

# **Usage of Policy and Provision of Welfare for Persons with Disabilities in Thai Society**

**<sup>1</sup>Phrabaideka Suphot Ketnakorn (Tapasilo),**

**Phra Bancha Khemaweero and Poolsak Homsombat**

Mahachulalongkornrajavidyalaya University Ubon ratchathani Campus, Thailand

\*Corresponding author. E-mail: bob2529@gmail.com

## **Abstract**

The purposes of this study research include: 1) to study the welfare needs of persons with disabilities in Thai society; 2) to study the preparedness and development in implementing welfare for persons with disabilities in Thai society; 3) to propose the appropriate policy and provision of welfare for persons with disabilities in Thai society. This is a mixed methods research including documentary research and field qualitative research. The target groups were purposively sampled including 4 organizations scattering in Ubon Ratchathani, Chiang Mai, Nakhonratchasima and Chonburi provinces. The groups include 8 executives and officials providing social welfare service for persons with disabilities and 29 persons with disabilities receiving the social welfare service. The instruments used include interview forms. The findings revealed that all people including persons with disabilities need successes in various aspects of their life such as: 1) health; 2) education; 3) accommodations; 4) employment, income and labor welfare; 5) income security; 6) recreation; and 7) other social services. Moreover, the problems found are the empowerment of persons with disabilities, creation of opportunities and equality in society evidencing that Thai persons with disabilities are quality citizens living in society with dignity. In preparedness and development in welfare implementation for persons with disabilities has yet facilitated their living in housing, public buildings, tourist sites, transportation system with high cost of facilitating technology for persons with disabilities. This has made persons with disabilities become in poverty and cannot get access or truly use these services. Appropriate policy and provision of welfare for persons with disabilities in Thai society include: 1) welfare in education , 2) medical welfare, 3) Welfare in vocation, 4) social welfare, and 5) welfare in mental rehabilitation through Buddhism; The expectation of people with disabilities from Buddhist organizations to empower them by managing environment in the temples suitable for them; producing media for Dhamma suitable for each type of disability; organizing accommodation for persons with disabilities who want to practice Dhamma; promoting the role of Buddhist monks In helping persons with disabilities and producing manual of Buddha Dhamma teaching in relation to their living.

**Keywords:** Policy; Welfare Provision; Persons with Disabilities

## Introduction

In provision of welfare for persons with disabilities at present, Thailand has prioritized human rights and ratified conventions of the world affairs such as world declaration on social development, protection and development of children and convention on child rights. This also includes the Thai constitution enforced in 2017. This provision of welfare for all focuses on social security, provision of social welfare, integrated development through the participation of all sectors in society. In addition, various social affairs have been transferred to be under the responsibility of local administration organizations in order that the people can thoroughly get access to services focusing on provision of welfare for all more than in the past (Department of Public Welfare, 2016)

Therefore, the direction of the welfare provision for persons with disabilities in the future should focus on coverage distribution of the service in helping them and their families facing troubles by strengthening the families to be able to give them care with happiness that they can be able to sustainably rely on themselves. In addition, the local administration organizations should be promoted and developed their potentials in providing social welfare for them and their families that face troubles (Department of Social Development and Welfare, 2015)

Implementation of social welfare, development and rehabilitation of persons with disabilities, likewise, has been influenced by external pressures both in global and regional levels. The direction and tendency of the welfare provision for them should be thoroughly standardized and decentralized (Khamhom, 2014). Model of the service provision should also be suitable for the problems and needs of persons with disabilities and their families. The roles of families and the communities should also be promoted in taking care of them (Kanchanaphabu, 2015). The common roles of all sectors should be promoted for their concrete implementation and building their networks in welfare provision specially some Buddhist temples that have potentials in rehabilitating persons with disabilities and protecting their rights in all levels in order that they can equitably get access to their rights and opportunities like other people. Related laws and procedures may be more suitably improved and amended than the present ones.

