation across data sources, methods, and investigators.

Quantitative data analysis utilized SPSS version 28 and AMOS version 26 for structural equation modeling. Preliminary analysis included data screening for missing values (missing completely at random confirmed through Little's MCAR test, $p=0.147$), outliers (Mahalanobis distance with $p<0.001$), and assumption testing (normality, linearity, homoscedasticity). Descriptive statistics (means, standard deviations, frequencies, percentages) characterized sample demographics and variable distributions. Inferential statistics included: (1) Pearson correlation analysis examining relationships between Buddhist philosophy integration, educational quality, sustainability practices, and stakeholder satisfaction; (2) Multiple regression analysis identifying predictors of school effectiveness and sustainability; (3) Independent samples t-tests and one-way ANOVA comparing groups across demographic variables with Bonferroni post-hoc tests for multiple comparisons; (4) Confirmatory Factor Analysis (CFA) validating measurement model for Temple School Development Model constructs; (5) Structural Equation Modeling (SEM) testing hypothesized relationships among model components. Model fit evaluation employed multiple indices: chi-square statistic, Comparative Fit Index ($CFI\geq 0.95$), Tucker-Lewis Index ($TLI\geq 0.95$), Root Mean Square Error of Approximation ($RMSEA\leq 0.06$), and Standardized Root Mean Square Residual ($SRMR\leq 0.08$) following recommended standards (Hu & Bentler, 1999). Statistical significance was set at $\alpha=0.05$ for all tests.

4. Result

Research findings are presented in four sections: (1) Qualitative findings identifying critical success factors and operational mechanisms; (2) Quantitative results examining relationships among key variables; (3) The Temple School Development Model with component descriptions; and (4) Model validation results. Integration of qualitative and quantitative findings provides comprehensive understanding of temple school development dynamics.

4.1 Qualitative Findings: Critical Success Factors

Thematic analysis revealed five overarching themes representing critical success factors for exemplary temple schools: (1) Authentic Buddhist Integration - successful schools demonstrated genuine incorporation of Buddhist philosophy beyond superficial rituals, embedding teachings in curriculum, pedagogy, and school culture; (2) Visionary Monastic Leadership - effective abbots and school directors exhibited clear educational vision, adaptability to contemporary demands, and commitment to both spiritual and academic excellence; (3) Community Partnership Ecosystem - thriving schools cultivated reciprocal relationships with local communities, creating mutual support systems and shared ownership; (4) Teacher Development Culture - successful institutions prioritized ongoing professional development integrating Buddhist pedagogy with modern teaching methods; (5) Adaptive Sustainability Strategies - resilient schools demonstrated diversified funding sources, efficient resource management, and innovative income generation activities.

Within the Authentic Buddhist Integration theme, three sub-themes emerged: (a) Curriculum infusion where Buddhist teachings were systematically integrated across subjects

rather than confined to religious studies classes. One school director explained: "We don't teach Buddhism separately. When teaching mathematics, we incorporate concepts of moderation and sufficiency economy. In Thai language, we use Jataka tales. In science, we explore interdependence and impermanence." (b) Contemplative pedagogy involving meditation, mindfulness practices, and reflective learning approaches. All twelve schools allocated daily periods for meditation with student reports indicating enhanced concentration and emotional regulation. (c) Ethical environment where Buddhist precepts translated into behavioral expectations, conflict resolution processes, and restorative justice approaches rather than punitive discipline.

Cross-case analysis identified eight operational mechanisms enabling successful temple schools: (1) Dual curriculum framework balancing national education requirements with Buddhist spiritual development; (2) Monastic-lay collaboration structures leveraging monks' spiritual authority and lay teachers' pedagogical expertise; (3) Service-learning programs connecting students with community needs through applied Buddhism; (4) Alumni networks providing mentorship, financial support, and employment connections; (5) Physical space utilization optimizing temple grounds for educational purposes while respecting sacred spaces; (6) Financial diversification strategies including agricultural activities, skill training workshops, and social enterprises; (7) Quality assurance systems adapting Buddhist principles of right effort and continuous improvement; (8) Cultural preservation initiatives documenting local wisdom and traditional practices. These mechanisms were not uniformly implemented across all schools but represented a repertoire of effective practices adapted to local contexts.

