The Study on the Construction of a Buddhist Community as a Learning Organization Based on Systems Thinking & Perspective, and its Prospects

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Abstract

The theme of this study is to combine eastern Buddhist thinking and western system thinking and management concept to transform the Fo Guang Shan community as a Buddhist learning organization, as well as to plan and probe into its prospects. The research purpose and contribution are to establish a successful operational model with modern system management and Buddha dharma for increasing Buddhist organizations. By becoming Buddhist learning organizations, they can continue to learn, grow and guide the public to learn. Hence the world will be learning Pure Land.

To accomplish the goal of learning Pure Land, Buddhism should recognize the current needs and development, properly integrate content, adjust the process and absorb new knowledge to respond to the changing times, in order to fulfill the purpose of benefitting the world; otherwise, it will become a conservative, outdated religion unable to educate the public and face elimination since it would not catch up with human trends and global technology. Changeable technology significantly influences the pursuit of material life. In these times, it is urgent to find the balance needed to accomplish the goal of propagating Buddhist teachings.

With the guidance of Master Hsing Yun, the founder of Fo Guang Shan, it influences practice and development of Humanistic Buddhism in the Buddhist circles of Taiwan and helps to prevent people's misunderstanding of Reclusive Buddhism which only concerns individual instead of global practice. Although different schools have different beliefs, Buddhism has undeniably been successfully introduced around the world. The main reason for the successful global development of Humanistic Buddhism is its implementation by Master Hsing Yun and appropriate management of the Fo Guang Shan community. It results in modernization and systemized Buddhist temples in Taiwan. With the system, it can be further developed, and with modernization, it can continuously face the challenges of the changeable times and satisfy the spiritual demands. Since Fo Guang Shan has a mature managerial system and background, this study will try to introduce system management thinking which is popular and commonly identified in the west, and compare and integrate it with Buddhist thinking to create efficacious Buddhist management. It treats the organizational model of Hard Systems Thinking as representative in the simulation of the enormous and complicated system of the Fo Guang Shan community. The purpose is to develop the Fo Guang Shan community as a learning organization which can fulfill the functions of Humanistic Buddhism and systematically accomplish of goals of Pure Land.

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1. Introduction

In the history of Buddhism, from the death of Shakyamuni to the present, more than 2500 years have passed. From the perspective of overall human cultural development, Buddhism has risen and fallen in response to the effects of different periods, regions and humanism. From the declination in India, the development of Buddhism became vigorous, such as Mahayana Buddhism (Mahayana) in China, Japan and Korea and Therevada Buddhism (Hinayana) in

Thailand, Vietnam and Burma. Currently, particularly with the stimulation of Humanistic Buddhism in Taiwan, it is introduced to the world, not only extending Buddhism, but also glorifying the spirit and concepts propagated by the Buddha. As suggested in the subtle relation of "origin and declination of cause and effect", Buddha dharma progresses from tradition to modernity, and turns from withdrawal to humanistic practice. As for compatibility of Buddhism, it not only tolerates and learns from social cultures changing with the generations and enriching the content, but also establishes a base upon which to successfully extend the wisdom of the past to the present.

However, with the coming of the 21st century, for sustainable development, Buddhism must recognize the demands and development of the times, appropriately integrate the content, adjust the process and absorb new knowledge to respond to the changing times in order to accomplish the goal of providing guidance to the world; otherwise, it will become a conservative and outdated religion unable to educate the public. It might be easily become eliminated if it does not match human and technological global development. Regarding "opportunity", we should recognize the model established by Buddha by personal practice on the cycle of birth, practice and accomplishment in the human world. Besides, reaching out to society from temples and offering an active education to the public is the necessary path to fulfill the practice as Buddha exemplified. However, technology changes dramatically and it significantly influences the world which pursues a material life. In the changeable modern times, regarding "decent practice" in Buddhism, it is urgent to find the balance required to accomplish the goal to propagate Buddhist teachings.

In the past 30 years, Master Hsing Yun, the founder of Fo Guang Shan, overcame the abovementioned difficulties and actively developed the reforms of outdated concepts and constraints of traditional Buddhism in order to be the pioneer in guiding the Fo Guang Shan community as the leader of modern Buddhism of Taiwan. This significantly affects the future development of Buddhist circles in Taiwan (Fo Guang Shan, 1997). The Master not only contributed to the implementation and development of Humanistic Buddhism, but also influenced the accomplishment of disseminating concepts of Humanistic Buddhism in the Buddhist circles of Taiwan and the world. It thereby precluded people from misunderstanding Reclusive Buddhism which is not concerned with earthly affairs and is rather mysterious in nature. Although different schools of Buddhism have different beliefs and understanding of Buddha dharma, "Ba Zong Jian Hung" and "practice of Shan, Ching and Lu" of Fo Guang Shan integrated the concepts of Humanistic Buddhism and successfully introduced it to the world from Taiwan.

One of the main reasons for the successful global development of Humanistic Buddhism is Master Hsing Yun's implementation of its beliefs by the combined traditional and modern management of the Fo Guang Shan community; it led to systemized temples as well as the modernization of Buddhism in Taiwan. Master Hsing Yun persisted in the systemization of Fo Guang Shan as he believed that "only *system* can extend the life of community" (Fu, 1995). With *system*, the base is solid and operation is successful and Buddhism will be widely spread. With modernization, Buddhism can continuously face the tests and demands of our times.

