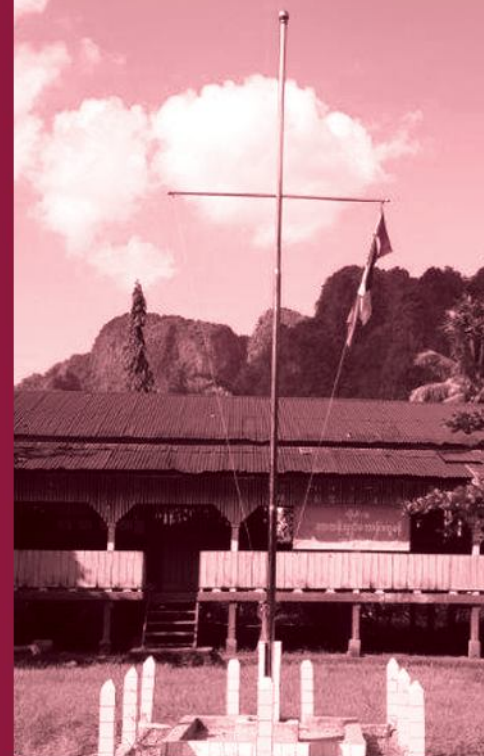




Diversity in Education in Myanmar

Marie Lall



PYOE PIN
Programme



Diversity in Education in Myanmar

Marie Lall

November 2016





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About Pyoe Pin

Pyoe Pin promotes inclusive, accountable and fair governance in Myanmar to underpin a more open, prosperous and peaceful society.

The Programme uses political economy analysis and adaptive, iterative approaches to support processes that enable broad locally-led coalitions to coalesce around tangible real life issues and create sustainable change.

Over the last nine years, Pyoe Pin has facilitated, brokered and supported coalitions of actors from civil society, government and private sector. These coalitions have led to significant results through supporting the interests and incentives of the actors themselves. The locally-led results have had both an intrinsic value – including reforms in important areas such as land, education, health, forestry, legal aid and freedom of association, impacting the lives of millions of people – and have also contributed to changing the 'rules of the game' to be more inclusive, open and fair.

Disclaimer

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The views expressed in this report do not necessarily reflect those of our funders.

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Preface

An academic system that practices educational equity – in achievement, fairness and opportunity – is fundamental to greater long term social and economic participation in Myanmar. Education provision is not just human development issue in Myanmar: it is intertwined with the country's peace and national dialogue processes.

Non-state schools, including ethnic, monastic and community schools, play an important role in Myanmar by complementing state education. They provide the poorest and most marginalised children with access to education.

The policy framework for non-state schools has yet to be established. There are not many linkages between the two sectors and most that exist take place mainly on an ad hoc basis or due to initiatives of individual organisations.

Therefore, non-state providers are faced with issues such as bridging between state and non-state education for recognition of student achievement or teacher qualifications. Some service providers encounter challenges in teacher development and financial sustainability. Armed conflict in some of the ethnic areas has also impacted on education provision and on linkages with state education.

Achieving progress on education provision is likely to require significant collaboration between state and non-state providers, the private sector and development partners. Exclusion will lead to failure to address high expectations of stakeholders and to secure their support.

Policy-making processes and policies which are inclusive fully utilise human resources that civil society, non-state sector and ethnic groups can provide, resulting in the opportunity to comprehensively reform the education sector. Peace and national dialogue processes, which are intertwined with education, therefore may also be positively affected.

Gerry Fox
Team Leader
Pyoe Pin Programme

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1 Executive Summary

1.1

Objectives and Methodology

The purpose of this report is to outline the diversity and role of non-state basic education provision in Myanmar (excluding the for-profit urban private sector) and to offer an analysis of the social and economic benefits of a diverse education system that meets the needs of a multi-ethnic, multi-lingual population. Much of what developed outside of the state system grew due to the dedication of civil society to meet the needs of the most disadvantaged across the country, despite the oppressive system when the military junta was in power. Many of the education systems and individual schools have been successful, have developed best practice and have the backing of the local stakeholders, at times resulting in early non-state and state collaborative arrangements at local level. It is hoped that a better understanding of these systems will lead to their increased support by both government and the development partners.

The research of this report is based on a review of the existing literature, data collected on previous fieldtrips between 2015 and 2016 as well as fresh fieldwork in August and September 2016. Data collected as part of DAI and USAID projects conducted prior to 2015 focused on how especially ethnic education systems saw the future of mother tongue based (MTB) education in light of the peace process and the reforms.

The fieldwork in August and September 2016 focused in particular on information regarding how different education systems are currently funding themselves, how they train their teachers, how they collaborate with the state and other non-state actors and how the advent of a more participatory political system (as well as the influx of major funding agencies and development partners) had changed what they can provide to their stakeholders. Data was collected in Yangon, Mandalay, Lashio, Taunggyi and Hpa An, covering Chin, Kachin, Karen and Pa-O nationality respondents as well as three monastic schools and three non-state teacher training programmes.

1.2

Myanmar non-state education good practice

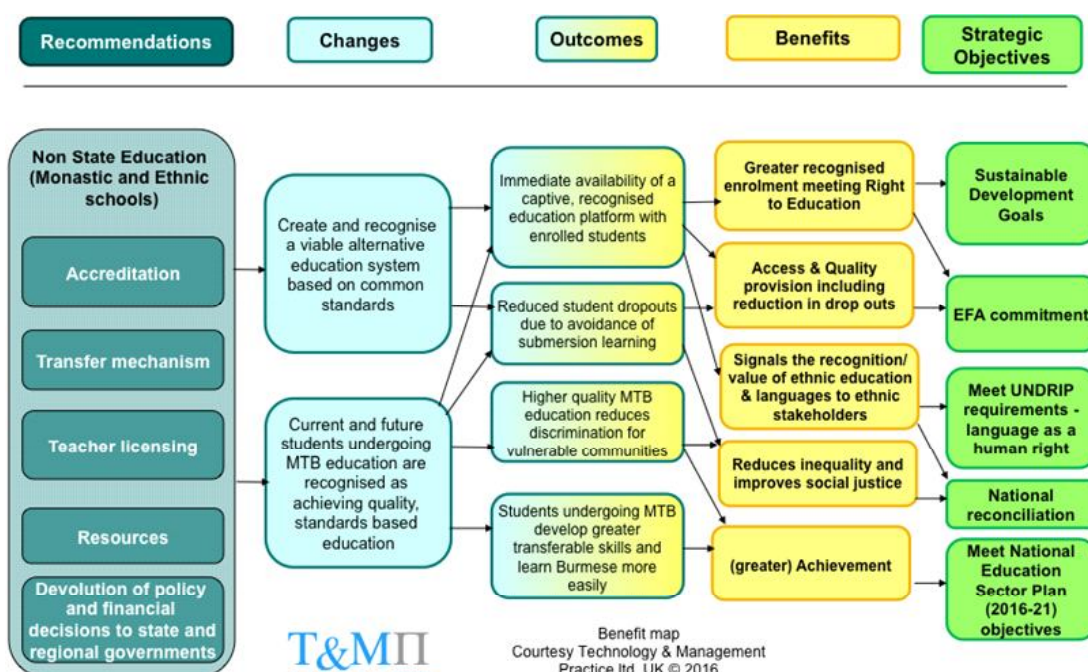
At the time of writing Myanmar is neither able to meet its international EFA commitment nor its domestically set targets for 2021 through the state system alone. ***The recognition and increased support of non-state education provision is key to meet the education needs of all children in Myanmar.*** The report discusses selected examples that show that a lot of excellent practice across diverse education system emerged despite military rule. Many non-government schools and systems meet local needs in a way the government cannot replicate. These non-state schools improve access to education (and with this the right to education), improve achievement and reduce inequalities between communities. They are also supported by the local communities, making them locally relevant and responsive.

First and foremost parents are able to choose schools that meet their particular needs. Allowing parents' choice in how they educate their children strengthens the democratic process. It also means that those parents who can afford and want to pay for schooling can choose low or high fee options, leaving the state to focus on those who are not able to pay for education. Diverse systems are especially important in multi-cultural and multi-lingual societies as the curriculum across different types of schools can cater to more diverse stakeholders. Locally relevant content means that minorities are able to feel a part of a wider, diverse society, rather than being subsumed into a national identity they might reject. The rigidity of state education often also means that the children from the poorest background cannot and do not keep up and drop out. Schools that directly cater for the disadvantaged have a better understanding of how to keep poor families engaged in education. Therefore non-state education often results in reduced social inequalities and greater social justice in diverse societies.

1.3

Recommendations

Reasons for maintaining a diverse system include meeting the needs of a diverse population, as well as improving trust, especially with regard to ethnic education needs, building on the peace process, federalism and democratisation. Working together with the non-state sector is essential if Myanmar is to meet its international Education For All commitment as well as the targets set out in the education strategic plan that promises access to quality basic education to all children across the country. The benefit map below indicates how the recommendations would lead to the required changes and would help meet the **government's committed strategic objectives and priorities**.



Specific Recommendations

1. In order to develop collaboration (as described in the NESP 2016-21 developed by the Myanmar Ministry of Education¹), develop mutually agreed standards across state and non-state sectors so that children can readily transfer between systems. This is not so much about knowledge content (which is based on learning a particular curricular content by heart) but rather on competencies and learning outcomes. This would mean that it is not necessary to teach exactly the same curriculum and that children who go to schools following another curriculum can still transfer back into the state system.
2. Based on the agreed quality standards suggested above, agree an accreditation system for non-state sector schools that is not necessarily exam based.
3. Encourage more ethnic nationality teachers to undertake training and then work in their local area so that they can use their ethnic language as a classroom language. Support the development of an ethnic teacher training college (and other similar initiatives), as has been set up in Shan State.
4. Based on agreed standards, develop an accreditation and equivalence system for teachers who have worked in ethnic, community and monastic schools.
5. Develop school and teacher support mechanisms (including financial resources) that allow non-state schools to deliver education in remote areas. This is a better allocation of resources rather than trying to replace those schools and would usually have greater local community support.
6. Strengthen the state and regional parliaments with regard to education policy development.
7. Strengthen the state and regional parliaments with regard to financial resources for education development.
8. Devolve more authority to the State Education office, especially with regard to the application of language policy and the hiring of teachers. This has to include increased financial devolution.²
9. To have mechanisms and policy framework for coordination between state and non-state sectors at national and sub-national levels. The government is now planning to have coordination mechanisms at national level.

Beyond recommendations for the government the following are recommendations for **development partners and donors**.

1. Recognise, support and strengthen the role local community plays in education.
2. Support and strengthen non-state ethnic and community schools and schooling systems, especially in areas that cannot be reached by government education.
3. Support non-state teacher training initiatives, especially for teachers to meet the required standards.³
4. Support non-state teacher salaries located in poor communities that struggle to support their teachers.
5. Support non-state schooling systems to engage with the government to develop mutually agreed standards to facilitate and standardise transfer mechanisms.

¹ This policy was developed by the previous government and is being reviewed and revised by the current government. It has not as yet been approved.

² Various state and non-state stakeholders including government, civil society and ethnic education service providers came together in the past three years in UNICEF's Language Education and Social Cohesion Initiative to draft State language policies in Mon, Karen and Kachin States. Mon and Karen State Language Policy Declarations which they developed were submitted to the State governments concerned in March and May 2016 respectively. Progress toward approval is not clear yet.

³ The MOE is currently drafting competency standards for basic education teachers.

2 Introduction: The role of the state in education

Central to the question of education is who should be responsible for provision. Traditionally, in the post second world war and post-colonial world, the state has been key in providing education to its citizens. However the state is not always able to meet the needs of all citizens. This is further discussed below.

State education has several aims, including first (and often foremost) as a political tool to control and change society. Governments have long used education and the school curriculum amongst other vehicles for disseminating political ideologies with a view to transforming societies and subjecting them to more effective state control. But state education also has an important economic function, as the growth of national economies is increasingly seen as being dependent on the training of a highly skilled and adaptive workforce. In addition education has a function as a 'tool for social justice' where governments have hoped that through 'education for all', society would be improved and equal opportunities would be enhanced.⁴

However the role of the state in education is changing. Today globalisation and international actors dictate that public services, including education need to adapt to the market place in order for nations to increase their international competitiveness. The World Bank and other international donor organisations propagate neoliberal reforms that include an increased involvement of the private sector in providing public services. These reforms have been particularly supported by the growing middle classes in middle income and poorer countries, as they tend to benefit most from policies that offer choice and because they have the ability to buy themselves out of the public system to the detriment of the poorer and weaker sections of society.⁵ The new economic realities have led to increased marketisation across the public sector, leading in turn to disaggregation, deregulation, commodification, an emphasis on measurable outputs, managerialism and accountability. Consequently, across the globe the state's role is increasingly shifting from being a provider to that of a regulator of public services. This has opened the 'education space' up to other providers, many of which are driven by profit motives. However not all non-state education provision is about profit and whilst it is important to maintain the role of the state in public education in order to ensure social justice and access for all, two situations need further discussion:

First what should happen when the state is incapable of meeting the need of specific sections of the population and second what should be acceptable if and when the state education system fails the vast majority of its citizens. Over the last decade and a half there has been a concerted global push to increase access to education across the globe through the Education for All (EFA) and the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs). Net enrolment in primary schools in developing countries has increased from 83% in 2000 to 91% in 2015.⁶ This has helped to achieve Universal Primary Education (UPE) worldwide, however many countries have faced problems in securing equitable access to education for all groups. It is estimated that there are still 57 million primary school-aged children worldwide who were not attending school in 2015 and some of

⁴ See e.g. Lall and Vickers 2009.

