



## THE INTEGRATION OF ARIYASACCA PRINCIPLES-BASED LEARNING MANAGEMENT FOR STUDENTS OF INTERNATIONAL BUDDHIST STUDIES COLLEGE

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### Abstract

**Background and Objectives:** At the International Buddhist Studies College (IBSC), students reported that they faced concrete daily challenges related to academic requirements and language barriers, as well as limited integration between contemplative practice and learning processes. Although the principles of Ariyasacca have long been regarded as an effective approach to problem-solving, their application in learning management in international Buddhist higher education has received limited attention. Therefore, this study aimed to investigate the learning management challenges faced by students at IBSC, to examine how Ariyasacca principles illuminate their causes and provide a framework for their transformation within an educational context, and to develop an Ariyasacca Principles-Based Learning Management Model (APBLM) that integrates doctrinal wisdom with evidence-based institutional practice.

**Methodology:** A multiphase mixed-methods design was used. Specifically, Phase 1 integrated data from surveys of 48 students and in-depth interviews with 30 students and 11 lecturers to identify learning management challenges and needs; Phase 2 combined documentary analysis with in-depth interviews to examine how the principles of Ariyasacca manifested in educational environment and guided pedagogical improvements; And Phase 3 synthesized the findings of the first two phases to develop and validate the APBLM through four forms of validation: Empirical, pedagogical, theoretical, and comparative.

**Main Results:** This study revealed that five challenge clusters at IBSC, manifesting with moderate intensity (Overall Dukkha Weighted Mean = 3.09), collectively formed a self-reinforcing feedback system. The causes of these challenges emerged from the interaction of external conditions and internal dispositions (Samudaya = 2.82). In particular, students maintained high aspirations (Nirodha = 3.97) and strong receptivity to Buddhist-based solutions (Magga = 4.02), even though they encountered moderate challenges. Documentary and interview analyses further established



that the principles of Ariyasacca could be mapped onto an educational context. Based on these findings, the Ariyasacca Principles-Based Learning Management Model (APBLM), a cyclical learning management framework validated through four forms of validation, was proposed to address curriculum design, contemplative pedagogy, language support, experiential learning, community building, and institutional reform.

**Involvement to Buddhadhamma:** This study falls within the field of Applied Buddhism, which relates particularly to Buddhist innovations in method development and to Buddhism and the development of wisdom and morality by applying the principles of Ariyasacca to develop a systematic learning management model for international Buddhist higher education. The principles of Ariyasacca, while being ancient teachings, retain relevance in terms of identifying suffering and proposing paths for its resolution when applied in the context of institutions. By applying doctrinal wisdom to educational practice without diminishing the core values of the principles, this study positions the APBLM as an embodiment of Buddhist skillful means (Upāya-kosalla) in education, thereby showing how classical Buddhist teachings can contribute to institutional transformation and also support the development of wisdom and morality in contemporary multicultural academic settings.

**Conclusions:** This study provided the APBLM, a cyclical framework that can guide institutional reform over time while preserving its internal consistency with Buddhist principles. The APBLM also showed that instead of being opposites, academic rigor and spiritual depth could support each other when institutions in Buddhist higher education apply their foundational wisdom to address the challenges that students encounter in the environment of multicultural learning.

**Keywords:** Ariyasacca Principles, Buddhist Higher Education, Learning Management, Applied Buddhism, Buddhism and the Development of Wisdom and Morality

## Introduction

First articulated in the Dhammacakkappavattana Sutta to the group of five ascetics (Bodhi, 2000), the Ariyasacca, or Four Noble Truths, have since served as the doctrinal and practical bedrock of Buddhism for over two millennia. Although their original purpose was to guide practitioners toward nibbāna, the principles have been recognized as a problem-solving structure that involves identifying the arisen problem, analyzing its origin and cause, envisioning appropriate solutions and conditions for change, and implementing systematic pathways for actions (Phramaha Duriya Kittisaro (Sungyoka), 2026). In this sense, the principles of Ariyasacca not only extend beyond their original purpose for the spiritual path but also provide a structure for analysis and solution proposal, thereby showing their relevance to understand and address challenges within Buddhist higher education contexts.

The International Buddhist Studies College (IBSC), as a higher education institution within Mahachulalongkornrajavidyalaya University, provides international programs for both monastics and laypeople from different countries to support the vision of MCU in developing an international center for Buddhist studies (Mahatthanadull, 2020). Accordingly, IBSC represents the integration of Buddhist wisdom into modern education. However, the real daily context of its students reflects



more varied and complex aspects. Students from diverse linguistic, cultural, and contemplative backgrounds must adapt to an English-language learning environment while also trying to balance academic pressure and their spiritual aspirations. Moreover, they often find limited formal opportunities to connect contemplative practice with academic activities. These conditions lead to persistent challenges in learning management that affect their daily learning experiences and therefore call for a more systematic approach based on the institution's own Buddhist foundation. However, these issues have received limited attention in existing studies.

Although there is a growing body of research on Buddhist-inspired educational models, much of the existing literature has largely focused on primary (Phrakhupalad Sak Mahāwīro (Kosolsuphawatt) et al., 2021) or secondary education (Phraprayad Abhinanto (Muan Si Phrom) et al., 2021) within Thai contexts. This narrow focus has given rise to a critical research gap in understanding how the principles of Ariyasacca act as both a diagnostic tool and a transformative pedagogy in multicultural and technology-enriched international Buddhist higher education institutions like IBSC, which face context-specific challenges such as linguistic barriers, the rapid integration of technology reshaping learning, and the need to balance academic rigor with contemplative practice.

In response to this research gap, this study proposes the development of an Ariyasacca Principles-Based Learning Management Model, designed specifically for the context of multicultural Buddhist higher education at IBSC, thereby seeking to provide a coherent framework that supports comprehensive student development while maintaining the distinctive philosophical foundations of Buddhist higher education and meeting modern expectations for academic quality and rigor. It is important to note in this study that learning management is conceptualized as an integrated system comprising curriculum design, pedagogical delivery, student support, and institutional policy that together shape the educational environment. The effectiveness of this system is assessed through students' lived experiences. Therefore, educational dukkha functions as the empirical indicator through which learning management conditions are analyzed using the Ariyasacca framework.

### Objectives

This study aimed to investigate the learning management challenges faced by students at IBSC, to examine how Ariyasacca principles illuminate their causes and provide a framework for their transformation within an educational context, and to develop an Ariyasacca Principles-Based Learning Management Model (APBLM) that integrates doctrinal wisdom with evidence-based institutional practice.

### Methodology

This research employed a multiphase mixed-methods design integrating documentary research, qualitative interviews, and quantitative surveys. This design was selected because the complexity of integrating the principles of Ariyasacca into modern higher education cannot be adequately addressed by a single method.

The study was structured in three phases:

Phase 1 employed questionnaires and interviews to diagnose existing problems and needs.



Phase 2 combined documentary analysis with in-depth interviews to examine how the principles of Ariyasacca manifested in the educational environment and guided pedagogical improvements.

Phase 3 synthesized findings from Phases 1 and 2 to develop the Ariyasacca Principles-Based Learning Management Model (APBLM), which was then validated through four forms of validation: Empirical validation to verify that the model was grounded in documented realities; Pedagogical validation to confirm that the model was pedagogically sound; Theoretical validation to ensure that the model maintained philosophical coherence; And comparative validation to examine the potential of the model to be applied beyond the context of IBSC.

