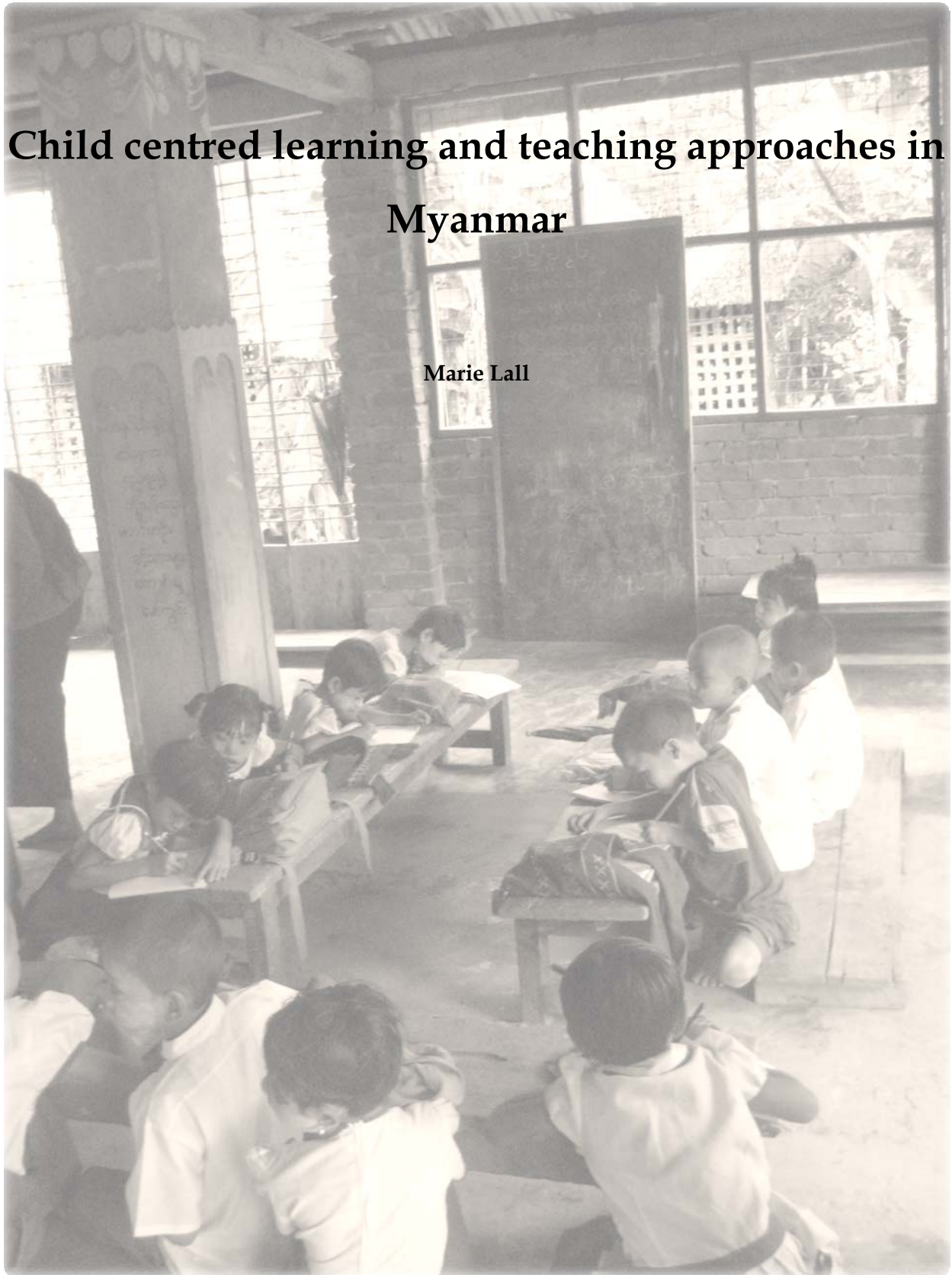


Child centred learning and teaching approaches in Myanmar

Marie Lall



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1 Executive Summary

Objectives

This report is a part of an ongoing process of greater cooperation between education training providers, teachers, trainers and monastic schools applying the child centred approach (CCA) methodology. The purpose is to support education providers and practitioners in identifying and sharing child centred education best practice and helping the identification of core competency based standards, so that CCA can be effectively replicated and expanded throughout the country. As a first step this project was to research the elements of CCA methodology as they are being used in Myanmar monastic schools where there has been some form of CCA training. Most importantly the fieldwork was to establish how far teachers and schools are accepting this new teaching methodology and if they are willing and able to apply it. Beyond the field research the report was to help identify agreed core competency based standards based on international and local CCA practice.

CCA is a philosophy, not a methodology – which is why there are so many different approaches and no one classroom applying it will look the same. Given the fact that in Myanmar schools rote learning is the norm, CCA allows for a much more progressive way of teaching. The advantages of CCA are that the students will learn to think (not to memorise) and genuinely build an understanding of the subjects they are being taught. Today CCA is also being rolled out through monastic school networks aided by international and national NGOs and teacher training providers.

The research was conducted over 18 days. Individual semi structured interviews were conducted with 4 principals in 4 schools in Yangon Division, Mandalay Division and Ayeyarwady Division. 7 further schools were visited in the same areas. Focus groups were held with 66 teachers and 58 parents or grandparents across four schools. Their families comprised 236 children or grandchildren. Interviews were also held with 7 training providers.

Main Findings

Monastic networks are at the base of the ‘roll out’ of CCA. The cascading methodology of a number of training providers means that teachers at monastic schools get trained as trainers and subsequently train the teachers in their own school and later the teachers in the affiliated schools.

Schools where there had been some training had adopted CCA methods in some form and tried to overcome difficulties in using the new methodology. However in all schools visited, rote learning was still in use.

Teachers had no difficulties explaining what they saw as the main elements of CCA. They spoke of the benefits they experienced when using CCA as they felt that they learnt more themselves, they had more fun with the students and developed a closer relationship with the students. Most teachers however were still finding ways to apply the new methods to their classroom but were experiencing setbacks due to logistical problems such as high student-teacher ratios, lack of space,

lack of teaching aids and lack of time.

Training - The training provided in the selected schools had often been a mix of various approaches – some teachers have had one set of training by one provider, others have had multiple trainings by external providers and some again have been trained by in house trainers as well as attended training sessions outside. The length of the training sessions also varied considerably from a few days to several weeks.

Achievements – The spreading of good practice through the local and regional monastic networks has been a key to success, increasing numbers of teachers that are able to work with each other and get to know each other through the various trainings. This has also led to a slow but steady attitude change both at teacher and at principal level with regard to teaching methods. Increased access to resources and funding has also underpinned the development of CCA across these schools.

The training providers are linked to each other and to a number of nodal monastic schools with whom they collaborate through a complex network web. Overall the objectives of all the programmes are the same as they aim to train teachers or teacher trainers to develop a child centred approach in the monastic school classrooms. Their definition of child centeredness is also essentially the same. However the manuals reviewed had different approaches in securing the objectives and training techniques also varied.

Crosscutting Themes

A number of themes came up across the interviews with principals, teachers, parents and training providers:

Changed children's attitudes - Children were seen to be more engaged and happy to come to school. Parents in particular mentioned how children were excited by the prospect of going to class in the morning. Teachers mentioned fewer absences and drop outs as proof that children were more engaged. In the classroom the teachers said that the children's confidence was up and many were no longer afraid to ask questions.

Extra work for teachers - Teachers, but also head monks, trainers and training providers all agreed that CCA requires teachers to do a lot more work overall. Most teachers were familiar with lesson planning but a CCA session requires careful thought as to what aids are needed when and the classroom preparation also meant time management. Since teaching aids were often not readily available, teachers would either have to think of a substitute easily available in their home or construct and build props themselves. If a mechanism to share aids were established at each school, this would help reduce the extra workload.

Modern times and a Myanmar Centric approach – Modern times require Myanmar to break out of the rote learning strategy. CCA was seen as a western solution and it was often suggested that there is a need to a Myanmar centric CCA which would encompass asian values. CCA needed to be compared to Buddha's teaching – a warm relationship but with respect, and that teachers had to know how to cultivate the respect for teachers, parents and other elders. CCA could reflect

Buddhist values if teachers were properly trained and had a deeper understanding of their own culture.

Issues and difficulties mentioned were not always directly related to CCA but are endemic in the Myanmar school system. Large class sizes, student teacher ratios, the lack of materials and teaching aids as well as the lack of time for teachers to prepare and get through the material were seen as the main impediments to good teaching and the application of CCA.

The Workshop

As a part of the project a half day workshop was organised, bringing together various stakeholders from the schools and the training providers who had contributed to the research.

Based on the workshop an agreed set of minimum competency based standards is proposed for CCA teachers that are actively engaged in delivering teaching through the CCA methodology in their schools. The common training requirements to reach each level would need to be agreed as a next step. A similar framework is being proposed for CCA trainers and should cover parameters such as minimum years of CCA teaching, number of teachers trained, years as CCA trainer, understanding of CCA pedagogy at deeper levels so as to disseminate the how and why's of CCA effectiveness, ability to observe and carry out follow up and remedial sessions and finally be able to train CCA trainers themselves. To develop the underpinnings of this framework it is important to work collaboratively with the group of training providers and their methodologies to arrive at agreed common standards. This should be scoped in a separate study where buy-in to participation has been obtained by providers and their willingness to sign-up to a common Myanmar based standard as it evolves should be ascertained.