⁵ There are two arguments that emerge from this situation – on the one hand the middle classes choosing to leave the state sector contribute directly to the cost of education, leaving the state to provide for the disadvantaged sections of society. However, it often also means that when the middle classes leave the quality of state education plummets.

⁶ United Nations 2015.

these children seem to be deprived of access to their education because of a lack of adequate government systems.⁷ While the EFA agenda of the 1990s emphasised fee-free primary schooling, non-state providers have focused their attention on those who are under-served by government programmes,⁸ resulting in a growing low cost private sector across Africa, India and Pakistan.⁹ Low fee and other non-state provision is increasingly popular due to:

- Lack of faith in the government school system, often due to high relative rates of teacher absenteeism.¹⁰
- 'Quality proxies' – e.g. availability of equipment including computers, pupil-teacher ratios and the physical appearance of the school.¹¹
- Perceptions of social status gained by having children accessing private schooling.¹²
- Parental demand for children to learn English¹³ – supported by evidence to suggest that the perception of increased life opportunity due to English skills is warranted.¹⁴

When non-state education is a legitimate solution to the problems inherent in public schools and when they offer greater accountability to parents and the students, governments and international agencies should positively engage with the non-state sector. However, there are questions about the ethics of the development of a low fee sector, especially if the motive of the provider is driven by profit. Although low cost, the affordability of these schools is still relative to family income and several studies have shown that while the schools may target disadvantaged communities, the poorest of the poor are still excluded – usually due to financial constraints.¹⁵

The main debate remains around whether or not non-state provision is actually equivalent in quality to public schooling. While attempts have been made to prove this¹⁶ and some tentatively positive results reported, 'there is very little rigorous empirical evidence' when comparing the effectiveness of the state and non-state sectors in low income countries.¹⁷ Recent research in 2016 focusing specifically on the not for profit sector of non-state schooling concludes that '...where evidence exists, it [the report] finds that philanthropic schools in particular have learning outcomes that are comparable to those in state schools and can play useful roles in complementing state education, by expanding access to marginalised groups and improving school readiness.'¹⁸

⁷ UNESCO 2015 a.

⁸ Rose 2007.

⁹ Ghana (e.g. Rolleston and Adefoso-Olateju 2012); Kenya (e.g. Tooley and Dixon 2006); Nigeria (e.g. Rose 2007); and India (e.g. Ohara 2012, Tooley and Dixon 2005, Muralidharan and Sundararaman 2015, Srivastava 2007).

¹⁰ Dixon 2012, Härmä 2009 and 2011; Muralidharan and Kremer 2007.

¹¹ Policy Innovations 2010, cited in Bangay and Latham 2013.

¹² Fennell 2013.

¹³ Dixon 2012.

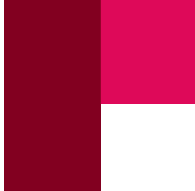
¹⁴ Azam et al. 2013; Chakraborty and Bakshi 2016.

¹⁵ Ohara 2012; Härmä 2011.

¹⁶ Tooley and Dixon 2007; Muralidharan and Kremer 2007.

¹⁷ Muralidharan and Sundararaman (2015 p.1013).

¹⁸ DFID 2015.



Another debate has been around costs as the non-state schools reviewed were able to achieve comparable results at a third of the cost of the government schools. This however is due to the significantly lower salaries that are paid to the teachers.¹⁹ The teachers in the non-state system are usually younger, less experienced and less qualified than their government school counterparts. Differences in achievement are therefore attributed to lower pupil-teacher ratios, lower teacher absenteeism and in some cases better learning environments.²⁰

This report discusses diversity and the role of non-state basic education provision in Myanmar (excluding the for profit urban private sector) and offers a case for the social and economic benefits of a diverse education system that meets the needs of a multi-ethnic, multi-lingual population.

3

International good practice: How non-state education can meet the needs of a diverse society

The pros and cons of a diverse education system

There are a number of social advantages to a diverse education sector. First and foremost parents are able to choose schools that meet their particular needs. Allowing parents' choice in how they educate their children strengthens the democratic process. It also means that those parents who can afford and want to pay for schooling can choose low or high fee options, leaving the state to focus on those who are not able to pay for education. Diverse systems are especially important in multi-cultural and multi-lingual societies as the curriculum across different types of schools can cater to more diverse stakeholders. Locally relevant content means that minorities are able to feel a part of a wider, diverse society, rather than being subsumed into a national identity they might reject. The rigidity of state education often also means that the children from the poorest background cannot and do not keep up and drop out. Schools that directly cater for the disadvantaged have a better understanding of how to keep poor families engaged in education. Therefore, non-state education often results in reduced social inequalities and greater social justice in diverse societies. How a diverse education system contributes to the right to education, increased access, in certain cases to improved quality and higher achievement – and therefore the EFA and SDGs – is explored below.

There are of course also disadvantages to a diverse education system, not least the lack of control by the government on what is taught and how. A diverse system cannot be centrally managed and the lack of central regulation on content and quality is possibly the main worry for education ministries. To operate, diverse education systems require a level of devolution or decentralisation that need well functioning communication systems and good administrative infrastructures. Not all parts of a decentralised system will do equally well, creating new problems and possible competition for resources. For a diverse system to function, the roles and relationships between institutions need to be clear and the state needs to trust in the regional and local structures, allowing for autonomy in decision making at multiple levels. Clearly, the local and regional structures must have the capacity to use the power vested in them to support the non-state sector to avoid further marginalisation. However, in a multi-ethnic, multi-linguistic country such as Myanmar that is striving to developing a federal democratic state, a diverse education system can underpin state building and strengthen the nation.

3.1

How to meet the *right to education*

As enshrined in many constitutions around the world, all children have a right to education, regardless of their economic status. Whilst often government schooling is supposed to be 'free of cost', many poor and marginalised families cannot afford the hidden costs (such as uniforms, books and tuition fees²¹) or in many cases the economic opportunity cost²² to send their children to a government school.

²¹ In Myanmar many school teachers expect to be paid by parents for extra 'out of school tuitions' to supplement their salaries.

²² Poor families have to choose whether their children work and supplement the family income or go to school, meaning a reduced family income at the end of every day when the child has not worked. This is a common dilemma for the poorest sections of society across the developing world and an issue across rural areas where children help on farms and plantations as well as in urban slums where children work in factories, teashops and as vendors.

Additionally, certain families whose livelihoods depend on working in plantations or fields find that the seasonality of their occupation affects when children can go to school. Non-government provision (in Myanmar monastic schools²³) that caters specifically for poorer sections of society do not require the families to invest in uniforms or books, and can fill that need. Unless more flexible schooling is available, these children drop out of state provision or remain out of school altogether.

In multi-ethnic and multi-lingual societies state education often only provides schooling in the dominant language, generally with the aim to 'unify' a diverse population by building a national identity. This can discriminate against 'others', including vulnerable minority groups, and can lead to resentment, resistance and conflict. Education and language use in these cases underpins, and even causes conflict between the majority and minority groups. Education in the mother tongue increases access, quality, achievement and reduces social inequalities. Ethnic and linguistic minorities have a right to their language, and forced assimilation could mean the loss of language and possibly the minority culture.²⁴ Debates around the concepts of 'language rights' and 'language as a human right' have been supported by the 2007 UN Declaration of the Rights of Indigenous Peoples (UNDRIP) in Articles 14.1-3, making provisions for indigenous peoples to have the right to education in their own languages and the right to education from the state without discrimination. Additionally, Article 30 of the Convention on the Rights of the Child outlines that a minority or indigenous children shall not be denied the right to use their own language; and Article 169 of the ILO advocates for culturally and linguistically relevant language policy that is responsive to the rights of educational access and quality that are offered.²⁵

There is an abundance of global research (some of which is cited in this report) that shows that the best possible way to meet language needs in multi-ethnic and multi-linguistic societies is 'mother tongue-based teaching' (MTB teaching), that is, instruction in a child's first language (L1), usually with a gradual transition to a second language (L2), or foreign language. In MTB programmes, students have the opportunity to learn core concepts primarily in a familiar language (L1), and later they learn the vocabulary for those concepts in a new language (L2). MTB education is especially beneficial in early childhood programs, preschool and the early grades. MTB education can take many different forms, depending in the extent to which chosen languages are used, and for what purpose, within educational programs.²⁶ In Myanmar schools run by ethnic communities or ethnic armed groups offer primary schooling in the local mother tongue. More developed systems offer MTB education and allow students to transfer back to the government schools if they wish to do so.

Given that many government education systems are not able to meet the needs of multi-ethnic, multi-lingual and poor communities, the development and support of locally owned education systems is crucial to meet children's rights but also help with access, quality, and social justice, aspects that are discussed below.

²³ Not everyone in Myanmar sees monastic schools as 'non-state', as they are MORA's responsibility. However, the Ministry of Education does not train the monastic school teachers and until recently the government was not supporting teacher salaries either. Now there is a limited government teacher stipend, but monastic schools do not have the same facilities or support as regular government schools. Monastic schools also have a lot of autonomy in school management, e.g. recruitment of teachers and the management of funds they raise themselves.

²⁴ Skutnabb-Kangas 2012; Magga 2005.

²⁵ UNESCO, 2003, pp.22-23.

²⁶ Kosonen and Benson 2013.

3.2

Non-state education for *access* and *quality*

Children who grow up in poverty are at an automatic disadvantage and have less access to education. However access to education can also promote increased access on a societal basis, with increased capacity for participation in public dialogue and in wider society through a stronger educational foundation, essential if families are to be lifted out of poverty.²⁷ In Myanmar's Buddhist monastic schools many teachers have had NGO training in child-centric education methods, resulting in quality schooling for the poorest in society.²⁸

Children with a different mother tongue have no choice but to participate in a foreign language (submersion model) but this often leads to drop outs and repetition.²⁹ Increased disaggregation of education data by gender, ethnicity and language, showed disparities in educational achievements in areas such as language and culture. There is also growing acknowledgment of the role of languages in achieving all Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) and Education for All.³⁰ At the International Conference on Language, Education and the Millennium Development Goals in 2010 participants emphasized how not learning in their mother tongue affects people from moving out of poverty and may perpetuate conflict (UNESCO 2012).

Research shows that incorporating learners' languages into education improves both the quality of education and creates learning that is more inclusive as well as equitable.³¹ UNESCO supports the use of mother tongue in education on a similar premise: as a means of improving quality, multilingual education as a way to promote equality, and language as a method of encouraging understanding between different population groups and ensuring respect for fundamental rights.³²

Decentralised education systems are more likely to be able to implement locally relevant education models where local stakeholders are involved and where educational access is increased not only within those localities, but also further afield.

²⁷ UNESCO 2012.

²⁸ The assumption that monastic school teachers provide lower quality education because they have not had the same pre-service training as their government counterparts is often inaccurate. MEC's Situation Analysis of Monastic Education in Myanmar (2016 pp. 25-31) examines different factors and concludes that the quality of monastic education is not better, though not worse, than state education.

²⁹ Benson 2009.

³⁰ Ouane 2012.

³¹ Kosonen and Benson 2013.

³² UNESCO 2003.

3.3

Non-state education for *achievement*

As mentioned above, some types of non-state education systems have achieved better results than their government counterparts. Often this is due to smaller classes and lower teacher absenteeism. With regard to language there are of course pedagogical advantages for minority students who receive instruction in their mother tongue in multilingual language programs, and where this has been done there is evidence of educational success.³³ Children who start learning in their mother tongue achieve better results across all subjects as they are able to understand the teacher. They are also able to learn additional languages more easily than if they had been exposed to the submersion model as knowledge and skills transfer across languages once a child has strong foundations in their first language.³⁴ Research found that students who used the mother tongue for most or all of primary school, were found to achieve better results than those who made the transition to L2 earlier.³⁵ Since language is key to communication and understanding in education, it becomes clear through better student outcomes across all subjects that students who learn in their mother tongue also receive a higher quality of education.³⁶

3.4

Non-state education for addressing *inequalities and social justice*

Non-state education serves to address inequalities, both educational and societal. Poor children that are able to access education and matriculate have a chance to get out of the cycle of poverty by going on to study and/or getting better jobs than their parents. An additional benefit is that different ethnic or religious communities are able to mix in schools, underpinning community cohesion. MTB education in multi lingual environments might not address all linguistic inequalities, especially where there are minorities within minority areas.³⁷ Despite this,

MTB education can be a tool in achieving equity as it addresses some of the educational disadvantages faced by linguistic minority groups and has proven to be an effective way to help maintain languages by validating their use in the classroom and communities, thereby reducing the gap between non-dominant and dominant language speakers.³⁸

³³ Heugh and Skutnabb-Kangas 2012.