### **Population and Sample**

In the quantitative phase, 95 students in the English program were included, consisting of 18 fourth-year B.A. students, 40 second-year M.A. students, and 37 second-year Ph.D. students. Complete enumeration was used because the target population was small enough to include all members. However, responses were collected from 48 students, achieving a 50.5% response rate. The other 47 students did not complete the questionnaire within the data collection period. Although these 47 students did not participate in this study, the 50.5% response rate still provided a meaningful snapshot of the challenges at IBSC for analysis.

In the qualitative phase, thirty students were selected for in-depth interviews by using purposive maximum variation sampling, thereby aiming to capture diverse experiences of students across degree level, gender, nationality, and knowledge background so that educational challenges could be understood comprehensively. A purposive sample of 11 lecturers (4 Internal and 7 External) providing pedagogical expertise was also chosen based on disciplinary diversity, pedagogical approach variation, and demonstrated engagement with Buddhist pedagogy or educational innovation. Student participants were anonymized using codes based on degree level (B for B.A., M for M.A., and P for Ph.D.) with sequential identifiers; Lecturer interviews were conducted with named consent and full attribution.

### **Research Instrument**

Quantitative surveys were developed in two forms based on the framework of Ariyasacca: For B.A. students (42 Items) and for M.A./Ph.D. students (54 Items) by using a 5-point Likert scale (1 = Strongly Disagree to 5 = Strongly Agree). The M.A./Ph.D. version was further developed to address research skills, thesis/dissertation challenges, and the application of Ariyasacca at the graduate level. Before real data collection, content validity was established through an iterative process of reviewing and revising the questionnaire items by the research team to ensure systematic alignment with the Ariyasacca framework, clarity of language, and appropriateness to the IBSC context. All subscales showed excellent internal consistency for both groups ( $\alpha$  Ranged From .909 to .986), which indicated excellent reliability.

Based on Ariyasacca principles, semi-structured interview guides were developed and validated by three experts using Item-Objective Congruence (IOC), in which all items achieved IOC values of  $\geq 0.50$ . Documentary instruments were divided into primary and secondary sources.



Primary sources were the Pali Canon and its commentaries, both of which were based on the editions of the Pali Text Society and reliable English translations. Secondary sources comprised Buddhist textbooks, research works, dissertations, journals, scholarly books, and studies on contemplative pedagogy.

### Data Collection

In Phase 1, structured questionnaires were distributed online to the 95 students, with 48 respondents (Response Rate = 50.50%). In-depth interviews were conducted with 30 students and 11 lecturers, both in person and online. For Phase 2, documentary analysis examined primary and secondary sources, while in-depth interviews with the same 30 students and 11 lecturers complemented the documentary findings by providing contemporary perspectives on how the principles of Ariyasacca manifested in the educational environment and guided pedagogical improvements. The last phase did not collect primary data but synthesized the first two phases. Additionally, this study was ethically approved by the Buddhist Research Institute.

### Data Analysis

Descriptive statistics were used to calculate means and standard deviations for quantitative data, and the results were interpreted according to the following scale: 1.00 - 1.80 (Very Low), 1.81 - 2.60 (Low), 2.61 - 3.40 (Moderate), 3.41 - 4.20 (High), and 4.21 - 5.00 (Very High). The formula  $[(n_1 \times M_1 + n_2 \times M_2) / (n_1 + n_2)]$  was used to calculate the weighted means for combined B.A. and M.A./Ph.D. groups. For qualitative data, thematic analysis was used, with the data organized based on Ariyasacca categories. Transcripts of the interview were reviewed systematically to identify patterns and then organized according to the four principles of Ariyasacca as the primary analysis. All emerging themes were cross-referenced with the original data to ensure the interpretation correctly reflected the language and experiences of participants. Finally, documentary data were analyzed through direct content analysis based on the Ariyasacca structure. The findings were triangulated at the levels of methodology, data source, and theory to increase the credibility of interpretations.

## Results and Discussion

### Systemic Educational Suffering at IBSC

As summarized in Table 1, there were five primary areas where educational dukkha at IBSC manifested, which revealed gaps in the current learning management system.

**Table 1** Five Challenge Clusters of Educational Dukkha at IBSC

| Cluster                                                           | Representative Indicators (Weighted Mean)                                                                                                     | Interpretation |
|-------------------------------------------------------------------|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|----------------|
| 1. Workload Pressure and Curriculum-Assessment Imbalance          | Deadline stress (3.34); Difficulty finishing assignments (3.12); Insufficient research time (3.12); Academic overload (M.A./Ph.D. Only) (3.2) | Moderate-High  |
| 2. Self-Regulation, Motivation, and Emotional Resilience Deficits | Procrastination (3.08); Motivation loss (3.24); Focus difficulties (2.9); Lack of right effort (2.82)                                         | Moderate       |



**Table 1** Five Challenge Clusters of Educational Dukkha at IBSC (Continued)

| Cluster                                                                                     | Representative Indicators (Weighted Mean)                                                                         | Interpretation            |
|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|---------------------------|
| 3. Language Proficiency and Research-Skill Constraints                                      | Academic English difficulty (3.22); Research skills (3); Graduate research expectations (M.A./Ph.D. only) (3.1)   | Moderate                  |
| 4. Structural and Institutional Limitations                                                 | Limited learning resources (2.66); Unclear advisor guidance (2.76); Insufficient teacher/classmate support (2.48) | Moderate-Low              |
| 5. Insufficient Integration of Theory, Practice, and Ariyasacca-Based Experiential Learning | High receptivity to integration (4.02) contrasted with limited implementation (3.02)                              | Moderate-High discrepancy |
| <b>Overall Dukkha</b>                                                                       | <b>3.09</b>                                                                                                       | <b>Moderate</b>           |

### 1. Workload Pressure and Curriculum-Assessment Imbalance

As shown in Table 1, this cluster served as a central structural condition that contributed to the challenge in learning management, in which deadline and examination pressure (3.34) were rated highest. The accounts from students highlighted the accumulation of numerous assignments, shortened deadlines, and the rigidity of assessment structures (B01, 2025); (M06, 2025). According to lecturers, the density of the curriculum, excessive reliance on lecture-based methods, and the assessment mechanism heavily focused on theory led students to mental overload, which limited their chances for developing emotional and spiritual aspects considered crucial parts of Buddhist education (Phramaha Anon Anando, 2025); (Phramaha Weerasak Abhinandavedi, 2025); (Watana, 2025). This imbalance, from the lens of learning management, hindered in-depth learning because it prioritized coverage rather than integration, which constituted a structural root cause requiring systemic rather than isolated intervention.