As the reasons mentioned above, the researcher is interested in studying the usage of policy and provision of welfare for persons with disabilities in Thai society to build a useful knowledge in suitable provision of welfare for strengthening them that helps Thai society to develop its invaluable human resources.

## Research Objectives

1. To study the welfare needs of persons with disabilities in Thai society
2. To study the preparedness and its development in implementing provision of welfare for persons with disabilities in Thai society
3. To propose policy and provision of suitable welfare for persons with disabilities in Thai society

## Scope of Research

This research is a qualitative research by organizing interviews and field study aiming at learning welfare needs of persons with disabilities; studying preparedness and its development in implementing welfare for persons with disabilities in Thai society including studying policy and how suitable welfare for persons with disabilities in Thai society should be provided by studying from documents and interviews. Scope of this research can be divided as the followings:

**Scope of content:** The content of this research includes; to study needs, preparedness and its development in welfare of persons with disabilities; and to propose policy and how suitable welfare for persons with disabilities in Thai society should be provided.

**Scope of Area/Organization:** The scope of area in this research is as the followings:

1. Home for Persons with Disabilities of Ubonratchathani, Tambon Khamyai, Muan district, Ubon Ratchathani province
2. The Korat Association of Persons with Disabilities, Tambon Naimuang, Muang district, Nakhon Ratchasima province
3. Mahatai Foundation for Developing Persons with Disabilities, Muang Pattaya, Banglamung district, Chonburi province
4. Yاردfon Center for Empowerment and Vocational Development for Persons with Disabilities

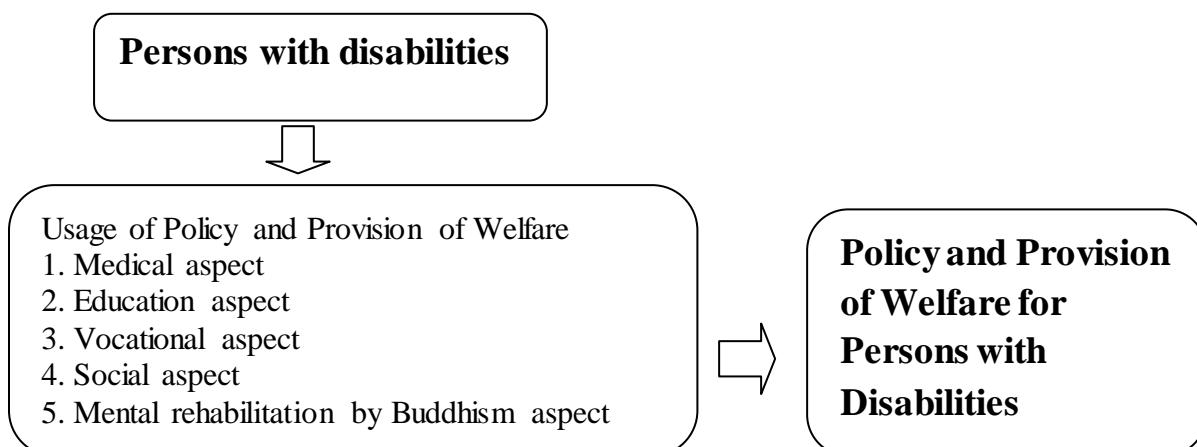
**Scope of Population:** The target population of 37 can be divided into 2 groups:

1. Officials of the associations or the welfare centers for persons with disabilities and academics purposively selected as samples in total 8 persons
2. Persons with physical disabilities (arm, hand, leg and body) in total 29 persons excluding mental, visual and hearing disabilities.

**Key Informants:** This research is an in-depth research focusing on interviewing 8 executives and officials of organizations in 4 provinces providing welfare for persons with disabilities and 29 persons with disabilities provided social welfare. Information is gathered and analyzed to gain concept, principles, modeling process for welfare provision for persons with disabilities. The target group is 37 persons in total.

