

Naresuan Evaluation Theory

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Abstract

Naresuan Evaluation Theory has been developed from the Thai context basing on a Buddhist principle known as *patija samutha baht* and *The six senses*, pluralism, empiricism, humanism, democracy, peaceful solution or *ahimsa*, and good governance. The theory traces back to the original requirement of the evaluation, value assignment, criteria, and outcome of the evaluation. The discloser of the evaluation, and role of the evaluator. In addition to the theory proposing, the author had also presented the model and approach of the Naresuan Evaluation Theory which has been expanded from the Theory itself.

Definition and Description of the Theory

From general survey, the term “theory”, according the Merriam Webster Colligiate Disctionary (1996: 1223) is referred to :

1. the analysis of a set of facts in their relation to one another.
2. abstract thought.
3. the general or abstract principles of a body of fact.
4. a belief policy or procedure proposed or followed as the basis of action.
5. a plausible or scientifically acceptable general principle or body of principles offerred to explain phenomenon.

From the above citations, there are few keywords which characterize a theory. They are : (1) relationship among the facts, (2) abstractness, (3) belief and idea which serve as the basis for practice, and (4) its explanatory function. Others also define the term as follows:

Hosper (1967: 229-247) contends that what considered theory should consist of abstract concept which attempts to explain the phenomenon in a conclusive or inferential way. A theory is not simply the conclusion drawn from the observation but it must be constructed to the level higher than the facts and could extensively explain the phenomenon or facts.

From all these definitions, fundamental features of a theory could be concluded as:

Firstly, a theory emerges from the observation of a phenomenon for some period of time to the point where pattern and regularity of the phenomenon could be derived leading to the construction of a statement to describe, explain, and predict the phenomenon under investigation. Thus, a theory is the statement which has been reliably and validly constructed and supported by the facts that could verify the theory.

Secondly, in relating to the first premise, the statement of a theory is to build up new concepts or principles which are interrelated to represent the specific phenomenon being observed. Accordingly, the theoretical statement must be general and could generalize to any specific phenomenon of the same kind.

Lastly, a theory is never be totally close but is testable. Theory could be put into hypothesis to be tested any time. One result of the constant testing of a theory is the theory development which would bring such theory into its highest perfection. Therefore, a theory is not an absolute truth.

Definition and Description of the Evaluation Theory

The above definition of the theory could be used to derive the definition of an evaluation theory as:

“Set of statements which are generalizable consisting of principles and concepts relating to evaluation. They are interrelated to describe, explain, and predict the phenomenon under evaluation in a reliable way.”

Key features contained in this definition are:

Firstly, the evaluation theory is constructed from the observation of the phenomenon to be evaluated or from the empirical data acquired through the evaluation. Thus, the theory of evaluation consists of principles or concepts. The evaluation is highly generalizable to the evaluative situation.

Secondly, the theory of evaluation serves the function to describable, explain, and predict the phenomenon being evaluated in a conclusive way dealing with the evaluation’s value or usefulness, objectives or goals, methods, and evaluator’s roles.

Lastly, the theory of evaluation consists of a set of propositions opening for the proof or disproof leading to the construction of an update body of knowledge which would bring new progress to the evaluation theory.

Components of the Evaluation Theory

Evaluation theories differ in the theorist's belief or the philosophical basis of such belief. Basic philosophical foundation of the evaluation is the philosophy of reality of the value, or metaphysics of evaluation and philosophy of access to the reality of such value or epistemology of evaluation. Accordingly, if the belief in the reality of value or in evaluation the reality of the value differs, the theory, method, and form of evaluation should differ as well. Because of this philosophical bases, in an attempt to construct or develop an evaluation theory, it necessary that some philosophical ground must be laid first. The evaluation theory, like any other theory, has two major components: (1) concepts, and (2) propositions.

1. Concept is a word or phrase people create. It is abstract to call or to represent property of a certain thing or phenomenon which could be observable. Concept is the representation of ideas people use to communicate among one another leading to the perception of meaning and classification of any phenomenon. Concept emerges from the phenomenon. In other words, observation of the phenomenon lead people to construct the concept. Concept can not be created with any support of phenomenon. Abstract concept such as goodness, human being, research, evaluation, and other terms the author has used in this passage are all concept. Even the term concept is itself a concept. From this meaning and characteristic of concept, it is clear that evaluation theory is always involved with concepts.