Recommendations

Further analysis shows that for CCA to be adopted widely and to evolve into a Myanmar centric approach, efforts need to be focused on 3 pillars:

Pillar 1: Formal evolution of the CCA methodology

To formally evolve today's CCA methodology to the maturity it requires, to develop commonly agreed standards, consistent with Myanmar culture and values:

1. **Development of competency based standards for CCA** both for CCA teachers and CCA teacher trainers (which could be based on the framework developed out of the workshop in Section 9). This could be developed into a formal framework that helps with sharing issues and develops a consistent method across schools, training providers and various institutions located in different parts of Myanmar. For this to be developed the first step is to instigate more coordination amongst training providers, starting with what they deliver and where, but also including the discussion around different training methods and approaches. A number of specially organised workshops could set the process in motion as long as the training providers agree to take part. Competency based standards are about outcomes and not processes. Therefore this in no

way means the standardisation of training processes. Trainers are still free to train in their own way. However agreed key competences will help benchmark progress and quality around agreed outcomes of training. Trainers can also continue to teach non-core competencies which are not part of the agreed framework.

2. **Evolve the framework to a commonly owned methodology** so that as a standard framework for training it allows for evolution of skills for teachers. Build provider, trainer and teacher databases that would help in reducing duplicate training and also create a career path for growth.
3. **Create a Myanmar centric approach:** CCA needs to reflect Buddhist values. Leverage views from teachers who feel that CCA is not incompatible with the Myanmar culture and train them as teacher trainers.
4. **Better dissemination of underlying methodology to teacher trainers:** Address the problem where teacher trainers who are responsible for passing the methodology on, have difficulty in clearly explaining how they train teaching staff. Be aware of the drawbacks of the cascade model and the effects on quality erosion. Applying a set of competency based standards for trainers (as suggested in Section 9) could help with this.
5. **Continuation of CCA into higher classes as children move into their high school years:** CCA is more successful at primary level and most monastic schools are not equipped for secondary education. This poses a huge structural problem where student that do pursue secondary education could flip back into rote learning if CCA is not used in senior years. The monastic schools which have high school sections should ensure that their teachers receive training and have access to the intra school support networks which will be led by those teachers in the primary sector who have been trained. This way, methods at secondary level can start to change. As parents are pushing for more monastic schools to expand into high schools, it is imperative that those monastic schools using CCA dispel the myth that it is only effective at primary level.
6. **Prepare and 'enrol' top leadership (head monks):** Any transformational change in teaching (CCA is one of them) requires support and encouragement from school leaders. Evidence showed that difficulties in adoption were observed where there was no buy-in from head monks. A separate curriculum/training to enrol head monks would need to be developed in order to support the CCA grass root initiatives.
7. **Consider support for improved infrastructure:** Class partitions, etc.

Pillar 2: Creation of a support structure for trainers and teachers

Use informal and formal support structures to improve current adoption within the community, anticipate and deal with adoption barriers and improve the quality of dissemination.

8. **Improve coordination between providers:** Improved coordination is required between the providers through facilitation by the Education Thematic Working Group, which focus on education both in the formal and in the informal sector (which would include monastic education). These meetings and networks allow for different organisations to communicate

with each other, discuss difficulties and share good practice. Beyond the already existing UN based working group the next step in the process of agreeing core competencies and setting up a framework as suggested above, would be best achieved through a series of workshops where all provider are present. This in itself will allow greater coordination. Celebrating achievements could also be done together through jointly organised awards ceremonies. At such events teachers and providers would be able to meet each other. The workshop could be followed up with half yearly meetings of all providers to coordinate and to avoid duplication, allowing also for the sharing of good practice – as had happened in the previously held conference.

9. **Develop coordinated follow on sessions**, provide in-class training to improve equality of training provided. As discussed in Section 7, providers that provided in class training met with better results and follow on training session will ensure that CCA is adopted correctly.
10. **Anticipate and deal with inter-collegial problems**: Training teacher trainers about the pedagogy of the method (as mentioned in pillar 1) should also address issues of respect and learning from each other, so that emergent inter-collegial hierarchies can be anticipated and dealt with during the training phase.
11. **Anticipate and plan for resistance from the male and senior teachers**: Female teachers reported success through better bonding with students, male and senior teachers felt erosion of respect. Encourage teachers to set up intra-school support networks to deal with such issues as well as the sharing of good practice and mutual teaching observation.
12. **Provisioning of teaching aids**: Teaching aids were often not readily available and teachers would have to spend time to construct and build props themselves. Training providers can share good practice of how to make teaching aids. For example one provider in particular has managed to use recycled and easily available materials to help teachers with this.
13. **Provide resources to CCA teachers to help build their confidence**: Far more worrying for the teachers than the issue of time and discipline is that many felt they might be asked questions they would not be able to answer. In a culture where the respect for teachers is so deeply ingrained having an 'ignorant' teacher could fatally undermine the teacher's position. In order to avoid such a scenario teachers said they would have to read much more. This again was extra work and often there was no means to acquire this extra knowledge (no internet, few if any books etc.). So available resources would help teachers explore and personally develop themselves in this method. Monastic networks should be encouraged to share resources.
14. **Increase Parental involvement**, which was very low due to family and social circumstances in the schools studied, but which will be necessary in order to underpin the CCA methods and the continuation of learning at home.

Pillar 3: Recognising and celebrate successes

Engender social proof and adoption with the stakeholder community by celebrating visionary leadership and extraordinary successes through an awards structure. Help the early adopters lead the way for the majority.

15. **Celebrate creativity of teachers:** In section 8.2, the report shows challenges teachers face with huge numbers of students, a fundamentally new teaching approach, extra working hours and shortage of resources both for teaching aids and their own personal learning. Consequently where teachers have displayed outstanding levels of creativity (Discussed in Section 6.1) to successfully deploy CCA, their achievements should be recognised and celebrated both for the sake of the individual and a means for sharing innovative practice.
16. **Recognise the vision of monks:** The monastic schools often operate in cluster form with networks helping each other. The cascading methodology of a number of training providers means only works when the head monk or principal of the school is willing to propagate the new teaching method. As in mentioned in Section 6.1 even a head monk with 'a vision' can find battling the traditional monastic community difficult at times. Monks that create and implement the vision should be recognised both for the individual's sake and also to engender a common means of influencing the rest of the monastic community through social proof.

2 Objectives of the Project

This report is a part of an ongoing process of greater cooperation between education training providers, teachers, trainers and monastic schools applying the CCA methodology.

The Terms of Reference defined the purpose The purpose is to support education providers and practitioners in identifying and sharing child centred education best practice and helping the identification of core competency based standards, so that CCA can be effectively replicated and expanded throughout the country. As a first step, this project was to research the elements of CCA methodology as they are being used in Myanmar monastic schools where there has been some form of CCA training. Most importantly the fieldwork was to establish how far teachers and schools are accepting this new teaching methodology and if they are willing and able to apply it.

Beyond the field research the report was to help identify agreed core competency based standards based on international and local CCA practice.

Competency based standards involve the analysis of tasks or roles, the development of a list of tasks and possibly the construction of training based on this list. Competence is based on certain attributes: knowledge, abilities, skills and attitudes and is focused on performance of a role or set of tasks or within a domain. The tasks have to be completed to an appropriate standard. When the major roles or domains within a profession are combined with the attributes underlying their performance, standards or levels of performance can be developed.

A workshop was organised to help get a number of stakeholders around the table and discuss CCA core competencies and issues which had emanated from the research. This would be the first step in sharing approaches and methods across schools, training providers and various institutions located in different parts of Myanmar. The other aim of the workshop was to discuss and seek solutions to the issues and difficulties which arise on the ground when CCA is applied in an average Myanmar monastic school. The aim of the report following both the fieldwork and the workshop is to review the local practice and the lessons learnt and to start developing commonly agreed competency based standards of CCA amongst the various Myanmar stakeholders by analysing the roles played by the various stakeholders and developing a list of 'next steps' based on the results of the interviews and the workshop.

The report starts to define a CCA methodology that has the potential to be commonly owned by key stakeholders in Myanmar. Based on the research the report concludes with a proposed process to take things forward based on greater training provider coordination and the support of monastic school networks.

3 Aims, objectives, history and philosophy of CCA

‘The student knows more than the teacher about what he has learnt – even if he knows less about what was taught.’ (Peter Elbow)

The Child Centred Approach to education (CCA) is known by various names and can be referred to as child centred pedagogy, child centred education, child centred teaching, child centred learning, student centred teaching or student centred learning. Throughout this report it will be referred to as CCA.

In the literature on CCA Chung and Walsh (2000) found 40 different meanings of the term in contemporary usage. CCA is a philosophy, not a methodology – which is why there are so many different approaches and no one classroom applying it will look the same. There is, despite this plethora of usages a common ideological basis, however not without disputes and disagreements. The CCA approach to education focuses on the needs of the learners, rather than the teachers. Consequently this approach requires a different design of the curriculum, a separate approach to course content and an understanding of the interconnections between courses.

Just as teaching is different in a CCA context, so too is the structure of a classroom. In a child-centred classroom, children initiate their own learning by choosing activities that interest them. They work in a more independent way to discover their own potential. Additionally, CCA allows students to work in ways that complement different personal learning styles. Given that a child-centred classroom will include a lot of learning through play it is more common to see this form of education instituted at the early-childhood level. It can however be appropriately used at every level of learning and teaching – with younger as well as with older children.