Since Fo Guang Shan has a mature system and modern cognition, and tolerates new knowledge and future religion, this study will try to integrate System Thinking which is popular and widely identified in the west with Buddhist thinking, in order to create a system management integrating Buddha dharma. In addition, this study will develop a simulation to transform the Fo Guang Shan community into a modern learning organization with Buddha dharma and have systematic planning; a discussion on its future prospects will also be presented. The purpose is to improve Fo Guang Shan community with a diverse, systematic and intelligent organization to spread Humanistic Buddhism via multiple dimensions and promote the learning of Pure Land.

2. Systems Thinking Theory and Application

Systems Thinking is a modern scientific cognitive model widely applied in the west. It is extended from "System Dynamics" created by Professor Jay Forrester of Massachusetts Institute of Technology. System Dynamics originated from "Cybernetics" in technological

science theory; its etymology is from the Greek word *Kybernetes* (steersman in English). In short, Cybernetics is the science which studies and applies the relations and effects among Control, Feedback and Communication. This science is commonly applied to different fields, such as machinery, biology and even social science. Hence, it shows the prospects and feasibility of Systems Thinking in different fields. In short, Systems Thinking is the thinking framework which helps people deal with complicated issues by overall observation. In order to recognize the significance and function of Systems Thinking, we must first discuss the thinking model of analysis in the past Machine Age. The description is as follows:

2.1 The Machine Age Thinking
In the past Machine Age, and the social and human development following the industrial revolution, people's cognition of things was based on analysis to determine the operation and functions. Analysis usually includes three steps (Ackoff, 1981):
Step 1: Things are carefully decomposed.
Step 2: Understanding individual behavior and functions after decomposition.
Step 3: Trying to integrate decomposed parts into total cognition.
For instance, in thinking model of the Machine Age, in order to understand "human beings", we divide human bodies into different parts, such as eye, nose, hand, foot, heart, etc. We try to explore the behavior and function of these parts and treat the total recognition as the base upon which to understand "human beings". Upon the theoretical base of the analysis, we can specifically develop three conclusions:
1. In the Machine Age, people believed that all things could be decomposed.
2. In the Machine Age, people believed that all things could be reorganized after decomposition.
3. In the Machine Age, people believed that reorganization of decomposed parts signified a total cognition of the things.
However, the thinking model was questioned by following Systems Thinking scholars who indicate three disadvantages of analytical thinking:
1. Not all things can be decomposed.
2. Not all things can be reorganized after decomposition.
3. Individual behavior, function and meaning of decomposed parts are not equal to total behavior, function and meaning.
The above can generally be divided into two categories:
Category 1: complicated things
People realize that although we may reorganize the cognition of behavior of decomposed parts, we do not understand the whole behavior. For instance, by analysis, "human beings" are decomposed into organs. We know how eyes, ears, limbs and heart function. However, the reorganization of these organs and cognition is not equal to our understanding of "human beings". The organs are observed in appearance; however, "human beings" are not the total of organs since we should also consider personality, intelligence, temperament, decision making, viewpoints, etc. These cannot be observed by analysis. Hence, "if we understand things by decomposition of analysis, we might neglect many critical parts" (Middleton, 1996). Therefore, the most significant disadvantage of analytical thinking is that it cannot deal with complicated things.
Category 2: complicated society
Analysis can be easily adopted to deal with simple mechanic systems. However, in complicated human social systems, it is difficult to approach the behavior and functions simply by the three steps of analysis. In human society, there are different degrees of complexity. For instance, different people have different world views. In their environments, people's behavior will be significantly influenced by their concepts. The behaviors cannot be predicted normally since people's concepts and views usually change with time, environment and events. Therefore, complicated factors in different social systems with changeable thinking are the extension of "Chaos Theory". It is apparently not possible to successfully study complicated systems such as human society by the analytical method.

2.2 The Systems Age Thinking

With the changing times, people start to realize that the analytical thinking model of the Machine Age could not solve more complicated problems. A new thinking model, Systems Thinking was proposed by modern European and American scholars who claimed that it could deal with complicated issues. Differing from analysis in the Machine Age, in the System Age, we adopt synthesis, which differs from analysis. Synthesis also includes three steps (Ackoff, 1981):

Step 1: It tries to find the whole in which the part is contained.

Step 2: It tries to find the whole behavior or all parts included in the whole.

Step 3: Behavioral operation of the thing or understanding and cognition of the parts in the whole depends on the roles in total behavior and function to accomplish the whole.