³⁴ Cummins 2000; Riches and Genesee 2006.

³⁵ Thomas and Collier 2002.

³⁶ Benson 2004.

³⁷ Jhingran 2008 (cited in Benson and Kosonen, 2012, p.126) finds India to be an example of where educational needs of all learners are not met as a result of a regional reproduction of national language decisions that support more dominant languages. However, Papua New Guinea provides a positive example of how a country may support MTB education in many languages as it has approximately 850 languages with around 400 being currently used as a medium of instruction (Benson and Kosonen 2012, p.128).

³⁸ Tupas 2015.

4 Non-state Education in Myanmar – current practice

At the time of writing Myanmar is neither able to meet its international EFA commitment nor its domestically set targets for 2021 through the state system alone. The recognition and increased support of non-state education provision is key to meet the education needs of all children in Myanmar. The sections below discuss selected examples that show a lot of excellent practice across diverse education system has emerged out of military rule. Many non-government schools and systems meet local needs in a way the government cannot replicate. These non-state schools improve access to education (and with this the right to education), improve achievement and reduce inequalities between communities. They are also supported by the local communities, making them locally relevant and responsive.

4.1

Current role played by monastic and other faith-based schools

4.1.1 Monastic schools

Monastic schools, the mainstay of Myanmar education for centuries, were outlawed during the socialist period as of 1962 and only allowed to return in 1993. In the early 1990s monastic schools were encouraged to re-open and register. This allowed some of the biggest monastic networks to establish themselves, and the sector has been growing ever since. As Myanmar has signed the international 'Education For All' (EFA) declaration,³⁹ monastic schools today are seen as part of the solution to provide education across all sections of society and across the country. Only by including the monastic schools is the Myanmar government able to demonstrate that there is a genuine movement to promote universal education. The ministerial language referring to monastic schools is reflecting these changes as what was formerly seen as 'non-formal' is today increasingly referred to as 'formal' education provision.⁴⁰

Traditionally the monastic sector has always focused on supporting the poorer sections of society. The real cost of state education is based on family contribution to uniforms, books, tuitions, school repairs and sometimes 'bribes',⁴¹ resulting in the exclusion of the poorest families. The role of additional tuitions (teachers often feel that this is necessary to supplement their income) also results in a culture of favouritism that privileges those children that can provide incentives for teachers. Monastic schools play a key role in providing education in slums, to migrant worker families, plantation (and other seasonal) worker families, children who have to work and certain minorities who find that they cannot access government schools. Some monastic schools also offer boarding facilities, accepting children from further afield or provided boarding and education for children who had been displaced by natural disasters (including but not limited to Cyclone Nargis), and in some cases orphans who had no other family to rely on. All registered monastic schools will teach the government curriculum and will do so in Burmese, allowing students to switch to government schools for post primary and secondary levels. A few monastic schools also offer post primary and secondary education themselves, but few monastic schools are registered as upper secondary schools, the main exception being Phaung Daw Oo (PDO) in Mandalay.⁴²

³⁹ UNESCO, 1990.

⁴⁰ The monastic schools are registered with the Ministry of Religious & Cultural Affairs.

⁴¹ Bribes can take many forms, such as sometimes being forced to take tuitions or buy snacks from teachers

⁴² Another school is Salay monastic school in Mandalay, where Studer Trust has the training centre.

If located in ethnic areas, the local teachers would be able to communicate with the students in the ethnic language and explain Burmese concepts to those children who did not speak Burmese. As such, the fact that teachers at monastic schools are locally sourced, means that there is less of a language barrier than in the state system.

Monastic school networks do not only meet the needs of the poor, they have also spearheaded change in teacher education. Starting in PDO over a decade ago, the Centre for the Promotion of Monastic Education ensured that monastic teachers were able to receive Child Centric Approach (CCA) training. Some monastic schools had also received CCA training by local and international NGOs. This resulted in teaching quality being vastly improved across the non-state sector especially at primary level, as the application of CCA in the non-state sector predated its application in government schools. This is described in more detail in the next section.

Karen State – Taungalay Monastic school

Just outside of Hpa An is Karen State's largest monastic school that offers schooling from KG to grade 10. The school trains its own teachers, many of whom are their own graduates who return. To help the students matriculate, government school teachers volunteer to teach the 10th grade. Although the school follows the government curriculum, this is offered in Karen with some form of transfer to Burmese at post primary level. They also cater for Karen children whose families live away from Karen State. The head monk reiterated that this means that girls were especially safe whilst growing up. They accept transfers from the KNU and border schools. The head monk has good relations with the State education office and has received help from a number of NGOs and agencies such as the Adventist Development and Relief Agency (ADRA), the Karen Development Network, Thabyay Education Foundation⁴³ and Yinthway Foundation⁴⁴.

4.1.2 Summer language and culture programmes

In ethnic areas, especially Mon and Karen States as well as the Pa-O Self-Administered Zone (SAZ), monastic schools are also active in culture and language summer schools. The programmes differ from State to State and between ethnic groups, however they usually emanate from collaboration between the ethnic Literature and Culture Committees and the Sangha (monks), offering training programmes for volunteer teachers who then are able to teach children enrolled in Burmese medium state schools in their mother tongue.

⁴³ 'Thabyay's programs are designed to support students and key community and civil society workers. We help them to acquire the skills, knowledge, networks and assistance to foster self-directed, sustainable development in their communities and the wider society.' <http://www.thabyay.org/>.

⁴⁴ 'Yinthway is a local NGO whose goal is to promote and support the holistic development of children in communities in Myanmar.' <http://www.yinthway.org>

Pa-O Monastic summer school

The Pa-O monastic summer school has been running for over 37 years. The length of course depends on the village, but usually varies between 10-15 days, although some villages offer month long courses. Some courses are for adults and some for children. Monks give annual teacher training for five days every year and every village sends two people to be trained. Then they go back and deliver the course. When the programme started they had between 200 and 300 teachers but now there are now over 4,000 teachers teaching around 10,000 people every year. According to the Pa-O National Organisation (PNO) it is compulsory for all young people between the ages of 20 and 25 to attend. The teachers are offered certificates after the training. The PNO's Parami Development Network, the Pa-O literature and culture organisation, and the Sangha work together to make sure the summer school takes place every year during Ta Baung (around March) either in private houses, village halls or monasteries.

Mon Monastic summer school

In the 1990s, and particularly after the 1995 NMSP ceasefire, monastic education initiatives expanded considerably. Before the ceasefire, Mon monks had for many years been conducting various forms of language and culture teaching, particularly in the school summer holidays (March-May), but these activities were not systematically coordinated until after the ceasefire. In 1997 Mon Literature and Culture Society members, including students and graduates of Mawlamyine University, in partnership with some progressive monks, began to organise Mon Summer Literacy and Buddhist Culture (MSLBC) trainings in a number of monasteries. By 2010 310 monasteries across 16 Townships (in Mon and Karen States, and Tanintharyi, Bago, Yangon and Mandalay Regions) were taking part.⁴⁵ While the extent of MSLBC training activities has expanded as a direct result of the increased space created by the NMSP ceasefire, Mon armed groups were not directly involved in these initiatives.

4.1.3 Christian education provision

Monastic schools are not the only faith-based schools in Myanmar. Across many ethnic areas the Catholic and Baptist Churches have been involved in education for many decades. The churches tend to offer two types of education – supplementary education (mainly ethnic language and culture) either after school or through summer schools, or sending volunteer teachers to remote schools to support the children in those areas with language and learning. The churches are particularly active in Kachin State where the Baptist and Catholic networks send hundreds of volunteers to live in villages for a year or two at a time.

However in Chin State a very long-standing language summer school organised by the church ever since Chin languages were banned in government schools ensures that the many Chin languages are kept alive.⁴⁶ The summer schools depend on volunteers who are trained by the church for a week every year and then teach to faith-based communities. Employees of the church share their time for this, but Chin experts, including government staff from all over the country, come and help. The church takes care of all expenses and the literature and culture committee have developed the curriculum and books. The course lasts one month every summer and is for the 5-15 years of age, focusing on writing, reading, and also learning the Roman script. There are different levels (5 language grades) depending on the capacities of the students and certificates are given for each grade. There are literature and culture committees for each and every dialect.

⁴⁵ Data from Mon education CBOs.

⁴⁶ Interviewees said that Chin languages were used and taught in government schools, although not officially allowed, until the 1980s.

Outside of Chin State the church organises the summer schools for the Chin communities. There is a two week teacher training for university students in Yangon and Mandalay who then serve as volunteers for the month long course across the country. The Asho Chin community also have a network of 4,477 volunteer teachers who are then sent to villages and 38 townships in Magwe, Bago, Irrawaddy, Yangon and Rakhine. Mostly they teach in private homes.

The research also identified an ethnic church based schooling network that offers full time schooling (as opposed to supplementary schooling or a summer programme). Given the ethnic roots of the system, this is discussed below.

4.2

Current role played by ethnic schools

Ethnic schools fall into many categories. Some are run by ethnic armed group (EAG) education departments, some are community based, others are mixed with state or even monastic provision. A categorisation of the different types of schools is available in the appendix. However, all ethnic schools have one thing in common – they offer education in an ethnic mother tongue. Some offer MTB, meaning that they switch to teaching in Burmese in higher grades, others only offer schooling in the ethnic language, Burmese being treated as a subject if it is offered at all.⁴⁷ Ethnic schools are particularly important as they offer schooling to communities in conflict affected areas where the government system cannot reach. Their recognition is essential as a part of the on-going peace process if the Myanmar government is to build an inclusive state that values all ethnic groups.

4.2.1 Mother Tongue Based education

Since the late 1940s, the right to ethnic language education has been one of the issues at the heart of Myanmar's prolonged state-society and armed ethnic conflicts. At a minimum, ethnic nationalists have demanded the teaching of minority languages in state schools during school hours; a stronger version of this position is to demand teaching of the curriculum *in* the mother tongue (at least through primary schooling). There are also positions based on a continuum between the two extremes that advocate that some schooling is offered in the mother tongue with Burmese alongside, and others who would be happy with mother tongue education in the first two to three years of schooling, slowly transferring to the union language.

In Myanmar, a half-century of military rule between 1962-2011 saw the consolidation of state power under a regime identified with the Burman (*Bamar*) ethnic majority, which makes up about 60% of the population.⁴⁸

⁴⁷ For the politics of ethnic education and the role of conflict see Lall and South 2013; South and Lall 2016.

⁴⁸ Houtman 1999. According to Robert Taylor (2015, pp. 278), the state-socialist government, which dominated (then) Burma for the first quarter century after the military coup, "undertook a number of policy innovations designed to better integrate minority ethnic border regions with the core of the country ... Schools were required to teach in the national language, Burmese... [In 1964] the government opened the Academy for the Development of National Groups at Ywathitkyi, Sagaing Division, the graduates of which were dispatched across the country to integrate the population".

During this period, Burmese (the majority language) became the sole language of governance and education, with ethnic minority languages suppressed and marginalised.⁴⁹ The perceived 'Burmanisation' of state and society has constituted one of the prime grievances of ethnic nationality elites, which have mobilised minority communities to resist militarised central government authority, in the context of the world's most protracted armed conflict.⁵⁰ Despite and because of the repressive system, EAGs and ethnic civil society have developed MTB education systems so as to serve their ethnic communities in their own language as well as preserve their culture, literature and traditions in the wake of the Burmanisation policies.

4.2.2 Preservation of ethnic nationality

The principal role of ethnic schools is that they allow children whose language and heritage are non-Bamar to access education in their own language, supporting not only the rights of these families in the preservation of their language and culture, but also helping reduce drop out rates. This goes beyond the language summer schools that are offered by the Sangha and other faith based organisations in conjunction with the literature and culture committees. In many cases these schools operate in remote areas where there is no state education provision, possibly because this is a conflict-affected area.

There are many different types of ethnic schools (see appendix), however they broadly fall into two main categories – those who teach the government curriculum in ethnic language with extra modules of language, literature, culture and history vs. those who have developed their own curriculum. The most developed ethnic education systems run by separate education department are found in Mon, Karen and Kachin States and are briefly described below.

