Abstract

The study aimed at investigating 1) knowledge according to Sufficiency Economy Philosophy (SEP) portrayed by Leander (the father) and Moses (the son), the two main characters, in John Cheever’s The Wapshot Chronicle; 2) what extent they portrayed it; and 3) what were the reasons behind the portrayals of it. The qualitative method was used, and the results were presented in a form of a descriptive analysis. The study found that Leander and Moses had knowledge according to SEP. However, they portrayed knowledge differently. Leander portrayed knowledge through the characteristic of a writer keeping on writing journals and a letter giving advice to his two sons. Also, his knowledge was seen from the routine activities. The reasons behind Leander’s portrayals of having knowledge were to maintain the simple way of living and to keep his sons with him in St. Botolphs—a small fishing village. Moses was demonstrated to possess professional knowledge used for working as an office worker. Although he learned knowledge about living in St. Botolphs from Leander, Moses never used it. The reason behind his portrayal of having knowledge was his need to find a job in order to survive in a modern city.

Keywords: Sufficiency Economy, knowledge, The Wapshot Chronicle

บทคัดย่อ

งานวิจัยนี้ มีวัตถุประสงค์เพื่อ 1) ศึกษาความรู้ในฐานะที่เป็นเงื่อนไขของเศรษฐกิจพอเพียง ที่แสดงออกโดยเลียนค์และโมเสส ตัวละครเอก ใน เดอะ ว็อบช็อท ครอนิเคิล ของจอห์น ชีเวอร์ 2) ความรู้ถูกแสดงอย่างระดับใดและ 3) เหตุผลของการแสดงออกเกี่ยวกับความรู้นั้น วิธีการแสดงข้อมูลที่เป็นคุณภาพและข้อมูลแสดงผลการวิจัยแบบบรรยาย งานวิจัยพบว่า เลียนค์และโมเสส มีความรู้ตามหลักปรัชญาเศรษฐกิจพอเพียง อย่างไรก็ตามด้วยเหตุผลที่แสดงความรู้ที่แตกต่างกัน เลียนค์แสดงความรู้ผ่านการเป็นนักเขียน เขียนบันทึกประจำวันอย่างต่อเนื่อง และเขียนจดหมายเพื่อให้หาบันดาลใจเพื่อให้ลูกชายทั้งสอง นอกจากนั้นแสดงความรู้เกี่ยวกับการดำรงชีวิตในหมู่บ้านเล็กๆ ของตน ผ่านกิจกรรมในชีวิตประจำวัน เหตุผลของการแสดงออกความรู้ของเลียนค์ คือ การนำความรู้จากการท่าเรือและทำการเกษตรกลับมาใช้ในชีวิตประจำวัน เพื่อให้ลูกชายทั้งสองใช้ชีวิตในบ้านเกิดเหมือนกัน โมเสสแสดงความรู้เกี่ยวกับการทำงานในสำนักงาน เขาได้เรียนรู้เกี่ยวกับการดำเนินการที่เป็นกิจกรรมในชีวิตประจำวันจากเลียนค์แต่โมเสสไม่เคยใช้ความรู้นั้น เหตุผลของการแสดงออกความรู้ของโมเสส
Introduction

A number of literary works depict different types of consideration that, more or less, raises readers’ awareness on living their life in this complicated world. Philosophy is a part of nearly every literary work created in the world; however, it varies greatly from culture to culture. For one, a simple way of living and a sufficiency ideal are often seen as distinctive characteristics of the main characters as well as their community. Among numerous works, Thai literature presents these senses such as Rajadhiraja, the epic about the battle between Burmese and Mon (an ethnic group) (Meesook, 2007). Khun Chang Khun Phan, an epic Thai poem originated from folklore, also reveals the significance of simple living and sufficiency (Sirikraiwattanawong, 2009). Additionally, a lot of Thai folk fables demonstrate characteristics of simple life and sufficiency such as moderation and self-immunity (Krootmaung, 2010). The sufficiency and life with no complexity and chaotic activities are demonstrated in literary works with authors’ hope to imprint the sense of ‘enough’ or ‘sufficiency’ into the readers’ mind in order to help them to survive in this complex world and even to be able to reach sustainable happiness.