**Scope of Time:** The length of time for this research is 1 year from October 1 – September 30, 2017.

## Conceptual Framework



**Figure 1.** Conceptual Framework

## Research Methodology

This research is a mixed methodology research including documentary research and qualitative research in the field as the followings:

1. Documentary study by studying and gathering information from related documents
2. This research is a qualitative research through field study to gain concept, principles, models and processes of policy formulation for community, people, organizations and local areas.

### Research Instruments

This research focuses on analysis and participation. The key instruments, thus, include interview guidelines or forms.

### Gathering Information

The researcher gathered information as specified by the objectives by using the following methodology:

- 1) Issuing letters to related parties including organizations, chiefs of government agencies, communities, organizations providing services for persons with disabilities, asking for cooperation in providing information and responding the interviewing forms. The team of researchers approached the target areas of the 4 organizations.
- 2) In interviewing, the team of researchers took in-depth interviews among the executives and officials providing social welfare for persons with disabilities and related persons using the policy and provision of welfare for persons with disabilities in Thai society.
- 3) Gathering information from documents in relation to concepts, principles and processes of formulating policy on provision of welfare for persons with disabilities in Thai society.

### Information Analysis

As this research is both documentary research and qualitative research through empirical evidence by interviewing, then the team of researchers analyzed the content and concluded following the objectives of this research.

## Results

This research is a qualitative research that the researcher proposed from the gathered information from documents and information from in-depth interviews in relation to the objectives of the research. Findings can be revealed as the following:

1. Needs in welfare of persons with disabilities in Thai society: All people in society including persons with disabilities need successes in various aspects of their life. If particular need has been fulfilled, the person is happy and satisfied with his or her life. The fulfillment of need leads to the improvement of quality of life. Need in one's life is, thus, an important variable for social welfare of persons with disabilities as well as the other people as the following:
  1. 1 Need for survival or existence: physical need or the basic needs including food, shelter etc., Comparing with Maslow's Theory of Needs, they are in the same level of physiological need and following with safety need.
  1. 2. Need for social relation or social relatedness: relationship between person to person and person with society etc. Comparing with Maslow's Theory of Needs, it is the need for spiritual security of not being neglected, belonging as a member of society and being accepted and praised by colleagues and supervisors.
  1. 3. Need for progress or growth: need for change and development in personal status; to be pioneering and continuously extending powers by one's own knowledge and capacity. This also includes progress and growth in one's career. In addition, it has been found that persons with disabilities also have needs in various aspects including: 1) health; 2) education; 3) housing; 4) employment, income and labor welfare; 5) income security; 6) recreation; 7) social services

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According to problems and needs of persons with disabilities, the related legal rights of persons with disabilities should be reviewed to empower, create opportunity and equality in society. This will lead to common happiness and inclusive society as in the 12th National Economic and Social Development Plan.

2. Preparedness and its development in provision of welfare for persons with disabilities: As there have been changes in various aspects including political change leading to new draft of constitution and reformation of the country in various areas, the local implementation has initiated mechanism of provincial service centers for persons with disabilities, other service centers, organizations for persons with disabilities, local administration organizations and other agencies that help more persons with disabilities in locality get access to service. This has been realized as strength in development of quality of life of persons with disability in Thailand. In addition to the mechanisms mentioned above, it has been found that the environment and public services in Thailand have not yet facilitated the living of persons with disabilities such as housing, public buildings, tourist sites, transportation system including high cost of technology facilitating persons with disabilities. This has made persons with disabilities not be able to get access and truly use the services. The majority of persons with disabilities still cannot get access to information, participation in social activities and formulating policy. In addition, the majority of persons with disabilities are still discriminated and left behind. This is because of the inappropriate attitude of persons in the same family and society towards the persons and symptoms of disabilities.