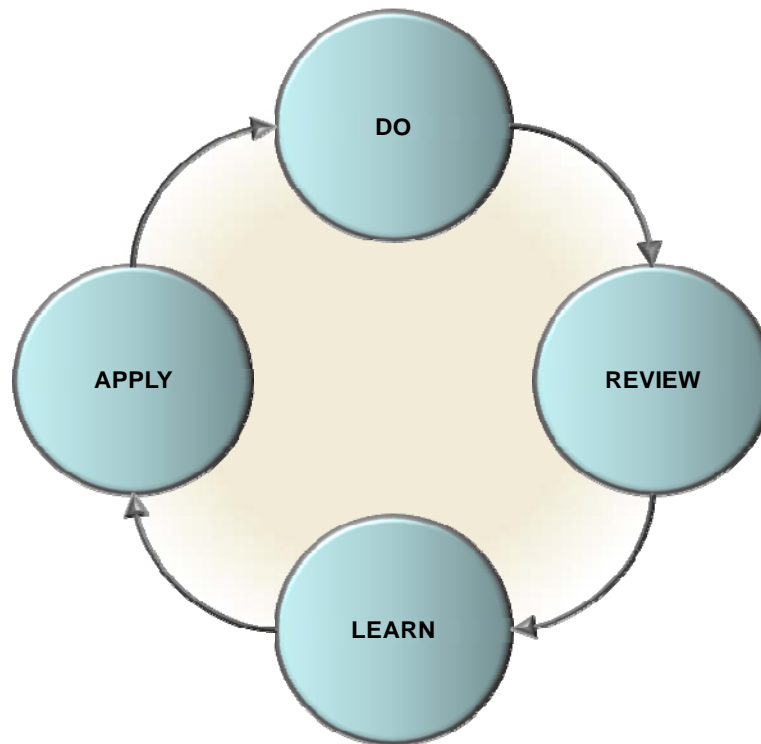
Teachers in a child-centred classroom act as ‘facilitators’. They assist students in learning without providing direct instruction but by providing a supportive learning structure. The teacher’s ultimate role is to help provide guidance and order within the class while allowing each student to explore his or her own potential. So as to facilitate all students’ skills and interests, educators can distribute students differently. For example, some child-centred schools divide students into ‘learning communities’ and/or use multi-age groupings.

Teachers are responsible for creating certain opportunities in which students:

- are able to set and re-set their own goals
- define strategies and identify indicators of success
- think about their own performance
- develop meta cognitive behaviours
- become better at asking questions (of themselves and their peers too)
- coordinate ‘long-range curricular planning’

- develop personal efficacy

Learning becomes an active process for the individual student as well as an interactive process between students, as learning is constructed together in social activity. Learning - as Watkins (2003) puts it is 'individual sense making'. The best way to structure learning is through a cycle of (adapted from Watkins 2003):



CCA stands in contrast to a highly prescribed curriculum where a great deal of judgement and decision making is removed from the classroom teacher. Unlike with CCA the Teacher Centric Approach (TCA) does not focus on how much the students understand and does not allow to build on previously generated knowledge. Students are expected to copy what is written on the board or read what is in the book and memorise it. At its worst TCA uses rote learning where simple repetition and memorisation does not allow for questions from the students and does not result in any form of understanding of the subject at hand. It is often seen as more 'efficient' than CCA as children learn to the test and what they have learnt can be measured or verified. What however cannot be measured is the level of understanding of the subject matter. With CCA the level of understanding is better.

Historically there has been a struggle between the teacher centred approach (TCA) which focuses on performance (outcomes, measurement and management) and the child centred approach (CCA) which has learning (process, construction and participation) at its heart.

This dispute continues today as many western countries have returned to a teaching methodology which favours performance and measurement. This is driven by national and international

competition where exam results between students, schools and countries have now led to a plethora of rather meaningless league tables and greater control by governments of what goes on in the classroom. Whilst CCA is being eroded in the west through greater government control and an increasing neoliberal approach to education (competition between schools, increased involvement of the private sector etc.), many developing countries are increasingly adopting CCA, and moving away from rote learning in a drive to engage children in their own learning. These moves are supported by international organisations such as UNICEF and JICA, as well as local NGOs, education foundations and organisations that operate in these countries.

3.1 International organisations and developing countries

Today there are a number of non western countries who have adopted CCA in various adapted forms. Often CCA has been brought to these countries by an international organisation such as UNICEF as opposed to having been developed locally. This does not mean that local education philosophies and practices could not have previously had a child centred philosophy at its core. Today however what is witnessed in schools across Asia and Africa is more often than not linked to UN and other developmental organisations who have built CCA based educational programmes suited for schools outside of the developed world.

CCA has led to a plethora of international policies and international organisations responding to these policies. The Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) envision universal primary education to be achieved by all signatory countries by 2015. This means that there has been a push for increased funding of primary education across developing countries – including also teacher training programmes. UNICEF's main CCA policy has been an international programme of child friendly schools which has been rolled out across Africa and Asia trying to help with issues such as large classrooms, multi grade teaching, lack of teaching materials and other issues prevalent in developing countries. At the heart of the programme is an awareness of rights, 'human dignity, equality and freedom'. In order to transform this global vision into reality, UNICEF has launched a life skills basic learning need for all young people, which is basically an extension of the Life-Skills Based Education used all over the world to impart skills-based learning to young people. In this endeavour to empower young people, UNICEF has initiated a number of programs in various areas, such as for HIV/AIDS prevention, health, education, human rights and social issues, violence prevention, peace building and education for development.

The Child Friendly Schools project was initiated in Thailand in 1998, and has since spread to many other countries all over the world. The CFS mission statement is 'to develop child-centred learning environments for all children, especially the disadvantaged, through activity-based quality education and healthy school environments, while engaging families and educational and social communities in the process of transformation' (UNICEF, Creating Child Friendly Schools).

Following are the five key dimensions underpinning the project. The school has to be:

1. Inclusive of all children
2. Academically effective

3. Healthy, safe, protective and supportive environment
4. Gender aware and culturally sensitive
5. Involvement of parents, communities and students

UNICEF's philosophy behind targeting children first and advocating a child centred approach is that children are the 'starting point' for breaking intergenerational cycles of poverty. This approach also links in with children's rights.

Case study India

Vittachi, Raghavan and Raj (2007) detail how alternative schooling – mostly based on CCA has evolved around India. The origins go as far back as some village schools teaching in local languages in the mid 19th century and have nothing to do with western philosophy. Social reformers living in the late 19th century and early 20th century such as Vivekananda, Sayed Ahmend Khan amongst others led to ideas which underpinned alternative education in India before independence. Some approaches combined education with religious revitalisation or social service. Tagore set up his own alternative school in Shantiniketan, Bengal upholding contextual education. Amongst other examples listed is also the Sri Aurobindo International Centre for Education established in Pondicherry in 1943. Later education in India was influenced by western philosophy such as the Montessori methods, Rudolf Steiner and Paulo Freire and this led to localised movements and schools.

The 'upsurge' in alternative education came from the 1970s onwards with people creating different kinds of alternative schools based on various ways of thinking and practices. Often parents were at the heart of such new initiatives as they wanted their children to be educated differently than what the state schools offered. CCA in particular has developed sporadically – one example cited is the 'Centre for learning' (CFL) in Bangalore which was set up in 1990 by a group of teachers with a core curriculum but in an environment conducive to children's exploration. Yet alternative schools are still few and far between and cater mainly to the middle classes.

However the CCA approach is slowly gaining ground as it is being supported by the work of international agencies and organisations. On the basis of UNICEF work on promoting quality education, the government of Maharashtra has decided to integrate Activity Based Learning (ABL) in all state schools. Different forms of CCA developed as a needs-based technique in order to deal with multi grade and multi level teaching under one roof. ABL started formally in Tamil Nadu in 2003 and has at its core the 'learning ladder'. It developed through a local school, combining pioneering local practices with Montessori methods, and was later picked up by the Tamil Nadu state government and piloted across the state. Its reputation soon spread beyond the state borders and the central government has encouraged other states to start using these new teaching methods. The methods used include bringing the blackboard to the eyelevel of the students, colour coding learning and teaching material, using both Tamil and English as languages of instruction, encouraging child self evaluation, encouraging peer teaching and allowing for differential rates of progress. The learning ladder also allows for teacher creativity and there is space for the teacher to

help those children who have slowed down. The main elements of ABL are based on the clarity of lessons – the learning ladder providing structure, and the child knowing what must be done next, a pleasant but disciplined classroom environment, children being involved in the learning process through tasks, and the creativity of the teacher's role. (Anadalakshmi, 2007)

An evaluation of ABL (Schoolscape, 2009) states that the key achievements are that:

- The average achievement of children increased significantly in all subjects;
- The gaps in achievement within gender, location and social groups was narrowed down;
- More children shifted from low achievement range to very high and excellent achievement range.

Case study Pakistan

CCA practices also seem to be gaining ground in Pakistan. Since 2008 the Aga Khan Education Services (AKES) have been training teachers in their schools in child friendly approaches - but their main focus remains on early childhood development. This is mentioned on their website but there are no details on the programme. (http://www.akdn.org/pakistan_education.asp)

The Sindh Education Foundation (SEF) has also started to pioneer CCA methods and teacher training. Again little information is available on the actual programme, apart from the fact that the support was provided to teachers working not at government but at low cost private schools.