In short, synthesis in the System Age determines the behavior and function of parts by the whole. It is suggested that the thinking model can avoid neglecting important parts after decomposition. It can also probe into the interactions and relations of different parts in the whole. In Figure 1, we can recognize the difference between analysis of the Machine Age and synthesis of the System Age. Analysis can be the tool for obtaining data and knowledge, while synthesis is the method for achieving total cognition and understanding details.
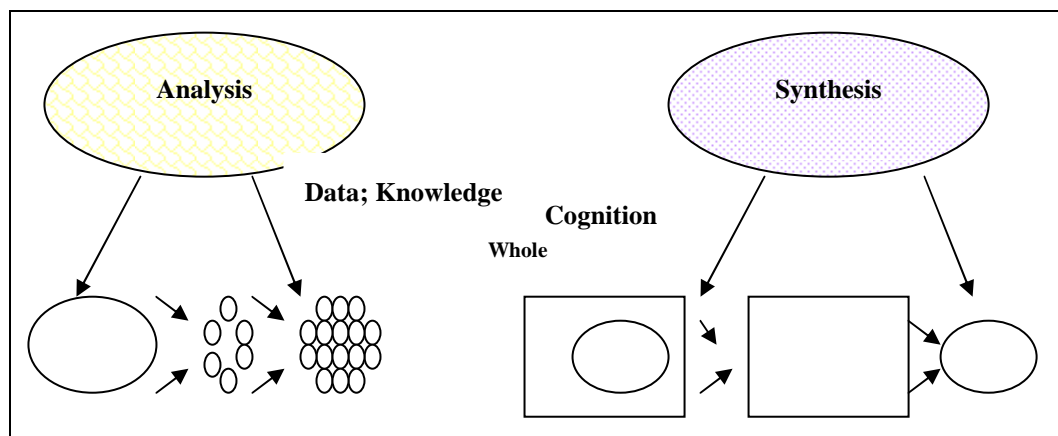

Figure 1: Difference between Analysis and Synthesis

In the age of Systems Thinking, scholars have different theories and views regarding the complicated issues in complicated environments. There are three research fields:

1. Hard Systems Thinking: Hard measure (human factors are not of concern) is adopted to deal with organization or problem solving. For instance, British system management scholar, Peter Checkland (1978), defined Hard Systems Thinking as follows: "it selects an effective method to accomplish a known or targeted goal." Well-known Hard Systems Methodology includes Systems Engineering, Systems Analysis, Operational Research, etc.

2. Soft Systems Thinking: differing from Hard Systems Thinking, Soft Thinking scholars suggested that in the occurrence and treatment of complicated problems and chaos of realistic social environments, "human" is the factor which must be valued and of concern. Only by recognizing human interaction and people's different world views can we understand the sources and formation of complicated social system. Common Soft Systems Thinking methodology includes Social Systems Design, Social Systems Science, Soft Systems Methodology, etc.

3. Critical Systems Thinking: with different perspectives, scholars of Hard Thinking and Soft Thinking methodology have their theoretical bases. Based on different cognition and social environments, they have different views and treatments regarding complicated issues. In fact, we cannot judge the advantages or disadvantages of the previous theories. Hence, scholars proposed Critical Systems Thinking theory and they suggested that it could deal with complicated issues by effective tools (methodology or methods). The selection of effective tools (one or more) is based on objective and just critiques which judge the advantages and

disadvantages of the theories and application of different methodology and methods, as well as the phenomenon of the problems according to social environment. Currently, Critical Systems Thinking methodology includes Critical Systems Heuristics, etc.

This study briefly introduces different kinds of Systems Methodology. However, based on Systems Thinking, various methodologies are extended and may lead to different applications. They are commonly studied and applied to different dimensions in western society. Until now, Systems Thinking scholars continue to propose new and improved methodologies; however, they will not be introduced in this study due to the limitation of space.

3. Correlations among Systems Thinking, Buddhist Thinking and Learning Organization

As to the relationship between Systems Thinking and learning organization, we must first understand what a learning organization is. What is the difference between a learning organization and a common organization? A learning organization is not the highly competitive organization which makes the most profits. It is the organization which allows people to develop their life and spirituality. In short, a learning organization is the entity in which all organizational members have the intention to continuously learn and grow. It means individuals and groups make continuous progress. When organizational members have learning motivation, cohesion and the intention to learn and construct a vision, a learning organization will be established; otherwise, the group with selfish individuals who will not fulfill most of the functions. For instance, in a basketball team, all of the players are experts at throwing balls into the basket. If they do not cooperate with each other and try to compete with each other, they will finally fail to win games.

Systems Thinking is closely associated with the construction of a learning organization. A management expert, Peter M. Senge, has studied the theories and practices of Systems Thinking and learning organizations for ten years. In his work *The Fifth Discipline*, Systems Thinking is treated as the most important fifth discipline. With the other four core disciplines, self-transcendence, improvement of mental model, establishment of common prospect and group learning, he established the construction blueprint of a learning organization. Senge emphasized that the combination of five disciplines is extremely critical in creating a learning organization: "…why is Systems Thinking the fifth among the previous disciplines? It is the theory and practice which integrates other disciplines and it avoids the situation in which disciplines are treated as unrelated or temporary fashion in real implementation of organization. Without Systems Thinking, we will not find how disciplines interact with each other. Systems Thinking emphasizes each discipline and continuously reminds us that integration of the whole is more effective than the total of different parts." (Senge, 1990)

In short, Systems Thinking is the first step of awareness in western society. It guides people to change their past views on things and problems. The self-centeredness, isolation from the group, lack of foresight and selfishness will be transformed into a new thinking model of care for the whole, perception of interpersonal relationships and recognition of the interaction of things. A learning organization is established by such a thinking model.