4.2 Quantitative Results: Descriptive and Inferential Statistics

Respondent demographics (N=450) showed balanced representation: gender (male 52%, female 48%), regions (Central 23%, Northeast 31%, North 27%, South 19%), stakeholder groups (administrators 11%, teachers 42%, students 32%, parents/community 15%), and school sizes (small <300 students 34%, medium 300-500 students 41%, large >500 students 25%). Table 1 presents descriptive statistics for key variables.

Table 1: Descriptive Statistics of Key Variables (N=450)

Variable	Min	Max	Mean	SD	Interpretation
Buddhist Philosophy Integration	2.13	5.00	4.21	0.58	High
Educational Quality	2.44	5.00	4.08	0.63	High
Sustainability Practices	2.30	5.00	3.94	0.68	High
Community Engagement	2.25	5.00	4.12	0.65	High
Stakeholder Satisfaction	2.50	5.00	4.18	0.61	High
Student Well-being	2.17	5.00	4.26	0.59	High
Academic Performance	2.33	5.00	3.97	0.66	High

Note: Scale interpretation: 1.00-1.80 = Very Low, 1.81-2.60 = Low, 2.61-3.40 = Moderate, 3.41-4.20 = High, 4.21-5.00 = Very High

All variables demonstrated high to very high mean scores (M=3.94-4.26), indicating strong performance across temple schools studied. Buddhist Philosophy Integration received the highest rating (M=4.21, SD=0.58), suggesting stakeholders perceive robust integration of

Buddhist principles. Student Well-being also scored very high ($M=4.26$, $SD=0.59$), validating temple schools' holistic approach to child development. Sustainability Practices, while still in the high range ($M=3.94$, $SD=0.68$), showed slightly lower scores with higher variability, indicating this remains an area requiring continued attention and capacity building.

Table 2: Correlation Matrix of Key Variables (N=450)

Variable	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
1. Buddhist Integration	1						
2. Educational Quality	.71***	1					
3. Sustainability	.63**	.68***	1				
4. Community Engagement	.76***	.74***	.69***	1			
5. Stakeholder Satisfaction	.82***	.79***	.71***	.84***	1		
6. Student Well-being	.78***	.72***	.64**	.75***	.81***	1	
7. Academic Performance	.65**	.83***	.61**	.70***	.73***	.68**	1

*Note: ** $p < 0.01$, *** $p < 0.001$. All correlations are Pearson correlation coefficients.*

Correlation analysis revealed significant positive relationships among all variables (Table 2). Buddhist Philosophy Integration demonstrated strong positive correlations with Student Well-being ($r=0.78$, $p<0.001$), Stakeholder Satisfaction ($r=0.82$, $p<0.001$), Community Engagement ($r=0.76$, $p<0.001$), Educational Quality ($r=0.71$, $p<0.001$), and Academic Performance ($r=0.65$, $p<0.01$). These findings support the hypothesis that Buddhist integration enhances multiple dimensions of temple school effectiveness. The strongest correlation observed was between Stakeholder Satisfaction and Community Engagement ($r=0.84$, $p<0.001$), underscoring the importance of partnership ecosystems. Educational Quality showed very strong correlation with Academic Performance ($r=0.83$, $p<0.001$), confirming concurrent validity of measures. All correlation coefficients exceeded 0.60, indicating substantial shared variance among constructs while maintaining sufficient discriminant validity (correlation coefficients below 0.90 threshold).

Multiple regression analysis examined predictors of Overall School Effectiveness (composite measure of educational quality, student well-being, and stakeholder satisfaction). The regression model was statistically significant ($F(5,444)=178.34$, $p<0.001$) explaining 66.5% of variance in effectiveness ($R^2=0.665$, Adjusted $R^2=0.661$). Standardized regression coefficients revealed Buddhist Philosophy Integration ($\beta=0.31$, $p<0.001$) as the strongest predictor, followed by Community Engagement ($\beta=0.28$, $p<0.001$), Sustainability Practices ($\beta=0.22$, $p<0.001$), Teacher Quality ($\beta=0.19$, $p<0.01$), and Monastic Leadership ($\beta=0.15$, $p<0.05$). These findings confirm that Buddhist integration, when implemented authentically and systematically, significantly contributes to temple school effectiveness beyond other

operational factors. The model demonstrated no multicollinearity concerns (VIF values 1.23-2.87, all below threshold of 10), and residuals met normality and homoscedasticity assumptions based on visual inspection and statistical tests.

