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Aukkapong Sukkamart

*King Mongkut's Institute of Technology Ladkrabang, Thailand, auk2519@gmail.com*

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RESEARCH BRIEF

# A Causal Relationship Model of Thai Students Disciplined Minds

**Aukkapong Sukkamart**

King Mongkut's Institute of Technology Ladkrabang, Thailand  
auk2519@gmail.com

According to Williams and Williams (2011) creating an emotionally literate environment includes equipping students with essential life skills. Well-being or life satisfaction is the degree to which a student is content with his or her life including pleasure in daily activities, meaningfulness of life, the goodness of fit between desired and achieved goals, mood, self-concept, perceived health, financial security, and social contact. According to UNICEF (2000), in all countries, quality content should include several pivotal areas including literacy, numeracy, and life skills.

## *Disciplined Mind Learners*

In Fryer's (2007) discussion about Gardner's (2007a; 2007b) "5 minds" and what it takes to develop an ethical mind-set. The five minds discussed the disciplined mind, the synthesizing mind, the creating mind, the respectful mind, and finally the ethical mind.

Specifically, the disciplined mind was stated to be what we gain through applying ourselves in a disciplined way in school which eventually leads to our professional expertise. It is our ability to master information and is not simply knowing a particular subject. According to Young (2006), learning to think the way experts think is a skill which should be developed by the end of secondary school (Young, 2006).

As stated in the "Distance" (2016) article, successful online learning requires students to be self-directed, self-motivated, and self-disciplined. This is consistent with the research from Duckworth and Seligman (2005), which indicated that self-discipline outdoes IQ in predicting academic performance of adolescents. Roper (2007) also identified seven successful tips for online students and indicated that the most important was the student's ability to develop a time-management strategy to help manage course requirements as an independent learner. Therefore, students that have a disciplined mind are far more likely to succeed in a technologically advanced environment where independence is part of the education environment's criteria (Dille & Mezack, 1991).

Trilling and Fadel (2009) indicated that collaborative work required the ability to assume shared responsibility and value individual contributions made by each team member. Communication and collaboration skills can be learned through a variety of methods (e.g., project-based learning, problem-based learning, and design-based learning). Digital literacy and the associated skills are thus becoming the basic and essential skill set of any employee that wishes to survive in a highly competitive world (Phuapan, Viriyavejakul, & Pimdee, 2016). Also, research on teaching communication and collaboration skills encourages direct and mediated

communication, working with others on team projects, and performance-based learning and assessment (Partnership for 21<sup>st</sup> Century Learning, 2009; Reeve, 2016).

### *Life Skills*

The World Health Organization (WHO) has defined life skills as “the abilities for adaptive and positive behavior that enable individuals to deal effectively with the demands and challenges of everyday life” (Seth, n.d.). From the four “pillars of learning” as outlined by Delors (1996), life skills are seen as personal management and social skills necessary for functioning on an independent basis and it covers learning how to do, learning to do, learning to be, and learning to live together (Nan-Zhao, 2009).

Liao and Lin (2011) discussed student self-learning management as it was applied within a virtual learning environment (also referred to as a learning management system or LMS) by using Moodle and determined that online discussions stimulated student creativity. This is consistent with the study of Hashemyolia, Asmuni, Daud, Ayub, and Shah (2014), which indicated that student participation predicts student academic achievement with students who use LMS having the ability to communicate effectively. Individual students select, manage, and assess their own learning and development activities, which can be measured or pursued at any time, in any place, through any means, at any age.

### *Self-Concept*

According to Mann, Hosman, Schaalma, and de Vries (2004), self-esteem can lead to better health and social behavior, and that poor self-esteem is associated with a broad range of mental disorders and social problems.

### *Teacher Classroom Management*

According to Marzano and Marzanoe (2003), one of the classroom teacher’s most important jobs is managing the classroom effectively. Teachers’ actions in their classrooms have twice the impact on student achievement as do school policies regarding curriculum, assessment, staff collegiality, and community involvement.

This is consistent with a comprehensive literature review by Wang, Haertel, and Walberg (1993), which demonstrated the importance of effective classroom management. From the research collected from 86 chapters of annual research reviews, 44 handbook chapters, 20 government and commissioned reports, and 11 journal articles, Wang et al. (1993) produced a list of 228 variables affecting student achievement. The findings from the 134 separate meta-analyses clearly showed that classroom management had the largest effect on student achievement.