3.1 Dialogue on Systems Thinking, learning organization and Buddha dharma

Specifically, Systems Thinking and a learning organization match Buddha dharma. On the other hand, regarding Buddha dharma, western Systems Thinking, and learning organization in recent years, Buddha dharma of Buddhism with the history of more than 2500 years, may be the earliest Systems Thinking! Issues of concern to western societies in modern time, such as the interaction between the whole and individuals, treatment of complicated problems, the study of human nature and changes of spirituality, by careful observation, are thoroughly explained in Buddhist thinking, such as in classical texts and the instruction of t past Buddhist masters. This study briefly describes the synthesis of Systems Thinking and "cause and effect" of Buddha dharma, and generally explores five disciplines proposed by Dr. Senge (1990): "compassion", "sadness",   "happiness" "abandonment" and "the Four Immeasurables" of Buddha dharma.

3.2 Synthesis and cause & effect in Buddhist thinking

The synthesis of Systems Thinking is the reflection developed upon western people's old defects. It transforms westerners' past self-centered consciousness into care for the surroundings and the whole. It solves complicated problems by realizing the relation between the unity and individuals. The most important concept in Buddha dharma is the interactions between cause and effect/result. The origin of cause is what Shakyamuni, the founder of Buddhism, comprehended. It was not created or established by Buddha; it is the essential and general principle of the universe and life. Buddha discovered the natural rule through insight. He taught people by his discovery. "Fa Pu Ku Chi, Chang Ching Fang Sheng" means "all things on earth are not created from emptiness. They cannot exist individually; they appear and exist with various conditions, causes and effect" (Master Hsing-Yun, 1995). "Existing cause and effect, and the related complicated interaction, form the profound rule to explain the origin of the universe and life" (Master Hsing-Yun, 1995). Hence, if we recognize the cause and effect in the essence of Buddha dharma, we will thoroughly realize the nature of systematic thinking.

"Buddha is afraid of cause and the public is afraid of result". The complicated problems are caused by people's misunderstanding or neglect of the truth of cause & effect. Buddhist thinking tries to instruct the principle of cause and effect. If we realize that everything, every motive and every action is associated with the unity in terms of cause, effect/result, for instance, we adopt synthesis to turn the concern from parts to the whole, we will comprehend things and avoid complicated problems.

3.3 Five disciplines of Learning Organization and the Four Immeasurables

The five disciplines proposed by Senge (1990): self-transcendence, improvement of mental model, establishment of common prospect, group learning and Systems Thinking implementation are related to the Four Immeasurables of Buddhism: "compassion", "sadness", "happiness" and "abandonment". In order to fulfill self-transcendence, improvement of mental model, the establishment of common prospect, group learning and construct Systems Thinking, we must have compassion, sadness, happiness and abandonment. With the Four Immeasurables, we can modestly and happily accept others and ourselves in order to understand ourselves and others and even change ourselves to match others. Hence, all organization members can encourage each other and help learning and growth.

"Propagate Buddhism with a global outlook; Live daily with a humanistic nature; Benefit the multitude with a compassionate mind; Distinguish between the truth and heresies with right knowledge and understanding" (Fo Guang Shan, 1997) are precepts established by Master Hsing Yun, the founder of Fo Guang Shan, for BLIA members; they include Systems Thinking and the wisdom of learning organization.

In addition, Buddhist thinking includes other complementary wisdom for Systems Thinking, such as Wu Jie Shih Sheng, Si She Liu Tu, Ba Chen Tao and San Fa Ying which can be explored by future researchers. Systems Thinking can be treated as the modern tool for carrying out Buddha dharma. The two methods will be the best ways for people's understanding and practice.

4. Development and Creation of Learning Organization of Fo Guang Shan

Fo Guang Shan is a Buddhist community which values institution and system. The organizational structure is large and the divisions increase with the demands of the times. It includes the branches of Fo Guang Shan hosted by foreign and domestic monks, educational culture units, subordinate business and increased followers. For instance, there are about one thousand Buddha's Light International Associations (BLIA) (Shen, 1996; 1999; 2005) around the world and the followers number in the millions. In such a large organization which grows rapidly, it is necessary to improve Fo Guang Shan, further complete the system and organization and refine the members; otherwise, when the organization grows, personnel affairs will become complicated, such as the distribution of personnel resources, quality of talents, cohesion, responsibility, competence, etc. Therefore, when developing such a diverse operation, it is urgent and necessary to integrate the whole organizational structure and properly adjust the personnel affairs in the organization.

The completeness of the system relies on the members in the system in order to achieve maximum effectiveness. Decision makers' establishment of guideline and order is insufficient. More importantly, all organization members must cooperate with each other and avoid conflict among different units; hence, organizations which grow rapidly will limit and prevent various kinds of problems. As suggested by Senge (1990), "a new business grows immediately. However, when it reaches certain scale and the growth slows down, it will require more professional managerial skills and more complete organization". Therefore, for the future successful development of the Fo Guang Shan community, it must create an organization which adapts to diversification and a smart model.

This study suggests that it is necessary and feasible to develop Fo Guang Shan as a learning organization which adopts Buddha dharma and Systems Thinking. We believe that it is an important issue for all members of Fo Guang Shan at present.

4.1 Current hard organizational re-planning

Fo Guang Shan is a large organization and the framework is both vertical and horizontal (Fo Guang Shan, 1997). In common business organizations, when vertical and horizontal gaps increase, common problems include 'Control and Feedback' in the operation, internal and external communication, understanding of total organizational direction, etc. The organization usually enhances the relationship by magazines, communication or annual meetings. However, due to various reasons, it tends to neglect the importance of two-way and even three-way and multi-way communication, so organizational members cannot totally understand the organization and problems and achieve a common consensus to solve the problems. The units might not understand each other. Besides, Fo Guang Shan has frequent personnel rotations, and it is unlike common business organizations which have the authority to layoff or hire employees. In the future process to propagate Buddhist teachings, the number of participants will increase. Fo Guang Shan should pay attention to its organizational framework and distribution of human resources; otherwise, it will be a concern after long-term and rapid growth.