2. Proposition is an essential component of the theory next to the concept. A proposition is the statement that shows relationship between two of more concepts. By this virtue, a proposition is abstract to an higher extent than the concept and has generalizability. It is more complex than a concept which is always represented by a word or phrase. Theory of evaluation, there is a need to link concepts related to evaluation and put it in the form called proposition.

As suggested by Scriven (1998 : 59), a theory of evaluation is a set of proposition systematically integrated to explain a particular thing related to evaluation. Theory of evaluation could be divided into two parts: internal and external theories of evaluation. The former is the theory itself – the procedure of the evaluation. The latter is referred to the object of evaluation and the utilization of the evaluation.

Steps of Evaluation Theory Development

Like others, a good evaluation theory starts with empirical data collected through regular observations of the phenomenon of interest for a certain period of time until some understanding and explanation are acquired. Fawcett & Downs (1986, cited in Sirichai Kanchanawasi, B.E. 2545) suggest that any steps in developing a theory should follow the following steps:

1. Identify the related concepts.
2. Define the concepts. This step is to provide the meaning for each concept both in theoretical and operational terms. Theoretical definition is to assign the meaning of the concept in general term. This type of meaning is sometimes called dictionary definition. Operational definition, on the other hand, contains empirical or observable terms.
3. Construct propositions by linking two or more concepts together on certain logical order.
4. As there are more than one propositions in a theory, there is a need to organize the propositions. It is suggested that they should be ordered from concrete to abstract. The propositions are connected together logical and empirical terms.
5. Construct diagram to represent the structural relationship among the concepts in a proposition and among the propositions in the whole theory to show the system of relationship.

Relying on the steps, the author would like to present a theory of evaluation, hereafter will be referred to as “Naresuan Evaluation Theory” whose details are as follows:

Basic Philosophical Foundation of the Theory

The Naresuan Evaluation Theory has been developed from the concepts prevailed in various disciplines :

1. Buddhist dhamma principles known as “*pati ja samutha baht*” which explains the origin and existence of things which have been interrelated leading to the conclusion that all effects are generated by certain cause(s).
2. Philosophical principle which is known as pluralism which explains that truth about things has more than one side.
3. Epistemological principle and Buddhist principle explaining access to and attempt to find the truth both of which rely on the five senses. This contention agrees with the empiricism and reasoning or cognition along the epistemological line of rationalism. This phenomenon is called the six senses (composed of eyes, ears, nose, tongue, sensation, and mind).
4. Humanist psychological principle which deals with human dignity and esteem assuming that humans do not take any action which would deprive their human dignity and esteem.

5. Democratic principle which opens for all people in the society to have equal opportunity and discourages any action which would violate other individuals' rights.

6. Principle of peace or Ahimsa which serves as the conceptual framework of dealing with invasion on the part of the others. This principle encourages the non-violent method to resolve any conflict. Both sides should be equipped with toleration in dealing with each other.

7. The principle of good governance which stresses the importance of transparency and accountability. Information involved management should be freely acquired by any interest group and the public in general for the purpose of public scrutiny.

Basing on the above mentioned principles, a conceptual framework could be illustrated as in the diagram below.