The three-day training was entitled 'school Improvement and Pedagogical Excellence through Child Centered Learning and Parental Involvement' and covered topics such as the School Improvement Plan, Child Centered Approaches, Activity Based Learning and Thematic Based Teaching on Math, English, Science and other subjects. 'It also included managing challenging behavior of students and preparation of a 3-month Action Plan to be implemented by the teachers after the training. [...] This training was based on the beliefs that learning is a natural process that differs for each individual and it happens best when children's innate natural abilities are understood and respected. [...] However teachers play the most significant role in the schooling process and these trainings aimed to ensure that they play their due role in improving quality of education.' (<http://www.sef.org.pk/iqep/activities.html>; <http://www.sef.org.pk/news2.asp>)

The examples of India and Pakistan above both show that CCA methods can be developed and championed locally and are not necessarily dependent on the funding and policies of INGOs.

4 Background of the education situation in Myanmar and monastic education

At independence Burma had the highest literacy rate in its own language across the former British Empire. This was not only due to the Burmese schools, but largely to the monastic schools who had always, and continue to play, a major role in educating the poorer sections of society (Lorch 2007).

For many years, other Asian countries saw Burma as an example in education. Decades of underinvestment and civil strife have today resulted in the slow and steady decay of the state education system across the country. Despite the fact that during the socialist era school buildings continued to be built both in the cities and in the villages, teacher education and pay deteriorated markedly. The closure of universities in the 1980s and 90s and the shift to higher education correspondence courses has had a marked effect on teacher subject competencies and training with many teachers, especially in the rural areas barely having passed class 11.¹

Basic education is divided into the normal mainstream as well as technical and vocational education. The duration of time a child spends in the normal stream is 5, 4, 2 years for primary, middle and high school which goes to year 11 (Grade 11, previously used as the 10th standard, is the final year).

There is a high primary enrolment ratio. Nevertheless, primary education faces two main problems: there are not enough schools (the numbers ranging from one school in 5 villages to one school in 25 villages in the border regions) and there is a high dropout rate estimated at around 34 per cent (Khin Maung Kyi et al.:145). The authors also point out the high repetition rate in both rural and urban areas.

Anonymous interviews in Yangon with an education charity confirmed the high dropout rates, explaining that children show up for the first school day and that statistics are based on this, but that as soon as a few days into the school year children, especially in rural areas stop attending schools. In part such drop out is based on the high direct costs of sending children to school (such as buying books and uniforms). In the rural areas this is supplemented by the high opportunity cost for parents who need their children's working help. Although schooling is free in principle, parents are expected to contribute to the financing of education as state expenditure on education as a share of GDP is decreasing (Khin Maung Kyi et al. p.147). Those who cannot afford to go to state schools go to monastic schools or forego their education altogether. Monastic schools were outlawed during the socialist period as of 1962 and only allowed to return in 1993. In 2005 it was

¹ Given only 11 years of schooling higher education often starts as young as with 16 years of age, meaning that even those with a university degree will be very young compared to their international peers.

estimated that 1500 monastic schools catered for 93,000 children (Achilles 2005). According to data collected by the ministry of Religious affairs last year's enrolment in registered monastic schools was 196,458 children across the country.² In some cases the building has been provided by the state but parents have to pool their funds to pay for a teacher. This is especially the case in more remote areas (Lorch 2007).

The history of Monastic education dates back over 1000 years to the Bagan era and was the main education system during the rule of the Burmese kings. The introduction of a more modern British system in the colonial days led to a decline of the monastic system. In essence monasteries no longer catered to the need of the new era. The monastic system was revived under the Burmese socialist party rule as all schools were nationalised but could not reach across the whole country. Monastic schools started to fill the gaps. Under the parliamentary system the state had supported monastic schools. The schools were overseen first by the ministry for social welfare, later by the ministry of education and after 1988 the responsibility moved to the ministry of religious affairs. In the early 1990s monastic schools were encouraged to open and allowed to register so as to gain a certain legal status. This was a window which allowed some of the biggest monastic networks to establish themselves.

As Myanmar has signed the 'Education for all' declaration, 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 will the Myanmar government be able to demonstrate that there is a genuine movement to promote universal education. Consequently today monastic schools are going through interesting times and are in a more prominent position than at any time since independence. The ministerial language referring to monastic schools is reflecting these changes as what was formerly seen as 'non-formal' education is today increasingly referred to as 'formal' education provision.³ The monastic schools can register with the Ministry of Religious Affairs and there is now a formal structure with monastic school committees at township, state/division and national level. Whilst there are still significant restrictions, advocacy at the National Committee level led to an agreement for Monastic schools to be included in a government sponsored (although limited) child centred teacher training programme.⁴

The problems with Myanmar's education system are well known. Although access is today less of a problem, retention rates remain low, especially in rural areas. Large class sizes of between 60-100 students per class have entrenched rote learning as a system. This in turn means that there is no understanding of what is actually being learnt as only the level of memorisation counts. Many teachers are barely educated to the 11th standard and even those who have a university degree (often through distance learning courses) have rarely had any pre-service training. The teachers who do access teacher training colleges are few and always land in the state education system.

² This means that there could be well over double that amount in the non registered but affiliated monastic schools and even more children when border areas are taken into account.

³ Interview Yangon 08.06.2010.

⁴ Taken from the TOR

Child Centred learning and teaching approaches in Myanmar

According to the Ministry of Education approximately 57% of primary teachers, 58% middle school teachers and 9% high school teachers have never attended teacher training (Lwin, 2000).

Ethnic areas have further problems as Burmese is the only officially recognised language for instruction in schools and many have had to set up complimentary or parallel systems (possible only in the ceasefire areas) in order to teach their children their mother tongue. The remoteness of many ethnic areas means that it is difficult to secure government trained teachers for these schools. Mostly these schools have to rely on local teachers who speak the local language but who might not have benefitted from any training.

Across both state and monastic schools the quality varies tremendously with some schools having benefitted from in service teacher training funded by international organisations such as JICA or UNICEF. There is also evidence that in some cases schools have had access to training in RWCT, a programme funded out of Thailand.



5 The arrival of CCA in Myanmar – state and informal provision

The child centred approach arrived in Myanmar through International Non Government Organisations (INGOs) such as UNICEF and JICA in the late 1990s/ early 2000 and was later picked up by local NGOs. CCA is government endorsed and UNICEF and JICA who both have a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) with the Ministry of Education, started to train teachers who worked in the state sector schools through the teachers' colleges.

In the mean time, around 2003-4 Pestalozzi also started to offer training to teachers in the monastic sectors, amongst others teachers at Paung Da Oo monastery. Since 2005 there are a number of CCA training providers who work exclusively with monastic schools. They include Hantha educators, Yinthway Foundation, the Asia Peace and Education Foundation (APEF), Shalom Foundation (Nyein Foundation) and Save the Children amongst others. Some of these are local NGOs (with and without international support) and some are international charities (such as Save the Children). The international response to the Nargis cyclone increase funding in the education sector and brought with it an expansion of teacher training provision and funding for further training.

Hantha trainers developed in 2005 with the help of a former state school teacher started to facilitate former government teachers to become teacher trainers. They are using a cascading cluster system and are active in monastic networks in Sagaing Division and Bago District. More recently there has been interest from the Shan and Mon states. The centre piece of their model is that they train teachers in the classroom. They have developed their own training manual in Myanmar and also showcase a number of teaching aids for teachers which are made out of local and recycled materials and easy to copy and reproduce.

Shalom has specialized in training teachers in the ethnic minority areas since 2005. They have funded a local Yangon based consultant – Dr Thein Lwin – to train their master trainers who have cascaded the model to 60 other teacher trainers.

Yinthway started teacher training in 2008 and has come to CCA through their programme on early childhood development and early childhood books. They developed a relationship with UNICEF and are currently developing three model schools in Yangon, Lashio and Mandalay. They are funded by INGOs and work with local partners on the ground which includes Christian organisations in ethnic minority areas and Monastic schools. They have a technical vision of teaching and teacher training. Their local partners are both Christian organizations for the Kachin, Chin, Shan and Karen as well as monastic schools in Kayah State and Ayeyarwady division.

APEF was built up after Nargis (2008) and based its method on the training offered previously by UNICEF. The programme is linked with Paung Da Oo monastery, which has established the Centre for the Promotion of Monastic Education (CPME) which has in house trainers who help

train teachers across the wider network linked with this monastery. In 2008 150 teachers were trained to become independent trainers and 50 of these were taken over by Yinthway as facilitators for their won programme. APEF also recruited some of these trainers and APEF's teacher training programme began in earnest in March 2009 .They now have 12 master trainers who work in different areas of the country and train teachers across monastic networks in the Delta and in Yangon division. They have also developed their own training manual in Myanmar.

Save the Children came in with teacher training after cyclone Nargis and brought with them a methodology designed for areas in conflict and crisis.

There is also evidence that some teacher trainers and some teachers have received training in RWCT, a teaching methodology that uses some of the child centred methods in the classroom. This training has to be seen in addition to the CCA training that teachers receive.

A detailed diagram shows the relationships between the various training providers in Section 7:
The training providers in practice

In October 2009 a national conference brought trainers and training providers together. This was followed by a conference for teachers. In both conferences the participants expressed a wish for greater coordination.⁵



⁵ It was not possible to meet with all training providers. There are organisations such as Educasia and Smile who are also involved but their role and connections in the training provider network was not explored.

6 The schools in Practice

6.1 The monastic schools and their networks

Across Myanmar monastic schools often operate in cluster form with networks helping each other. More recently teacher training has been one of the things which have been spread through the monastic networks. The cascading methodology of a number of training providers means that teachers at monastic schools get trained as trainers and subsequently train the teachers in their own school and later the teachers in the affiliated schools. This is however only the case when the head monk or principal of the school is willing to propagate the new teaching method. In a number of monasteries there is resistance to new teaching methods as hierarchies change and the children become noisier. Even a head monk with 'a vision' can find battling the traditional monastic community difficult at times.