3. Policy and suitable provision of welfare for persons with disabilities in Thai society should be implemented in the following areas:

3.1 Welfare in education: It has been found that the management of provision of welfare in education for persons with disabilities in Thai society is the inclusive welfare responding the various needs of persons with disabilities. However, there are some suggestions for the future policy of welfare in education as the followings:

-Learning center for persons with disabilities at community level: As vocation is one of the most crucial aspects for persons with disabilities for livelihood security by earning income for supporting themselves and their families, the security and appropriateness in vocation, marketing of production or employment with reasonable salary is necessary.

-Centers for welfare and healthcare provided by the government: Centers for welfare and healthcare for persons with disabilities should be provided and be known by their relatives in getting access to their rights including primary healthcare for themselves or provided by their caregivers. This also opens opportunity for the participation of persons with disabilities to live with others in society.

4. Medical welfare: It has been found that healthcare, education and vocation are all in need of persons with disabilities. Promotion of community religious establishments in rehabilitating persons with disabilities is an alternative to enhance the quality of their life. Policy on medical welfare for persons with disabilities can, thus, be proposed as the followings:

-Religious establishments for rehabilitating persons with disabilities: Some temples are well prepared for facilitating and providing service for persons with disabilities such as meditation for rehabilitation, natural rehabilitation by using herbs, change of way of life, attitude and way of living in accordance with Buddha Dhamma principles.

-Organizing Dhamma activities for true quality in illness treatment: It has been found that religious establishments for illness treatment for persons with disabilities have different strengths and weaknesses. However, there are some common perspectives in using Buddha Dhamma for treatment. When persons with disabilities observe Buddha Dhamma, it helps both physically and mentally rehabilitation that they feel confident in their potentials not less than other people in society.

5. Welfare in vocation: It has been found that persons with disabilities try to help and rely on themselves and not being burden of their family and society if their capacity is enhanced, job opportunity is available in government and private entrepreneurs and loans for entrepreneurs are available. It is, therefore, policy on vocational welfare for persons with disabilities should observe the following factors: necessity for provision of welfare for persons with disabilities; provision of welfare for persons with acute disabilities; facilities for persons with disabilities; independent life of persons with disabilities; and budget for providing appropriate welfare for persons with disabilities.

6. Social welfare: Procedures on development of the provision of social welfare should be as the followings:

1) Enforcing legal measures: The government should delegate authorities in service provision in all aspects as enacted by law.

2) Increasing performance of all mechanisms implementing social welfare for persons with disabilities

3) Promotion and support: Budget supporting each type of service should be continuous and all areas and personnel should understand the individual need and necessity of persons with disabilities.

4) Circulation of information: Information of provision of social welfare should be provided to each type of persons with disabilities specifically at district level. Information should be shared with them and their relatives including the blind in order to exchange experiences and learning.

5) Mental rehabilitation through Buddhism: From the interviews, Buddhism is essential in empowering persons with disabilities to sustain their living in the following aspects:

-Supporting temples with budget to prepare suitable environment for persons with disabilities: Reflection from the interviewees with disabilities shows that most temples have not yet fully organized suitable activities for them. In the past, activities for persons with disabilities have been initiated and organized by related schools, associations or institutions. For example, school for the blind in Bangkok brought school children to practice Dhamma at Sathira Dhammasathan. However, most interviewees agree that temples should organize various activities responding the conditions of each type of disabilities as the followings:

1) Producing appropriate Dhamma media for each type of disabilities

2) Developing suitable places for physical disabilities

3) Providing accommodation for persons with disabilities while practicing Dhamma

4) Promoting the role of monks in helping persons of disabilities

5) Producing manuals on Teaching of Buddha in relation to the living of persons with disabilities

Moreover, the concept of Buddhism views all things including humans in two angles. Persons with disabilities can, therefore, bring the weaknesses of disabilities to strengthen oneself such as meditation for developing oneself to be more conscious, being neither discouraged nor sorrowful, not adhering to suffering of the past or too much concerning for the future. Persons with disabilities try harder in handling life than others. They may use the method of thinking by not thinking and through meditation in all motions as usual habits. This will not only decrease suffering but also encourage oneself.