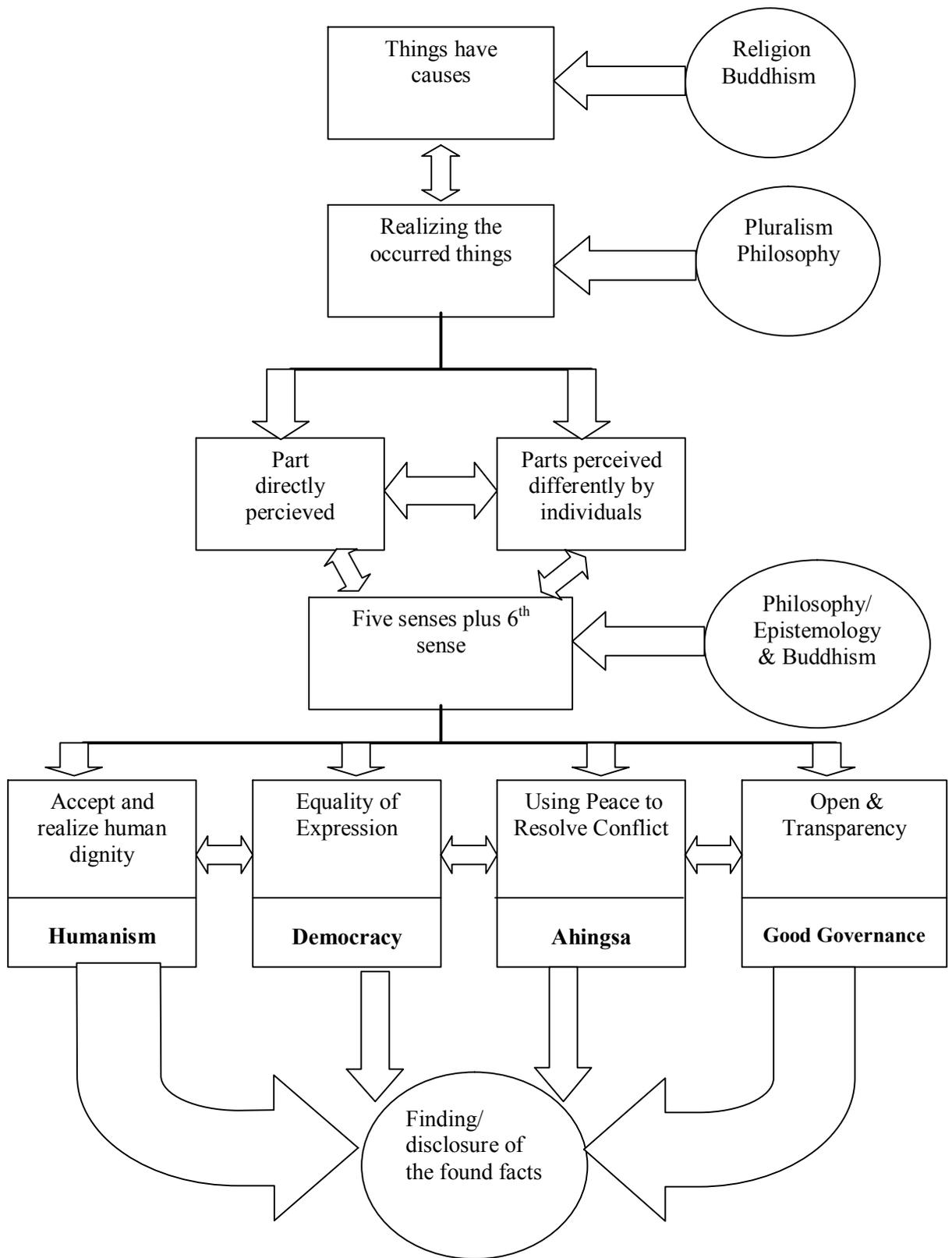


Figure 1 : Conceptual Framework of the Proposed Naresuan Evaluation Theory

Concept

The concepts related to Naresuan Theory of Evaluation consists of :

1. Outcome of the evaluation is referred to the value assigned to the findings through various information collecting tools.
2. Value of the evaluation is referred to criteria or whatever objectively perceived and shared by all involved partners which is related to the evaluation outcome. The shared value is regarded public value while that selectively perceived and potential of perception by individual in the course of the evaluation is regarded personal value.
3. Empirical method is referred to the method used in the inquiry into reality of things basing on the five senses as channels of perception.
4. Rational method is referred to the method used in the inquiry into reality of things basing on thinking, insight, reasoning, or intelligence.
5. Humanistic principle is referred to a psychological perspective which emphasizes freedom and realizes the human dignity to dealing with human beings.
6. Democratic principle is referred to the idea which emphasizes equality and the open of equal opportunity for people, individually or in group, in the society to express of their action or demands without violating other people's legitimate rights.
7. Ahingsa principle is referred to the idea used to resolved conflict between individuals and groups of individuals through peaceful mean without compromising any side's goals.
8. Good governance principle is referred to the concept concerning organizational management which is based on transparency. This system should open for any public scrutiny by disclosing the information and outcome of the evaluation to the public.

Propositions

Having reviewed the related ideas and concepts, the author would like to propose the following propositions:

Proposition 1: Assigning value to a particular object being evaluated or to the outcome of any evaluation should have some causes. It has not occurred in the vacuum. The cause of assigning value to any evaluation or its outcome is the perception of the people involved with all the things that happened to the object being evaluated.

Proposition 2 : The perception of the result of the evaluation or any value assignment consists of both the part that could be congruently perceived by the partners involved in the evaluation and the part that is subject to the perceptual capacity and the selective perception of each or group of the involved partners.

Proposition 3 : Any value given to the evaluand or attempt to obtain the assessing results can be acquired through empirical, rational, five-sensory, and psychic methods.