A review of the literature and academic studies has led to the determination of the factors and importance of the students’ disciplined mind, their life-skills, their self-concept, and the necessity for the teacher’s classroom management skills as outlined in the following five hypotheses.

- H1: Self-Concept (SC) has a direct and positive influence on a Disciplined Mind (DM).
- H2: Self-Concept (SC) has a direct and positive influence on Life Skills (LS).
- H3: Teacher Classroom Management (TCM) has a direct and positive influence on Life Skills (LS).
- H4: Teacher Classroom Management (TCM) has an indirect and positive influence on a Disciplined Mind (DM).
- H5: Life Skills (LS) has an indirect and positive influence on a Disciplined Mind (DM).

## **Methods**

Evans (2013) analyzed 460 articles on assessment feedback in higher education over a 12-year period and discussed the importance of authentic and performance assessment. For integrated scientific process skills, Martin, Sexton, Franklin, Gerlovich, and McElroy (2005) and Padilla (1990), referred to five required skills including formulating hypotheses, defining operationally, identifying and controlling variables, experimenting, and interpreting and making inferences. Therefore, the following methods are presented.

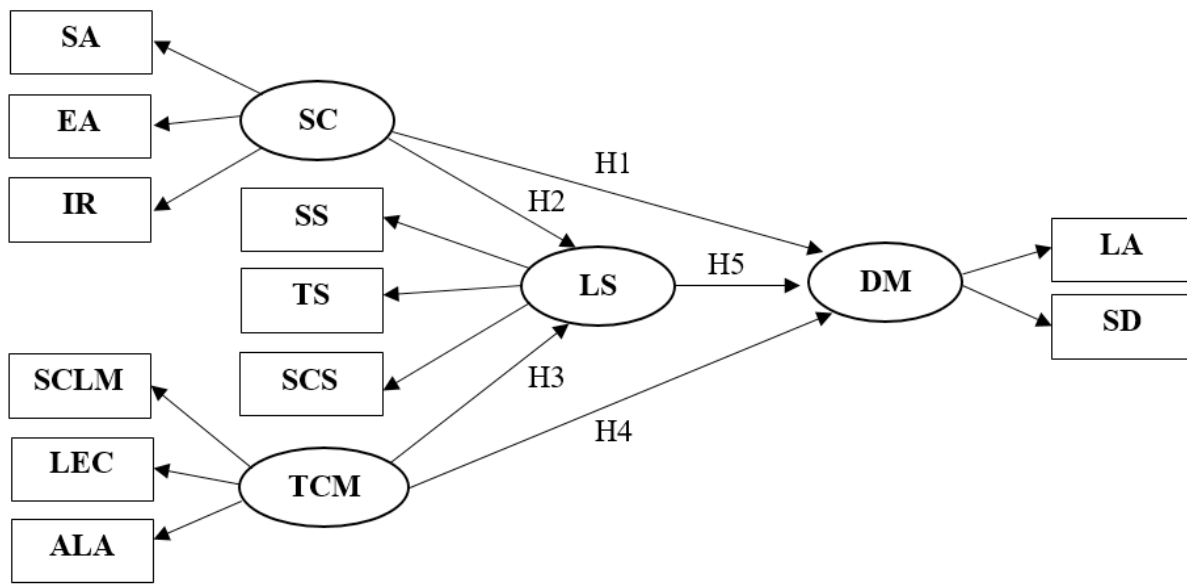


Figure 1. Conceptual model of a Thai student’s disciplined mind.

Population and Sample

The population in this study was 260,283 students enrolled in 119 lower and upper secondary schools (junior and senior high schools) located within Bangkok’s Educational Service Area Office Zone 1 and 2 in 2013. A multistage random sample was constructed by taking a series of simple random samples in stages from both the 119 lower and upper secondary schools.

This type of sampling is often more practical than simple random sampling for studies requiring “on location” analysis such as this study (Rahmantya, 2009). From it, 932 students were identified and surveyed. The sample size was thereupon validated using Yamane’s (1973) formula (while allowing for a 4.5% error rate), where n is the sample size, N is the population size, and e is the level of precision.

$$n = N / [1 + N (e)^2]$$

Table 1  
Summary of Latent and Observed Variables and Their Associated References

Latent Variables	Observed Variables (11 Items)
Disciplined Mind (DM)	learning ability (LA) self-discipline (SD)
Life-Skills (LS)	social skills (SS) thinking skills (TS) stress coping skills (SCS)
Self-Concept (SC)	self-awareness (SA) emotional adjustment (EA) interpersonal relationships (IR)
Teacher Classroom Management (TCM)	student centered learning management (SCLM) learning environment creation (LEC) authentic learning assessment (ALA).