## Discussions

This study research is related to the need in appropriate welfare for persons with disabilities in Thailand. It has been found that the majority of persons with disabilities still have spiritual problems that relate to physical and emotional aspects. If Needs Theory of Maslow is brought to explain (<http://whochange-the-world.blogspot.com/2015/07/maslow-theory.html>. 10 February 2018) Everyone, whether with disabilities or without, has their hierarchical needs

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beginning from physiological, security or safety, social, prestige up to the highest one i.e. self-esteem or success on whatever one wishes.

From the theory, it can be explained that welfare needs of persons with disabilities include: physical health, security and safety in living, appropriate social and environmental condition. Government and related agencies should, therefore, provide welfare that persons with disabilities have good health, secured life, social and environment that facilitate their living and developing their potentials, () , material needs that facilitates their life. This also includes subjectivity aspect i.e. responding spiritual need for happiness and satisfaction of life.

Both dimensions of need are the relations between mental need that affects physiological need that is physiological need is the result of mental or spiritual need of the person. When physiological need is fulfilled, it helps mental health. Everyone needs happiness in life that (Khamhom, 2014) commented that 3rd strategy of the 7th social benefits and social welfare development plan (2017-2021) supporting all sectors to drive provision of appropriate social welfare and social development towards the target group. The plan has been implemented for a period of time by focusing on physiological welfare.

In mental aspect, it has been found that provision of welfare in the common wealth of Australia (Department of Public Welfare, 2016) has its own concept in eradicating psychological barriers that might cause mental imbalance or disequilibrium of persons with disabilities. It also found that the impact of physical disabilities leads to psychological problems and in turn affecting physical health. In Thailand where most people are Buddhists, importance of mental aspect has been realized that when physical health is defective, mental health has also been affected by complicated symptoms of illness. (Phongrapha Kanchanaphabu, 2015)

Promotion of the role of temples with other government and private sectors, appropriate activities are organized to empower persons with disabilities in behavior, mental and intellectual that they can equitably lead their life in society in consistent with ( Praphaiwatcharaphan, 2009) empowerment of persons with disabilities, families and communities from valuing and searching their potentials and changing from negative to positive concept, will help them improve their quality of life.

In addition proposed that Buddhism opens opportunity for persons with disabilities to unlimitedly reach practice principle for ending suffering. However, there are some religious disciplinary enactments that persons with disabilities have to follow.

For potentials of persons with disabilities, society should participate and open opportunity for them to creatively express their potentials. Mental rehabilitation is also necessary. Cancer can be treated by herbs and Dhamma for rehabilitation. From the point of view of persons received the service, symptoms of some cases have been surprisingly improved. As evidenced by volunteer medical doctor (Kittisanphong, 2014) Arokayasan Wat Khampramong that helped Phra Panaphana phat Chirathammo, Dr. for many years. This can be recognized to be a part of mental treatment of persons with disabilities. Some cases do not have only disabilities but also with chronic illness and bedridden that needs a close care-giving. This is not only to treat the patients but also their relatives and caregivers to have strength in taking care of the patients.

Activities for patients and relatives are also spiritual treatment that needs to focus on the most crucial belief i.e. Buddhism Phrakhru Suthammanusit, the director of rehabilitation center for persons with disabilities and paralysis, ( Wat Huai Kiang Interviewed 10 February 2018.) has established the center for many years until it has been accepted by government sector. Its networks have also been developed with local administration as shown in Figure 2.