Proposition 4 : The disclosure of the found facts and information which are the result of the evaluation or assigning value to the thing to be evaluated must be carried through the full awareness of humanity of the people being evaluated. It must equally open for the involved partners to express their evaluation needs and demands. Should conflict of the needs and opinions among these partners occur, it must be resolved with peaceful mean. The outcomes of the evaluation must be transparently disclosed to all involved partners.

Theory

In valuing the evaluand, criteria, and outcome of the evaluation, one must rely on the causes or evidences which support the legitimacy of the value, criteria, and outcome of the evaluation. These could be congruently perceived among the involved partners and potentially perceived or selectively perceived by the involved individuals. The method through which value, criteria, and outcomes are obtained should utilize empirical and/or rational approaches.

The value, criteria, and outcomes of the evaluation must be transparently disclosed, with full awareness of dignity and needs of the involved partners who are treated as human being. The conflict occurred as the result of conflict of the evaluating needs must be resolved with peaceful mean.

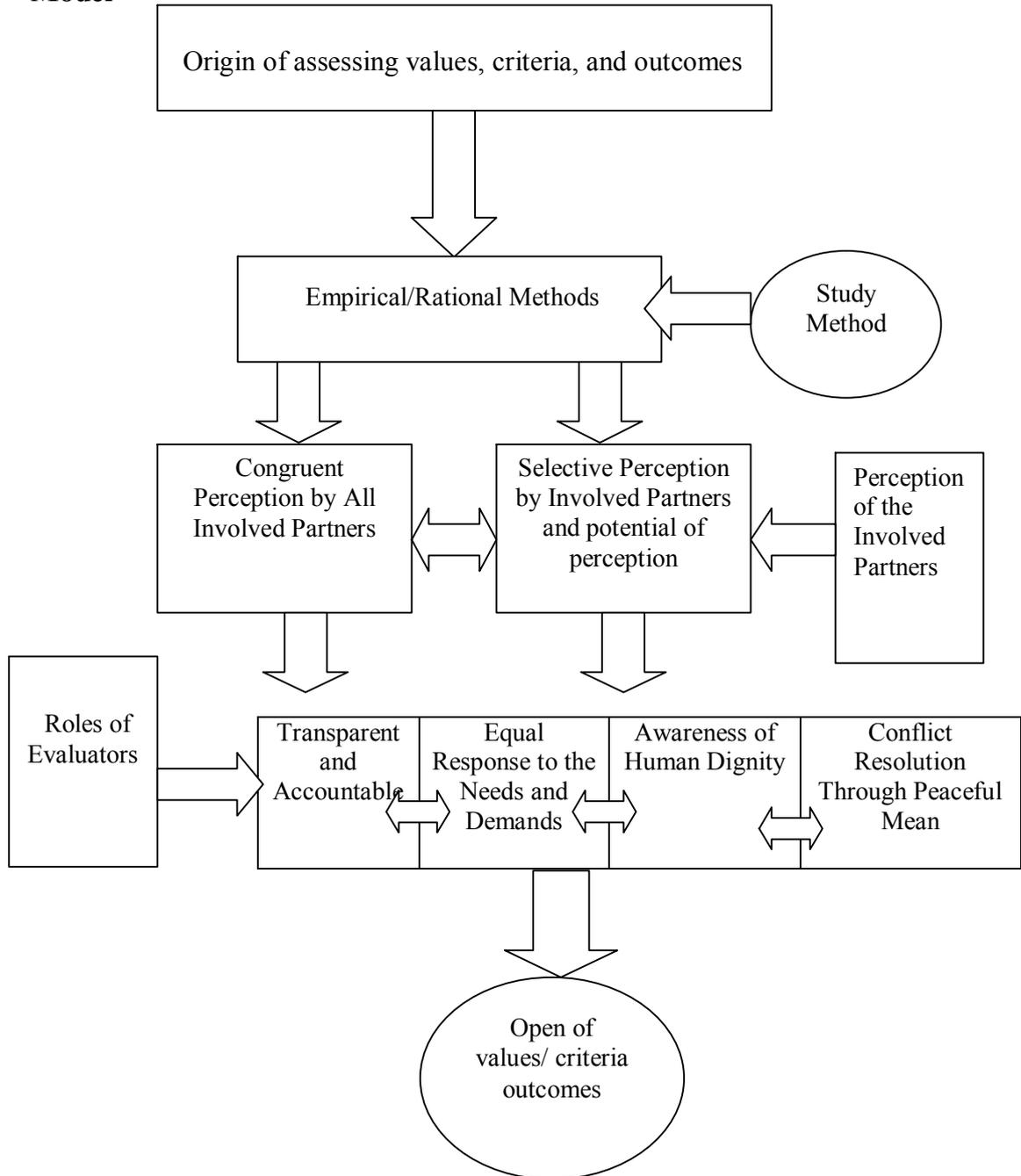
Model

Figure 2 : Components of Naresuan Evaluation Model.