Not only Thai literary works reflect a sufficiency ideal and a simple way of life, however. They also appear in literary works in other part of the world such as John Cheever’s The Wapshot Chronicle, one of the famous American novels.

The Wapshot Chronicle was published in the middle of the twentieth century; however, the situations that were created in it are realistic. At that time, life in the United States underwent dramatic change after the government under the leadership of President Herbert Hoover had pursued the policy of ‘laissez-faire in 1930s. “Laissez-faire” or “laissez-faire capitalism” is the economic situation the government allows the private businesses to develop without any control. Later, the laissez-faire caused the economy to be “mixed economy” which some businesses were still owned by the government and some were owned by private businesses, but not by ordinary people.

Under the economic ideal of such capitalism, life is changed when young people are attracted by the atmosphere of a modernized city. They are willing to move from their agricultural and peaceful homeland to settle down in a chaotic suburb while working in a modern city. In other words, they are forced by that ideal to struggle in the central. Meanwhile, the city itself has gradually formed a “cosmopolitan city” in which different people from different parts of the country and even the world settle down. At the beginning, St. Botolphs, the setting in The Wapshot Chronicle, is demonstrated as a small fishing village comprising quiet neighborhood of peaceful and sufficient land. The ancestors of the Wapshots are characterized to live there in harmony for centuries. Leander Wapshot, the father, continues living in St. Botolphs and feels very lonely after Moses and Coverly, his two sons, have left him to live in New York, and later, Washington. At the end of the story, Leander commits suicide while Moses and Coverly allow themselves to be trapped in a chaotic and modern city. Although the two young men have their own family in that city, they never know the meaning of real happiness.
The simple way of living and the sense of sufficiency in the story reflect a philosophy entitled Sufficiency Economy Philosophy (SEP). In Thailand, the concept of SEP and the components were first bestowed by His Majesty King Bhumibol Adulyadej in 1974. Later on, in 1998 and 1999, the King added the two underlying conditions—knowledge and morality—to provide a solid foundation for moderation, self-immunity, and reasonableness (The Thai Chamber of Commerce, 2007). Wibulswasd, Piboolsravut, and Pootrakool (2010) define a formal meaning of the philosophy in Sufficiency Economy Philosophy and Development as a guideline to life which can be applicable at all levels, “Sufficiency Economy Philosophy is an approach to life and conduct which is applicable at every level from the individual through the family and community to the management and development of the nation”. In fact, Sufficiency Economy characteristics are not new. The conditions and the characteristics of it were mentioned by world philosophers as Socrates and Plato, ancient Greek philosophers, who viewed knowledge as virtue. In the eastern world, the SEP characteristics are the significant features of good man affirmed by Buddha, the great teacher of the philosophy on which the religion of Buddhism is based. As a result, numerous best-known writers of the world present the characteristics of SEP in their works as seen in John Cheever’s The Wapshot Chronicle.

The benefits of this study are to help readers to become well aware of the importance of SEP knowledge, to provide an understanding of life in the complex world, to encourage readers to appreciate the value of literature, and to point out an alternative approach to analyzing it.

Objectives of the Study

1) To investigate knowledge, one of the key characteristics of SEP, portrayed by Leander and Moses, the two main characters in The Wapshot Chronicle.

2) To identify to what extent they portray knowledge.

3) To know the reasons behind the portrayals of it.

Scope of the Study

This study uses the data to analyze knowledge according to Sufficiency Economy Philosophy portrayed by Leander and Moses, the main characters, in John Cheever’s The Wapshot Chronicle from beginning to end.