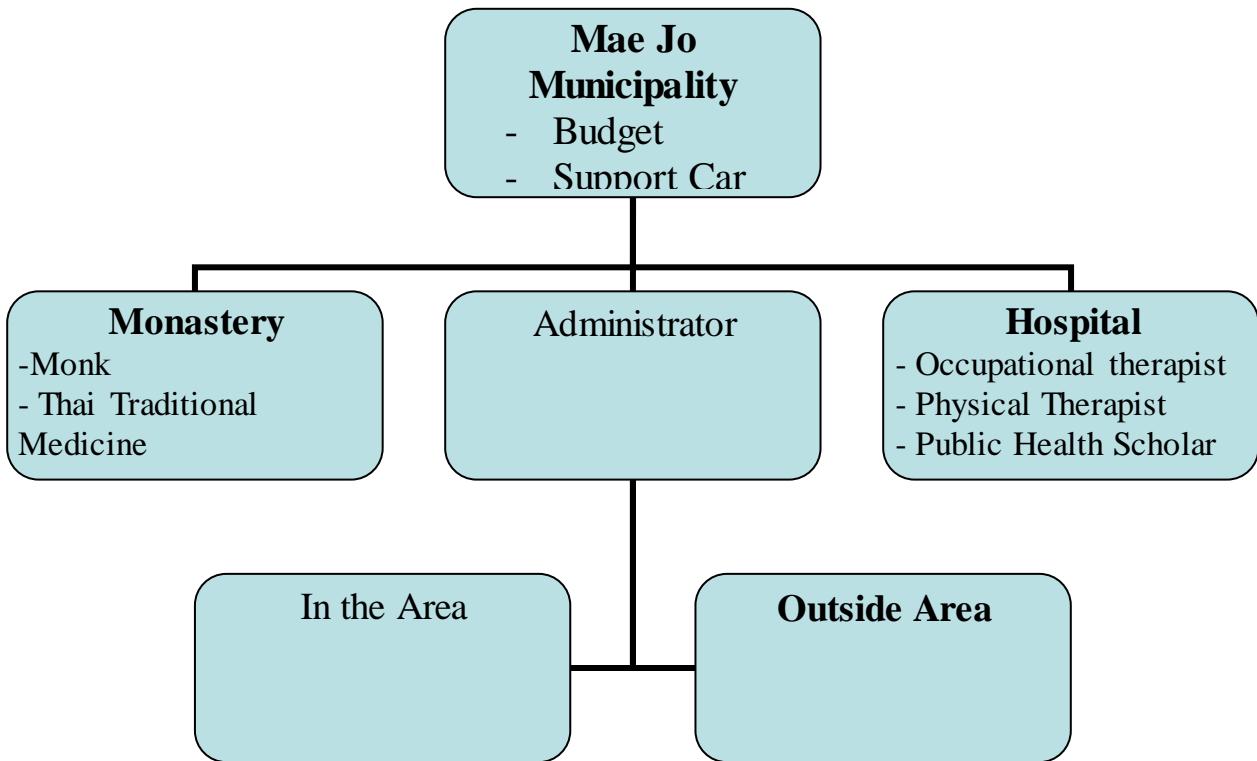


Figure 2 Provision of service between Wat Huay Kiang, Mae Jo Municipality and Sansay Hospital (Thai)

From figure 2 Persons with disabilities have been physically and mentally treated. The local temple is the center for helping the living of persons with disabilities in accordance with the Buddhist teaching. Living under the physical disabilities is not the barrier to spiritually live their life. On the contrary, it stimulates persons with disabilities to have potentials in initiativelly and constructively self-development in education, arts, social leader. This has helped opening opportunity for persons with disabilities and other people to friendly practice towards them with the principle of Brahmavihara 4 or sublime states of mind and Sangahavatthu 4 or bases of social solidarity that is useful for human dignity and equality in accordance with (Suwannasap, Lilakkhanawira & Lawang 2016) focusing on lifting up quality of life specially better movement of persons with disabilities by supporting all aspects in care-giving and promoting the acknowledgement and value of themselves.

In addition, provision of appropriate welfare is the crucial issue that (Kritnaphut, 2010) pointed that problems and needs are different according to the type of rights used in a particular social welfare. There should, therefore, promote development procedure in provision of social welfare as shown in figure 3.