This study tries to adopt the Hard Systems Methodology *"Viable Systems Model (VSM)"* (Stafford Beer, 1995; Jackson, 1991) of Beer, to re-plan the enormous organization of Fo Guang Shan. As a physical system for human beings, the model is developed by a refined framework, thoughts, control and feedback. It is the overall design for different types of organizations, showing the completeness of organizational operation and helps organizations with self-diagnosis and treatment, without the interference of external force (such as organizational consultants). As human-based system, it has the functions of automatic control and adjustment. Therefore, if an organizational framework and system of Fo Guang Shan can be established and operated by this model, it will be more refined and smart, with better administration. Figure 2 is basic model of Viable System Model (VSM) proposed by Beer (1995). The model has five systems, as shown below:
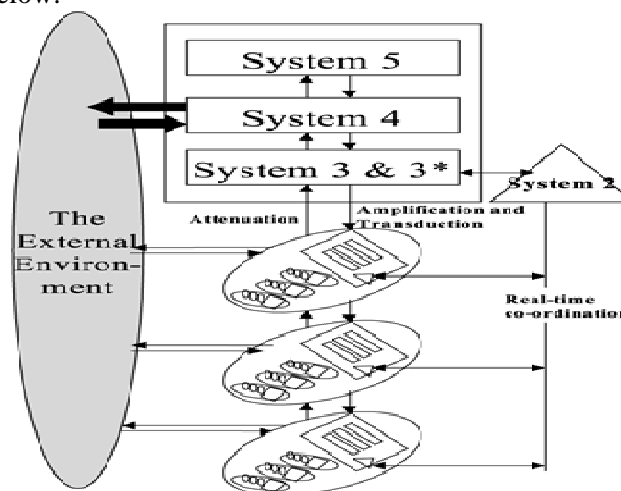

Figure 2: Beer's "Viable Systems Model; VSM " (www.emeraldinsight.com)

1. System 5 is the brain of the whole organization; it guides and governs the whole organization. It distinguishes and integrates various kinds of information transmitted from System 4 and forms a systematic policy. It will discuss and communicate policy transmission and implementation in sub-units with System 3.

2. System 4 develops the organization. It has two main tasks. Task 1 plays the role of "Switch" (Beer, 1995) of the whole organization. It switches the order from System 5 to lower levels of the organization (System 1 to 3) and switches the information from lower levels (System 1 to 3) to System 5 in order to help System 5 make important decisions. Task 2 is to garner and provide information needed by the organization regarding the external environment.

3. System 3 controls the whole organization. As the system's "heart", System 3 ensures that the policy derived from System 5 is practiced precisely. In other words, it makes sure that System 1 properly carries out its duties.

4. System 2 helps with negotiations within the organization. It monitors and coordinates System 1 and ensures that sub-units of System 1 cooperate with each other in order to avoid the situation of only taking care of individual affairs.

5. System 1 manages sub-units in the organization, and this is extremely important. It is responsible for the management of duties of the organization. When there is problem in one unit, as with an organ in the human body, it will cause the discomfort and even disease or death of the organization (body).

As shown in Figure 3, this study breaks through the current horizontal system of Fo Guang Shan; based on the Fo Guang Shan community system, it adopts "*Viable Systems Model (VSM)*" to design a future smart and diverse learning organization model. (Since Fo Guang Shan has many branches of temples and subordinate business, due to research purpose and limitation of space, this study only plans to examine a few units and relies on future in-depth planning and exploration.)

The most significant advantage of VSM is that it clearly indicates the duties of each unit and member in the organization; besides, the enormous organizational framework of Fo Guang Shan can be designed and operated by this model to form a large model. The units and the branches (even the branches with one host) in the system and BLIA can form several medium or small "*VSM*" (according to the scope and size of the duty of the unit) (Figure 1-3). Hence, each medium model is subordinate to the large model and each small model is subordinate to the medium model. They are connected with, concerned about, help and control each other. The operation of the model will influence the whole large model. Therefore, the awareness of the units and members will increase. The model will lead to the successful operation of the Fo Guang Shan community. Units and members in the system can recognize the effects and contribution to Fo Guang Shan. Recognizing the personal importance to Fo Guang Shan will enhance the tolerance, drive and learning of the whole organization. No one will hinder the overall growth.

4.2 Soft education and guidance of current organization of Fo Guang Shan

A complete smart hard learning organizational structure relies on the cooperation of soft aspects of the organization. In other words, all members should have a common consensus of learning, identification and cooperation. Hence, a smart hard learning organizational structure can demonstrate maximum effectiveness. Education and guidance are necessary to allow all members to establish a common consensus of collective learning, identification with the organization and cooperation.