Mon State

In 1972 the NMSP Central Education Department was established. The fledgling school system was reformed in 1992, with the formation of the Mon National Education Committee (MNEC),⁵¹ and foundation of the first Mon National High School. At the time of the 1995 NMSP-SLORC ceasefire, the Mon National School (MNS) system consisted of 76 schools,⁵² which were located in the NMSP 'liberated zones' (most of which were transformed into 'ceasefire zones', in June 1995) and in the three main Mon refugee camps (only one of which was actually located in Thailand). Research conducted in 2011-2012 established that the ceasefire allowed for the Mon education system to spread to the government controlled zones.⁵³

⁴⁹ The 1974 Constitution made Burmese the country's official language. Jaquet (2015 pp. 21) notes that, even before independence, political leaders such as Gen. Aung San regarded the Burmese language as the proper basis for cohesive national identity and unity.

⁵⁰ Smith 1999; South 2011.

⁵¹ MNEC Aim: "To create a society that ever continually makes learning for its capacity improvement so as to build a federal union state that is destined to provide its people at least with basic education and enables all ethnic groups of people to peacefully coexist." MNEC Objectives: "For all Mon children to access basic education; To maintain unity in diversity; To develop friendliness among the ethnic nationalities; To maintain and promote ethnic culture and literature; To develop technological knowledge; To produce good sons and daughters of the nation; To help the outstanding students attain scholarship awards for continuing their education up to the international universities."

⁵² In 1995 there were also 227 'mixed' schools (see below): personal communication from retired NMSP education official.

⁵³ Lall and South 2013.

Today there are 136 MNS. The MNS teach the government curriculum in translation and also teach Burmese, so that students can switch to the government system. In Mon high schools the curriculum is supposed to be taught in Burmese with Mon inputs, however in practice more Mon than Burmese is used.

Since the mid-1990s Mon has been taught as part of the curriculum in 'mixed schools'. These institutions are government schools, where the MNEC provide (and usually support financially) one or more teachers, and also have some input into the syllabus, especially for history. The relationships between state and non-state education regimes vary between townships, districts and villages. In most cases, cooperation between the Mon and the State education authorities is based on personal relationships in the local (District/Township or village) setting.

Karen State

The education system in Karen-populated areas is highly diverse, reflecting the heterogeneity of this community, numbering approximately 5-7 million people in Myanmar both inside and outside of Karen State.⁵⁴ Most schooling is organised and owned by communities, with varying degrees of external support.

The KNU instigated schools in areas under its control in the 1950s. In the 1970s an Education Department was established (now referred to as the Karen Education Department – KED) halfway up the Thailand-Burma border near the Thai town of Mae Sot. KED currently provides support to over 1,500 schools in Karen State. The KED manages the schools using their own curriculum based on Karen languages and English, not teaching Burmese.⁵⁵ 285 schools use only the KED curriculum; 553 schools use mixed KED and Myanmar MoE curricula; and 666 use only the Myanmar MoE curriculum.⁵⁶ KED schools receive support for school materials from the KED and for teachers' stipends from the Karen State Education Assistance Group (KSEAG). Teachers in these schools are referred to as community teachers and are mostly recruited from local Karen communities.⁵⁷

Other Karen EAGs also administer schools in their areas of authority. For example, there are nearly 100 schools in areas under the control of the authority of the Democratic Karen Benevolent/Buddhist Army (DKBA). Another ex-KNU faction, the KNU Peace Council,

administers about 30 schools (including two high schools) with around 3,000 students. Mixed schools in these areas (sometimes built by the government and materials supplemented by CBOs) will usually teach the government curriculum.

⁵⁴ South, 2011. Karen dialects occupy the Tibeto-Burman branch of Sino-Tibetan languages. There are some 12 Karen language dialects, of which the majority speak Sgaw (particularly in hill areas and among Christian communities) and Pwo (especially in the lowlands and among Buddhist communities). The size of the Karen population is unknown, no reliable census having been undertaken since the colonial period. Many commentators emphasise the Christian identity of the Karen. However, not more than 20% of the Karen population are Christians. There are also some small populations of 'Karen Muslims'.

⁵⁵ See Lall and South (2013) regarding differences between the Karen and the Mon education systems.

⁵⁶ It is interesting to note that many mixed schools in Karen areas are often community schools where the government has come in at a later date – unlike the mixed schools in Mon State that are government schools who as part of a local agreement accept a Mon language and often also Mon history teachers sent by MNEC. The issues emerging from greater penetration by government education in Karen (and other formerly conflict affected areas) since the peace process started in 2012 are described by Lenkova(2015).

⁵⁷ P.10 School Committees and Community Engagement in Education in Karen State, World Education 2016

In addition to state and non-state provision of formal education, a number of part-time and informal initiatives exist that include civil society programmes in Karen languages implemented by international and national NGOs both inside government-controlled areas and in the opposition-orientated borderlands.

Karen literature and culture committee

The Karen literature and culture committee organises an annual two months summer school during school holiday covering not only language and literature but also culture and traditions. The original textbooks were written in 1965 but have been modified. Texts exist from KG to grade 10 but they only use the material until Grade 4 in the summer programme. 10th grade and university students serve as volunteer teachers. They are trained by the literature and culture committee and this is supported by well-wishers, but more recently also through government money earmarked at State level for ethnic languages.⁵⁸ Depending on the Karen language and if they are Buddhist or Christian there is also limited support by the KNU or the Border Guard Force (BDF). The summer school is mostly held in monasteries, but also in community and government schools. It seems to depend on the relationship with the local township education officer.

The literature and culture committee now also provides language training during the school year after school (some of it even during school hours, although this is not official). The permission to teach Karen languages during school hours seems to be the main problem for the stakeholders. The teacher training for this course lasts one month and then the teachers are sent to villages as requested by the village committee. Accommodation and food are free as the community takes care of the teachers.

Kachin State (and Kachin communities in Northern Shan State)

The KIO Education Department was established 1978/79, and reformed in 1992. In 2015, it administered 180 schools, including 25 Middle Schools and 4 High Schools, with 26,879 students and 1,591 teachers. The KIO Education Department established a Teacher Training School in 1997, which was upgraded in 2007. At present, KIO schools teach the government curriculum in Jingphaw, with extra modules covering Kachin language and culture.⁵⁹ Kachin (Jingphaw) readers for different grades have been (or are in the process of being) developed by KIO Education Departments. From 1993-2011, KIO high school graduates could matriculate at associated government schools, but this has been curtailed since the resumption of fighting. Following the resumption of armed conflict since 2011, the KIO schools are switching more to Kachin and English, and use less Burmese in the classroom. This is part of a general move to disengage from the government education system, and develop a more distinctively Kachin school system. The KIO Education Department wants to develop an 'international curriculum, oriented more towards overseas study', than convergence with (or placing students into) government basic and higher education systems.⁶⁰ Previously KIO school

⁵⁸ The government provided Kyat 30,000 per teacher for 10 months in Mon and 8 months in Karen last school year to teach ethnic languages at state schools. According to the interviews conducted in September 2016, the Karen literature and culture committee were able to use some of that money to pay their language teachers. The modalities of this arrangement are unclear.

⁵⁹ There are 6 Kachin ethnic groups, each with their own language. The dominance of Jingpaw seems to have been more accepted by many (but not all) since the conflict between the KIA and the Tatmadaw resumed in 2011. This is based on research conducted with Ashley South between April 2015 and February 2016 on Kachin State.

⁶⁰ Personal communication with KIO education officials December 2015 in Laiza as well as KEF officials in Myitkyina.

government basic and higher graduates used to enter government universities or register for distance higher education. However now graduates often attend one of the tertiary education institutes at Mai Ja Yang or Laiza.⁶¹ They are also still able to join the Baptist theological college in Myitkyina.

More recently Kachin communities in Kachin and Northern Shan State have started to develop a Church based school system with an independent curriculum to better serve the Kachin community. Currently only available at primary level, the driver for the new system was to offer high quality mother tongue based education with low student teacher ratios, based on a child- centred approach. As of 2016 there are 23 community schools in northern Shan State with over 1,000 students and 192 teachers, and 24 schools in Kachin State with 300 students and 80 teachers affiliated with this network.

4.3

Interaction and collaboration between the sectors

4.3.1 State / Non-state

There are some formal mechanisms between monastic and state schools through the monastic education supervisory committees. Through this mechanism, MEDG advocated for the transfers in grade 9.⁶² Despite the fact that there is little formal mechanism for state/non-state interaction, on the ground many collaborations have been negotiated locally. The main example seems to be students being able to switch from non-state schools to government schools when they enter post primary or secondary school level. This is dependent on the non-state school offering the government curriculum and the student being able to speak Burmese. Such switching has been standard between monastic and government schools, it is however also common with many MNEC run schools in Mon State. Another version of this is when students from monastic or MNS take their matriculation exams at the local government school. More recently a new decree requiring students who want to transfer between systems having to take a proficiency exam is making such collaboration more difficult for ethnic schools across the country. In Kachin State transfers from non-state schools are no longer possible.⁶³

More recent collaborations between the state and the non-state sector include teachers from monastic and ethnic schools in Mon State being invited to take part in the government in service teacher training, supported by UNICEF. In Mon State again there has been increased interaction between the State Education Office and MNEC with regard to discussions on Mon language provision in government schools. These discussions are however at an early stage. In Mon and Karen, multi-stakeholder Education Sector Coordination Meetings have been taking place for a year now. SEO, MNEC, KED, INGOs and LNGOs attend the meetings and discuss issues such as student transfer and teacher deployment. A recent British Council pilot programme 'Connecting Classrooms' is working

⁶¹ Examples of Kachin HE include the Teacher Training School, Intensive English Program, and Federal Law College located at the KIO-administered town of Mai Ja Yang on the China-Myanmar border and the KIO Agriculture College at Alen Bum (near Laiza) as well as the nursing college in Laiza.

⁶² Coordination/governance mechanisms are described in Situation Analysis of Monastic Education in Myanmar (MEC 2015, pp. 14-15). The supervisory committees from national to township levels consist of monks and government officials. However not all sub-national committees are functioning.

⁶³ Apart for children transferring from monastic schools.

to link government and monastic schools to collaborate and support each other in Yangon and Mandalay Regions and Mon State.⁶⁴ Monastic schools often have links with local government schools – retired government teachers working in monastic settings facilitate that process. In a number of cases reviewed over the past years this results in the sharing of books and closer contacts between the Township Education Office and the monastic school in question. However as with many of these collaborations they are locally arranged, ad-hoc and personality dependent.

In the Pa-O Self-Administered Zone a unique collaboration between the Pa-O National Organisation and the Taunggyi Education College has led to the setting up of a new teacher training institute that focuses on training ethnic teachers. This shall be described below.

4.3.2 Within the non-state sector

The collaborations in terms of language and culture summer schools between monastic schools and ethnic Literature and Culture Associations have been described above. These collaborations between two sets of non-state actors have been standard and on going for many years (see section 5.1.3 for Christian teacher training institute working with monastic schools).

In 2013 a meeting was held allowing the different ethnic education departments and education groups from across Myanmar to meet in Yangon for discussions on the education reforms. Later, with the help of the Karen Teachers' Working Group a collaborative network was formed entitled the Myanmar Indigenous Network for Education (MINE).⁶⁵

⁶⁴ In Mon State the MNEC high school in Ye is included in the project.

⁶⁵ <https://www.facebook.com/events/693947027363751/>

5 Challenges in the non-state sector

Non-state education in Myanmar is often seen as less successful in terms of student achievement compared to government provision as children from monastic and ethnic schools do less well in national exams than their government school educated counterparts. Internationally, as discussed in the introduction, parents often prefer non-state schools as their results are better. The difference between Myanmar and other developing countries is partly due to the examination system that requires children to memorise large parts of the curriculum by heart and reproduce it in Burmese for the exam. This disadvantages children whose mother tongue is not Burmese and those who have been taught in an ethnic language. It is also partly due to the fact that the non-state education discussed here is not the private for profit sector that caters to the urban middle classes and lower middle classes where the tuition fees are used to provide better facilities and more teachers. The ethnic and monastic non-state sectors face a number of challenges, in particular teacher recruitment and retention¹ (resulting sometimes in large teacher-student ratios), teacher training, teacher salaries, parental involvement, supplying materials and providing adequate premises. These challenges emanate from a shortage of funds.

5.1

Issues of teacher training in the non-state sector

5.1.1 Teacher licensing

The National Education Strategic Plan (NESP)⁶⁷ had advocated teacher licensing to be put in place for quality assurance purposes. Discussions on teacher licencing/certification are on-going and it is unclear how the new government will implement this and what effect this will have on the non-state education sector. Whilst certification can help improve quality across the education sector, the development of these standards needs to be agreed with non-state stakeholders as well, so that the collaborative process improves standards and teaching methods in all sectors. It is important to recognise that many teachers in the non-state sector have received teacher training, and in some cases might be more adept at child centric teaching and learning than their government counterparts. If this becomes a requirement for all schools, but monastic, community and ethnic schools are left out of the process, it risks further marginalising of non-state education and entrenching the divide between the sectors. Resource constraints mean that teachers from monastic, community and ethnic schools might not be able to get the required certification/licence without government help.

The section below discusses teacher training examples across different non-state sector systems.