### Research Tools

A questionnaire was used to collect data from the 932 students through multi-stage random sampling. The questionnaire items were designed using a 5-point Likert type agreement scale (Likert, 1967). The reliability of the questionnaire was determined to ensure that the responses collected through the instrument were reliable and consistent. The reliability value of 0.81 to 0.88 was calculated on the latent variables disciplined mind, life-skills, self-concept, and teacher classroom management (TCM) by using Cronbach's alpha (Cronbach, 1990) to ensure whether there was internal consistency within the items. The questionnaire was then used to evaluate the disciplined mind of the students, which the scales being defined as follows: 1 = Very low, 2 = Low, 3 = Medium, 4 = High, and 5 = Very high.

### Results

Table 2 shows the results from the respondent's questionnaire response concerning their personal information. As expected, there were slightly more girls (52.47%) than boys (47.53%), which is most likely explained by the fact that many boys opt for vocational education paths in their later high school years.

#### *Confirmatory Factor Analysis (CFA)*

The researchers specified the CFA model (Hox & Bechger, 1998) where DM learners were influenced by learning ability and self-discipline. The variables for DM factor loading are 0.45 and 0.71, respectively, with both variables are statistically significant at the 0.05 level. The root mean square error of approximation

**Table 2**  
*Respondent's Characteristics*

Questionnaire Item	Number	%
<b>Sex</b>		
Male	443	47.53
Female	489	52.47
<b>Total</b>	932	100.00
<b>Bangkok Education Service Area Office</b>		
<i>Service Area Office 1</i>	487	52.25
<i>Service Area Office 2</i>	445	47.75
<b>Total</b>	932	100.00
<b>Student's Grade</b>		
Grade 7	47	5.04
Grade 8	123	13.20
Grade 9	205	22.00
Grade 10	204	21.89
Grade 11	183	19.64
Grade 12	170	18.24
<b>Total</b>	932	100.00

(RMSEA), which measures the discrepancy per degrees of freedom (df), was also reported at 0.000 for DM. RMSEA values range from 0 to 1, with a smaller RMSEA value indicating better model fit. The acceptable model fit is indicated by an RMSEA value if less than or equal to 0.06 (Hu & Bentler, 1999).

The *p* value is also a descriptive statistic, which ranges in value from 0 and 1. DM was determined to be 0.87, which is a large *p* value (> 0.05), indicating weak evidence against the null hypothesis. Researchers have stated that a Cronbach’s alpha ( $\alpha$ ) value greater than 0.70 is also reliable, which for the study, the  $\alpha$  value for DM was calculated at 0.02, thus, is considered a good model fit (Hair, Black, Black, Babin, & Anderson, 2006; Nunnally, 1978).

LS was determined to be influenced by social skills (SS), thinking skills (TS), and stress coping skills

(SCS) as indicated by the standard loading scores of 0.79, 0.90, and 0.78, respectively (Table 3). All the variables were also statistically significant at the 0.05 level.

SC was also influenced by self-awareness (SA), emotional adjustment (EA), and interpersonal relationships (IR) as indicated by the standard loading scores of 0.85, 0.51, and 0.85, respectively. All the variables are statistically significant at the 0.05 level.

TCM was influenced by student centered learning management (SCLM), learning environment creation (LEC), and authentic learning assessment (ALA) as indicated by the standard loading scores of 0.82, 0.87, and 0.64, respectively. All the variables are statistically significant at the 0.05 level.

The level of influence of each of the variables is shown in Table 4. Results show that SC and TCM had

**Table 3**  
*CFA results for Disciplined Mind, Life-Skills, Self-Concept, and Teacher Classroom Management*

Latent Variables	Observed Variables	Factor Loading
1. Disciplined Mind (DM)	Learning Ability (LA)	0.45*
	Self-Discipline (SD)	0.71*
2. Life-Skills (LS)	Social Skills (SS)	0.79*
	Thinking Skills (TS)	0.90*
	Stress Coping Skills (SCS)	0.78*
3. Self-Concept (SC)	Self-Awareness (SA)	0.85*
	Emotional Adjustment (EA)	0.51*
	Interpersonal Relationships (IR)	0.85*
4. Teacher Classroom Management (TCM)	Student Centered Learning Management (SCLM)	0.82*
	Learning Environment Creation (LEC)	0.87*
	Authentic learning Assessment (ALA)	0.64*