Master Hsing Yun has four proposals "to be members of Fo Guang Shan" (16) and they can serve as the principles to instruct Fo Guang Shan members to create and experience a learning organization:

1. Members of Fo Guang Shan treat the abbot as first and themselves as second!
2. Members of Fo Guang Shan treat the public as first and themselves as second!
3. Members of Fo Guang Shan treat business as first and themselves as second!
4. Members of Fo Guang Shan treat Buddhism as first and themselves as second!
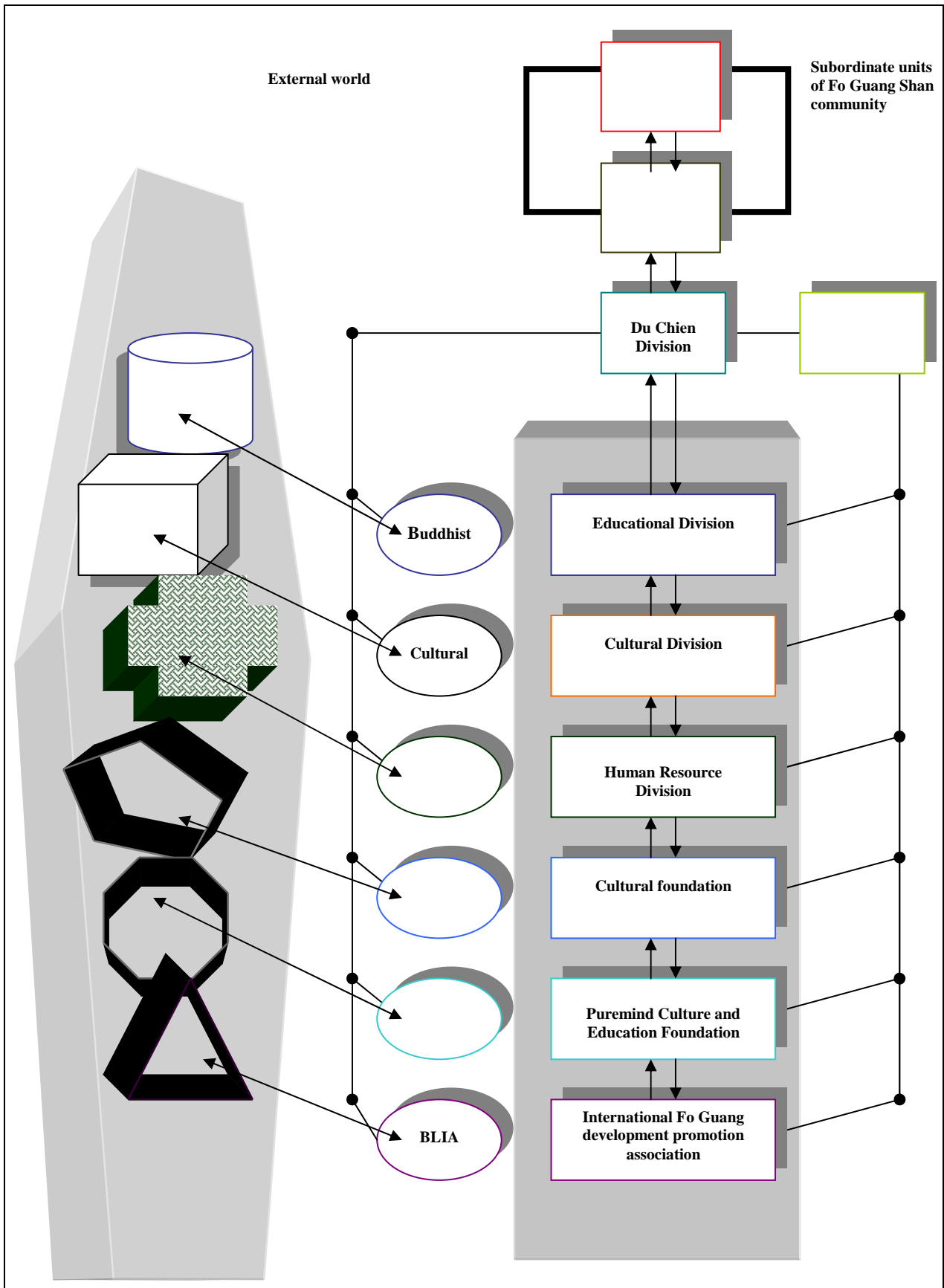
Figure 3: Future smart and diverse Learning Organization model of "Viable Systems Model" (VSM) of Fo Guang Shan

Hence, the identification and contribution of the Fo Guang Shan community to the unity involves more than personal benefits. In *The Fifth Discipline* of 1990, Senge indicated five disciplines needed to create a learning organization: self-transcendence, improvement of mental model, establishment of common prospect and group learning. It matches Systems Thinking and Buddhist thinking. The strict doctrine of Fo Guang Shan and instruction of Master Hsing Yun to the followers can be guidelines to establish a learning organization. Besides, the Master emphasized that members of Fo Guang Shan should have a "collective creation, system leadership, base of Buddhism and follow rules" (Senge, 1990). It demonstrates the belief of the Fo Guang Shan community which is devoted to holistic learning.

Noticeably, although construction of the total concept is important, the unity is constructed by all Fo Guang Shan members. Everyone should try to learn and be tolerant. They enhance the growth of the community. Besides, with the concern for the total benefit of Fo Guang Shan, all members can achieve personal growth and learning. It is the goal of a successful learning organization; therefore, members of Fo Guang Shan must be cultivated with Systems Thinking, i.e. the practice of cause & effect of Buddha dharma in reality. We should not only establish cause & effect in Buddhism, but also practice it in daily lives. Cultivation of Systems Thinking means applying cause & effect in organizational operation; this should not be difficult for Fo Guang Shan members. With sincerity and courage, the members practice, analyze and infer the possible results of decision making. Thereby, they will certainly make the right decisions.