Most schools run double shifts in order to allow larger numbers of students to access education. Most also have a number of classes in one larger hall, with few and flimsy partitions if any. Even the newer schools in the Delta which have been rebuilt after the cyclone had at least two classes operating in each room, making it quite difficult for teachers and students to work without disturbing the other class(es) present. There was little access to teaching aids and although many schools had small libraries, there was limited teaching and learning materials apart from the government prescribed textbooks and a blackboard. Consequently teachers have to display incredible levels of creativity if they are to use the child centred approach. Examples of creativity witnessed include bringing household items into the classroom to construct a story or a play around which the children learn, using games such as hangman to learn the alphabet, getting groups to share the few coloured pencils to draw the subject matter of the day, using the leftovers from rubber slipper factories to make colourful boards where numbers and letters can be stuck on, cutting out images from magazines to put on the wall or board or even to make little booklets etc.

Many schools emphasized the need to give students and families more than just an academic education based on the government curriculum. Three out of the four main schools visited had projects relating to vocational training or sustainable development. Families had received this well as many saw this as being more applicable to the daily lives of their children.

The schools generally also had a close relationship with the local community and the parents of their students helping the poorest families with food and other items when the need arose. In the rural areas the head monk was seen as a father figure to the community.

All the schools visited had a few teachers (in one case only one teacher) who had received a certain amount of CCA training. Most teachers were still finding ways to apply the new methods to their classroom but were experiencing setbacks due to logistical problems such as high student-teacher ratios, lack of space, lack of teaching aids and lack of time. These will be discussed in more detail in the next section of the report.

6.2 Teachers

The teachers in monastic schools do not come from the same pool as those who teach in the state system. There is no formal pre-service training and many, especially in the rural areas have had no more than the 11 years of basic schooling. Head-monks usually want university graduates but often have to compromise and accept the most qualified local staff. Many are very young – and in one school in particular there was a preference to employ their own graduates after they finished year 11. Some schools had started to use teaching assistants, especially in very large classes and if space allowed. However the coordination between the main teacher and the teaching assistant is still something which needs to be learnt as the mechanisms did not seem to have been fully worked out in some classrooms. However teaching assistants are crucial in settings with over 80 or 100 students in a class if the teaching method is to go beyond simple rote learning.

As mentioned above the teachers who were interviewed mostly had had some CCA training, some even by different providers adopting varying approaches. In general CCA was more easily adopted by the younger women. Based both on classroom observations and interviews it seemed that a few of the male teachers seemed resistant to changing their ways stating that ‘some subjects are suitable for CCA teaching and some are not’. There were more female teachers overall and they were mostly responsible for the younger classes, making the adoption of CCA methods not only gender dependent but also related to the age of the students and the level of the class. Younger women spoke frequently about how they had fewer problems in the changing hierarchies where students feel free to ask questions and where the traditional silent respect for teachers is eroded. Teachers understand the methodology but face too many obstacles to apply CCA across the board. In certain schools CCA was being applied a few hours a day – in other schools it was dependent on the class and subject. In all cases it was dependent on how confident the teacher felt in using the methodology. Many teachers said that they were still finding their feet and that they needed practice in using the new method. They understood that the method would improve their teaching but were outside their comfort zone in using it. As one of the head monks said: ‘If they cannot understand the new method they do not dare let go of the old method.’ (Vice principal monastery 2)

6.3 Training

The training provided in the selected schools has often been a mix of various approaches – some teachers have had one set of training by one provider, others have had multiple trainings by external providers and some again have been trained by in house trainers as well as attended training sessions outside. The length of the training sessions also varies considerably from a few days to several weeks. Not all providers provided follow-up sessions and the cascade model used by many assured large numbers of trained teachers but with no quality assurance as to how much of the method was actually being retained and passed on. Discussions with teacher trainers revealed that there was a wide disparity in quality and the understanding of training methodologies. The lack of coordination between the training providers is one of the main issues

as schools literally grab what they can get – accept any training offered, but this approach lacks the possibility to build on what has been previously learnt. There was also an issue with certain teachers believing that since they had had training as trainers in a cascade model, they were in effect qualified to train the teachers of their school. Not only did this create new hierarchies and associated intercollegiate problems – those assigned to train other teachers could not clearly explain what and how they had conducted the training. The issue of quality assurance of the various training methods is therefore quite central.

Training also often happened outside the school where the teachers came from, making it difficult to apply the new techniques learnt once teachers return back home. Only one training provider has made it a point to train teachers within their own classrooms.

6.4 Teachers and methods used

Whilst the trainers had some difficulties explaining how they trained teachers, teachers in turn had no difficulties explaining what they saw as the main elements of CCA and what they believed the benefits were. Many also explained through examples what methods they used in the classroom. Classroom observations showed that CCA practices were indeed being used in many (not all) classrooms, especially for the younger children and in schools where some teachers had been trained. The most commonly used approaches included group and pair work, student presentations in front of the class, getting more able students to teach others in small groups, the use of teaching aids such as flash cards and pictures, especially in maths, Myanmar and English, role play, singing songs, and reciting poetry (sometimes together as a whole class), drawing pictures, using pictures to illustrate body parts, plants or other objects, as well as the use of jigsaw puzzles and storytelling. Classrooms often did not have walls (one big hall with small partitions) and so only occasionally students' work was displayed. Given the cramped space teachers could also not grow plants in the classroom (or keep an aquarium as one American educationist suggests). However teachers spoke of taking the children outside and showing them plants and objects so they could learn through observation. Some teachers brought in common household items such as jars and bottles and used these as teaching aids. Assessment practices had also changed quite radically for those who applied CCA. Unlike their colleagues who mainly used written tests, more CCA teachers used a form of oral assessment by asking questions.

The teachers themselves spoke of the benefits they experienced when using CCA as they felt that they learnt as well and they had more fun with the students. As will be detailed in the themes section below, the teachers felt that CCA also gave them a closer relationship with the students. They would immediately know if one student was not following, or had difficulties understanding. They also felt that it improved relations between the students as group work ensured the stronger student helped the weaker ones.

So despite the issues with training some of the methodology seems to stick with teachers as they are applied at least selectively across the schools visited. But in all schools visited the rote method of learning was still applied, especially with older students, by teachers who had had no training

and in classes where due to the cramped conditions, moving about between benches was impossible.

6.5 Students

Students were mostly from poor families living in the local areas. In some cases orphans and ethnic minority students were living as borders in the monastery. Generally there were 80-100 students in each class and the benches and rooms were overcrowded. Both in urban and rural areas classes had varying age groups with some students having started education late. In general boys and girls learnt together but in some schools they were seated separately. Apart from the 3rd school which was very large and yet perfectly disciplined, order and adherence to rules was better in smaller schools and in the largest school there seemed to be utter chaos most of the time. But students in classes observed which used CCA methods, seemed to have a good relationship with their teachers and seemed excited about learning. Students who worked in groups also generally maintained discipline whilst the teacher was moving from one cluster to another to help.

6.6 Parents

The choice of school for most parents was based on the fact that the school was free and that they were poor. Many, especially in the rural areas also said that the school was close and that their children could easily go there alone. There was an implicit trust in the teachers and the head monk that the children would be treated well and protected. Beyond free education the monasteries also often supported the families by other means – such as meals or snacks for the children – and this was mentioned as an important factor in how the school was viewed.

The parents interviewed were all very interested in their children's education but many said they were unable to help or felt incapable of taking part in the education process either due to time constraints (most families live hand to mouth and have a hard time putting one meal on the table) or because they were not educated themselves. Parents also all said that they wanted their children to become 'civilised' and that the school was the best way for this. There was no critique of the schools whatsoever – in fact many parents said they felt the schools were 'perfect' and only when prompted very hard did they have some suggestions for improvement. Mostly these consisted in the school expanding (having more space) or the school becoming a middle or high school. The parents know that they will not be able to send their children to the state middle or high school due to the costs of uniforms and books. They also feel that it would be nicer for their children to remain in the same environment till year 11. Many parents appreciated the vocational classes or the courses in sustainable development and although not asked about them made it a point to mention how helpful these were. Invariably parents hoped that children would take on work that they were interested in and without exception the parents wanted the children to have a better profession than them and saw education as the only means forward. In the one school where CCA was most commonly used the parents seemed to notice that the children had become more active and inquisitive, stating that they could not always answer their children's questions.

The one school which offered a 'fast track' for children with teaching in English in small classes had parents largely emanating from the middle and lower middle classes. These parents praised the system for not requiring extra tuition they felt they would have had to provide their children with in state schools. It also pointed to the risk that such extra facilities could be subject to provider capture.⁶

6.7 Other support to the schools

Some schools visited have had help from INGOs, NGOs, foundations and private organisations who have donated money for buildings, books, stationary and food. A German travel agency and a German NGO focused on vocational education seem to have been particularly active after Cyclone Nargis – but not exclusively across the Delta. Clinics have also been set up bringing the local community closer to the school. Linked with sustainable development some INGOs have provided machinery for workshops (in the city) or for the cultivation of crops (in the rural areas). In one smaller school a local education organisation was helping with teacher salaries and training costs. In the larger outfits it has become a challenge to ensure regular funding for all the children. Local donations supplement – in particular with regard to food. But this is often not enough to ensure teacher salaries and the maintenance of boarding houses.