The above figure shows 3 major components in Naresuan Evaluation Model which include (1) Methods of study into the evaluand to obtain values, criteria, and outcomes of the evaluation – empirical and rational methods; (2) perception on the values, criteria, and outcomes of the evaluation of the involved partners which could be congruently and potential or selective perceived basing on each individual, and (3) role of the Evaluators which is based on the 4 principles: transparency, equality, humanity, and peace.

Approach

In using the theory and model of Naresuan evaluation as proposed above in any project, one should follow the following procedures :

Stage 1 : Acquiring Basic Information

At this stage, basic information concerning the evaluand is surveyed. The goal is to see the context of the evaluand. The detailed procedures are as follows:

1.1 Discuss with the donor or the evaluation contractor organization concerning their evaluation needs, timing and duration, form of the report, etc. The hired evaluation contractor then use this information in the negotiation process before the final TOR could be drawn.

1.2 Study the project document to be well informed about the status and scope of the evaluand.

1.3 Visit the site of the project operation to observe and have conversation with the people in the field both of those who operate the project and the people who are affected by the project as well as the others who have been involved to assess the attitude, find cooperation in the course of information collection, and their needs in various aspects.

Stage 2 : Designing the Evaluation

This is the stage where various aspects of preparation are set. It consists of the following detailed procedures:

2.1 Negotiating: The TOR must be reviewed to acquire more understanding as well as to find some points that are not clear nor compatible with the whole process. Both sides should keep in mind the principles of transparency, equality, human dignity, and peaceful conflict settlement.

2.2 Identifying evaluation sites and sources of information needed.

2.3 Discussing with the involved partners and all possible stakeholders concerning the evaluation expectation.

2.4 Synthesizing the collected needs and expectations.

2.5 In the case where there are some potential conflicts of needs and expectations, the evaluator have to set the forum participated by all involved partners to share and exchange opinion to reach a relative consensus on the needs for the evaluation. The evaluator should utilize the principle of peaceful conflict management.

2.6 Should the negotiation fails, the evaluator team have to choose the evaluation issues themselves basing on their expertise and critical thinking.

Stage 3 : Starting the evaluation Process.

When the plan is finalized, the evaluation process begins. At this stage, the team go out to start their fieldwork collecting the needed information. Detailed procedures are as follows:

3.1 Create and choose the appropriate information collecting tools relevant to the decided issues. They could employ both quantitative and qualitative methods to best guarantee the results.

3.2 Collect the information along the issues and sited pre-set from the identified sources such as from person, documents, or other traces of evidence.

Stage 4 : Information Analysis

The collected information is now being analyzed. This stage consists of the following detailed procedures:

4.1 Preliminarily analyze the information along the set issues.

4.2 Present the preliminary findings to the informants and stakeholders in each issue. The meeting can also serve as the social validating forum. The participants can also comment about the inclusiveness of the acquired information. The evaluator team then take all the comment into consideration and revise their information collecting scheme before returning to the filed for the additional information.

4.3 Synthesize all the information acquired to prepare the evaluation report draft.

Stage 5 : Write up the Report and Present the Findings.

This is the last stage of the evaluation process involving the preparation of the report to be presented to the involved partners and stakeholders. The details are as follows:

5.1 Prepare two versions of the report – one is for the public and the other is for specific group of stakeholders.

5.2 Drafting the report basing on the evaluation framework preset and the conclusion derived from stage 4.

5.3 Present the report the stakeholders so that they could help check the validity and reliability. The public version of the report can be scrutinized by all stakeholders regardless their affiliated group but the one specifically prepared for each group of stakeholders should be scrutinized only by member of the corresponding group.

5.4 In the case where parts of the evaluation are not consensually agreed upon, the forum should be organize so that pro and con ideas could be heard before final resolution should be reached. During this course of conflict management, all partners should bear in mind the 4 principles as mentioned above.

5.5 Revise the report and publish the final report of both versions.

All these approaches are summarized in the figure 3.