### 2. Self-Regulation, Motivation, and Emotional Resilience Deficits

As presented in Table 1, this cluster encompassed multiple self-regulation facets at moderate levels, with loss of motivation rated highest (3.24). Emotional struggles, from student descriptions, such as feelings of being drained, uncertain, and overwhelmed, extended beyond quantitative observations. As one student reflected, "I understand Dukkha not only as General Suffering but also as Everyday Struggles Such as Stress, Self-Doubt, or Academic Pressure. I have Also Learned to Identify the Causes of These Difficulties, Like Attachment to Results or Negative Thinking" (M06, 2025). Lecturers traced these patterns to limited metacognitive skills, emotional imbalance, poor university support, and extrinsic motivations (Jiwattanasuk, 2025); (Phramaha Songwit Variddhiṭhāyī, 2025); (Phramaha Weerasak Abhinandavedi, 2025). From a Buddhist perspective, these patterns could be interpreted as the manifestation of sloth and torpor (Thīna-middha), restlessness (Uddacca), and lack of right effort. In the context of learning management, these inner states revealed a lack of cultivated self-regulation and thus emphasized the need to integrate contemplative and motivational support within the curriculum rather than as additional support.



### 3. Language Proficiency and Research-Skill Constraints

Survey results in Table 1 showed moderate levels of language and research constraints across all dimensions, with academic English proficiency constituting the primary barrier. Student interviews further clarified this issue: While they understood Buddhist doctrines thoroughly in their own language, communicating that understanding academically in English posed difficulties, as one noted, "One Personal Challenge I Face at IBSC is Adapting to the Full English Academic Environment, Which Sometimes Requires Extra Effort to Follow Readings and Discussions" (M12, 2025). A lecturer also observed, "Many Students Possess Deep Doctrinal Knowledge in Their Own Languages, but The Gap Between Internal Understanding and External Expression Limits Their Academic Performance" (Sidee, 2025). This gap was compounded by the absence of systematic institutional language-support programs; Only peer support or volunteer lecturers were available for students (Phramaha Anon Anando, 2025). These deficits could be seen as the manifestation of *avijjā*, involving not only a lack of knowledge but also approaching and expressing it. This gap also showed a structural flaw in the current system when viewed in terms of learning management because when support for language skills and research capabilities had not been effectively integrated into curriculum design and student support services, students were largely left responsible for bridging this gap themselves.

### 4. Structural and Institutional Limitations

Although insufficient support from teachers or classmates was rated low (2.48), institutional challenges were rated at moderate levels (Table 1). This rating indicated that support was adequate, but structural barriers remained. Various issues concerning institutional challenges were also reported by students, such as complex visa procedures and overcrowded accommodation, which lacked research space, as well as uncertainties of scheduling and bureaucratic processes (M01, 2025); (P10, 2025). At a systemic level, deeper issues were identified by lecturers, such as an imbalance of the curriculum towards a preponderance of Theravada teachings; A lack of qualified faculty in other Buddhist traditions; Limited research facilities; And administrative reluctance to approve essential learning resources like meditation retreats (Phramaha Anon Anando, 2025); (Phramaha Weerasak Abhinandavedi, 2025). These structural constraints shaped students' learning environments beyond individual control, thereby reinforcing and perpetuating challenges in clusters 1 - 3. In the view of learning management, this implied that effective reforms required concurrent changes at the institutional and policy levels rather than focusing only on curriculum or pedagogy.

### 5. Insufficient Integration of Theory, Practice, and Ariyasacca-Based Experiential Learning

As indicated in Table 1, although there was a high degree of openness to integration (4.02), students' perceptions reflected limited opportunity to apply Buddhist teachings in meaningful ways in daily life and academic challenges. Students who practiced meditation on their own reported significant benefits: "Meditation Retreats and Asking Questions Help My Ability to Overcome Challenges in My Learning Experience" (B01, 2025). However, this integration relied primarily on individual effort, and the integration with coursework in a formal design was only "Rarely" encountered by students. Lecturers confirmed that meditation retreats and experiential learning



activities were not systematically integrated into courses (Jiwattanasuk, 2025); (Phramaha Anon Anando, 2025); (Phramaha Sompong Khunakaro, 2025) and depended largely on individual rather than institutional systems (Phra Suthep Suddhiyano, 2025). As a result, this revealed a structural gap in learning management design, limiting students' access to contemplative practices that improve self-regulation, reduce work-related stress, and support metacognitive skill development, capacities that could interrupt the reinforcing cycle described in the following section.

### The Reinforcing Feedback Loop

These five clusters created a self-reinforcing feedback process representing the principle of *paṭiccasamuppāda* at the institutional level. Heavy workload and assessment density (Cluster 1) created stress and time scarcity, resulting in students' self-regulatory capacity being undermined (Cluster 2) and increased procrastination tendencies, loss of motivation, and difficulty in maintaining focus. Impaired self-regulation and motivation further contributed to language and research skills problems (Cluster 3), leading to slower academic progress, increased time requirements, intensifying workload pressure, creating deadline compression, and restarting the reinforcing cycle. Structural and institutional limits (Cluster 4) created the environmental conditions for this cycle to emerge and persist. At the same time, a weak theory-practice connection (Cluster 5) hindered engagement with contemplative practices that could interrupt the cycle. This pattern explained why isolated interventions tended to fall short. Therefore, breaking it required comprehensive, multi-level interventions, which provided the structural rationale for the APBLM's design. This self-reinforcing cycle is illustrated in Figure 1.

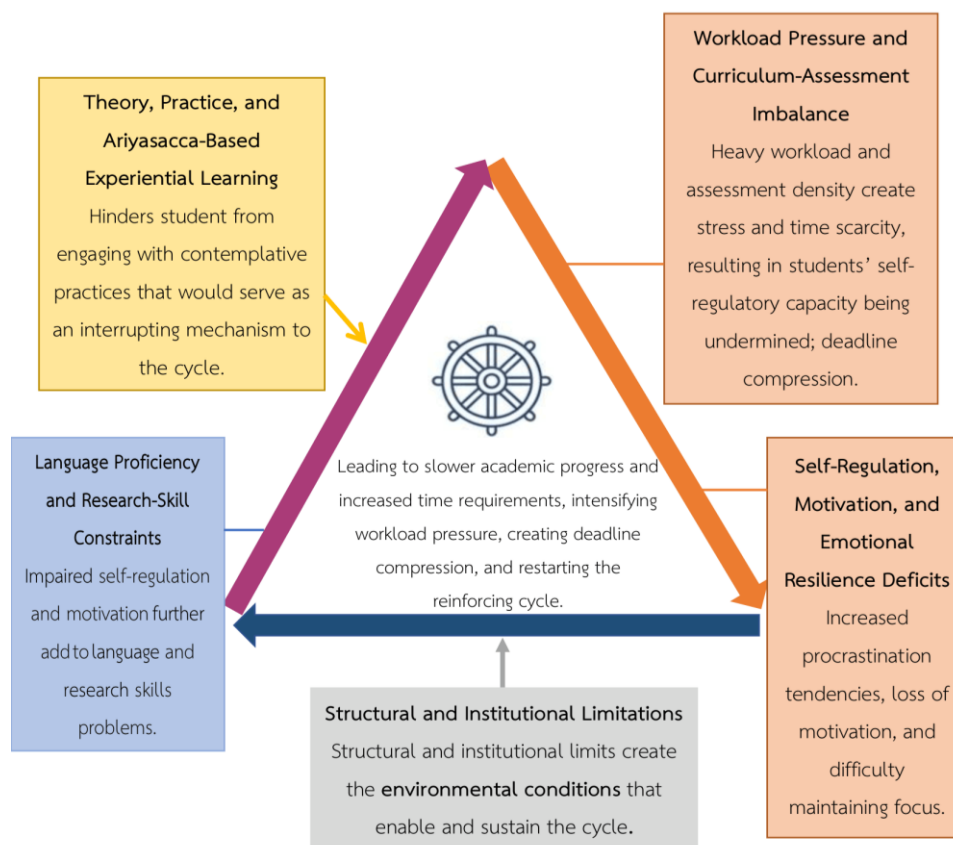


**Figure 1** Self-Reinforcing Learning Management Cycle

Root Causes of Educational Dukkha at IBSC

The fundamental causes of educational dukkha at IBSC could be traced to the initial three challenge clusters. The overall samudaya weighted mean was at the moderate level (2.82), which indicated that although the factors were present, they were not overwhelming.