6.8 Achievements and lessons learnt

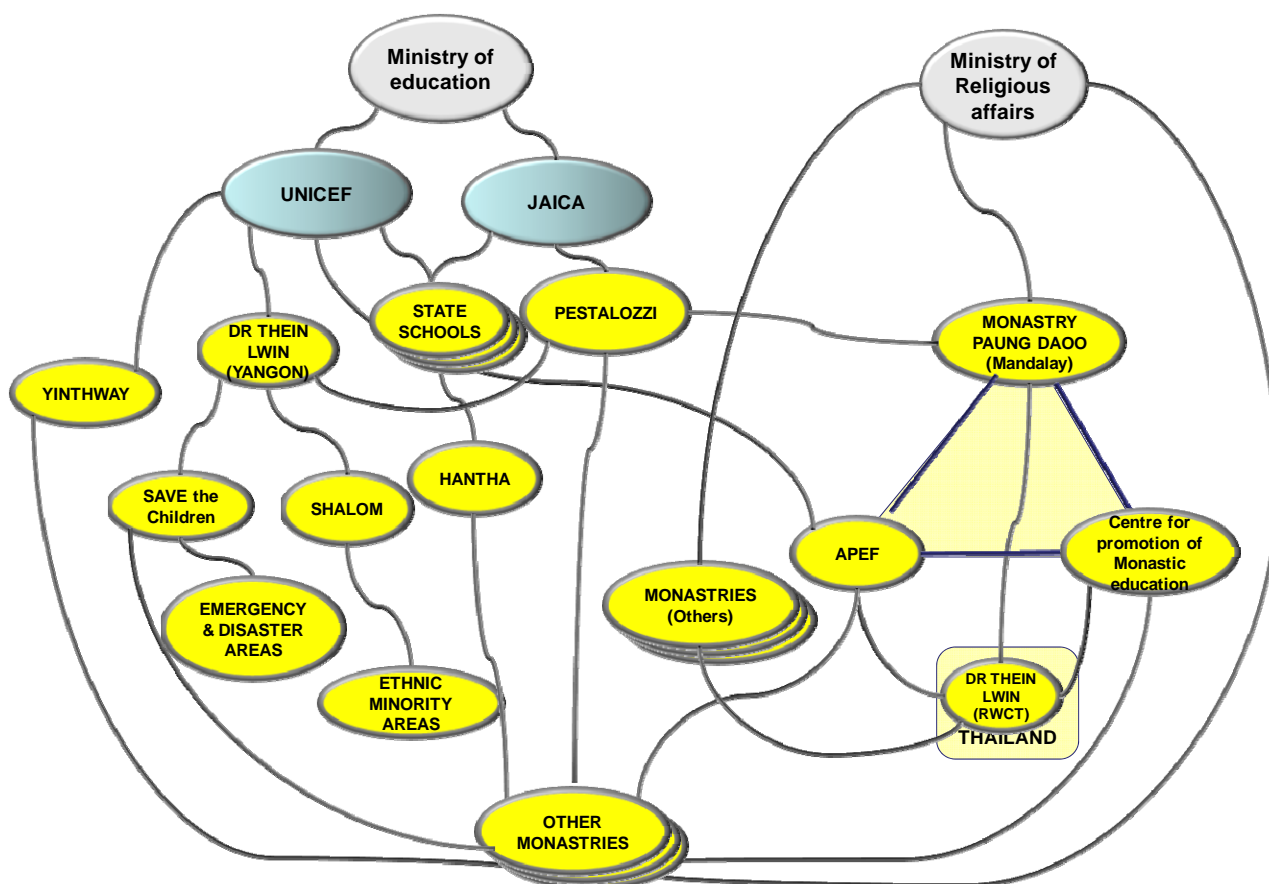
The main achievement discussed with the head monks was that of the growth of their schools from primary schools to encompass upper primary sections as well as in some cases middle school and high school sections. The local population also echoed this by expressing their satisfaction with the schools and asking for further expansion.

Beyond this what could be observed was the strengthening of networks and the spreading of good practice through the local and regional monastic networks. More and more teachers are able to work with each other and get to know each other through the various trainings. The sharing of good practice and experience has also led to a slow but steady attitude change both at teacher and at principal level with regard to teaching methods. Increased access to resources and funding has also underpinned the development of CCA across these schools. But even though monastic schools have come a long way and attitudes clearly support new forms of teaching, CCA remains difficult to apply due to logistical problems and there is a need for local adaptation.

⁶ This reflects the universal fact that middle class parents will know how to harness educational possibilities for their children better than working class parents. Research on the 'Gifted and Talented' programmes in the UK shows that working class parents are 'disproportionately under represented.' (Reay, 2008, p.645)

7 The training providers in practice

The main training providers are linked to each other and to a number of nodal monastic schools with whom they collaborate through a complex network web (see Diagram below⁷). What is interesting is how some organisations and names seemed to be at the centre of the web and at the base of the often used cascading model – through which trainers were trained and then went on to train more trainers as well as teachers.



Overall the objectives of all the programmes are the same as they aim to train teachers or teacher trainers to develop a child centred approach in the monastic school classrooms. Their definition of child centeredness is also essentially the same. There were differences in that some providers focused more on lesson planning and classroom management while other focused on teaching techniques and the types of teaching exercises which can be done with students. One training manual in particular was very theoretical and did not bear much connection to the local context. However the manuals reviewed⁸ had different approaches in securing the objectives and training

⁷ The Diagram was constructed on the basis of the interviews conducted with the training providers. It refers to CCA training only. The ministry of education manages its own teacher training in its teaching colleges. However it relies on UNICEF and JICA to provide CCA training for the government teachers.

⁸ I was given access to a few full training manuals and overall some form of materials related to teacher or trainer training by 5 organisations including one I had not met in person.

techniques also varied. Some training providers were more technical than others; some had simpler and shorter approaches; some, especially those developed locally, were also more adapted to local circumstance. The biggest differences observed were in terms of training times (a few days to a number of weeks and months) and how much follow-up there was once the trainings had taken place. Whilst the cascade model allows for many teachers or trainers to be trained quickly, it also means that in the process often quality invariably suffers. Little or no follow-up means that there is a risk that not only good practice is disseminated and that some bad habits stick.

As with implementing any new education practice served by multiple training providers, teething problems are expected in the areas of coordination, quality, evolution of the framework, and persistence of learning. The problems faced by training providers, schools and trained teachers in Myanmar are not dissimilar and present challenges and opportunities for improvement:

Improve coordination between providers: Improved coordination is required between the providers through facilitation by the Education Thematic Working Group, which focuses on education both in the formal and in the informal sector (which would include monastic education). These meetings and networks allow for different organisations to communicate with each other, discuss difficulties and share good practice. As all stakeholders are not free at the same time, greater effort would be required to ensure their attendance and contribution. The lack of coordination between the training providers might also be linked to the type of funding received from where and for what⁹. *Improving coordination would help in harmonising funding and creating a wider access web.*

Develop a framework of training: Certain schools (and certain specific teachers in those schools) had received multiple trainings from a number of different providers – in essence duplicating the work already done but not allowing for a building on previous skills and knowledge and possibly even leading to confusion as to what methodology was to be used. *A framework for training that allows for evolution of skills for teachers would help in duplicate training and also create a path for growth.*

Better dissemination of underlying methodology to teacher trainers: Certain teacher trainers who had indeed received training by multiple agencies, and are now responsible for passing the methodology on, were comfortable with the technical terms but had difficulty in clearly explaining how they trained teaching staff. They were not being able to describe the methods they used or the methods they were trying to transmit. They also had difficulty on distinguishing whether the training they had received was for teacher trainers or trained teachers. *Emphasising the methodology for teacher trainers and distinguishing it with the training for trained teachers would help alleviate the problem.*

Reinforce and contextualise CCA training: In some schools the culture of learning from each other through observation and mentoring was not observed and the training had not fostered itself sufficiently although it seems to be a part of the theory. Two potential causes could be the

⁹ One training provider clearly had received funds exclusively for use in the Delta and was looking for funds to expand the programme in other states and divisions around Myanmar.

cascade model, where the urgency in training as many teachers as possible, could impact quality and training done away from the classroom may bears little resemblance to the reality of the classroom. This is one of the reasons that all providers have found it difficult to have the methods they have taught later applied in the schools. Many providers¹⁰ said that the first rounds of training were unsuccessful which can lead to criticism of CCA being a western approach. *It is necessary to develop both training and teaching materials which relate to the local context and where possible applied locally.*



¹⁰ Only one training provider trains directly in the relevant classroom in order to avoid such problems.

8 Themes

This section describes the crosscutting themes which were identified from the interviews of the various stakeholders. They reflect what teachers and parents as well as head monks and training providers commonly said. Some of these themes clearly came out of the questions asked, others, such as the need for a Myanmar centric CCA emerged unrelated to the way the questions had been structured and posed.