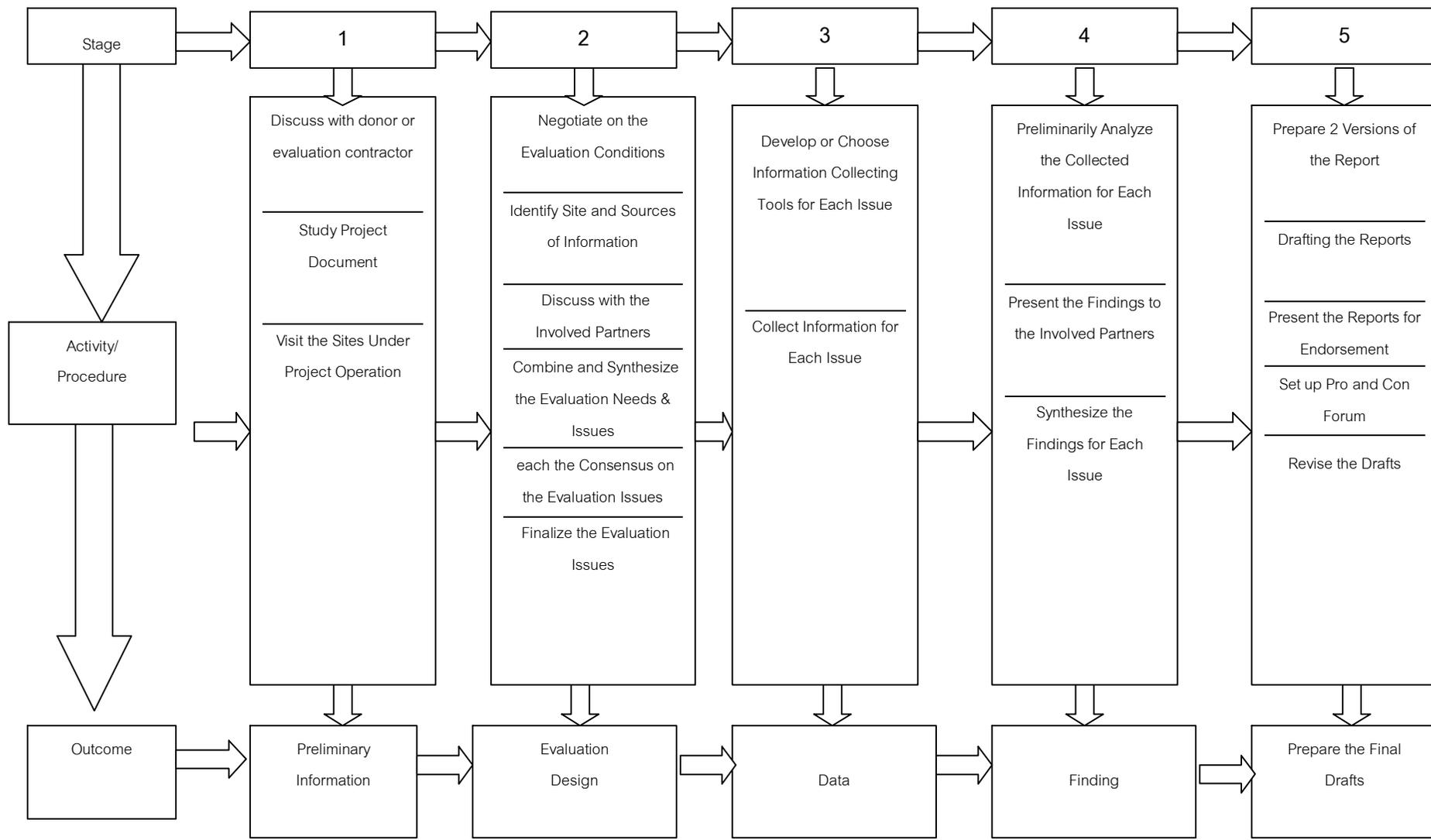


Figure 3 : Naresuan Evaluation Approach.

Conclusion

This article was to present Naresuan Evaluation Theory developed by the author himself. The theory was founded on major principles derived from Buddhism, philosophy, psychology, Ahimsa, and good governance. After presenting the theory and propositions, the author has come up with model and approach to facilitate the need to put the theory into practice. Though the author has reached the final stage of the theory development and wish to present the result to the colleagues, he welcomes all the comments hopes the debates continue to yield benefit the academic circle of the Thai society.

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