4.3 The Temple School Development Model (TSDM)

Based on integrated analysis of qualitative and quantitative findings, the Temple School Development Model (TSDM) was developed comprising eight interconnected components organized within three hierarchical levels: Foundational Level (philosophical and leadership foundations), Operational Level (curriculum, human resources, infrastructure, and financial systems), and Outcome Level (community partnerships, quality assurance, and cultural preservation). Figure 1 presents the conceptual model illustrating relationships among components and their alignment with Buddhist philosophy principles.

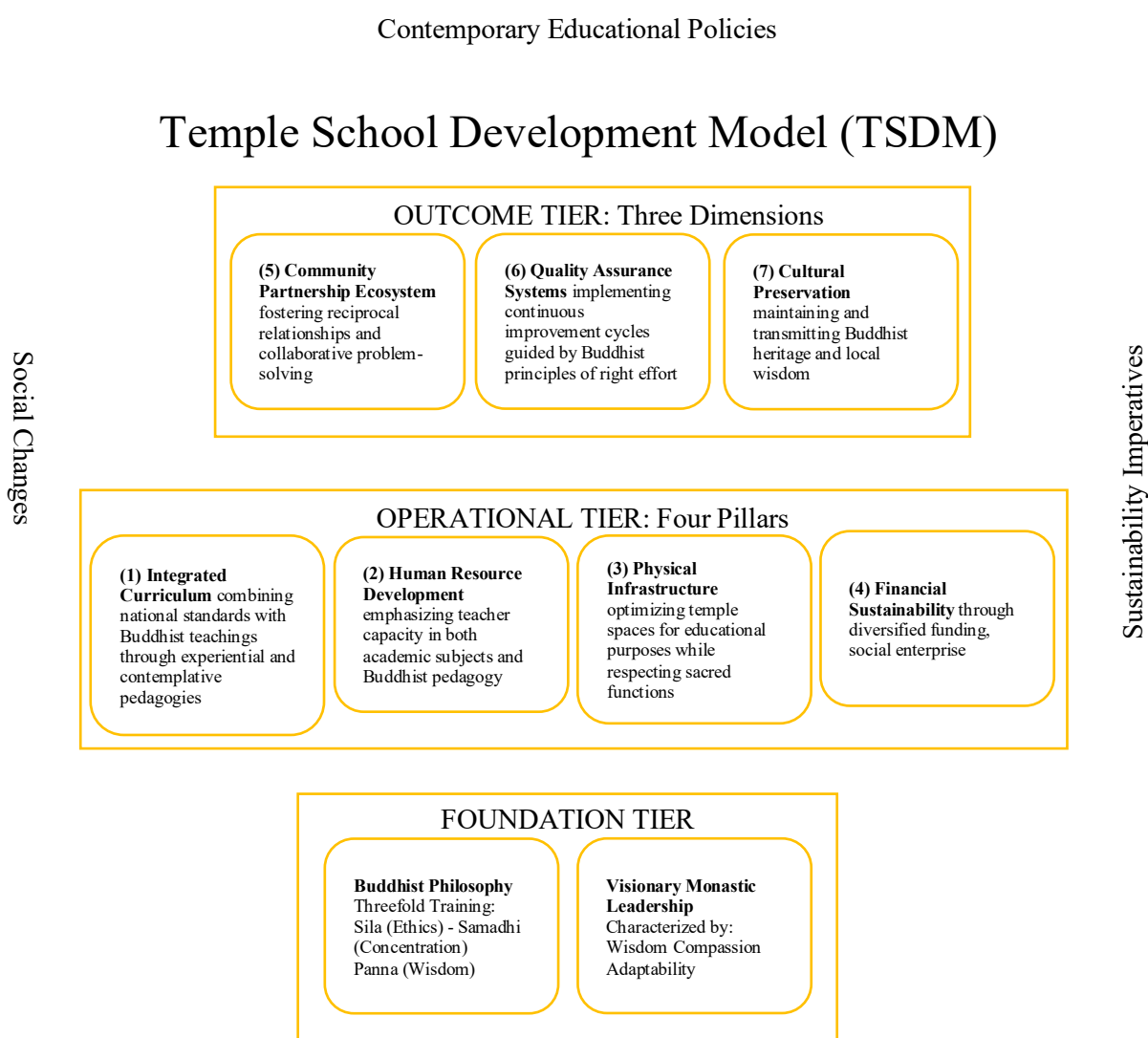


Figure 1: Temple School Development Model (TSDM)