4.3. Create a positive critical thinking environment of Fo Guang Shan

In this section, we suggest that a learning organization must have a positive critical thinking environment, which means to broadly explore and accept different members and their views of life, behavior and personal vision. Organizational benefit requires positively criticizing and improving different members' views and behavior in order to assist with the two-way learning of individuals and organization.

Formation of an organization aims to realize a vision. Most of the business organizations are based on commercial profits and economic benefits. Hence, there is a common organizational trend: three kingdoms: "The boss and investors are in one, employees are in the other and consumers are in another." Everyone only focuses on personal well-being and short-term benefits and does not care about others. For obtaining personal benefits, they reluctantly cooperate with each other or accept compromises, such as in the relationship between employees and boss and between enterprises and consumers. In such environments, a vicious circle continues and everyone fails. In modern time, the global crisis of enterprises and economy, and the conflict and cold war between different countries, are the outcomes of such vicious cycles (Fo Guang Shan, 1997).

Differing from common business organizations, the Fo Guang Shan community aims to enhance people's well-being and construct the Pure Land. Based on such belief, viewpoints inside and outside of the organization, activities and problem solving are based on benefits to the public. There should be no operational obstacles. However, currently, the world situation changes dramatically and human beings have different beliefs and needs. Besides, the traditional Buddhist institutional system does not match the modern environment, but impacts current Buddhist organizations. Not everyone can totally understand and identify with the beliefs and methods of Buddhist organizations to benefit the world. In other words, different people might not treat the same thing in the same way; this is an important reason why the Fo Guang Shan community must create a positive critical environment for a learning organization.

The construction of a positive critical thinking environment is elaborated as follows:

1. Cultivation of a common vision between members of Fo Guang Shan community and the public

Most of the people are uncertain about their real vision. We have goals; however, they are not the vision. Senge has suggested that when people are asked about their desires, they tend to focus on current things they are pursuing, usually temporary goals. Therefore, people tend to be lost in seeking these goals and few of them realize their ultimate vision; they do not understand real vision. Thus, they are usually lost or give up in the process of pursuing the fake vision. It is therefore important to explore individuals' ultimate vision. The persistence to accomplish goals

is the priority.

If one can share the vision with others and even carry it out, it will provide excellent learning. However, vision is generated from the inner world and cannot be compelled. The master of management, Senge, suggested that "if we have the same vision and have never sincerely shared it with each other, it is not a common vision. When people have a common vision, it will connect them. Individuals' vision is based on their significant concern about the prospect. The motive of common vision originated from a common concern" (Senge, 1990). He also suggested that it is extremely important for a learning organization to cultivate a common vision "since it is the focus and energy of learning. Without vision, there is only 'adaptive learning'. When people are devoted to the things they are significantly concerned about, there will be 'generative learning'. …unless people are excited about their vision, the whole creative learning, the capacity to expand self-creation, will be abstract and meaningless" (Senge, 1990).

How can one collect and construct a common prospect of all members in Fo Guang Shan and understand the different perspectives of the public? Positive critiques can be adopted to select and improve the disadvantages, to serve as the base for development of policy setting and activity planning of Fo Guang Shan in order to yield twice the results with half the effort.

2. Cultivation of group self-transcendence of members in Fo Guang Shan

Everyone walks his own selected path and no one can be forced to develop individual self-transcendence. When an organization forces its members to develop self-transcendence, it will backfire, not to mention people outside of the organization. Hence, only by sincere learning can one grow and achieve self-transcendence. The Fo Guang Shan community is a religious organization and the members are mostly wise people who voluntarily embrace Buddhism. They already have the motive of self-transcendence. However, the problem is that when the members have strong self-transcendence which reinforces self-consciousness in the organization, it will cause the problem of individual interest. There is an old Buddhist saying: "leading a group of solders is better than a group of monks." If the members can establish group self-transcendence with other members, their acquisition will be higher than any individual achievement. Establishing such group self-transcendence will first rely on the members' sincere establishment of positive critical environment.

3. Enhancement of Fo Guang Shan members' relationships

The Fo Guang Shan organization is enormous, with many members. They usually do not know each other. Hence, it is difficult to reach a common consensus on views and methods and for them to cooperate with each other, not to mention the fulfillment of common vision. "It is easy to construct the vision and difficult to practice it." Thus, it is urgent to enhance Fo Guang Shan members' relationships. They should know and also understand each other in order to help and share with each other and have collective learning.

4. Encourage Fo Guang Shan members to have "In-depth Dialogues"

"In-depth Dialogues" means "all members in a group share their assumptions and have collective thinking" (Senge, 1990). When organizational members do not have prejudice and misunderstanding, and they sincerely share with each other and propose their opinions and views, they will be able to establish a positive critical learning environment; otherwise, they will finally mistrust each other, compromise or fail to tolerate each other. They will not accomplish group self-transcendence and learning goals. Once "In-depth Dialogue Culture" in Fo Guang Shan community is developed, it will introduce the "In-depth Dialogue Culture" in different Buddhist organizations in Taiwan and worldwide Buddhist organizations in the future; different schools of Buddhism will not negatively compare themselves with others and show off; rather, they will be unified in the spirit of Buddhism. It is the Pure Land that Fo Guang Shan community has been pursuing and the theory of Fo Guang Shan fulfilled by members of Fo Guang Shan (Fo Guang Shan, 1999).