Research Methodology

The qualitative method is conducted through the steps as follows. First, the data is collected from the dialogues of Leander and Moses, the two main characters, when they talk to each other and while talking with other characters. To collect the data from the dialogues, those reflecting SEP knowledge are focused on. The narration of the main character’s actions and the circumstances surrounding are also investigated. Then, the data is analyzed by exploring knowledge of these two main characters, investigating to what extent they portray it, and examining the reasons behind their portrayals of it. In this step, the extracts containing what the study is searching for are shown while the analysis is presented in the form of descriptive analysis. Finally, the conclusion and the discussion are drawn for further studies.
An Analysis

Leander

Leander is an aging father who has quite a close relationship with his two sons, Moses and Coverly. He represents an old American man living in the small Massachusetts seaport town called St. Botolphs. His ancestors were seamen travelling the world for centuries, but Leander reduces himself to ferrying tourists across the bay from St. Botolphs, the mainland, to Nangasakit, a leisure island. Leander cannot support his family members financially and leaves them live with financial support from his senile cousin, Honora. Even Topaze, the boat he uses to carry the tourists, belongs to Honora. After his two sons have left St. Botolphs Leander starts writing a journal and keeps writing it until he drowns himself into the ocean.

Leander’s knowledge can be seen when he is portrayed as a writer keeping on writing a journal. This can be inferred that Leander has knowledge according to SEP because a writer is the one who collects both knowledge and experience and applies what is learned to the written work. Writers even create some ideas and put them into the work upon writing. In addition, a journal contains experiences gained throughout the writer’s life. Leander displays knowledge when he keeps on writing a journal about his experience and the history of the Wapshots including a letter comprising an advice to his sons. Even though it is only a journal or a diary instead of serious written work, it reflects knowledge. It is because the ability to write and give the advice proves that he has some forms of knowledge to pass on. In one journal, Leander shows his accumulated experience while giving the advice to his two sons how to proceed with their daily life, “Writer went to work day after confab about poor father (he wrote). Rose before dawn as usual. Got morning papers for delivery and looked at help-wanted ads. Vacancy at J.B. Whittier. Big shoe manufacturer. Finished newspaper route. Washed face. Put water on hair” (Cheever, 2003: 139).

Leander’s knowledge is also found in a letter. This letter is entitled by him as “Advice to my sons”. In the letter, the leisure and routine activities present some experience of life, “Never put whiskey into hot water bottle crossing borders of dry states or countries. Rubber will spoil taste. Never make love with pants on. Beer on whiskey, very risky. Whiskey on beer, never fear. Never eat apples, peaches, pears, etc. while drinking whiskey except long French-style dinners, terminating with fruit…” (Cheever, 2003: 306). Although a message Leander communicates in this letter appears little confusing, something that is useful for life can be seen such as the way of enjoying life. As SEP knowledge refers to experience accumulated from various activities from the past and present, his experience of life both in the journals and in the letter can be characterized as knowledge according to SEP. As a father, it is apparent that Leander intends to teach his two sons a guideline to life in a big new world outside St. Botolphs. That is, Leander’s knowledge can be seen in his characteristic of a writer, keeping on writing a journal and a letter in order to pass on his experience as well as giving advice to his sons how they should behave.

Another source that reflects Leander’s SEP knowledge is his routine activities. Life within St. Botolphs is portrayed through routine activities practicing to be able to stay alive. Those activities reflect knowledge according to SEP because skills accumulated from them for a long period of time and the necessities for living are seen. As people
learn skills best by practice, the routine activities actually develop those skills. Apparently, Leander’s knowledge is shown through his skills when he teaches his sons to do simple and daily tasks of living in that local fishing village, “He had taught them to fell a tree, pluck and dress a chicken, sow, cultivate and harvest, catch a fish, save money, countersink a nail, make cider with a hand press, clean a gun, sail a boat, etc.” (Cheever, 2003: 53). Although these tasks are so simple, the skills used to perform the tasks appear being accumulated for years and necessary for living naturally in the small village of St. Botolphs. Therefore, these skills and tasks can be accepted as knowledge in terms of SEP. In addition, the study finds a reason causing Leander to pass on this knowledge to his sons is that he believes in it. As a result, his need to maintain the simple way of living as the way it is seen. Most importantly, the study also finds that Leander attempts to keep his sons with him in ST. Botolphs; however, he fails.