8.1 Changed children's attitudes

The most common theme was how children had changed once new teaching methods were used. Children were seen to be more engaged and happy to come to school. Parents in particular mentioned how children were excited by the prospect of going to class in the morning. Teachers mentioned fewer absences and drop outs as proof that children were more engaged. In the classroom the teachers said that the children's confidence was up and many were no longer afraid to ask questions. 'They feel they [the children] can say what they want to do and feel more able to do things by themselves.' (Teacher in school 3) was a commonly echoed refrain. Children were also more curious, interested and keen to explore. Many female teachers also spoke at length about the new 'bond' they felt children were developing and that generally this meant they had a closer relationship and that classroom relations were no longer based on fear. The absence of corporal punishment in all classes visited contributed to that bonding process. Some teachers however (male teachers predominantly) felt that this closer bond also eroded the traditional respect children had for teachers and some parents also expressed worries to that effect. 'Children become noisy' (parents school 1, teachers school 4) was seen as a discipline problem at home and at school as well as by other monks in the monasteries where the schools were located. Conversely parents found that children more willing to do homework at home (especially mentioned in school 3). This clearly shows that where CCA is applied, the benefits are visible to both teachers and parents, neither of which will want a return to rote learning after having seen their children happy in a CCA classroom.

Overall teachers, parents and head monks all agreed that the changes witnessed in the children affected by the new teaching methods were positive and outweighed the discipline and respect problems. All felt that these issues would need further work and many spoke of the need of a 'Myanmar centric' CCA (discussed below as a separate theme) that needed to be developed as a result.

8.2 Extra work for teachers

Teachers, but also head monks, trainers and training providers all agreed that CCA requires teachers to do a lot more work overall. Most teachers were familiar with lesson

planning but a CCA session requires careful thought as to what aids are needed when and the classroom preparation also meant time management. Since teaching aids were often not readily available teachers would either have to think of a substitute easily available in their home or construct and build props themselves. Given the paucity of materials such as colour pens and glue this was not always easy and enquired more than just good ideas and creativity. The time factor was mentioned many times as teachers felt that they could not necessarily cover the required lesson in the time allocated, especially in classrooms with too many students. Giving individual attentions to small groups of students not only ate into the allocated time but also meant that in some cases the rest of the class posed a discipline issue as students would start to run around and create disruption. In these cases at least one teaching assistant would be required and this again would mean extra work as teaching would have to be coordinated. Far more worrying for the teachers than the issue of time and discipline was however the fact that many felt they might be asked questions they would not be able to answer. In a culture where the respect for teachers is so deeply ingrained having an 'ignorant' teacher could fatally undermine the teacher's position – some felt. In order to avoid such a scenario teachers said they would have to read much more. This again was extra work and often there was no means to acquire this extra knowledge (no internet, few if any books etc.). Head monks, trainers and teachers all agreed that teachers still need to learn and practice the CCA methods and that the teachers were not used to the self reflection and collaborative procedures which underlie such teaching. Those who had successfully mastered the method (very few felt this way) said that teaching had become easier due to the changed attitudes of the students. But some, mainly the male and teachers of older classes felt that the new methodology was not necessarily appropriate across the board and that CCA should be used only for 'some subjects' or for the younger classes.

8.3 Modern times

One of the head monks said that he felt times are changing and teaching methods also have to change accordingly (Principal monastic school 2). This was echoed by teachers and trainers as well certain providers alike who emphasised that Myanmar had to break out of the rote learning strategy in order to raise standards across the country. Since state schools were unlikely to take the lead in this, it was left (ironically) to the age old monastic school tradition to lead the way. All were aware that this would meet resistance, not least from parents who were wondering what was happening in classrooms if the children did not bring home something written in their notebooks, or if they could not recite the phrases learnt at school back at home. Resistance came from the monasteries themselves as well as monks used to silence and respect, suddenly have to deal with noisy children in and outside the classrooms. The issue of respect and how the students view teachers and parents or other elders remains central as many see the main difficulty in how to balance the new approach and what is seen as a 'modern' and 'western' way with traditional

Myanmar culture. Parents were especially worried that children would become too disrespectful and upturn the traditional hierarchies at home.

However there was a general understanding by all stakeholders – including the parents – that the children taught with the new methods could apply what they learnt in the classroom in the outside world and to real life. Teachers also feel they had to learn more themselves to adapt lessons to the real world and this in turn had benefits for their own understanding of the world. The teaching profession was consequently being viewed differently.

8.4 Creating a Myanmar centric approach

As mentioned above CCA was often seen as a ‘foreign’ or ‘western’ way to teach. In the long discussions about Myanmar’s transition into ‘modern’ times and how children should be equipped for life outside the school and the home, it was often suggested that there was a need to a Myanmar centric CCA which would encompass Asian values. One training provider mentioned how CCA can be compared to Buddha’s teaching – a warm relationship but with respect, and that teachers had to know how to cultivate the respect for teachers, parents and other elders. CCA could reflect Buddhist values if teachers were properly trained and had a deeper understanding of their own culture. CCA did not necessarily mean the loss of boundaries even if the child was at the centre and even if the child was able to ask questions. Clearly this is a very fine balance to strike and most engaged in this conversation tended to say that they were not sure how to do it. Only one other teacher trainer spoke at length how the image of Buddha and his teaching had to be used as an example for the classroom and that CCA was not incompatible with the Myanmar culture, but rather that the old style of teaching was what was incompatible with a Buddhist way of teaching and learning.

8.5 Issues and difficulties

Aside from the themes mentioned above what was mostly discussed across all stakeholders (apart from the parents) were the logistical difficulties in applying CCA in the schools as they stood and were equipped at present. All complained about class sizes and student to teacher ratios – often at 100 students to 1 teacher. This was generally compounded by the lack of space. Once classroom visited was so full that the teacher had to climb on the benches that the students were sitting on to get beyond the 1st row to the back of the classroom. The space was so tight that a stray dog entered and hid behind a bench and could not be chased out. The student to teacher ratio did not seem that important when there were teaching assistants or second teachers present and when there was enough space to form small groups of student to work together (i.e. if furniture can be moved). Often the lack of space affected teaching in other ways as well – not often mentioned, but still important is the fact that many classes take place in one room or hall with few if any partitions and those classes doing exercises will disturb each other. In one school CCA

methods were restricted to 3 hours a day so that everyone 'would have their turn' in the hall. Linked to the large classes is the issue of managing to cover the lesson in a certain amount of time. Whilst with a small group the teacher can spend time with each group and help, large numbers of students result either in each group getting little time or some groups being left out. Teachers often grumbled about the lack of time to get through the lesson.

The lack of teaching aids was often mentioned as being a problem. One training provider has developed teaching aids from recycled materials and shows teachers how to make their own – but in some very poor areas even these materials might not be available – and often teachers are seen struggling with just a blackboard and a few pieces of paper where they can draw pictures.

A number of the schools visited have double shifts. The teachers all teach both shifts. This means a 6 am start and an 11 hour day. Teachers don't have the time to prepare lessons and even less time to construct teaching aids. Sometimes there are libraries where teachers can get the extra information they need – often however the books there are of limited value to a CCA curriculum. Only one school visited had useful materials for both students and teachers.

The teachers interviewed also mentioned that in many schools where they had colleagues the principal was unhappy with any change of teaching methodology. If the principal or the head monk of the cluster was not on board, teachers would run into difficulties. This was compounded by monks who felt that their environment should not be disturbed by noisy children all day long (don't forget the 2 shift schools with a 6 am start). In many schools only a few teachers had received training and inter-collegial difficulties were emerging with new hierarchies (headed by those trained as trainers) were emerging. This created difficulties between teachers responsible for older students and those who taught with the new methods in younger classes. The fact that parents were hard to engage (mostly because of their living hand to mouth) meant that it was more difficult to get them to understand what the children were doing at school and support it.

In the school which had a differential teaching system (fast track vs. normal) teachers also spoke of the difficulties between students as those in 'normal' classrooms would have wanted to have the same number of hours of teaching in the preferential circumstances of their peers.¹¹

In all cases teachers and schools were trying to face these difficulties head on by developing locally based solutions. Despite the complaints none of the teachers who had

¹¹ In that school the normal sections of primary and middle schools receive 3.5 and 4 hours instruction in Myanmar in classes of around 100 students each. The FT sections receive 5 hours in English with a max of 30 students in each classroom.

benefitted from some training seemed to want to give up or return to the old ways.¹²

All the above themes clearly indicate a converging of thoughts of all stakeholders, albeit from different vantage points. It however also shows that coordinating training providers with teachers' needs is not difficult as those who have received some form of training tend to think on similar lines.



¹² Solutions to the various difficulties were discussed and developed in the workshop, details of which can be found in the Annex.

9 The Workshop

As a part of the project a half day workshop was organised, bringing together various stakeholders from the schools and the training providers who had been interviewed and contributed to the research. This was where teachers, trainers and providers were given the opportunity to agree a number of core competencies which provide the minimum standards for teachers applying CCA. (See Diagram below)

The first part of the workshop consisted in an overview of research results which was given in English and translated into Myanmar. The main part was dedicated to trying to establish some understanding around a CCA methodology that has the potential to be commonly owned by teachers, trainers, principals and training providers. The results of the research fed directly into the workshop. It had been established that in the schools where there had been some training, that there was 'buy in' to the ideas and concepts of CCA. The main problems in implementation were not a lack of understanding but logistical problems – as those listed in the theme of 'issues and difficulties' above. The research also threw up the problem of hierarchies and respect in the Myanmar culture and the need to define and develop a Myanmar centric approach. The workshop therefore was to address three issues: first what would be the minimum competencies for a classroom and the teaching/ learning in it to be labelled child friendly, second how certain logistical problems could be solved practically given the local context and third what the core competencies of a Myanmar centric CCA would be.

The workshop clearly showed that there was a good understanding of the basic elements of CCA and what the advantages were in using it. The discussions at the tables produced lists of minimum competencies – some of which did reflect local constraints, whilst others produced 'wish lists'. But when each table gave their presentation it was clear that all agreed on some basic premises for a classroom to be considered child centric and that most of these were based on teaching methodology which engaged the children individually and as a group.