Table 2 Key Dimensions of the Causes of Educational Dukkha at IBSC

| Causal Domain    | Representative Manifestations (Weighted Mean)                                                                                                        | Interpretation |
|------------------|------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|----------------|
| Internal Factors | Procrastination (3.08); Greed (Wanting Quick Success) (2.62); Hatred (Frustration) (2.72); Delusion (Unclear Purpose) (2.76); Fear of failure (2.98) | Moderate       |
| External Factors | Stress from deadlines/exams (3.34); Academic overload (M.A./Ph.D. 3.2); Limited resources (2.66)                                                     | Moderate       |
| Overall Samudaya | 2.82                                                                                                                                                 | Moderate       |

As shown in Table 2, educational suffering arose from the interplay between external conditions and internal factors. This understanding implied that changing conditions arising from the interaction between inner and outer factors could help identify appropriate and effective intervention. Clusters 4 and 5 did not cause suffering directly; Rather, they created the environmental and pedagogical conditions in which the root causes of suffering could arise, persist, and intensify. This distinction between direct causes and supporting conditions was important because interventions targeting only Clusters 4 and 5 could reduce environmental and pedagogical pressures but would not address core causal mechanisms if intrinsic psychological tendencies remained unresolved.

Aspirations for Transformation through Nirodha

Although they faced challenges and causes at a moderate level, students had high aspirations for comprehensive change, with a high overall nirodha-weighted mean of 3.97.

Table 3 Key Dimensions of Student Aspirations (Nirodha) at IBSC

| Aspiration Dimension        | Representative Goals (Weighted Mean)                                                                                                                      | Interpretation |
|-----------------------------|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|----------------|
| Internal Psychological      | Becoming a Buddhist scholar/expert (4.08); Developing as an independent researcher (M.A./Ph.D. 4)                                                         | High           |
| Ethical/Service Orientation | Improving skills to help self/others (3.98, B.A. 4.3 Highest); Building confidence to serve society (4.02); Securing a meaningful career (M.A./Ph.D. 3.9) | High           |
| Sociocultural               | Reduced stress, increased self-awareness, and peace of mind (3.82); Developing emotional resilience                                                       | High           |
| Academic Achievement        | Completing coursework/thesis/exams successfully (4); Satisfying curriculum requirements (M.A./Ph.D. 3.9)                                                  | High           |
| Overall Nirodha             | 3.97                                                                                                                                                      | High           |



As shown in Table 3, becoming a Buddhist scholar or expert was rated highest (4.08), reflecting a shift from external motivation to internal drive and genuine interest in learning. Similarly, undergraduate students rated improving skills to help themselves and others in the future highest (4.3), demonstrating their strong, compassionate service orientation. Qualitative data further supported the accessibility of *nirodha*. Students reported that "The Meditation Retreat Greatly Helped Me Understand and Deal with Suffering" (B01, 2025) and "I Realized that Everything is Impermanent; I Learned to Embrace the Process Instead of Trying to Control External Circumstances" (P11, 2025). For learning management, although facing moderate challenges (3.09), students showed high aspirations (3.97), suggesting that *Nirodha* represented a feasible transformation in education. The foundation for this process was already present in their orientations, allowing learning management design to harness existing motivation into sustainable engagement rather than create it from the beginning.

### Receptivity to Path-Based Solutions through Magga

As shown in Table 4, data revealed that students responded positively to Ariyasacca principles-based interventions, as shown by an overall magga receptivity weighted mean of 4.02.

**Table 4** Key Components of Receptivity to Path-Based Solutions (Magga) at IBSC

| Path Component                   | Representative Practices (Weighted Mean)                                                                                                                   | Interpretation |
|----------------------------------|------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|----------------|
| Ethical Conduct<br>(Sīla)        | Cultivating respect for teachers, peers, Dhamma (4.12); Seeking guidance from mentors (4.02)                                                               | High           |
| Mental Discipline<br>(Samādhī)   | Right mindfulness: Present awareness in learning (4); Right concentration: Meditation to calm and focus (4); Right effort: Consistent study and ethics (4) | High           |
| Wisdom (Paññā)                   | Right View: Pursuing a degree as a wholesome goal (3.98); Right Intention: Setting wholesome study intentions (3.98)                                       | High           |
| Holistic Balance                 | Balancing study, rest, and spiritual practice (4.1); Overcoming unwholesome habits (3.98)                                                                  | High           |
| <b>Overall Magga Receptivity</b> | <b>4.02</b>                                                                                                                                                | <b>High</b>    |

Among the items, cultivating respect for teachers, peers, and the Dhamma had the highest score (4.12), showing that students recognized the roles of ethical conduct and harmonious relationships for study and practice in academic and spiritual development. Students also understood that true development requires addressing multiple interrelated dimensions, revealed by their emphasis on balancing study, rest, and practice (4.1). Such openness was significant because it addressed self-regulation deficits (Cluster 2). In addition, seeking guidance from mentors was also rated highly (4.02), thus demonstrating openness to structured support. Strong endorsement regarding the components of magga, consisting of right view (3.98), right intention (3.98), right effort (4), right mindfulness (4), and right concentration (4), showed that students recognized the relevance of all three trainings, namely *sīla*, *samādhī*, and *paññā*, to their educational experience. One student



demonstrated a spontaneous application of Ariyasacca principles: "Whatever Problem I have, I Think About What the Problem is, What Causes it, What the Solution is, and The Way to Solve it. In this Way, I apply Ariyasacca in My Life" (P04, 2025), suggesting that magga could serve as a practical method for learning management and personal development.

The difference between receptiveness (4.02) and challenges (3.09) showed that students' readiness for change exceeded their perception of difficulties, creating favorable conditions for deploying APBLM. However, it was necessary to examine how the principles of Ariyasacca applied to the specific educational challenges identified at IBSC so that the readiness of students could be translated into action.

### **Ariyasacca Principles as a Diagnostic-Transformative Framework**

#### **Dukkha-Sacca Principle in Educational Contexts**

In the Dhammacakkappavattana Sutta, the Buddha described the principle of dukkha-sacca as a complex phenomenon that goes beyond mere physical suffering to encompass mental and existential insecurity, as well as the unstable nature of all conditioned experiences (Bodhi, 2000). The important thing was that the Buddha summarized suffering as the five aggregates subject to clinging (Bodhi, 2000), and this indicated that suffering ultimately lies in the clinging to the five aggregates.