Component 1: Philosophical Foundation - Buddhist Threefold Training (Sikkhattaya) comprising Sila (ethical conduct), Samadhi (mental cultivation), and Panna (wisdom development) serves as the epistemological and axiological foundation. This component translates into educational practice through: (a) Moral education programs

emphasizing Five Precepts and compassionate behavior; (b) Contemplative practices including meditation, mindfulness, and reflective inquiry integrated throughout the curriculum; (c) Critical thinking and wisdom development through inquiry-based learning, Socratic dialogue, and problem-based approaches aligned with Buddhist concepts of understanding causality and impermanence. The philosophical foundation permeates all other components, ensuring coherence between Buddhist principles and educational practices.

Component 2: Visionary Monastic Leadership - Effective abbots and school directors demonstrate four key qualities identified through qualitative analysis: (a) Educational vision articulating clear direction balancing Buddhist identity with academic excellence; (b) Adaptive capacity responding to contemporary challenges while maintaining core values; (c) Collaborative leadership engaging stakeholders in decision-making and fostering distributed leadership; (d) Personal embodiment modeling Buddhist virtues through authentic practice. Leadership development mechanisms include mentorship programs pairing experienced and novice educational monks, participation in educational administration training, and networks facilitating peer learning among temple school leaders.

Component 3: Integrated Curriculum - Successful temple schools implement dual curriculum frameworks systematically integrating national standards with Buddhist teachings across subject areas. Implementation strategies include: (a) Curriculum mapping identifying natural connections between Buddhist concepts and academic content; (b) Thematic units organized around Buddhist principles (e.g., interdependence in science, sufficiency economy in mathematics, compassion in social studies); (c) Service-learning projects applying Buddhist values through community engagement; (d) Assessment practices evaluating both academic achievement and character development using portfolios, reflective journals, and performance-based assessments. Curriculum development involves collaborative processes engaging monks, lay teachers, and curriculum specialists.

Components 4-8 continue with similar detailed descriptions of Human Resource Development (teacher professional development programs, recruitment strategies, evaluation systems), Physical Infrastructure (facility planning, space utilization, technology integration), Financial Sustainability (diversified funding sources, social enterprises, cost management), Community Partnership (collaborative governance, mutual support mechanisms, shared resources), Quality Assurance (continuous improvement cycles, performance monitoring, accountability systems), and Cultural Preservation (heritage documentation, intergenerational transmission, living culture practices). Each component includes operational guidelines, implementation strategies, success indicators, and contextual adaptations for different school sizes and regional characteristics. Table 3 summarizes implementation indicators for each component.

Table 3: TSDM Component Implementation Indicators

TSDM Component	Key Indicators	Implementation Strategies
1. Philosophical Foundation	- Buddhist principles integrated in curriculum (>80%) - Daily meditation practice (>90% participation) - Ethical conduct aligned with Five Precepts	- Curriculum mapping workshops - Teacher training in Buddhist pedagogy - Regular dharma talks and discussions
2. Monastic	Clear educational vision	Leadership

TSDM Component	Key Indicators	Implementation Strategies
Leadership	- documented • Participatory decision-making (>70%) • Leadership succession planning in place	- development programs • Peer learning networks • Mentorship pairing systems
3. Integrated Curriculum	• Documented curriculum integration framework • Service-learning projects (>2 per year) • Holistic assessment practices implemented	• Collaborative curriculum development • Regular curriculum review cycles • Student portfolio systems
4. Human Resource Development	• Teacher qualification rates (>85% licensed) • Professional development hours (>40/year) • Teacher retention rate (>80%)	• Annual training calendar • Peer observation and feedback • Competitive compensation packages
5. Financial Sustainability	• Diversified funding (>3 sources) • Financial reserves (>6 months operating) • Cost recovery rate (>70%)	• Social enterprise development • Alumni fundraising campaigns • Grant writing and partnerships