Note: *p* < 0.05

**Table 4**  
*Direct Effect (DE), Indirect Effect (IE), and Total Effect (TE) of Variables*

Causal variable	Variable Effect					
	Life Skills			Disciplined Mind		
	DE	IE	TE	DE	IE	TE
Life Skills (LS)	-	-	-	0.67*	-	0.67*
Self-Concept (SC)	0.65*	-	0.65*	0.16*	0.42*	0.58*
Teacher Classroom Management (TCM)	0.26*	-	0.26*	0.04	0.17*	0.21*
R <sup>2</sup>	0.70			0.74		

a direct effect on LS as the results were statistically significant at the 0.05 level. Furthermore, the coefficient of influence was calculated at 0.65 and at 0.26, respectively, with the causal variables explaining LS at 70%. LS and SC also were shown to have a direct effect on DM which was statistically significant at the 0.05 level. Additionally, the coefficients of influence were 0.67 and 0.16, respectively. SC and TCM also showed an indirect effect on DM through LS, which was also statistically significant at 0.05 level. Finally, the coefficients of influence were SC = 0.42 and

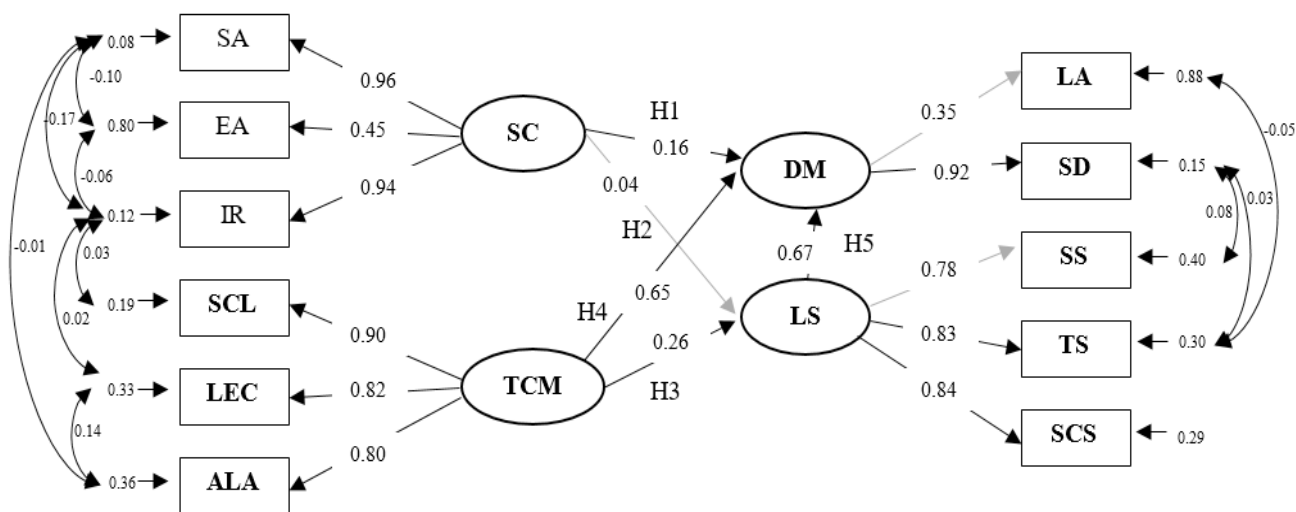
TCM = 0.17, with the causal variables together explaining DM at 74%.

Table 5 and Figure 2 present the final results of the study concerning a student’s disciplined mind.

Table 6 shows the mean ( $\bar{x}$ ) and the standard deviation (S.D.) of the latent and observed variables. From it we can see that all items were ranked as “good,” with the latent variable of DM having the highest score with a  $\bar{x} = 3.36$ . This was followed by TCM with a  $\bar{x} = 3.04$ , and LS and SC both with a  $\bar{x} = 3.02$ .