According to Paṭisambhidāmagga, dukkha sacca possesses four characteristics: Piṭṭha (Oppression), saṅkhata (Causal Formation), santāpa (Burning or Agitation), and vipariṇāma (Changeability) (Sayadaw, 2004). In the context of contemporary education, piṭṭha could be seen in the weight of academic requirements, and saṅkhata was exemplified in the conditioned nature of educational suffering, a product of causes and conditions arising from standard curricula, assessment systems, and hierarchical evaluations. Santāpa could be seen in the "Burning" aspect of learning as anxieties, restlessness, and fears in relation to evaluations. Finally, vipariṇāma was revealed in the instability of educational satisfaction, where educational achievements could not give lasting security.

The view that real suffering emerged from clinging implied a direct implication for learning management, namely that intervention without inner change would not lead to sustainable transformation. A student confirmed this: "These Challenges Slow My Academic Progress but Also Strengthen My Patience and Mindfulness Practice" (M12, 2025). In line with this, inner obstacles, such as emotional imbalance and difficulty maintaining mindfulness, as reinforced by lecturers, limited students' ability to transform knowledge into lived experience, and students were less able to engage deeply with the cognitive and contemplative components of the curriculum if they lacked emotional stability and self-awareness (Jiwattanasuk, 2025).

#### **Samudaya-Sacca Principle and the Causes of Educational Suffering**

Through the lens of the samudaya principle, the origin of suffering in education was identified by two inseparable mental factors (Sīlānandabhivamsa, 2014): Ignorance (Avijjā) and craving (Tanhā). According to the Abhidhamma, craving is grounded in an unwholesome mental factor, lobha, characterized by grasping objects, while ignorance is the deeper root that functions as the



"Concealment of the Real Nature of the Object" (Nārada, 2007). In educational contexts, ignorance caused students to think of progress in education as permanence, pleasure, and self, which in turn led to various desires, thereby creating suffering.

Samudaya-sacca was further described by its tendency to accumulate the causes of suffering (Āyūhana-mūho), to act as a continuous source of it (Nidāna-mūho), to bind beings to suffering (Samyoga-mūho), and to obstruct freedom from it (Palibodha-mūho) (Sayadaw, 2004). When applied as diagnostic principles, these characteristics provided a structural lens to interpret the self-reinforcing feedback cycle identified above. Specifically, causes accumulated and complicated the challenge clusters (Āyūhana-mūho); The conditions, structural and institutional, then sustained them (Nidāna-mūho), resulting in students being chained to inefficient learning patterns (Samyoga-mūho) and hindering their development of practices that could break this cycle (Palibodha-mūho).

Educational suffering was not only produced by internal and external factors but also by their interplay. Student interviews demonstrated this understanding: "From My Personal Perspective, the Challenges Emerge Through the interaction of Both Internal and External Factors" (M07, 2025). Lecturers also noted that limited intrinsic motivation to learn, passive engagement, along with a lack of academic preparation, created reinforcing cycles in which poor understanding reduced students' confidence and led to further disengagement, with the lack of self-regulation and unclear understanding of effective academic preparation further intensifying the cycle (Phramaha Sompong Khunakaro, 2025); (Phramaha Songwit Variddhi, 2025). These interplays suggested that learning management reform needed to be conducted systematically because of the interconnected causal structure of the challenges.

### **Nirodha-Sacca Principle and Educational Transformation**

Nirodha was defined as "The Remainderless Fading Away and Cessation of that Same Craving, The Giving Up and Relinquishing of It, freedom from It, Non-reliance On It" (Bodhi, 2000). According to the Mahāsatipatthāna Sutta, craving arises where there are pleasant or agreeable experiences, especially those involving sight, sound, smell, taste, touch, and mental objects (Walshe, 1995). These teachings suggested that by mindful and wise engagement with experience, craving could be understood and gradually removed. In education, this implied that learning management effectiveness depended not solely on removing external barriers but also on strengthening students' capacity for wise attention and mindfulness in learning and daily life.

Nirodha-sacca also possesses four characteristics, namely, nissaraṇattho (Escape from Suffering), pavivekattho (Freedom from Disturbance), amataṭṭho (Deathless State), and asaṅkhataṭṭho (Unconditioned Nature) (Sayadaw, 2004). These characteristics could manifest in education through escaping cycles of academic anxiety (Nissaraṇattho) or relative freedom from mental disturbance due to competition (Pavivekattho); Developing types of understanding that were not easily undermined by changing circumstances (Amataṭṭho); And the recognition of a capacity for learning that was not wholly dependent on external conditions (Asaṅkhataṭṭho). Interviews with students provided evidence of this as an accessible outcome: "By Applying Mindfulness, I continue to Cultivate Insight and Peace Even When Facing Difficulties. The Suffering does not disappear, but My



Relationship to It Changes" (M07, 2025). Lecturers likewise supported this approach, noting that when meditation and reflective exercises were combined, they helped connect academic learning with emotional regulation and personal growth (Phramaha Sompong Khunakaro, 2025). Therefore, *nirodha* in education did not mean not having learning challenges, but instead it was the cessation of unwise reactivity when encountering them.

### **Magga-Sacca Principles for Learning Management Practice**

Magga (The Eightfold Path) provided the prescriptive dimension of learning management by providing a structured process for holistic learning and institutional practice. Specifically, when applied as principles-based learning management, right view could be understood as cultivating a correct understanding of the purpose of education as holistic development rather than just obtaining a degree, and right thought cultivated compassion, non-harm, and genuine inquiry. Right speech promoted respectful, constructive, and honest communication that strengthened learning communities. Right action and right livelihood ensured ethical institutional practices. Finally, right effort, mindfulness, and concentration cultivated academic and moral development, awareness, focus, and mental discipline to enhance learning outcomes. These principles were supported in the interviews with students, as reflected by a student: "The Path is not Just Theory; It's a Practical Method for Living and Learning" (M07, 2025). Moreover, lecturers proposed six implementation strategies that directly informed the APBLM: Applying Ariyasacca structure to academic challenges, contemplative integration, adaptive support, experiential connection, improving facilities, and developing a holistic institutional model grounded in *sīla*, *samādhī*, and *paññā* (Jiwattanasuk, 2025); (Phra Paladraphin Buddhiso, 2025); (Phramaha Songwit Variddhiṭṭhāyī, 2025).

### **The Ariyasacca Principles-Based Learning Management Model (APBLM)**

Drawing on canonical insights and empirical findings, the APBLM was proposed, as illustrated in Figure 2. In this model, learning management integration occurred simultaneously, gradually, and in close connection, thereby reflecting the principles of *anupubbasikkhā* (Gradual Training).

#### **Core Cyclical Structure**

The model started with the *dukkha* dimension, which functioned as a diagnostic lens. Five challenge clusters (Overall = 3.09, Moderate) served as issues requiring resolution and indicators of structural gaps in the current learning management system. The importance of this diagnostic function lies in its shift in intervention focus from surface expressions to systemic causes that generate them.

The *samudaya* dimension came as the analytical dimension; It traced the root causes through the interaction of internal tendencies and external conditions (Overall = 2.82, Moderate). The value of this analysis lies in the reconceptualization of apparent student deficits, such as lack of self-control, lack of motivation, or language difficulties, as not personal failures but as emerging from a combination of specific conditions and causes. This implied that deficits rooted in causes could be resolved by addressing those causes, whereas attributing them to individuals addressed only the symptoms.