⁶⁶ Teacher retention is an increasing problem as the government has been recruiting experienced non-state sector teachers as daily wage teachers to supplement the government teacher training force. Daily wage teachers get one month basic training, a higher salary than in the non-state sector, and are able to become full government teachers with all the benefits after having served a minimum amount of time.

⁶⁷ The NESP was developed by the previous government and is being revised by the current government. It has not as yet been approved. 'This [teacher licensing] system will be designed and consulted on in the final years of the NESP and rolled out in a subsequent plan' (NESP).

5.1.2 Monastic schools

Teacher training varies greatly between different non-state actors. Traditionally monastic schools recruit local staff that have matriculated and if possible have taken a university degree or are engaged in distance higher education. In rural and remote areas staff have not necessarily matriculated. At the few monastic schools that have secondary school sections, graduates often come back to teach. Many monastic schools also employ or have as volunteers retired government teachers who help train younger teachers. New teachers learn on the job as there is no pre-service training. They teach as they were taught – mostly through rote learning. However, for around a decade there has been increasing availability of in-service teacher training, especially in CCA.

Phaung Daw Oo (PDO)

Phaung Daw Oo's Centre for Promotion of Monastic Education (CPME) pioneered a systematic approach, originally based on Reading and Writing for Critical Thinking (RWCT), that has spread through monastic schools. PDO then promoted CCA training, supported by the EU, Pyoe Pin and other donors.

Today PDO has a New Teacher Training Centre (NTTC)⁶⁸ that uses RWCT mainly for training lower secondary school teachers and CCA for primary school teachers. Their standard programme now is one month long and includes mentoring, as well as in class practical experience with observation and feedback. There are different programmes depending on the funding.

Studer Trust

Over the years other NGO training providers also managed to access monastic schools with various CCA programmes.⁶⁹ One teacher training programme that was visited is run by the Studer Trust based at the Salay Monastic School in Mandalay and offers a 10 week training programme, using the Yaung Zin competency-based training modules⁷⁰ for teachers that serve in a particular monastic network. The training also includes 45 minutes of English every day. The programme is residential and all costs are covered by the Trust. The trainees receive three practicum sessions during their stay. Beyond this there is specialist training for English teachers. Whilst this could be the model for a monastic teacher training academy, the Trust does not have the ambition to expand to provide teacher training beyond the monasteries which it supports.

The competency based training modules mean that monastic school teachers now have excellent preparation to teach and offer quality education. This has been recognised by the state sector as the expansion of teaching staff has included the hiring of experienced monastic teachers as daily wage teachers who can then transfer into permanent state employment after a year.

The Sangha is of course also responsible for training the volunteer teachers who provide the language, literature and culture summer programmes, especially in the Pa-O SAZ. In Mon and Karen States the teachers on these programmes also receive training through the monasteries.

⁶⁸ NTTC is different from CPME. NTTC was set up after the MEC funding finished.

⁶⁹ See Lall 2010.

⁷⁰ developed by Pyoe Pin's partners and other interested organisations in 2013

5.1.3 Christian teacher training

In Yangon there is a Christian teacher training college for teachers who stay in Christian boarding houses run by Catholic nuns. Since 2009 they have also started to train teachers who also work in monastic schools and other organisations that work with vulnerable children, as well as a church based private school that focuses on Karen IDP children. Usually these teachers teach English but sometimes they teach the whole curriculum, depending on their posting. Trainees have to commit for four years – two years training and then two years based in the field, usually remote ethnic regions. Although the teachers usually work in ethnic areas and they are themselves often ethnic nationals, they do not focus on ethnic language training. The focus is rather on English and on leadership and self-awareness skills that are passed on in the boarding houses where they are allowed to teach four hours a week. The church organises the accommodation and substance for the teachers across the 16 locations. The teachers also take part in summer programmes where they live with families and every evening they eat in a different household. The church and some Christian foreign church bodies, one of which is based in South Korea, fund the programme.

5.1.4 Ethnic school teacher training

Teacher training for the various ethnic education systems differs widely between ethnic systems. In the MNEC system teachers have had training in CCA through local NGOs such as Shalom. Teachers are often graduates of the Mon high schools and therefore familiar with the language and the style of teaching. More recently UNICEF organised joint in-service training of government and MNEC teachers in Mon State.⁷¹ Some MNEC teachers who were asked for feedback felt that they did not learn anything they had not been taught in the CCA programmes they had taken before - and that the government teachers looked down on them. However, the joint programme has helped improve some level of collaboration between MNEC and the State Education Office in Mon State.

In Karen State there are two teacher training colleges on the border run by the Karen Education Department (KED)⁷² and who supply teachers to KED schools. There are mobile teacher training programmes that include the KED's Area Teacher Trainer (ATT) program, which provides subject training,⁷³ and the Karen Teacher Working Group (KTWG)⁷⁴ Mobile Teacher Training (MTT) program, which provides methodology training. Currently KTWG provides help to more than 1,000 Karen schools, either community or KED schools.⁷⁵ Whilst the relationship between KED and KTWG is not really clear, they have worked very closely together. KTWG has also been a founding force to create MINE, an association of a number of ethnic education systems.⁷⁶ There are however

⁷¹ This School-based In-service Teacher Education (SITE) was also implemented in other States & Regions. In Mon, MNEC was included because UNICEF implemented a whole-state approach there.

⁷² KED is a part of the Karen State Education Assistance Group (KSEAG)

⁷³ World Education 2016 p.10.

⁷⁴ KTWG, a community based organization, was formed in 1997 in order to improve access and quality of education for Karen students. Their mobile teacher training has allowed KED to run a better education system.

⁷⁵ Lenkova 2015 p.19.

⁷⁶ MINE is linked with the Eastern Burma Community Schools Project (EBCSP) that provides mobile teacher training. It is not clear how far MINE provides teacher training to the ethnic education organisations that make up its membership.

many other teacher training arrangements, some of which are less well known. A recent report on education in Karen schools identified a school with 258 students studying till grade 8 with 13 teachers who all came from a mission in the Irrawaddy Delta.⁷⁷

In Kachin State the Baptist and Catholic churches train the volunteer teachers that are sent to the remote schools to support communities. These are short courses that help prepare the volunteers, but a lot is picked up 'on the job'. The KIO have a Teacher Training School located at the KIO-administered town of Mai Ja Yang on the China-Myanmar border that supplies teachers to the various schools run by the KIO. In government controlled areas in both Kachin and northern Shan State church based schools have developed their own teacher training college that offers a 1 year pre-service teacher training programme, preparing the teachers for their network of schools that teaches a separately developed curriculum. They also offer shorter refresher courses over the summer. Whilst they admit they have no qualified teacher trainers, their programme is based on modern child centred premises.

The PNO has developed the most innovative teacher training system. Finding that not sufficient number of Pa-O ethnic nationals were being accepted into the state run education college, the PNO leaders negotiated with the State Education Office to open their own teacher training college that would follow the same two year teacher training curriculum as all the ECs, and receive training from the teacher educators employed in Taunggyi EC. In addition the college would offer extra modules in Pa-O and ethnic languages. The recruits were the ethnic nationality teacher trainees who had applied but not been accepted into the ECs in Taunggyi and Kaya State. The college opened its doors on January 2016 with 113 trainees of 10 ethnic nationalities including Pa-O, Danu, Shan, Kaya, etc. The programme is residential and the trainees live with local families whilst the dormitories are being built. It is understood that they will take the state EC exam and be recognised by the government. The PNO hopes that this way it can increase the recruitment of ethnic nationality teachers who will work in government schools and be able to support children whose mother tongue is not Burmese.

5.2

Issues of financing, income generation and teacher remuneration

5.2.1 Monastic schools

Normal monastic schools tend to depend on three main sources of income – well-wisher donations constitute the largest part of their income, supplemented by the salaries given by the Ministry of Religious and Cultural Affairs for teachers (one salary for one teacher per 40 students) as well as some income generation schemes such as small shops, or land that yields agricultural produce. A number of monastic schools spoke about land that they own the produce of which they sell to support the monastery and the schools. PDO monastic school is very different in that respect as it receives a lot of international donor money in the form of grants that support its various teacher training programmes. In 2013 the Monastic Education Development Group (MEDG) that consists of different monks from different States and Regions, and is led by PDO, received MEC funding of \$2 million for 2 years that allowed them to train teachers in 335 schools across 7 States and Regions and give grants to other monastic schools. Over 1,400 teachers were trained and mentored and administrative training was given to monks.

⁷⁷ World Education 2016 p.14.

Schools had to apply to the MEDG for small grants for school improvement, e.g. infrastructure and income generation. They needed to meet various criteria for readiness for overall improvement. The steering committee's 11 members selected the schools. The selected 100 also received mentoring for teachers who had attended the one-month (29-day training days) Yaung Zin competency-based training.

More recently Educate a Child (Qatar) has offered funding of \$8 million over 3.5 years, although this funding had to be matched. Telenor brought \$2 million and monastic schools offered in kind support. The focus of this latest project is to bring 72,000 out-of-school children into school. They work with 600 schools, some of which will also offer live streaming from the PDO classrooms. Beyond this they receive funds from Misereor (German Catholic Bishops' Organisation for Development Cooperation) and People in Need (child protection programme in 30 schools). Income generation programmes such as a tailoring class and a wood workshop help to cover teachers' salaries.

Monastic based language and literature programmes like the Pa-O and Mon summer schools are supported by community.⁷⁸ Volunteer teachers in the Pa-O system only need support in kind during the one-week training phase, as they then return home and teach in their own village. Head monks raise the necessary money for books and graduation ceremonies from well-wishers and local donors. This is similar for the Karen, Kachin, Mon and Chin teachers, although some programmes will require the community to support the volunteer teachers whilst they are teaching, especially if they are not from that village.

5.2.2 Ethnic schools

Funding arrangements for schools run by armed group education departments depend on the political culture of the armed group and their taxation regime and vary between the groups. It is often difficult to get detailed information on how schools and teachers are funded.

Mon - MNEC

MNEC used to receive cross border funding but more recently it has been difficult to sustain paying even the very low teacher salaries. This has resulted in a 20% teacher turnover. MNEC still receives some NGO funding, including help from Norwegian People's Aid that has helped cover teacher salaries till September 2016, as well as some small grants to schools that are administered through the MoE but come from UNICEF.⁷⁹ The local community usually supports the MNEC teachers in kind with food (usually rice). However, the local community is very poor and are not able to give much. In some areas parents help with small amounts of money to the school as well, however there are no fees.

As of 2010-11 some MNS have turned to income generation schemes to help boost teacher salaries starting with "project team" shops and "community" shops, with community shops being more successful due to the community support and involvement.

⁷⁸ The Mon summer school previously received some cross border funding, but when that stopped, it did not affect the programme as the community stepped in to fill the gap.

⁷⁹ According to UNICEF, 94 schools received funding twice.

More recent projects across 28 schools (with 151 teachers) to boost teacher salaries include microcredit schemes, the hiring out of tables, tents and chairs, community and grocery shops and a loan scheme.⁸⁰ MNEC, with Pyoe Pin's support, has explored strategic options for sustainably financing MNS and decided to implement a few fundraising projects that they have prioritised.

Kachin – Church based education, KEF and KIO

In Kachin State the community supports Baptist and Catholic volunteer teachers mostly in kind, however the churches pay the volunteers a stipend for the duration of their service to cover expenses including travel costs.

The church based schools that have been set up in northern Shan and Kachin States ask the parents to pay fees to cover the cost of teacher salaries. They offer some forms of scholarship to parents who cannot pay at all. The community also has financed the setting up of the school. The church covers teacher training costs, and certain schools and administrative buildings are built on church land.⁸¹ This is the only model that comes close to a 'low fee'. One of the schools is building boarding facilities on church land with church money so as to accommodate school children from the more remote areas.

It is unclear how KIO schools in remote areas, conflict affected areas and in refugee camps are financed. Parents in these communities are usually unable to contribute to teacher salaries and the running of the schools. The higher education programmes in Laiza and Mai Ja Yang require parents to pay fees. These however are not sufficient to cover all the costs. It is unclear how the balance is

Karen - KED, KTWG and community schools

KED and KTWG have core funding through the Eastern Burma Community Schooling Project (EBCSP) that provides stipends and books. KTWG also get money from MEC, DFID and the International Rescue Committee (IRC). KTWG uses this to provide teacher stipends to some schools and the community supports teachers in kind and with donations. In certain areas there is some limited KNU district funding to schools. However, there are individual schools that in some cases receive funding from other organisations. The recent World Education report identified a school in Htee Poe Hta village that is funded by the American Jewish World Service, an international NGO, which supports students' food, transportation, and medical supplies. Teachers also receive a stipend of 7,000 Thai Baht (approximately 200 USD) per year from the NGO.⁸²

There are around 1,200 schools, 50% of which have seen some form of government penetration, including government teachers who are paid by the state. The system is therefore very mixed.

⁸⁰ Burton 2016.