Moses

Moses is the elder son of the Wapshot family. He is favored over Cloverly, his younger brother, by Leander. Moses has sexual intercourse with Rosalie, the guest of his family, in his house while there is Honora eavesdropping outside the door. This causes him to be forced to go out into the world to learn some responsibility although he is ill-prepared. In Washington, Moses has failed in his government job because he has an affair with a woman in the office. Then, he gets a second job as a worker of a bank. Later on, Moses marries a rich and beautiful girl, Mellissa, he decides to marry with when he first meets her. He has sex with her before marriage. In the big city, Moses has to live in an ancient expensive mansion of Justina, Mellissa’s aunt, because he cannot afford to buy his own family’s house.

Unlike Leander, Moses displays knowledge through his career as a government officer and a bank worker. Moses’s knowledge is depicted when working in a big city because he has to use some kind of knowledge that is relevant to his career. In other words, his knowledge appears to be the professional knowledge and skills used for working in an office. Furthermore, working there forces people to be competitive at all times. This implies that Moses has to apply knowledge and skills accumulated from vocational subjects to compete with others, and he has it much enough to win in such environment. In fact, Moses has such knowledge before he departs St. Botolphs. It is seen in his certificate showing that he completes a course or passes an examination. The certificate is found prepared together by his mother with his belongings as the important thing needed for living in a city, “Sarah gathered those things she thought Moses might need when he took up his life in a strange place—his confirmation certificate, a souvenir spoon he had bought at Plymouth Rock” (John Cheever, 2003: 89). That is, Moses’s knowledge is seen because it is an important tool used to earn a living in a city after he has left his homeland (a small fishing village of St. Botolphs) to work in a new land (Washington, the modern American world). The certificate shows the subjects, the fields, and the level of knowledge Moses carries.

The study also finds that Moses learns some knowledge from his father, too. The knowledge appears as daily activities of villagers living naturally in St. Botolphs. It is local wisdom Leander has gathered by himself and has been transferred by the members of the Wapshots from generation to generation. This knowledge is useful enough for
living happily and in harmony in the small fishing village of St. Botolphs. It involves the activities done on a tree, a chicken, a fish, and so on, “He had taught them to fell a tree, pluck and dress a chicken, sow, cultivate and harvest, catch a fish, save money, countersink a nail, make cider with a hand press, clean a gun, sail a boat, etc.” (Cheever, 2003: 53).

There are many reasons causing Moses to portray knowledge. It is because knowledge is a key indicator attracting an employer to accept him to work. In other words, Moses’s knowledge guaranteed by that certificate appears as the most important quality needed when he looks for a job in the city. Without knowledge, he cannot find a job, and it means that he cannot stay in that place. Most of all, a job provides a salary or money—a thing that is a necessity in the big new world. Not only living there, Moses has to settle down, marry a girl, and form his own family in that city. This means that knowledge, which results in money, is the most important necessity for life in a city. Moses’s knowledge is professional knowledge that he applies to work in an office as a government officer and a bank worker, working and competing to survive in a big, complex, and modern city.

As SEP knowledge refers to knowledge, skills, and experience accumulated from various subjects or activities from the past and present, it is found in Leander and Moses. In general, this is consistent with the results reported in Sirikraiwattanawong’s Analysis of Sufficient Economy Philosophy Appeared in Khun Chang Khun Phan (2009). Sirikraiwattanawong reports that all five principles: moderation, reasonableness, self-reliance, knowledge, and morality are practiced by the characters in the story. In Krootmaung’s Thai Folk Fables in the Lower Northern Part of Thailand: An Analysis for Sufficiency as a Way of Living Life (2010), wise decision-making that is based on having knowledge is found in the characters. Krootmaung also reports that self-sufficiency occurs most frequently in the fables.

**Conclusion**

Knowledge of Leander and Moses is portrayed differently. They portray knowledge in different degrees and with different reasons. Leander portrays simple knowledge, experience, and local wisdom having gathered for ages in the small fishing village. The journals, the letter, and the routine activities in the simple way of living indicate that Leander possesses knowledge according to SEP. Leander portrays his knowledge because he needs to maintain the simple way of living as the way it is. Also, he needs to keep his sons with him within ST. Botolphs. Moses learns knowledge from Leander, but he never uses it. On the contrary, he displays professional knowledge that is very different from what Leander teaches him. Moses’s certificate and its benefit that helps Moses to gain a job can be interpreted that he has knowledge in terms of SEP. In addition, Moses’s knowledge results in money which is one of necessities useful for survival and settling down in the modern city.