4.4. Hard, Soft and Critical integration

In the previous chapters, we indicated three factors necessary for the Fo Guang Shan community to form a learning organization: 1) Hard organization: it breaks through the current horizontal organizational structure and establishes a refined and properly administrative smart and diverse organizational system; 2) Soft organization: it instructs the members to use Systems

Thinking and match, demonstrate and apply it with Buddhist thinking; 3) positive critical environment: it encourages a positive critical environment in the organization to enhance the members' interactions and exchanges to renew the organization.

The previous three sections of the chapter have indicated hard, soft and organizational operation. However, the key for a learning organization is the implementation and cooperation of all three aspects. We should not carelessly and separately practice hard, soft or critical methods. The methods should match each other and be operated at the same time. Thus, a learning organization of Fo Guang Shan community can be constructed and its effectiveness demonstrated.

4.5 Prospect of a learning organization of the Fo Guang Shan community

Once the learning organization of the Fo Guang Shan community is established, the vision will be shown. The following are the expectations and prospects of the learning organization of the Fo Guang Shan community:

1. Adjustment with the changing times:

The learning organization of the Fo Guang Shan community is based on a smart and diverse system and powerful interactive learning capacity. The purpose is to absorb new knowledge and be renewed in order to keep up with the changing world and adjust the progress and content of organization to meet the demands of the times.

2. Diversity to respond to the needs of the public:

Once a learning organization of the Fo Guang Shan community is formed, the diversification will match the public needs. It will wisely listen to the opinions of the people, meet social needs and help and purify the society via multi-dimensions.

3. Expansion to meet future global development:

Although the times change rapidly, it does not necessarily move towards good deeds. Therefore, as a Buddhist learning organization, it should not only have the vision to meet the world trend, but also have the capacity to guide and purify the world instead of blindly following the changeable world.

4. Combination of Buddha dharma and modern management:

The learning organization of the Fo Guang Shan community is smart and diverse. Therefore, modern scientific management which benefits the organization can be adopted. It can be compared with Buddha dharma and applied to organizational management. Hence, it will not only effectively solve the problems in organizational system, but also reinforce the organizational operation.

5. Learning to absorb new knowledge:

A complete system and normal operation of the Fo Guang Shan community will enhance the organizational capacity of continuous learning. When the ability to absorb new knowledge is reinforced, as "Wen" in "Wen, Si and Xiu" of Buddha dharma, we will be able to think and practice with the aid of sufficient and broad knowledge. It will help the organization establish effective policies and practice effective instruction. Therefore, developing the members' cognition of world theory will increase the success rate in educating the public and purifying society.

6. Solution and prevision of complicated problems

Problems cannot be avoided in groups of people; however, in an organization with excellent system wherein the members learn from each other and have a common vision, the problems will be less numerous. The organization will have the adjustment ability to solve the problems. The development of a learning organization of the Fo Guang Shan community aims to construct a more flexible and complete system and integrate internal and external aspects of the organization.

5. Conclusion

The Fo Guang Shan believes in complete and sustainable learning. Human beings have the instinct of learning. From an unknown start, people partake in the cause & effect of learning. Children learn to eat and walk, and when they grow up, they absorb knowledge and life experience; this demonstrates the instinct of learning. .Buddhism is the religion with a view of

learning, evident in the Buddhist saying, "learning of Buddhism." By Buddha dharma, we realize that we are not perfect and that learning is the only measure to guide us to perfection. The key point of this study was to introduce western Systems Thinking, which can be compared with Buddhist thinking and a learning organization to obtain the conceptual planning of the Fo Guang Shan community. The purpose is to cultivate Systems Thinking and establish a Buddhist learning organizational system to realize the future development of the Fo Guang Shan community. Other Buddhist organizations can adopt this learning organization model; it will enhance the function of Buddhist organizations and more effectively benefit the world.

This study has important expectations and contributions regarding the construction of a Buddhist learning organization. Based on Buddha dharma, it introduces Systems Thinking as the thinking model for members of the Fo Guang Shan. We will cultivate the concept of "unity" and actively break through the differences of various schools and concepts. We should realize that Buddhism is a whole and the world is a condition. Different Buddhist organizations are simply the small units under the greater unity and condition. They should not fight over size and importance, and each of them significantly influences the whole of Buddhism. The members' contributions benefit the world, and the Buddhist organizations should sincerely have in-depth dialogues and actively develop systematic cooperation and coordination regarding prospects of Buddhism. Their contributions complement and benefit each other. They make efforts for the Pure Land instead of working separately. People might be confused and try to divide the Buddhist organizations.

Therefore, the Buddhist circles should recognize Buddha dharma and combine free and tolerant doctrines. They start from themselves in order to guide the public to establish the hopeful prospects of Buddhism and accomplish the dream of a humanistic Pure Land. This study is the breakthrough for the future management of Buddhist organizations. We hope that more Buddhist members will care about and identify with the study and conduct research, construction and practice for the future benefit of Buddhism and the world.

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