⁸¹ In one case the respondents said that they also received militia support, but it was unclear if this was moral support or in-kind/ financial support.

⁸² World Education 2016 p.12.

5.3

Challenges faced by the non-state education sector in light of the reforms and peace process

In light of wider reforms and the education reforms, education in Myanmar has started to change. The new education law has started to engage with issues of quality and languages for ethnic nationality children. The amendments that were agreed on the basis of months long student protests allow for some decentralisation in education (Section 4 (D), NEL 2015), States and Regions are allowed to develop their own curriculum (Section 18 (A), NEL 2015); and Section 22 NEL (2015) permits the use of ethnic languages alongside Myanmar as a classroom language: 'An ethnic language can be used alongside Myanmar as a language of instruction at the basic education level.'⁸³ This is however insufficient, first and foremost because of the lack of qualified teachers with ethnic language skills in the government system. According to UNICEF 70% of teachers working in ethnic areas are unable to speak the local language or dialect.⁸⁴ This could be because of low rates of university graduation in ethnic areas with few ethnic students joining education colleges.⁸⁵

At the time of writing it is unclear if different schools and systems will be recognised by the government and if/how they will be supported. This is not really an issue for the monastic system that is regulated by the Ministry of Religious and Cultural Affairs and now receives limited government support in paying teacher salaries. Monastic school pupils are also allowed to transfer to the government system and are able to take national exams. The main issue reported by monastic schools is the fact that they cannot easily register as a post primary or secondary school and feel that the regulations on what they can and cannot do is too tight.

Things are much more challenging for ethnic schools, that have developed systems in parallel to the state. One of the main challenges faced by all the ethnic schools, regardless if they teach the government curriculum or not is that of accreditation. As described above, the transfer of students between systems is usually locally agreed and the exam that has to be taken by students who want to transfer to government post primary provision has made this harder. The fact that there is no clarity on the 'legal status' of these schools adds to the difficulties.⁸⁶

In a series of workshops in Kachin and Mon States, education representatives and stakeholders were asked what they felt were the opportunities, threats and needs in light of possible convergence with the state system and maintaining a separate education system.⁸⁷

⁸³ National Education Law (2015) cited in Joliffe and Speers Mears 2016 p. 37. The original NEL of 2014 stated that an ethnic language should only be used 'If there is a need...' This was removed in the NEL 2015.

⁸⁴ Cited in Joliffe and Speers Mears 2016 p. 37.

⁸⁵ See Lall 2015. Joliffe and Speers Mears (2016) also point to the fact that despite the increase of daily wage teachers (who have not had to undergo training at an Education College), there are still insufficient teachers who can speak the local language/ dialect in ethnic areas.

⁸⁶ The EAG, community and church based schools are not specifically mentioned in NEL. Section 34, NEL 2014, categorises schools: government schools; government supported schools; schools managed by local organisations; private schools; philanthropic schools; special education program schools; mobile schools and schools for emergencies; and schools designated by MOE and other ministries concerned. Section 14 NEL (2015) amends Section 36 (NEL 2014) to say schools allowed to open in accordance with this law and recognised by this law and other education laws concerned can award training certificates, certificates of achievement, diplomas and degrees.

⁸⁷ Data collected as part of the DAI funded research project Oct 2015 – Feb 2016 with Ashley South.

Across the two options all agreed that ethnic leaders needed unity to back one path over the other and that this needed to be included as a part of the political dialogue framework.

5.3.1 Convergence - opportunities, threats and needs

All those who took part in the discussions conducted as a part of a Development Alternatives Incorporated (DAI) funded study rejected 'being taken over' by the state, but a number acknowledged that in light of the funding crisis and the difficulty in paying teachers decent salaries, a managed convergence with the state system, where the government would be responsible for teacher salaries might be a way forward.⁸⁸ They insisted that in this case the education department responsible needed to have a clear vision on what parts of the education system would be different from regular state education, they needed to be recognised as equal partners in the process and the schools needed to be recognised by the state. The stakeholders taking part in the discussion said that one of the greatest threats was the loss of confidence of the local community in the education system as well as a loss of confidence in local teachers (issue of accreditation) if government teachers were to co-teach. They also believed that the community would be confused as to who was responsible, students would lose confidence in their language and culture, as would the local teachers. The few who were willing to consider the option of convergence insisted that it would only work if responsibilities were clear and separate and if the community was consulted with and was behind them, understanding what convergence meant.

Those who said any form of convergence would be impossible highlighted the issue of which language would be used a medium of instruction, and the fact that the needs of each community is different, meaning that the priorities of ethnic education officials are different. They feared that all that they had built would be lost through convergence as the school would come under government control.

5.3.2 Remaining separate from the state sector

Most respondents preferred the option of remaining separate from the state sector, but recognised that this posed challenges as well. The ethnic education departments would need a strong policy, better management, and accreditation and recognition both for students and teachers, so that their students would have the opportunity to switch to the government system in a structured and agreed way.⁸⁹

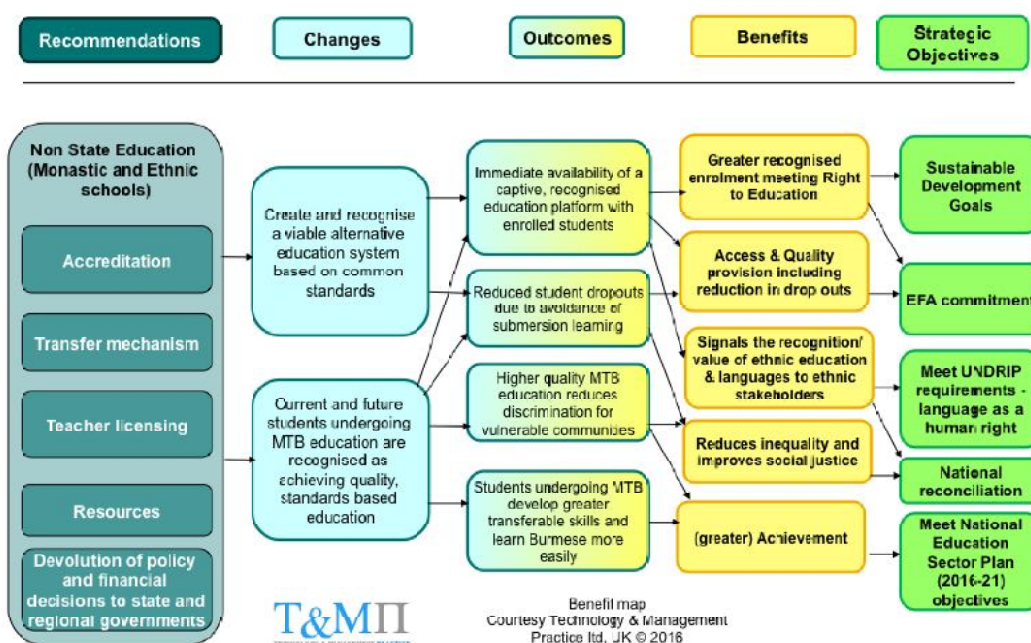
They recognised that there would be continuing challenges in paying teacher salaries and making sure there were enough teachers willing to teach under difficult circumstance. Teachers would need up-skilling so as to be accredited and or recognised, and this would not be the government responsibility. In many cases they also recognised that staying separate would mean a need for greater engagement between the sectors with better mutual understanding and respect between the two systems, and that the ethnic education department would need a better understanding of national policy and government structures and systems.

⁸⁸ Research conducted by World Education in Karen State has drawn slightly different conclusions where some community members were not opposed to the government taking over community schools as it lessened their financial burden of supporting teachers. See World Education 2016 Report 'School Committees and Community Engagement in Education in Karen State' for more details.

⁸⁹ Seen as much less important in Kachin State where many said they did not see why their pupils would continue in a low quality government system.

6 Conclusions and Recommendations

The main reasons for maintaining a diverse education system include meeting the needs of a diverse population, as well as improving trust, especially with regard to ethnic education needs, along with building on the peace process, federalism and democratisation. Working together with the non-state sector is essential if Myanmar is to meet its international Education For All commitment as well as the targets set out in the National Education Strategic Plan that promises access to quality basic education to all children across the country. The benefit map below indicates how the recommendations would lead to the required changes and would help meet the government's committed strategic objectives and priorities.



Specific Recommendations

1. In order to develop collaboration (as described in the NESP 2016-21 from the Myanmar Ministry of Education), develop mutually agreed standards across state and non- state sectors so that children can transfer between systems. This is not so much about knowledge content (which is based on learning a particular curricular content by heart) but rather on attaining competencies and learning outcomes. This would mean that it is not necessary to teach exactly the same curriculum and that children who go to schools following an alternative curriculum can still transfer back into the state system.
2. Based on the agreed quality standards suggested above, agree on an accreditation system for non-state sector schools – that is not necessarily exam based.
3. Encourage more ethnic nationality teachers to get trained and work in their local area so that they can use the ethnic language as a classroom language. Support the development of an ethnic teacher training college such as that which has been established in Shan State.
4. Based on agreed standards develop an accreditation and equivalence system for teachers who have worked in ethnic, community and monastic schools.

5. Develop school and teacher support mechanisms (including financial resources) that allow non-state schools to deliver education in remote areas. This is a better allocation of resources rather than trying to replace those schools, and would usually have greater local community support.
6. Strengthen the state and regional parliaments with regard to education policy development.
7. Strengthen the state and regional parliaments with regard to financial resources for education development.
8. Devolve more authority to the State Education Office, especially with regard to the application of language policy and the hiring of teachers. This has to include increased financial devolution.
9. To have mechanisms and policy framework for coordination between state and non-state sectors at national and sub-national levels. The government is now planning to have coordination mechanisms at national level.

Beyond recommendations for the government, the following are recommendations for development partners and donors.

1. Recognise, support and strengthen the role local community plays in education.
2. Support and strengthen non-state ethnic and community schools and schooling systems, especially in areas that cannot be reached by government education.
3. Support non-state teacher training initiatives, especially for teachers to meet the required standards.⁹⁰
4. Support non-state teacher salaries located in poor communities that struggle to support their teachers.
5. Support non-state schooling systems to engage with the government to develop mutually agreed standards to facilitate and standardise transfer mechanisms.

⁹⁰ The MOE is currently drafting competency standards for basic education teachers.

Annex 1 – Project details

7.1.1 Objectives of the Project and Purpose of the Research

The purpose of this report is to outline the diversity and role of non-state basic education provision in Myanmar (excluding the for profit urban private sector) and to offer an analysis of the social and economic benefits of a diverse education system that meets the needs of a multi-ethnic, multi-lingual population. In light of the education reforms that began in 2012, it is necessary both for the current government as well as for the development partners to better understand the diverse education landscape that is the legacy of military rule. Much of what developed outside of the state system grew due to the dedication of civil society,⁹¹ despite the oppressive system, to meet the needs of the most disadvantaged across the country. Many of the education systems and individual schools have been successful, developed best practice and have the backing of the local stakeholders, sometimes even resulting in early non-state and state collaborative arrangements at local level. It is hoped that a better understanding of these systems will lead to their increased support by both government and the development partners.

7.1.2 Methodology

The research of this report is based on a review of the existing literature, data collected on previous fieldtrips between 2015 and 2016 as well as fresh fieldwork in August and September 2016. Data collected as part of DAI and USAID projects conducted prior to 2015 focused on how especially ethnic education systems saw the future of mother tongue based (MTB) education in light of the peace process and the reforms. Workshops were conducted in Mon and Kachin States (both in government and EAG controlled areas) with relevant stakeholders to discuss what relationship with the state system might emerge due to the political changes across the country.⁹² These discussions have informed a part of this report.

The fieldwork in August and September 2016 has focused in particular on information regarding how different education systems are currently funding themselves, how they train their teachers, how they collaborate with the state and other non-state actors and how the advent of a more participatory political system (as well as the influx of major funding agencies and development partners) had changed what they can provide to their stakeholders. Data was collected in Yangon, Mandalay, Lashio, Taunggyi and Hpa An, covering Chin, Kachin, Karen and Pa-O nationality respondents as well as three monastic schools and three non-state teacher training programmes. One ethnic based post secondary institution was also visited.

⁹¹ In the broadest sense – including the Sangha, ethnic armed groups as well as CSOs and NGOs.