**Discussion**

The Wapshot Chronicle is written to satirize real-life situations in the atmosphere of capitalism. It reflects life under a capitalist ideal in the modern world in the US during 1950s. As the word “modern” refers to “up-to-date” or “new,” the modern world according to capitalism means the place in which the economic structure is formed under new circumstances. Schumpeter (2012)
explains the state of the capitalist communities by using the word “new” to express as “The fundamental impulse that sets and keeps the capitalist engine in motion comes from the new consumers’ goods, the new methods of production or transportation, the new markets, the new forms of industrial organization”. This leads modern forms of jobs, workplaces, technology, and conveniences to be offered as the pressing demands of modern life all citizens are willing to compete for. The competition not only changes the mindset of the citizens but masks the reality of hopelessness of living in a modern city from them.

In The Wapshot Chronicle, the author forms an old fishing village in which the main characters’ ancestors have lived for centuries. Later on, outside the fishing village, the suburbia is made up under the capitalist ideal whose central theme is opening up an opportunity just for a hard-working individual. Such suburbia is so attractive that Moses, including Coverly (Moses’s younger brother), is willing to leave the parents, relatives, and friends behind.

Knowledge according to SEP Leander portrays does not benefit anyone. Such knowledge was appropriate for living in the small village of St. Botolphs centuries ago, but not now. It is found so limited and simple that it does not help Leander and his two sons to make any good decision about life. Also, it cannot be applied to use in new circumstances like a modern capitalist city. Even, the knowledge reveals Leander misunderstanding about life of the complex world. As a result, it can be interpreted that Leander lacks the capacity to prepare his two sons to live in the new and modern world in which everything is different from living within St. Botolphs. As a result, both Moses and Coverly are ill-prepared when leaving their homeland to live in a big city. Although the knowledge learned from the father can be categorized as SEP knowledge, Moses and Coverly never gain its real benefits. In addition, it does not benefit Leander in the old village, too. Leander’s loneliness and death from drowning can be assumed that he is not aware of the real benefits of knowledge and cannot apply it to bring him happiness. Even his life, knowledge does not help him to save it.

Nonetheless, life of his sons is not the reason causing Leander to write the journals and the letter. The study finds that Leander begins writing the first journal after the two sons have already left St. Botolphs. The study even finds that he starts to write the first journal after he has lost his boat, Topaze. This reveals his real intention to write the journals that it is not for teaching the sons but soothing away the pain of losing Topaze instead. Even worse, this means that the feeling of losing Topaze is stronger than the feeling of losing his sons.

Apart from knowledge learned from Leander, Moses gains knowledge from being educated. This is shown in the certificate he takes with him from home to a city. However, all kinds of knowledge presented by Moses bring about separation, struggle, and loneliness instead of real happiness. Such knowledge changes his life as a young man living in a natural and peaceful environment of St. Botolphs to be a materialistic man living in a chaotic city. Also, it forces him to be separated from his parents until the end of the story and until his father is found dead. The reasons that lead Leander and Moses, including Coverly to blind themselves from the benefits of knowledge according to SEP and the simple life are money, materials, and wealth. Leander blocks himself from learning anything more and lets his
family depend upon financial support of Honora. Moses and Coverly let the wants flow so much that it destroys the living in harmony. Most of all, all of the three main characters fail to realize that there is real happiness in life if they start to understand the significant value of knowledge and other SEP elements. The Wapshot Chronicle encourages readers to become well aware that the real happiness is not wealth, property, and fancy materials men enjoy. However, it is sufficiency, knowledge, and other SEP elements that bring about real happiness.

**Recommendation**

The researcher recommends literary researchers who are interested in studying The Wapshot Chronicle that they should use other elements of Sufficiency Economy Philosophy such as morality, moderation, self-reliance, and reasonableness to analyze Leander and Moses as well as Coverly, another main character. Apart from studying SEP features in The Wapshot Chronicle, there should be research that applies a SEP theory to analyze other literary works.

**References**