The *nirodha* dimension articulated the transformative vision of the model based on student aspirations (Overall = 3.97, High) instead of external benchmarks such as graduate competency frameworks or institutional rankings. By doing so, the model aimed to ensure that its vision was



appropriate and meaningful for students while potentially offering internal evaluative criteria for its success, defined by students' achievement of their own goals rather than external indicators or standards.

The magga dimension proposed to complete the cycle by turning this transformative vision into six actionable strategies aligned with specific factors of the Noble Eightfold Path. Because each factor specifies a domain of practice (Morality, Concentration, Wisdom) and mode of practice, for example, right view as understanding the true nature of phenomena, this alignment helped define the content and the mode of engagement of each strategy, ensuring that interventions remained consistent with the core practical logic of the tradition.

The process was designed to repeat with new diagnosis cycles to ensure continuous improvement, thereby reflecting gradual training (Anupubbasikkhā) because sustainable transformation requires consistent and systematic effort. As the system evolved, each diagnostic cycle could yield an ever-deepening understanding of how problems, causes, and goals change. This allowed the model to adapt while maintaining consistency in its overall structure.

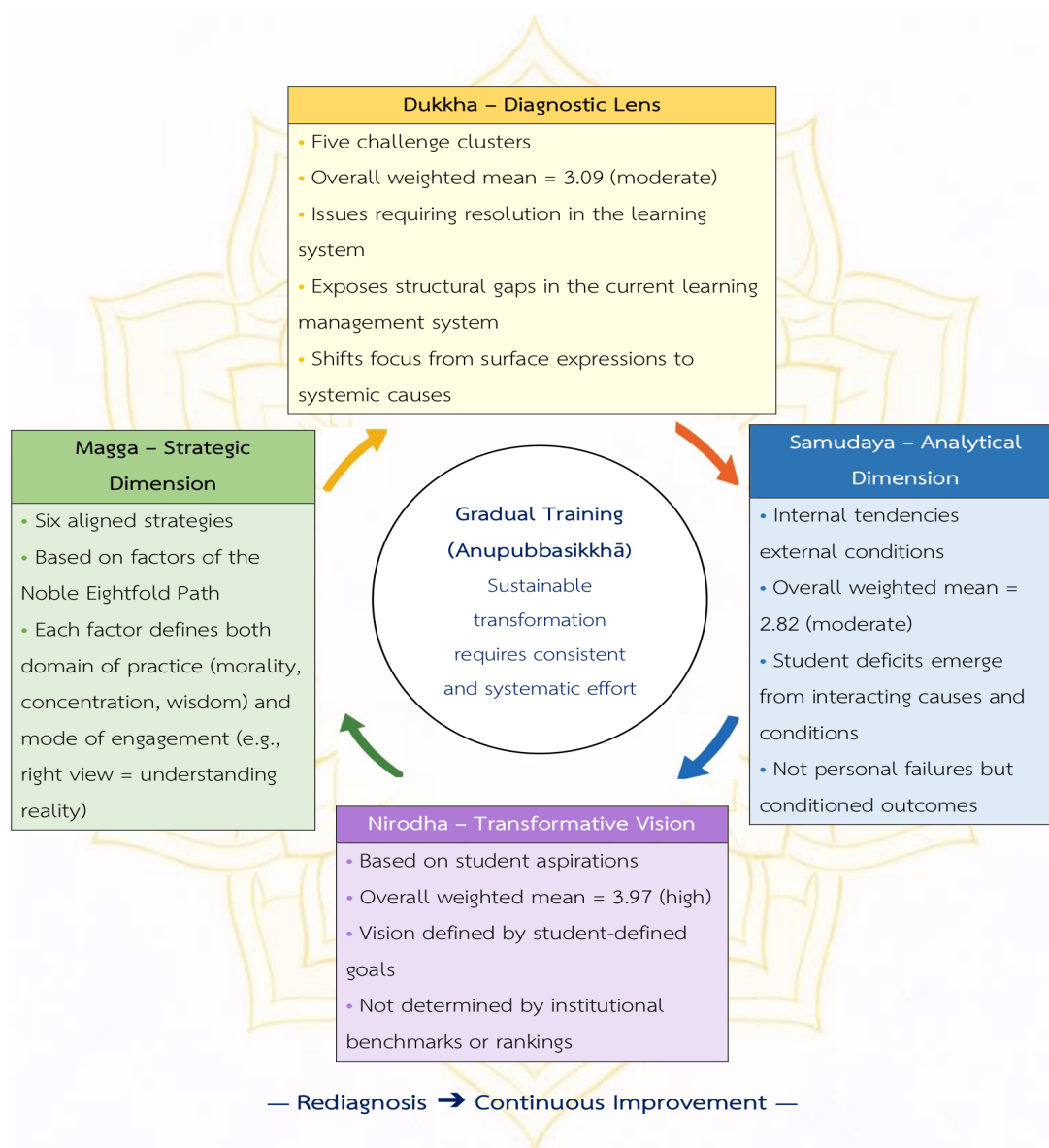


**Figure 2** Ariyasacca Principles-Based Learning Management Model (APBLM)



### Six Actionable Strategies

Through the translation of the Eightfold Path into concrete managerial and pedagogical practices, these six actionable strategies constituted the integrated learning management proposal of this study. The details were presented below:

Strategy 1 involved curriculum and teaching design aligned with the right view and right intention to address Cluster 1. It involved defining clear learning outcomes linked to Buddhist concepts, reducing curriculum overload, incorporating Ariyasacca principles as a method of academic inquiry, and providing progressive scaffolding from basic to advanced levels. Accordingly, when curriculum design is informed by the right view, teachings do not lean toward breadth but rather emphasize depth, and assessment is directed toward the cultivation of thinking to promote deeper insights.

Strategy 2 concerns contemplative pedagogy that relates more to right effort, right mindfulness, and right concentration to address Cluster 2. It focused on integrating meditation practice into learning routines, organizing retreats, integrating reflective practices, creating contemplative spaces, and providing faculty guidance in contemplative pedagogy. Especially, this strategy was designed to intervene in the feedback cycle's mechanism most directly. Dealing effectively with *thīna-middha* and *uddhacca* requires the cultivation of mindfulness and concentration to sustain mental balance. Without self-regulation, external interventions are unlikely to be effective.

Strategy 3 pertained to language and research support, drawing on the principles of right speech and right action to address Cluster 3. The approaches of this strategy included systematic language support, research mentoring, peer support systems, and timely feedback. Here, establishing systematic language support is a key instrument of the institution to address the *avijjā*-based gap between doctrinal understanding and academic outcomes.

Strategy 4, aligned with right action and right livelihood, focused on experiential and ethical learning to address Cluster 5. The approaches of this strategy included field-based learning, service learning, applied research opportunities, case-study pedagogy, and ethical reflection exercises. This strategy helps ensure that theory and practice are developed together so that academic study can lead to practical wisdom.

Strategy 5 focused on community building that is associated with right speech, right action, and right livelihood on the path to address social dimensions across clusters through designing mixed-group assignments, facilitating structured dialogue and cultural exchange, establishing mentorship across cultural backgrounds, creating affinity groups based on shared interests rather than ethnicity, and strengthening student-teacher relationships. In a multicultural environment like IBSC, this strategy is important because the benefits of other strategies may mainly rely on individuals, which makes sustainable impact difficult to achieve.