⁹² This project was conducted with Dr Ashley South resulting in a detailed project report: South, A. and Lall, M. (2016) *Schooling and Conflict: ethnic education and mother tongue based teaching in Myanmar*, The Asia Foundation, San Francisco. The report can be downloaded here: <http://asiafoundation.org/resources/pdfs/SchoolingConflictENG.pdf>

Annex 2 – Examples of non-state education successes

7.2.1 India - low fee private sector filling the gap when the state sector cannot meet the needs of all.

The increase in private school enrolment among primary school aged children in India is remarkable. The Annual Status of Education Report (ASER) 2012 notes that approximately 35% or more of primary school aged children in both rural and urban areas in India were attending private schools. Enrolment in private schools in rural areas has been increasing at around 10% per year.⁹³ This is primarily due to parental dissatisfaction with Indian government schools. The government schools and private schools in India have been juxtaposed in various studies, showing that students in private schools tend to get higher scores in tests than their publicly-enrolled counterparts.⁹⁴ This good performance of students seems to be related to the availability of more teachers in a school (due to lower salaries) and therefore less multi-grade teaching and smaller classes.⁹⁵ A study in Uttar Pradesh and Madhya Pradesh tried to explore the systematic difference in learning performance between government schools and private schools in the two states and found that although the overall quality in both private and government schools appeared to be low, the students in private sectors got higher scores than the students in government schools.⁹⁶

7.2.2 Pakistan – meeting the needs of the poorest through philanthropy

Pakistan has also seen the rise of low fee private schools as alternative to government schooling. As in India, students in private schools do better than those in the public counterpart.⁹⁷ For example, learning indicators in rural areas suggest that sixty per cent of class five children enrolled in a private school 'were able to read at least' a 'story in Urdu/Sindhi/Pashto', against forty-two per cent of government school students. For the urban centres, the figures indicate sixty-four per cent of private school students performing the same task against fifty-four per cent of government school students. In arithmetic, similar indicators existed – fifty-four per cent in private schools performing better than thirty-seven per cent in government schools (rural); fifty-nine per cent in private schools against forty-four per cent in government schools (urban).⁹⁸ This means that public confidence in the government system continues to be eroded. However, LFPS only cater to a small percentage of the population, and remain inaccessible for the poorest segment of society.⁹⁹ Today seventy-seven per cent of students in government schools are from a poor background.¹⁰⁰ Furthermore, the quality of private schools also fluctuates depending on location, often under resourced in rural areas, and the slums in urban centres. Far from improving the education system, LFPS have further created learning disparities, exacerbating socio-economic inequalities across the country.

⁹³ ASER 2013a.

⁹⁴ Goyal and Pandey 2012; Woodhead et al 2013.

⁹⁵ Muralidharan and Kremer 2007; Students in all kinds of schools tend to benefit from smaller classes in terms of learning outcomes (Nye et al 2000).

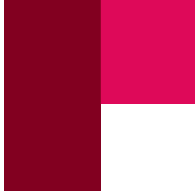
⁹⁶ Goyal and Pandey 2012.

⁹⁷ However as in India, Pakistani students underperform whether they are at government or low fee private schools.

⁹⁸ Annual Status of Education Report (ASER) Pakistan 2013b.

⁹⁹ Muzaffar and Bari 2015.

¹⁰⁰ Saeed and Zia 2015 p. 19.



Pakistan however has another form of non government education system, different from the traditionally low fee private school model that runs on a profit motive - the philanthropic school. Increasingly poorer sections of society have come to rely on philanthropic organisations to address health and education issues. These communities often live in areas where there is no government provision and where the private sector does not want to go, as no profit is to be made. Often funded by public donations, through Zakat,¹⁰¹ these organisations focus on marginalised communities, allowing children with different needs to access education. One particular model of philanthropic provision has been the 'adopt a school' programme where a philanthropic organisation takes on the responsibility to turn a failing government school around. This is a form of Public Private Partnership (PPP), where families access the government school for free, but the non government organisation renovates the building, brings in more teachers and in general lifts the quality of the government school.¹⁰²

¹⁰¹ Islamic tax

¹⁰² CARE is Pakistan's pioneering organization in the 'adopt a school programme' however today there are many more organisations involved in supporting government education through the PPP model. See Lall 2017.

Annex 3 – Myanmar Background

7.3.1 Education issues – a summary

The education sector in Myanmar has been in crisis at least since the 1962 military coup. According to the census conducted in April 2015, nationwide about one third of children (35.72%) are out of school (approximately 4.5 million children), with 12-18 year-olds (secondary school students) particularly affected.¹⁰³ In Myanmar the state has not been able to provide adequate access to quality education for a large number of its citizens. Broadly speaking, it is not meeting the needs of the urban poor, the ethnic minority children and families in rural and remote regions.

In many rural or remote parts of Myanmar there is inadequate access to schools. In addition, the poor state of physical infrastructure and classroom facilities, including overcrowded classrooms (especially in the primary grades), scarcity of teachers in primary and rural schools make it difficult to retain students. This is compounded by a poor learning environment, antiquated teaching methods, and a poorly designed assessment system that encourages widespread rote learning. In state schools children from poor families are discriminated against if they cannot pay unofficial 'fees',¹⁰⁴ resulting in high drop-out rates. Disability and poverty are stigmatised. Poverty has shaped household demand for education especially in terms of opportunity costs. Poor families see education as an investment and often resort to monastic schools, but often cannot 'invest' beyond their children acquiring functional literacy, numeracy, and basic life-skills. Richer families fuel a parallel market for after school tuition that also affects what gets taught in the classroom.

In ethnic nationality populated areas, students also face language handicaps, as non-Burmese speaking students struggle to benefit from classes still largely conducted in government schools in the national language (Bama saga/Myanmar). The mandated use of Burmese as the medium of instruction in public schools, with little or no support for local language speakers, has proved to be a significant handicap for children from ethnic households enrolled in the primary grades in state schools. Therefore, ethnic parents sometimes choose to send their children to non-state schools. These include monastic schools, and quite substantial systems organised by the larger Ethnic Armed Groups (EAGs) - e.g. the Karen National Union (KNU), Kachin Independence Organisation (KIO), New Mon State Party (NMSP) etc., each of which administers their own school systems. In many armed conflict-affected areas, EAG schools are the only existing education structures. Although the situation is beginning to change, with the limited introduction of ethnic nationality languages in some primary schools (but not as a medium of instruction¹⁰⁵), the Burmese orientation of government schools remains a major barrier to ethnic nationality children's educational achievement – resulting in a culture of linguistic discrimination towards ethnic minority students.

¹⁰³ Dropout rates in Mon and Karen States are about the national average, at 64%.

¹⁰⁴ Parents (and children) are regularly solicited to cover various common expenses at school. These contributions, while theoretically voluntary, entail levels of social coercion and discrimination. The Government of Myanmar has imposed a blanket ban on parental donations which in light of continuing funding gaps at the school has proved unsustainable.

¹⁰⁵ See more details in next section on National Education Law.

There is little information about educational achievement as the Education Management Information System (EMIS) in use by the MoE does not generate reliable data to track individual students as they enrol and progress through the system.¹⁰⁶ Community funding of education is estimated at 70% of total education expenditure. On the government expenditure side, salary payments dominate the budget, taking up between 80-90 %, leaving very little for goods, services, and maintenance expenses. Construction expenditures take up over 90% of the capital budget leaving little for equipment.

Excessive centralisation of decision-making has led to a fundamental misallocation of decision-making authority. Local information and requests are pushed up the chain of command to a level that lacks the appropriate knowledge, contextual judgement, or incentive to make the right decision. This has also weakened accountability at all levels – with no single person or agency assuming true ‘ownership’ over school needs or projects.

7.3.2 Education reforms¹⁰⁷

Education reforms have been one of former President Thein Sein’s main priorities, after national reconciliation with the NLD, peace with EAGs and economic reforms that would bring international agencies and investment back to Myanmar.¹⁰⁸ In the summer of 2012 Myanmar embarked on a Comprehensive Education Sector Review Programme (CESR), a three-phase process resulting in production of a comprehensive education plan in the summer of 2015. The CESR education consortium was led by UNICEF and closely supported by donors and development partners such as AUSAID and the World Bank. The MoE invited all interested Development Partners to take part, and many took the opportunity to engage with the ministry for the first time, focusing on reviewing state education.¹⁰⁹

The CESR’s responsibilities encompassed all sectors of teaching and learning, from Early Childhood Education to Higher Education, and involved a wide range of ministries and departments that had a stake in education.¹¹⁰ Reforms resulting from the CESR include increasing basic education from 11 to 12 years and changing teachers’ career structures. The former could resolve the time crunch teachers face to cover the curriculum, although the practicalities of such a transfer are complex. The latter is particularly important as teachers who want promotion move to the secondary schools, resulting in large student teacher ratios in primary schools with the least experienced teachers in these classes. The CESR also reviewed language policies (including the teaching of English) and recommended the translation of textbooks into ethnic languages.

In addition to the CESR there were other organisations also involved in the Education reform process. This included the Education Promotion Implementation Committee (EPIC) that was set

¹⁰⁶ This is what we found during the UNICEF Situation Analysis study in Mon State in (UNICEF 2014).

¹⁰⁷ More on education reforms in Lall, M. (2016) *Understanding Reform in Myanmar*, People and Society in the wake of Military Rule, Hurst Publishers, London.

¹⁰⁸ South and Lall 2016.

¹⁰⁹ Terms of Reference for Myanmar Education Sector Review (4 July 2012).

¹¹⁰ Ministry of Education, Ministry of Social Welfare, Relief and Resettlement, Ministry of Religious Affairs, Ministry of Science and Technology, Ministry of Labour, Ministry of Border Affairs, Ministry of Defence, Ministry of Health, Ministry of Agriculture and Irrigation, Ministry of Cooperatives, Ministry of Finance and Revenue, Union Attorney General’s Office.

up in October 2013 by the President's office.¹¹¹ EPIC's three components included a task force of deputy ministers from the 13 ministries directly involved in education (and their Director Generals), an advisory group consisting of retired MoE officials, academics and other national experts, and 18 working groups covering specific areas of education reform, with two co-leads - one from government and one from the group of experts totalling over 200 people. EPIC had limited contact with the CESR teams and the development partners.

Parliament had an Education Promotion Committee, which was comprised of ten USDP members, three NLD members and two MPs from the Shan Nationalities Democratic Party (SNDP). They were tasked to developing an overarching education 'mother law' to provide a framework for education reforms.

The new education 'mother law' was passed in parliament in September 2014,¹¹² resulting in mass protests on the streets by students who believe that the government retained too much control over education matters. Much of the argument was around decentralisation and local power. The revised law (NEL 2015) now allows for the use of ethnic languages as classroom languages alongside Burmese (Section 22). Classroom language is not the same as language of instruction, however it legalises what is occurring anyway in those ethnic communities where teachers speak the local language and use it to explain when the children cannot follow in Burmese.

According to NEL (2014) section 44, in Regions or States, the teaching of ethnic literatures and languages can be introduced in primary education and gradually extended, by the Region or State governments. Though the law doesn't explicitly allow MTB education, the teaching of ethnic languages as a subject and a good grounding in L1 literacy helps children go on to learn other languages according to some research evidence. The revised curriculum framework includes a 10% local curriculum, which can cover ethnic languages etc. However sub-national levels do not seem to have received any specific guidelines yet.

The NESP acknowledged the need for 'an effective partnership mechanism in place that brings these organisations together [monastic schools, private sector schools, community-based schools, schools funded by non-governmental organisations and schools managed under ethnic education systems] to share information and explore opportunities for collaboration' (p 92) and 'development of a partnership mechanism to support participation of different education service providers in the basic education reforms' (p. 93).

Discussions around teacher certification

Article 24, NEL (2015) removed article 50 (c), NEL (2014), which said that teachers are required to have a degree, diploma, certificate for teacher education or equivalent certificate of recognition. However, none of these documents said anything about teachers in the non-state sector.

Chapter 9 of the NESP mentions designing a teacher licensing or accreditation system in the NESP

¹¹¹ The development partners were assured that this was not intended to replace the CESR nor to do similar work twice, but that EPIC and the CESR were complimentary to each other. In reality however, this was a move to retake control of the process without having to shut the CESR down or make the development partners' work redundant. (Conversation with relevant people in the President's office).

¹¹² A revised version/revision? of this law was passed in June 2015.

final year and rolling it out in the subsequent plan as a part of a quality assurance system.

There are ongoing discussions about teacher licensing/certification. A paper called 'teacher certification and teacher licensing system' was presented at 'The Seminar on Education Promotion Implementation: Teacher Education Sector' organised by the MOE on 4-5 August 2016 to discuss plans and activities. The basic requirements for licensing proposed by the paper included a certificate of pre-service teacher education, township-based special one-month training or teacher distance education course for KG, primary and lower secondary level teachers. The paper also mentioned that holders of an education diploma, master's and Ph.D. awarded by other countries would also be eligible to apply for a license. The paper however did not mention non-state sector teachers.

7.3.3 New NLD government education policy

Not much is known about the NLD education policy. The Ministry of Education presentations to Development Partners have focused on access, completion, quality, transparency and alternative education for those who have not been able to access education. This has included the plan to establish a new department for alternative education. A new education sector partnership policy aims to better regulate how donors engage with the sector.

Below is the official translation of the NLD manifesto statement on education. The first 100 days the Ministry of Education focused on:

- Free education for primary school students;
- Refresher courses for basic education teachers;
- Enabling teachers to withdraw their salary from private banks;
- Implementing alternative education plans for those whose education was interrupted.