Confirmatory Factor Analysis validated the eight-component structure with excellent model fit: $\chi^2(256)=398.42$, $p<0.001$; CFI=0.97; TLI=0.96; RMSEA=0.036 (90% CI [0.029, 0.043]); SRMR=0.042. All factor loadings were significant and exceeded 0.60, ranging from 0.67 to 0.91 with average loading of 0.79. Composite reliability coefficients for each component ranged from 0.88 to 0.94, indicating excellent internal consistency. Average Variance Extracted (AVE) values ranged from 0.58 to 0.76, all exceeding the 0.50 threshold, confirming convergent validity. Discriminant validity was established through the Fornell-Larcker criterion, with square root of AVE for each construct exceeding inter-construct correlations. Structural Equation Modeling tested the hypothesized relationships among TSDM components, revealing that Philosophical Foundation significantly influenced Curriculum Integration ($\beta=0.68$, $p<0.001$), Human Resource Development ($\beta=0.54$, $p<0.001$), and Quality Assurance ($\beta=0.61$, $p<0.001$). Monastic Leadership directly affected Community Partnership ($\beta=0.71$, $p<0.001$) and Financial Sustainability ($\beta=0.58$, $p<0.001$). Overall model fit was excellent: $\chi^2(412)=623.87$, $p<0.001$; CFI=0.96; TLI=0.95; RMSEA=0.039 (90% CI [0.032, 0.045]); SRMR=0.048.

5. Discussion

This research advances understanding of temple school development by providing empirical evidence that authentic Buddhist philosophy integration significantly enhances educational sustainability while addressing contemporary challenges. The findings demonstrate that temple schools operating at the intersection of ancient wisdom traditions and modern educational demands can achieve excellence across multiple dimensions when supported by systematic development frameworks. The Temple School Development Model offers both theoretical contribution and practical utility, bridging philosophical foundations with operational mechanisms through an evidence-based, contextually appropriate approach.

The strong positive correlation between Buddhist Philosophy Integration and Student Well-being ($r=0.78$, $p<0.001$) aligns with emerging research on contemplative pedagogy and character education demonstrating that mindfulness practices, ethical frameworks, and holistic approaches contribute to psychological resilience, emotional regulation, and prosocial behavior (Roeser et al., 2023; Schonert-Reichl et al., 2020). This finding resonates with traditional Buddhist educational philosophy emphasizing development of the whole person rather than mere intellectual training. The study extends previous research by documenting systematic integration approaches and quantifying relationships within authentic educational settings rather than controlled interventions. The emphasis on Threefold Training (Sila-Samadhi-Panna) provides culturally rooted alternative to Western-derived social-emotional learning frameworks, suggesting that indigenous knowledge systems offer viable pathways for holistic education that merit recognition in international education discourse.

The identification of Visionary Monastic Leadership as critical success factor confirms leadership research emphasizing transformational leadership qualities including articulating compelling vision, modeling values, inspiring commitment, and fostering collaborative cultures (Leithwood & Jantzi, 2019). However, temple school leadership context presents unique characteristics warranting theoretical elaboration. Monastic leaders navigate dual accountability structures - ecclesiastical hierarchies and educational bureaucracies - requiring sophisticated boundary-spanning capacities. Their spiritual authority, when wielded authentically, generates distinctive forms of moral influence transcending positional power. Yet this same spiritual authority can become problematic when leaders resist necessary adaptations or fail to develop educational expertise. The research identifies adaptive capacity as distinguishing effective from struggling leaders, suggesting that traditional Buddhist emphasis on Yoniso Manasikara (wise attention) and Sammappadhana (right effort) translates into practical leadership competencies of contextual awareness and strategic responsiveness. Leadership development programs should therefore cultivate both spiritual depth and educational administration competencies through integrated curricula.

The Community Partnership Ecosystem theme extends social capital theory (Putnam, 2000) and community-based education frameworks (Bryk et al., 2010) by illuminating how Buddhist concepts of Sangaha Vatthu (bases of social solidarity) manifest in reciprocal school-community relationships. Unlike instrumentalist partnership approaches viewing communities primarily as resource providers, temple schools in this study demonstrated deep reciprocity where schools simultaneously serve and draw support from communities. This bidirectional relationship aligns with indigenous Thai concepts of bunkhun (reciprocal moral indebtedness) and Buddhist notions of interdependence (Idappaccayata). The finding that Community Engagement exhibited the strongest correlation with Stakeholder Satisfaction ($r=0.84$, $p<0.001$) underscores the centrality of partnership ecosystems. Educational policy should recognize community engagement not as peripheral enhancement but as core organizational capacity requiring systematic development, resource allocation, and accountability mechanisms. The research identifies specific partnership mechanisms including shared

decision-making bodies, collaborative problem-solving protocols, and mutual benefit agreements that operationalize partnership principles.