Finally, Strategy 6 concerned institutional reform aligned with all eight factors to address Cluster 4 through improving accommodation and study spaces, expanding resources and technology infrastructure, streamlining procedures, implementing transparent feedback mechanisms, supporting essential learning activities, offering professional development in effective pedagogies



for faculty, and promoting the right view at leadership levels. Due to the comprehensive impacts of structural conditions, the alignment with all eight factors is necessary in Strategy 6, as these structural conditions require guidance from all eight factors.

Additionally, these six strategies also aimed to disrupt the reinforcing feedback cycle outlined above to ensure that the model can intervene at root causes rather than symptoms: Strategy 1 reduces initial workload pressure, while Strategy 2 strengthens self-regulation to avert procrastination cycles. Strategy 3 addresses skill deficits so as to reduce the likelihood of performance anxiety, and Strategy 4 offers meaningful application so that motivation is maintained. Strategy 5 cultivates support networks to prevent isolation, and the final strategy removes structural barriers to avert the perpetuation of the cycle.

#### **Four Forms of Validation**

To ensure the credibility of the model in terms of scholarly contribution and as a practical guide, its validation was conducted through four complementary analytical lenses.

Empirical validation demonstrated that the model was anchored in documented evidence. Specifically, the *dukkha* dimension encompassed the five challenge clusters identified, and each actionable strategy was designed to correspond to each measured deficit. Similarly, the vision of the *nirodha* aligned with students' high aspirations (Overall = 3.97), and the structure of the *maggā* reflected their high receptivity (Overall = 4.02).

The pedagogical validation examined the extent to which the model addressed the pedagogical gaps identified by lecturers through the strategies they suggested. Six actionable strategies were identified as a deliberate design intervention targeting the pedagogical gaps and recommendations identified in interviews with lecturers. This expert-derived input informed how the model was built, which demonstrated alignment with expert-identified educational needs.

The theoretical validation process helped to ensure that the model upheld the standards of fidelity to the established doctrinal principles while being operationalized for educational contexts. Specifically, the model demonstrated rigorous coherence with the canonical *Ariyasacca* principles established during the documentary analysis, and each strategy also aligned with specific factors of the Noble Eightfold Path.

The comparative validation sought to determine whether challenges documented at IBSC were similar to those faced by other institutions. The thematic analysis of the interviews with the external lecturers revealed that they described the challenges that were thematically aligned with the challenges observed at IBSC. This suggested that the model's applicability extended to similar Buddhist higher education contexts beyond IBSC.

#### **Discussion**

This study first identified challenges in learning management at IBSC. Five challenge clusters, along with self-reinforcing feedback loops, revealed that learning management challenges at IBSC were at a moderate level but systematic. The study then examined how the principles of *Ariyasacca* illuminated the above issues, using its four principles as tools for diagnostic, analytical, aspirational, and prescriptive purposes, mapping directly onto the educational conditions. Finally, based on this



basis, the study developed an APBLM and validated it through four forms of validation.

Building on these findings, the APBLM extended previous studies that were inspired by Buddhism in educational research from changing the focus to systemic institutional reform instead of enhancing individual skills. Findings of Audmuangpiea et al. (2024) at Mahamakut Buddhist University showed that the Four Noble Truths brought positive results in promoting skills of creative problem-solving among undergraduate students and thereby improving confidence in academics as well as the ability to deal with everyday problems. Similar to the challenges at the moderate level found at IBSC (3.09), their study also reported a moderate initial state of learning management ( $\bar{x} = 3.25$ ). However, their model mainly focused on student competencies within a single-campus setting.

Similarly, Jongchaloemchai et al. (2021) developed a five-step learning management model for creative problem-solving that conceptually parallels Ariyasacca, and models like those of Ounraun & Onthanee (2023) and Sangthong (2020) focused on the development of specific skills, but none focused on systemic institutional reform.

A key distinction of this research lies in its application in the environment of an international, multilingual, and multicultural Buddhist educational institution. Research by Phrakhupalad Sak Mahāvēro (Kosolsuphawatt) et al. (2021) and Phraprayad Abhinanto (Muan Si Phrom) et al. (2021) effectively applied the Four Noble Truths in the context of primary and secondary schools, but these studies were conducted in highly homogeneous environments. This contrast was especially prominent at IBSC, where students from diverse countries had to deal with academic pressure in the second language and at the same time pursued spiritual development, which thereby showed the need for intervention at the systematic level. In response to this need, the APBLM showed that these principles remained analytically robust in a much more complex environment, specifically an English-language higher education institution with multicultural and multi-traditional characteristics. By adding a cyclical and iterative structure based on anupubbasikkhā (Gradual Training), the APBLM was not limited to the models of learning packages or the development of single-unit skills like previous studies, but was designed for sustainable development at the institutional level. This was also reflected in the experiences of students. Accordingly, students' perspectives demonstrated that the structure of Ariyasacca functioned not only as a tool for supporting analysis in research but also as a practical application orientation based on life experience (P04, 2025); (M07, 2025). This, thereby, made the model grounded in student-lived reality and expert pedagogical insight derived from the study context.

## Originality and Body of Knowledge

This research contributes new knowledge in three complementary aspects. First, it develops a new way of applying the principles of Ariyasacca at the institutional level, where the principles are used as both a diagnostic tool and a mechanism for guiding transformation in international Buddhist higher education. Next, it contributes methodologically by using Ariyasacca as the epistemological framework that reshapes the whole architecture and logic of research design.

Finally, it develops and validates the model, thereby showing how doctrinal authenticity and institutional effectiveness can go hand in hand in the multicultural Buddhist higher education contexts.

As illustrated in Figure 3, the explicit knowledge contribution of this study is the development of the Ariyasacca Principles-Based Learning Management Model. Its knowledge base consists of three interrelated components:

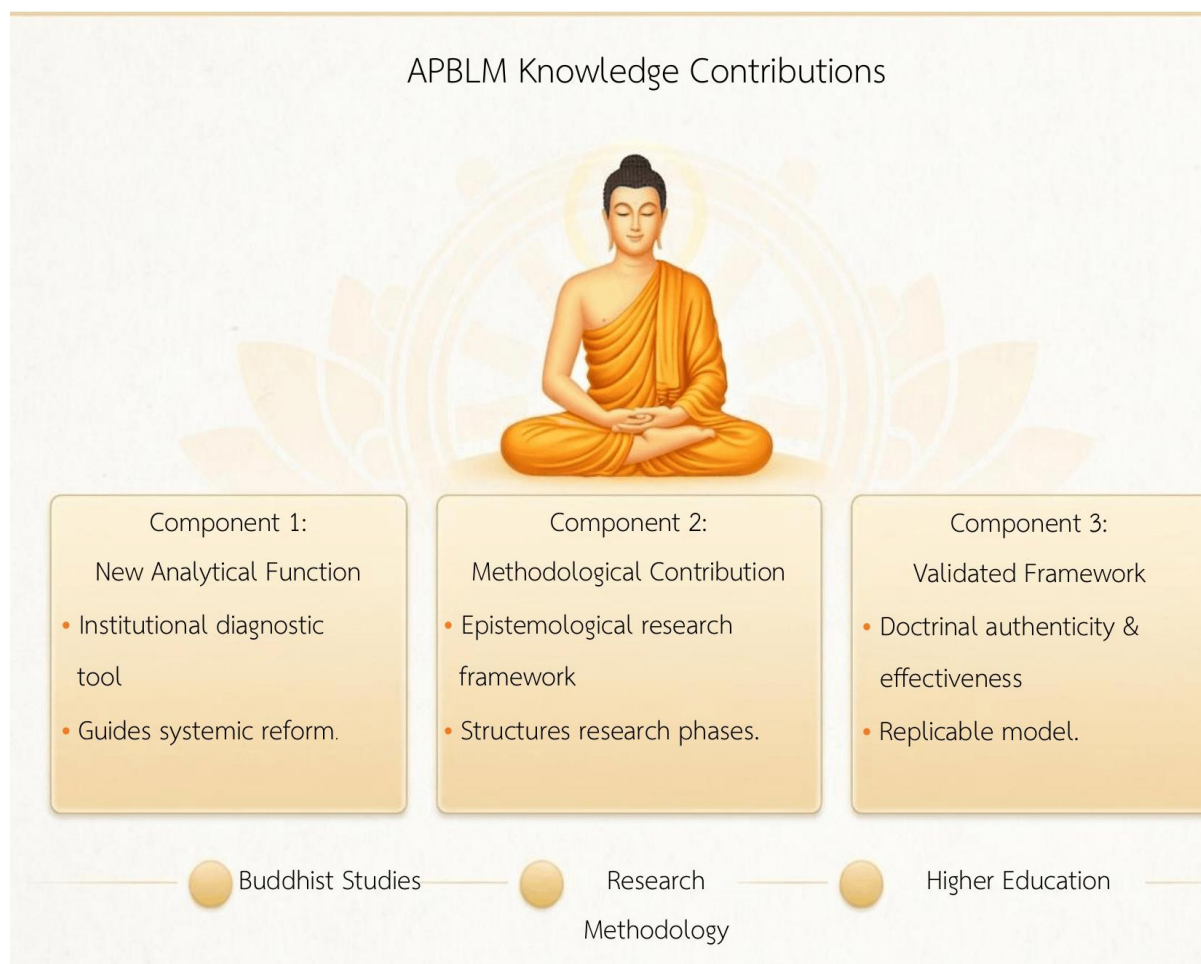


**Figure 3** The Ariyasacca Principles-Based Learning Management Model (APBLM) and Its Knowledge Contributions

**Component 1:** New Analytical Function for Ariyasacca Principles in the Context of the Institution: Although the principles of Ariyasacca have traditionally been used as teachings for liberation, this study extends these principles as a tool for diagnosing and addressing systemic issues in international Buddhist higher education. In practice, the principles were used to identify educational challenges, trace conditioned causes, establish desirable outcomes that aligned with students' aspirations, and inform the development of six institutional strategies within the APBLM. This illustrates how doctrinal principles interact with actual learning situations within the institution through the APBLM. The perspectives of lecturers also showed this analytical function by identifying not only structural problems but also proposing specific strategies that are in the



same diagnostic logic, as evidenced in the findings discussed in the preceding sections. This is important because it shows that the principles of Ariyasacca function as an institutional diagnostic tool without relying entirely on external management frameworks to address structural gaps.

**Component 2: Methodological Contribution through the Operationalization of Ariyasacca as an Epistemological Framework:** This study shows that the principles of Ariyasacca are not only a topic of research but can also serve as the organizing logic of the research design itself. The research process was guided by the internal structure of the Ariyasacca: Identifying educational dukkha, tracing its conditioned causes (Samudaya), conceptualizing the state of cessation (Nirodha), and delineating the path (Magga). This structure also guided the formulation of research questions, data collection, analytical synthesis, and the development of the model. This integrative logic also emerged naturally in the way participants interpreted their experiences, reflecting that the structure of Ariyasacca served not only as a research framework but also as a lived orientation for problem-solving within the study context. The contribution of this research does not lie in introducing Ariyasacca as a new framework but in showing how its internal logic can be systematically operationalized as a methodological framework applicable to Buddhist and contemplative education research.

**Component 3: Validated Framework Illustrating the Compatibility of Doctrinal Authenticity and Institutional Effectiveness:** This research demonstrates that Buddhist higher education institutions need not rely exclusively on secular governance models because the APBLM shows that Buddhist principles remain structurally capable of addressing the challenges of the global and multicultural environment within higher education. As evidenced in the findings of this study, the practice of mindfulness demonstrably changed students' relationship to suffering, showing that the transformation, according to Buddhist spirituality, is not only conceptual or theoretical but can also be experienced in an academic environment. This broadens the understanding of "Effectiveness" in Buddhist higher education that emphasizes intrinsic development aligned with the philosophical values of the institution rather than relying solely on external evaluation criteria. This, therefore, also demonstrates that academic quality and spiritual development can support each other in the long term.

## Conclusions and Recommendations

This study showed that at IBSC, educational suffering manifested through quantifiable patterns across five interconnected challenge clusters and arose from causal networks that collectively produced suffering. Although students faced moderate challenges, they still had high levels of aspiration for comprehensive development across emotional, ethical, scholarly, and contemplative dimensions. Their high levels of receptiveness towards solution methods based on magga lent empirical support to the view that nirodha was an attainable educational goal, and the magga provided a relevant, desired methodological framework. Documentary and interview analyses further established that the principles of Ariyasacca functioned as a systematic approach by first diagnosing educational suffering, then tracing its root causes, affirming the possibility of transformation,



and finally proposing paths of systematic change. The resulting Ariyasacca Principles-Based Learning Management Model represented diagnosis and prescription in a cyclical form, validated through four forms of validation, with six actionable strategies designed to address challenge clusters and interrupt feedback loops at multiple points. Ultimately, this study confirmed that essential Buddhist wisdom still had strong diagnostic and transformative power. In the context of contemporary challenges such as globalization, rapid changes in technology, and cultural diversity, the model enabled Buddhist institutions to maintain their traditions while at the same time promoting academic quality, development of ethics, and contemplative practice, thereby redefining the purpose of education, which is not only the transmission of information but also a transformative process of cultivating wisdom-in-action that can be used to alleviate suffering in an interconnected world. However, this research also has several limitations, which thereby outline the course for future research and institutional action. Because this research focused on one institution, future comparative studies among multiple Buddhist universities in different regions are needed. Also, future research could implement the six strategies of the APBLM by piloting interventions over one or two academic years using pre- and post-measures to evaluate their effectiveness in terms of students' well-being, academic performance, and ethical development. In terms of institutional practice, IBSC and other universities could take more systematic steps, such as using the model's strategies to establish processes for curriculum review, integrate contemplative activities into semester orientation, and make language support a formal part of course structures. Additionally, apart from traditional academic metrics, aspects of student well-being, ethical development, and contemplative engagement also need to be considered within quality assurance processes. Finally, because this study primarily captured the views of students and lecturers, future research should adopt a whole-institution approach that includes administrators and staff, because their decisions and institutional responsibilities also shape the reality students live with every day. For students like M06, who reflected that she had "Learned to Identify the Causes of Difficulties, Like Attachment to Results or Negative Thinking," the APBLM is not only an academic model but also an experiential framework through which students can become more aware of and navigate personal development in an environment of academic rigor, especially when studying in a foreign language, reconciling Buddhist ideals with institutional realities, and searching for meaning within academic life.

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