NLD Election Manifesto - Education¹¹³

Education begins on the day of birth, and continues throughout life. Therefore the NLD will strive to establish opportunities for lifelong learning and the obtaining of a beneficial and valuable education.

1. We will establish early childhood care programmes.
2. With the aim of enabling all citizens to complete at least primary-level education and proceed towards further education, we will create learning opportunities progressively. To that purpose, we will:
 - a. Work to ensure that every primary-age child successfully completes his or her primary-level education in school.
 - b. Develop dedicated education programmes for children who face difficulties in gaining a primary-level education, such as children with mental or physical disabilities, children living in poverty, and children living in remote areas.

¹¹³ http://www.burmalibrary.org/docs21/NLD_2015_Election_Manifesto-en.pdf

3. In accordance with the principle of a federal union, we will develop an education system that supports and promotes ethnic languages and cultures. In doing so, we will:

- a. Strive to ensure that primary-age ethnic children who speak different languages are taught by teachers who are able to speak the mother-tongue of their students.
- b. Fund state and regional programmes to enable the use of mother tongue in primary education.

2. We will work towards achieving an appropriate teacher-student ratio.

3. Programmes will be run to improve the teaching abilities and subject-matter expertise of teachers in all schools.

4. We will prioritise the needs of schools in less-developed areas where schools currently lack necessary facilities and equipment, in order to make middle school and high school education more accessible to all.

5. For the improvement of the quality of life of people with limited educational qualifications, we will establish opportunities for further education through programmes for continuing basic middle- and high-school study, and in-school and out-of-school vocational training opportunities of equivalent standard.

6. We will aim to develop a world-class higher education system. In doing so, we will:

- a. Ensure that universities have autonomy over their own curriculum and governance, (and the ability to conduct independent research.
- b. Develop vocational education so that it gains equal status with academic learning.

7. We will establish effective education services that do not place a burden on parents and communities. In doing so, we will:

- a. Work to ensure the effective, efficient and transparent allocation and use of finances, drawing on state funding, private funding and other domestic and international sources of education funding.
- b. Develop effective educational reforms and management and monitoring programmes based on accurate information and data.

In February 2015 the NLD put in place the members to sit on the two Parliamentary education committees – the Amyothar Hluttaw Education Promotion Committee (Upper House) and the Pyithu Hluttaw Education Promotion Committee (Lower House). In the description of their role both are tasked to 'Support to implement modern education with right concept, good behavior and critical thinking for the state building process'.¹¹⁴

The National Education Sector Plan (2016-21) introduced a new curriculum, reformed student assessment and increased child centric approaches to education as the leading pedagogy. It is understood that it is undergoing some revisions to reflect NLD priorities.

¹¹⁴ Amyothar Hluttaw Education Promotion Committee (Upper House) Pyithu Hluttaw Education Promotion Committee (Lower House) members list (Government of Myanmar, February 2016)

7.3.4 The peace process and ethnic education (from South and Lall 2016)

Many armed organisations seeking to represent ethnic aspirations and grievances have been fighting the government for decades, but most are now engaged in an emerging - but in many ways still problematic and contested - peace process. One of the most interesting and important developments of the last four years has been the prominence of ethnic issues on the national political agenda, as represented by the peace process, which emerged under the previous government in late 2011. For the first time since independence, leaders of Myanmar's long (and often violently) suppressed ethnic nationality communities have been able to articulate their grievances and aspirations on the national political stage. Examples will be taken from the experiences of three ethnic groups whose education systems have been described above in more detail: the Kachin, Mon and Karen, and on EAGs and others seeking to represent these communities' grievances and aspirations, including in the fields of languages and education.

The KIO and NMSP agreed ceasefires with the then military government in the mid-1990s. These uneasy truces allowed for the limited rehabilitation of conflict-affected communities and the (re-) emergence of rich civil society networks. In the context of the previous round of ceasefires, the KIO and NMSP (and some other groups) expanded their already existing education networks, to provide mother tongue teaching to children in their areas of control ('ceasefire zones') and in adjacent government-controlled areas. In contrast, the KNU did not agree a ceasefire in the 1990s. In a context of continued armed conflict across much of southeast Myanmar, the KNU-administered education system developed a separatist outlook and syllabus, resulting in high school graduates from the KNU schools (many of which were refugee camp schools in neighbouring Thailand).¹¹⁵

Despite political difficulties, the NMSP ceasefire has persisted, and was renewed in February 2011. Although the current peace process in Myanmar remains problematic, the persistence of the NMSP ceasefire provided a unique space for the Mon education system to flourish. However, disappointed by a lack of donor support for a system widely regarded as a model of best practice for ethnic education schooling in Myanmar, NMSP educators were faced with a dilemma: whether to embrace a closer relationship with the (reforming) state education structure, or to follow the Kachin model, and develop a separate education system. The government (at Union and Mon State levels) has recently passed legislation and made statements allowing for - and indeed encouraging - MTB education in ethnic nationality-populated areas, at primary level (see below). As state schools are not well equipped to deliver these services (lacking appropriate teaching materials, or qualified teachers), an opportunity exists for Mon educators to 'fill the gap'. However many in the Mon nationalist and wider ethnic opposition community remain deeply distrustful of a Myanmar government they suspect of continuing to pursue forcible assimilationist policies ('Burmanisation'), and of the peace process currently underway.¹¹⁶

¹¹⁵ Lall and South 2013.

¹¹⁶ This excerpt is from a publication before the new government. It is not yet clear if there is as yet more trust under the new government.

The KNU education system is a remarkable testimony to the resilience and commitment to education of Karen communities. Nevertheless, in order to be viable in the long term, this regime will need reforming, including particularly strategic re-imagining of the relationship between the Karen and state education regimes in terms both of syllabus and administration. In the broader peace process, the KNU has been the most proactive and creative of the nearly 20 Ethnic Armed Groups involved in peace talks with the government. On 15th October 2015 in Naypyidaw leaders of EAGs (including the KNU) signed a Nationwide Ceasefire Agreement (NCA) with the Myanmar government and Army. After two years of often fraught negotiations, this document remains problematic and divisive - as indicated by the decision of some 10 EAGs not to attend the event or sign the NCA (including the KIO and NMSP).

At the time of the NCA negotiations issues related to language and education were not discussed and civil society stakeholders were promised that these would be dealt with during the Political Dialogue. This is an important point - Chapter 6 of the NCA acknowledges EAG authority in the fields of education,¹¹⁷ health, natural resource management and security, and provides for international assistance in these fields with the joint agreement of government and EAGs. There is a need to support EAG provision of education and other services, during the probably lengthy and contested 'interim period', between the agreement of an NCA (and earlier bilateral ceasefires) and negotiation of a comprehensive political settlement. This is relevant also for those EAGs which have not signed the NCA, but do have bilateral ceasefires with the government, such as the NMSP. The status of the KIO is more problematic in this respect, but in principle an end to conflict in Kachin areas should be possible if key stakeholders have the political will.

The NLD's continuation of the peace process - the 21st Century Panglong Conference¹¹⁸

The NLD government has committed to the NCA that was signed in October last year. In continuation of the peace process the new government decided to call the 21st Century Panglong conference to bring all ethnic armed groups together between the 31st of August and the 3rd of September 2016. The timing for the Union Peace Conference was rushed and this meant that disagreements on the status of the same three groups who had not been included in October 2015 were not resolved and they were again not allowed to attend. Despite the lack of inclusiveness, the UNFC members agreed to come to honour and show support for the new government. Issues of language and education were again not discussed.

¹¹⁷ Education is mentioned four times in the NCA: in Article 9 (a): 'Both parties agree to jointly strive to provide necessary development assistance to improve the livelihoods of civilians in the fields of health, education, nutrition and housing, and regional development'; Article 9 (h): 'In accordance with the laws, no educational opportunities shall be prohibited; there shall be no destruction of schools or training facilities; and no disturbances to school staff or students'; Article 9 (k): 'There shall be no destruction of public facilities such as hospitals, religious buildings, schools, and medical clinics without credible reason. No stationing of military bases shall be permitted in such public facilities'; and Article 25 (a), as above.

¹¹⁸ This section is not in South and Lall 2016

7.3.5 Typology of ethnic schools (from South and Lall 2016)

Type	Characteristics	Examples
Type 1 Ethnic-input	Government-run schools with civil society input	Government-run schools, with some teachers (and teaching materials) provided by the local community or civil society.
Type 2 Mixed schools	Government schools in EAG-controlled and contested areas, with some EAG &/or civil society input.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Includes schools in remote areas that accept volunteer teachers.
Type 3 Hybrid schools	Part government, part EAG; sometimes also input from civil society.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> NDAK schools in Kachin ceasefire areas IDP schools in Kachin areas Schools which were previously under the authority of EAG education departments, but have now been 'flipped' (or 'poached') by government Ministry of Education.
Type 4 EAG (government curriculum) schools	Schools managed by EAG, with no government teachers, but which use government curriculum (often in translation) and where children can sometimes transfer to the state system, after a test or local arrangement. Curriculum is supplemented by ethnic nationality-oriented materials, especially for history and social studies, but sometimes also other subjects.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> NMSP/MNEC Mon National Schools KIO schools (teach government curriculum in Jingphaw etc, and later in Burmese) Some Karen schools, particularly those supported by the community with limited KNU/KED input.
Type 5 EAG Schools	Schools built and run by EAGs and/or associated civil society groups, with separate MTB curriculum; no recognition/ accreditation or possible transfer for students.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> KED schools, and 'community schools' in areas under KNU authority or influence; refugee camp schools.
Type 6 Civil Society Private Schools	Separate MTB curriculum and different teaching methods; no recognition/ accreditation or possible transfer for students.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Community-supported schools in northern Shan and Kachin States Some Karen schools in KNU-controlled areas (sometimes administered and funded by churches).
Type 7 Foreign curriculum schools	Curriculum developed in/by another country, allowing (some) students to transfer to other schools in that country.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Schools with Indian curriculum in Kachin; some Karen mission schools.
Type 8 Supplementary Schools	Schools that focus on ethnic language &/or culture/religion, but teach after the government classes are over – either summer schools or afternoon/evening school	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Mostly provided by civil society groups; often linked to the <i>Sangha</i> and the churches.

8 Acronyms

ADRA	Adventist Development and Relief Agency
ATT	Area Teacher Trainer
AUSAID	Australian Aid
BC	British Council
BDF	Border Guard Force
CBO	Community Based Organisation
CCA	Child Centric Approach
CESR	Comprehensive Education Sector Review Programme
CPME	Centre for Promotion of Monastic Education
DAI	Development Alternatives Incorporated
DFID	Department for International Development
DKBA	Democratic Karen Benevolent/Buddhist Army
DPs	Development Partners
EAG	Ethnic Armed Group(s)
EBCSP	Eastern Burma Community Schooling Project
EC	Education College
EFA	Education for All
EMIS	Education Management Information System
EPIC	Education Promotion Implementation Committee
EU	European Union
IDP	Internally Displaced People
ILO	International Labour Organisation
INGO	International Non Government Organisation
IOE	Institute(s) of Education
IRC	International Rescue Committee
KED	Karen Education Department
KEF	Kachin Education Foundation
KG	Kindergarten
KIO	Kachin Independence Organisation

KNU	Karen National Union
KSEAG	Karen State Education Assistance Group
KTWG	Karen Teacher Working Group
L1 and L2	First Language (often mother tongue) and Second language
LNGO	Local Non Government Organisation
MDGs	Millennium Development Goals
MEC	Myanmar Education Consortium
MEDG	Monastic Education Development Group
MINE	Myanmar Indigenous Network for Education
MNEC	Mon National Education Committee
MNS	Mon National School
MoE	Ministry of Education
MORA	Ministry of Religious Affairs
MSLBC	Mon Summer Literacy and Buddhist Culture
MTB	Mother Tongue Based
MTT	Mobile Teacher Training
NCA	Nationwide Ceasefire Agreement
NEL	National Education Law
NESP	National Education Strategic Plan
NGO	Non Government Organisation.
NLD	National League for Democracy
NMSP	New Mon State Party
NTTC	New Teacher Training Centre
PDO	Phaung Daw Oo (Mandalay)
PNO	Pa-O National Organisation
PPP	Public Private Partnership
RWCT	Reading and Writing for Critical Thinking
SAZ	Self-Administered Zone
SDG	Sustainable Development Goals

SEO	State Education Office(r)
SITE	School-based In-service Teacher Education
SLORC	State Law and Order Restoration Council
SNDP	Shan Nationalities Democratic Party
TCA	Teacher Centred Approach to teaching and learning
TEO	Township Education Office(r)
UNDRIP	United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples
UNESCO	United Nations Organization for Education, Science and Culture
UNFC	United Nationalities Federal Council
UNICEF	United Nations Children's Fund
UPE	Universal Primary Education
USAID	United States Agency for International Development
USDP	Union Solidarity and Development Party
YZTDG	Yaung Zin Teacher Development Group

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