Financial Sustainability emerged as comparative weakness ($M=3.94$, $SD=0.68$), reflecting broader challenges facing religious educational institutions worldwide. The diversification strategies identified - agricultural activities, skill training workshops, social enterprises, alumni networks - represent creative adaptations to resource constraints. However, these strategies raise important questions about mission alignment and sustainability of sustainability mechanisms. Some income-generating activities risk commercializing sacred spaces or diverting attention from educational purposes. The research suggests that sustainable financial models must be evaluated not solely through economic efficiency metrics but also through alignment with Buddhist principles of *Atthacariya* (wise use of wealth) and *Apariggaha* (non-possessiveness). Policies supporting temple school sustainability should include: direct operational subsidies recognizing public benefit provided, capacity building in social enterprise development and financial management, facilitation of alumni network platforms, and regulatory frameworks enabling partnerships with private sector and civil society organizations while maintaining educational mission integrity.

The TSDM contributes theoretically by demonstrating operationalization of Buddhist philosophy in contemporary organizational contexts. While Buddhist principles have been explored extensively in psychology, ethics, and philosophy, their systematic application in organizational development models remains limited. The model illustrates how abstract philosophical concepts translate into concrete practices, policies, and performance indicators. For instance, the Buddhist principle of *Sammappadhana* (right effort) informs quality assurance systems emphasizing continuous improvement rather than punitive accountability. The concept of *Sati-Sampajanna* (mindfulness and clear comprehension) manifests in reflective teaching practices and metacognitive learning strategies. This translation work advances Buddhist applied philosophy by moving beyond abstract discourse to evidence-based application frameworks. The validated measurement instruments developed in this research enable future researchers to examine Buddhist integration quantitatively across diverse contexts, facilitating comparative studies and longitudinal evaluations.

Comparative analysis with international research on faith-based education reveals both convergences and distinctions. Studies of Catholic schools in Western contexts (Bryk et al., 1993; Jeynes, 2012) and Islamic schools globally (Hefner & Zaman, 2017) document similar advantages including strong value frameworks, community commitment, and holistic approaches. However, temple schools operate within distinctively Thai socio-religious contexts where Buddhism pervades cultural fabric and temples serve multifunctional community roles beyond religious worship. This embeddedness provides advantages in community legitimacy and resource access but also creates dependencies and constraints. The research suggests that while general principles of faith-based educational effectiveness may transfer across religious traditions, implementation mechanisms must be culturally contextualized. International education discourse should recognize diverse pathways to educational quality rather than imposing secular Western models as universal standards. The TSDM exemplifies culturally grounded development frameworks respecting indigenous knowledge while incorporating contemporary educational science.

6. Conclusion

This research establishes that temple schools can achieve educational excellence and sustainability through systematic integration of Buddhist philosophy with contemporary educational practices. The Temple School Development Model provides evidence-based framework comprising eight interconnected components addressing philosophical foundations,

leadership, curriculum, human resources, infrastructure, finance, community partnerships, quality assurance, and cultural preservation. Empirical findings demonstrate significant positive relationships between Buddhist integration and multiple effectiveness indicators including student well-being, academic performance, and stakeholder satisfaction. The study contributes theoretically by operationalizing Buddhist philosophy in educational organizational contexts, methodologically through validated measurement instruments, and practically through actionable implementation guidelines. Temple schools represent valuable educational institutions serving vulnerable populations while preserving cultural heritage, warranting sustained support and capacity building from educational authorities, monastic organizations, and civil society.

7. Recommendation

Temple school administrators should apply the TSDM framework to integrate Buddhist principles into curriculum through committees and annual reviews. Professional development must strengthen Buddhist pedagogy, meditation, and mentoring systems. Financial sustainability should be enhanced via mission-aligned social enterprises, alumni engagement, and grant-seeking capacity. Policy support should include subsidies, streamlined licensing, and technical assistance from the Ministry of Education, while the Office of National Buddhism develops leadership, curriculum resources, and peer networks. Quality assurance must respect Buddhist educational philosophy with context-appropriate indicators. Future research should explore long-term graduate outcomes, TSDM implementation effectiveness in varied contexts, and cross-tradition comparisons among Theravada, Mahayana, and Vajrayana educational models to inform global wisdom-based education.

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Declarations:

Conflict of interest: The authors declare no conflicts of interest.

Ethics of Human Research (if any) : This research did not require ethics approval certification.

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