**Table 5**  
*Hypotheses Testing Results*

Hypotheses	Coef.	Result
H1: Self-Concept has a direct and positive influence on Disciplined Mind.	0.16*	accept
H2: Self-Concept has a direct and positive influence on Life Skills.	0.65*	accept
H3: Teacher Classroom Management has a direct and positive influence on Life Skills.	0.26*	accept
H4: Teacher Classroom Management has an indirect and positive influence on Disciplined Mind.	0.04	reject
H5: Life Skills has an indirect and positive influence on Disciplined Mind.	0.67*	accept



**Figure 2.** Final SEM model.  
Note: Chi-square = 12.15, df = 18, p value = 0.84, RMSEA = 0.000.

**Table 6***The  $\bar{x}$ , S.D., and Interpretation of the Variable's Questionnaire Results*

<b>Latent variable</b>	<b><math>\bar{x}</math></b>	<b>S.D.</b>	<b>Level</b>
<b>Disciplined Mind (DM)</b>	<b>3.36</b>	<b>.54</b>	<b>Good</b>
learning ability (LA)	3.25	.63	Good
self-discipline (SD)	3.00	.39	Good
<b>Life Skills (LS)</b>	<b>3.02</b>	<b>.40</b>	<b>Good</b>
social skills (SS)	2.88	.46	Good
thinking skills (TS)	3.07	.46	Good
stress coping skills (SCS)	3.12	.43	Good
<b>Self-Concept (SC)</b>	<b>3.02</b>	<b>.43</b>	<b>Good</b>
self-awareness (SA)	3.08	.44	Good
emotional adjustment (EA)	2.99	.55	Good
interpersonal relationships (IR)	3.02	.47	Good
<b>Teacher Classroom Management (TCM)</b>	<b>3.04</b>	<b>.44</b>	<b>Good</b>
student centered learning management (SCLM)	3.03	.48	Good
learning environment creation (LEC)	3.03	.49	Good
authentic learning assessment (ALA).	3.05	.47	Good
<b>Total</b>	<b>3.11</b>	<b>.45</b>	<b>Good</b>

## Discussion

The results of this study identified the following elements:

### *Disciplined Mind (DM)*

A student's DM was determined to be affected by LA (0.45) and SD (0.71) with a student's DM leading to the ability to become an expert in any particular subject, which can later be applied to work and to life (Gardner, 2007a). Furthermore, Gardner suggested that a disciplined mind required four steps which included the student focusing on the important concepts within the discipline being learned, spending time and diving into the details of the topic, approaching topics in a variety of ways, and finally teachers should allow for the demonstration of the knowledge learned. DM learners are thus lifelong learners.

Zimmerman (2002) indicated that studies have clearly revealed how self-regulatory processes lead to success in school (but few teachers prepare students to learn on their own), with students who set specific

and proximal goals for themselves displaying superior achievement and perceptions of personal efficacy. Self-regulation of learning today involves more than detailed knowledge of a skill; it involves the self-awareness, self-motivation, and behavioral skill to implement that knowledge appropriately, which leads to lifelong learning.

Wolf (2007) documented the convergence between information literacy and self-regulation, indicating that students who master high levels of self-regulation are able to adapt to different and difficult learning situations, having the ability to change learning strategies when necessary. Setting specific goals and finished the desired tasks are also valued traits for self-regulated DM students.

Bloom, Engelhart, Furst, Hill, and Krathwohl (1956) demonstrated decades ago that most teachings tended to be focused on fact-transfer and information recall—the lowest level of training—rather than true meaningful personal development. This remains a central challenge for educators and trainers in modern times. Bloom et al.'s taxonomy (structure) model



consisted of three parts, or “overlapping domains” and although Bloom et al. used rather academic language, the meanings are simple to understand as outlined below:

- Cognitive domain (intellectual capability, knowledge, or “think”)
- Affective domain (feelings, emotions, behavior, attitude, or “feel”)
- Psychomotor domain (manual and physical skills, i. e., skills, or “do”)

From the research, a student’s DM was determined to be affected positively by learning ability and self-discipline.

#### *Life Skills (LS)*

From the research, the student’s LS was determined to be affected by social skills ( $SS = 0.79$ ), thinking skills ( $TS = 0.90$ ), and stress coping skills ( $SCS = 0.78$ ). This is consistent with Barone, Aguirre-Deandreis, and Trickett (1991) which also assessed the students’ life-skills as their social skills, their thinking skills, and their ability to deal with stress.

This is also consistent with Thailand’s national policies on education which view human capacity development as focusing on providing children and youth with a firm foundation for attaining morality and public-mindedness, together with capacities, skills, and basic knowledge essential to their future lives, leading to sustainability in national development (The Ministry of Education Thailand, 2008).