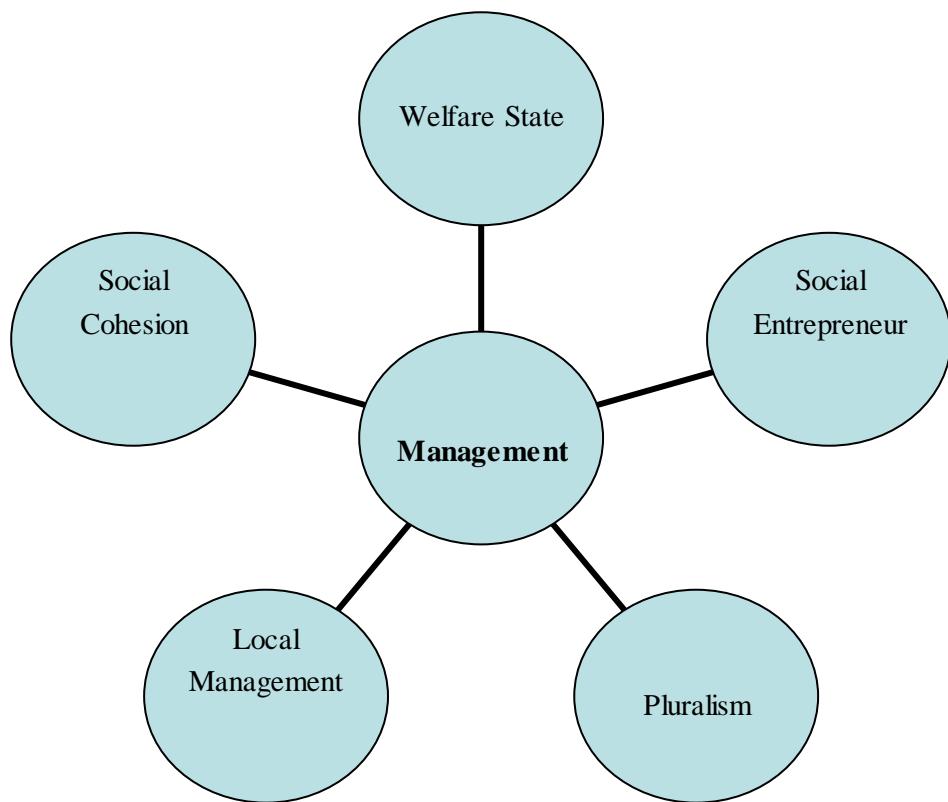


Figure 3 Model of management of welfare system that promotes the access of rights for persons with disabilities

From development concept proposed above, it helps the situations and problems of persons with disabilities. Problems of persons with disabilities are different by type of disabilities and by region. It is complex and complicated depending on its context of social culture whether they are the disadvantaged or the poor lacking 6 aspects: 1) opportunity; 2) employment; 3) power; 4) information; 5) dignity) and 6) intellectual.

Lacking these basic needs is a complicated problem. Rights and human dignity of persons with disabilities are more accepted in society that prioritize the same aspects of vocation, health and other facilities. Urban areas sometimes provide more facilities than in rural areas. Persons with disabilities, thus, sometimes feel that they are not well and thoroughly taken care of. They have their ways of life according each regional and cultural context with different strengths and weaknesses. However, persons with disabilities need appropriate welfare to lead their life with happiness in society.

## Recommendation

### Recommendation for Further Research

1. There should be participatory action research (PAR) for mobilizing the participation of various sectors including the people, community leaders, religious leaders, community organizations and government agencies. The research can be integrated in the provision of more appropriate and effective welfare.
2. Temples and local administration organizations with potentials and preparedness to do a pilot study in model of management of community welfare fund for disability to be extended at policy level.

3. There should be a further study on model of provision of appropriate welfare for persons with disabilities with comparison of areas-based study and problem-based learning with various contexts of society and culture covering span of age and level of disabilities in both urban and rural areas in order that this research has further details and concrete comparison.

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