#### *Self-Concept (SC)*

From the research, students’ SC was determined to be affected by three observed variables including self-awareness ( $SA = 0.85$ ), emotional adjustment ( $EA = 0.51$ ), and interpersonal relationships ( $IR = 0.85$ ). This is consistent with Eccles (1999) which reported that the key psychological challenges that mark the middle-childhood years are self-awareness, social comparison, and self-esteem; and according to Coopersmith (1967), self-esteem is a personal judgment of the worthiness that is expressed in the attitudes the individual holds towards himself. Baumeister (1998) went on to further elaborate that self-esteem is the evaluative aspect of

the self-concept that corresponds to an overall view of the self as worthy or unworthy.

#### *Teacher Classroom Management (TCM)*

From the research, TCM was determined to be affected by three observed variables: student-centered learning management ( $SCLM = 0.82$ ), learning environment creation ( $LEC = 0.87$ ), and authentic learning assessment ( $ALA = 0.64$ ).

In the traditional classroom, the first area that makes a noticeable impact on student success is the physical environment of the classroom (Hannah, 2013; Grubaugh & Houston, 1990). Desks in straight rows and blank walls do not leave good first impressions about the atmosphere for learning. The way in which a teacher organizes their class, or how they control it, will yield positive or negative consequences for their students (Hannah, 2013). In Thailand, O’Sullivan (2006) expressed that the classroom environment is crucial for the quality of the Thai education system. This is consistent with other Thai research by Wongvanakit (n.d.), which determined that the design of university classrooms significantly affects the participants’ preference for the course and attitude on learning performance.

According to Motschnig-Pitrik and Holzinger (2002), “student-centered teaching” is more demanding in terms of communication, organization, as well as the provisioning of learning materials. The extra effort however of the “pure” student-centered approach is well justified and documented as can be seen from numerous well-documented case studies from scholars such as Rogers (1983).

Student-centered learning management also focuses on the concept of teaching students to create new knowledge and as part of this, cognitive learning is involved with concept learning and problem-solving. Teachers are no longer strictly experts but act as tutors who accompany the learners during the learning process and support them in active problem-solving.

According to the group Education Scotland (n.d.), mental, emotional, social, and physical wellbeing are essential within all learning communities and must be fostered for successful learning. And according to Guptaeswar (2014), the teacher should act as the facilitator in the process to achieve eventual success

with physical and emotional wellbeing being the cornerstone for all learning in the early years and even afterward.

In Thailand, health education in schools is promoted under the idea of “a state of perfect happiness” which is achieved through four dimensions including physical, mental, social, and intellectual (Erawan, 2015). The Thai Health Promotion Foundation (2003) developed a new definition of health that is comprised of a comprehensive and integrated health, which consists of physical, mental, social, and spiritual health, with their dimensions of lifestyle interconnected and interrelated in human relationships, with the physical and social environment.

## Conclusion

The latent variable of a student’s disciplined mind was shown to have a crucial role in the development of student learning and was positively affected by the observed variables, learning ability and self-discipline. A disciplined mind contributes to the potential access to knowledge and learning and the expressive behavior that is indicative of the ability to learn.

The latent variable life skills were shown to be positively affected by the observed variables social skills, thinking skills, and stress coping skills. The Partnership for 21st Century Skills (2009) indicated that life skills should consist of flexibility, initiative, social skills, productivity, and leadership. Life skills should also be developed in students to help them to happily co-exist with others while helping them develop the skills necessary to overcome the challenges and barriers in a modern world. Life skills are expressed through social behavior, thought processes, emotions, and the ability to cope with stress.

The latent variable self-concept was shown to be positively affected by the observed variables self-awareness, emotional adjustment, and interpersonal relationships. The teacher should therefore focus on teaching management to encourage and develop the students’ sense of self-esteem by acknowledging the positive aspects of a students’ behavior (not negative), which promotes self-esteem in students and strengthen the bond between the teacher and the student (Emmer, Sabornie, Evertson, & Weinstein, 2011) as self-concept

is how a student judges their worth or lack thereof (Baumeister, 1998). As a child grows, self-concept is highly influenced by parents, then teachers, and then classmates. These individuals all contribute to the student’s self-concept leading to their ability to fit in (or not).

The latent variable of teacher classroom management was shown to be positively affected by the observed variables student-centered learning management, learning environment creation, and authentic learning assessment. This is consistent with the approach to education management as enacted into law by Thailand’s National Education Act B.E. 2542 (1999, as amended 2002) which stated that a supportive environment must be established by the teacher in which students have positive feelings, feel safe, and are encouraged to learn. In addition, authentic assessment is a critical component of the teacher’s classroom curriculum and should be a catalyst for student development.

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