The second question in the workshop focused the minds of the participants on finding practical solutions to the constraints that they encountered when applying CCA. The individual problems chosen and their solutions are listed in the Annex. What was clear through the discussions was that even though some headline issues (space, teacher student ratio etc) were the same, the way they could be dealt with on the ground differed and depended upon local circumstances.

The third question under discussion was how to develop a Myanmar centric approach. The solutions proposed revolved around providing greater clarity for other teachers and parents about the methods and objectives of CCA, adapting the curriculum and teaching aids to the local circumstances, and getting other teachers on board. None of the solutions really dealt with the issue of hierarchies, respect and culture shock which had come up regularly in the interviews.

Beyond the answers to the questions posed the most important outcome of the workshop seemed to be the exchange of experiences between the various stakeholders and the networking which will

allow for a future sharing of good practice.

9.1 CCA Competency based framework

Based on the workshop and agreed set of minimum standards the following competency framework is proposed for CCA teachers that are actively engaged in delivering teaching through the CCA methodology in their schools. The common training requirements to reach each level would need to be agreed as a next step.

CCA Teachers	Skills and competency level	Proposed Observable outcomes	Training requirements
Emergent	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Teacher should prepare a lesson plan; Students and teachers should have a good relationship; Students should be working in groups; Teaching aids such as flash cards should be used; No physical punishment. 	Outcomes: The students would be able to ask and answer questions. The students should be singing songs and reciting poetry.	Common Training requirements:
Established	All qualities as Emergent CCA Teachers <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Teacher has been practicing CCA for xx months/years; There should be continuous assessment; Teachers should be able to give precise instructions; Teachers' active role in mentoring emergent CCA teachers. 	Outcomes: Improved discipline, reduced absenteeism, and creation of intra school support network of teachers	Common Training requirements:
Advanced	All qualities as Established CCA Teachers <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Teacher has been deploying CCA methodology across the school for xx years; Teacher is actively working on handling logistical problems relating to class sizes, infrastructure issues and teaching aids; Teacher is demonstrating qualities in handling softer issues related to collegial hierarchies, seniors, overall discipline. 	Outcomes: The schools looks different, school and leadership is behind the methodology and active role in in-house mentoring and issue management, active contribution to external forum on CCA practice and lessons learnt	Common Training requirements:

A similar framework is being proposed for CCA trainers and should cover parameters such as minimum years of CCA teaching, number of teachers trained, years as CCA trainer, understanding of CCA pedagogy at deeper levels so as to disseminate the how and why's of CCA effectiveness, ability to observe and carry out follow up and remedial sessions and finally be able to train CCA trainers themselves. To develop the underpinnings of this framework it is important to work collaboratively with the group of training providers and their methodologies to arrive at agreed common standards. This should be scoped in as a separate study where buy-in to participation has been obtained by providers and their willingness to sign-up to a common Myanmar based standard as it evolves should be ascertained. This is really important given the variance in training quality, duplication of training, improvement of CCA pedagogy and the issue of inter-collegial hierarchies, all of which have been observed during the current phase of the research project.

CCA Trainers	Skills and competency level	Training requirement and observable outcomes
Basic		
Practitioners	TO BE	
Expert (Train the trainer)	DEVELOPED	

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10 The future of CCA in Myanmar – Concluding remarks and general recommendations

CCA as implemented by monastic schools is here to stay and is able to expand across the monastic networks. Despite all the resource hurdles and other difficulties, three fundamental attitudinal shifts highlight its importance and relevance.

- **Positive changes in children's attitude:** As mentioned in *Section 8.1* children were seen to be more engaged and happy to come to school. Parents in particular mentioned how children were excited by the prospect of going to class in the morning. Teachers mentioned fewer absences and drop outs as proof that children were more engaged.
- **Positive changes in parents' attitude:** Once parents had a better understanding of CCA they were happy to support it. It was mentioned that the children taught with the new methods could apply what they had learnt in the classroom to real life.
- **Positive changes in teachers' attitude:** The teachers explained that they felt a bond with the children and also that they had to learn more themselves to adapt lessons to the real world. Many said that with CCA they enjoyed teaching more.

There also seemed to be a sense of vision across the leadership of those monastic schools that had experienced CCA training. The fact that times were changing was a sentiment echoed by teachers and trainers and that Myanmar had to break out of the rote learning strategy in order to raise standards across the country. Despite concerns on the erosion of traditional respect children had for teachers and parents, the overall view agreed that the changes witnessed in the children affected by the new teaching methods were positive and outweighed the discipline and respect problems. All felt that these issues would need further work and many spoke of the need of a 'Myanmar centric' CCA that needed to be developed as a result.

10.1 Recommendations

Further analysis shows that for CCA to be adopted widely and to evolve into a Myanmar centric approach, efforts need to be focused on 3 pillars:

- **Formal evolution** of the CCA methodology as applicable to Myanmar
- Creation of a **support structure** for trainers and teachers currently using CCA
- A method of **recognising and celebrating** some of the extraordinary successes in order engender social proof with the stakeholder community.

Each of these and their most important underlying initiatives are discussed in turn.

Pillar 1: Formal evolution of the CCA methodology

To formally evolve today's CCA methodology to the maturity it requires, to develop commonly agreed

standards, consistent with Myanmar culture and values:

1. **Development of competency based standards for CCA** both for CCA teachers and CCA teacher trainers (which could be based on the framework developed out of the workshop in Section 9). This could be developed into a formal framework that helps with sharing issues and develops a consistent method across schools, training providers and various institutions located in different parts of Myanmar. For this to be developed the first step is to instigate more coordination amongst training providers, starting with what they deliver and where, but also including the discussion around different training methods and approaches. A number of specially organised workshops could set the process in motion as long as the training providers agree to take part.
Competency based standards are about outcomes and not processes. Therefore this in no way means the standardisation of training processes. Trainers are still free to train in their own way. However agreed key competences will help benchmark progress and quality around agreed outcomes of training. Trainers can also continue to teach non-core competencies which are not part of the agreed framework.
2. **Evolve the framework to a commonly owned methodology** so that as a standard framework for training it allows for evolution of skills for teachers. Build provider, trainer and teacher databases that would help in reducing duplicate training and also create a career path for growth.
3. **Create a Myanmar centric approach:** CCA needs to reflect Buddhist values. Leverage views from teachers who feel that CCA is not incompatible with the Myanmar culture and train them as teacher trainers.
4. **Better dissemination of underlying methodology to teacher trainers:** Address the problem where teacher trainers who are responsible for passing the methodology on, have difficulty in clearly explaining how they train teaching staff. Be aware of the drawbacks of the cascade model and the effects on quality erosion. Applying a set of competency based standards for trainers (as suggested in Section 9) could help with this.
5. **Continuation of CCA into higher classes as children move into their high school years:** CCA is more successful at primary level and most monastic schools are not equipped for secondary education. This poses a huge structural problem where student that do pursue secondary education could flip back into rote learning if CCA is not used in senior years. The monastic schools which have high school sections should ensure that their teachers receive training and have access to the intra school support networks which will be led by those teachers in the primary sector who have been trained. This way, methods at secondary level can start to change. As parents are pushing for more monastic schools to expand into high schools, it is imperative that those monastic schools using CCA dispel the myth that it is only effective at primary level.
6. **Prepare and 'enrol' top leadership (head monks):** Any transformational change in teaching (CCA is one of them) requires support and encouragement from school leaders. Evidence showed that difficulties in adoption were observed where there was no buy-in

from head monks. A separate curriculum/training to enrol head monks would need to be developed in order to support the CCA grass root initiatives.

7. **Consider support for improved infrastructure:** Class partitions, etc.

Pillar 2: Creation of a support structure for trainers and teachers

Use informal and formal support structures to improve current adoption within the community, anticipate and deal with adoption barriers and improve the quality of dissemination.

8. **Improve coordination between providers:** Improved coordination is required between the providers through facilitation by the Education Thematic Working Group, which focus on education both in the formal and in the informal sector (which would include monastic education). These meetings and networks allow for different organisations to communicate with each other, discuss difficulties and share good practice. Beyond the already existing UN based working group the next step in the process of agreeing core competencies and setting up a framework as suggested above, would be best achieved through a series of workshops where all provider are present. This in itself will allow greater coordination. Celebrating achievements could also be done together through jointly organised awards ceremonies. At such events teachers and providers would be able to meet each other. The workshop could be followed up with half yearly meetings of all providers to coordinate and to avoid duplication, allowing also for the sharing of good practice – as had happened in the previously held conference.
9. **Develop coordinated follow on sessions,** provide in-class training to improve equality of training provided. As discussed in Section 7, providers that provided in class training met with better results and follow on training session will ensure that CCA is adopted correctly.
10. **Anticipate and deal with inter-collegial problems:** Training teacher trainers about the pedagogy of the method (as mentioned in pillar 1) should also address issues of respect and learning from each other, so that emergent inter-collegial hierarchies can be anticipated and dealt with during the training phase.
11. **Anticipate and plan for resistance from the male and senior teachers:** Female teachers reported success through better bonding with students, male and senior teachers felt erosion of respect. Encourage teachers to set up intra-school support networks to deal with such issues as well as the sharing of good practice and mutual teaching observation.
12. **Provisioning of teaching aids:** Teaching aids were often not readily available and teachers would have to spend time to construct and build props themselves. Training providers can share good practice of how to make teaching aids. For example one provider in particular has managed to use recycled and easily available materials to help teachers with this.
13. **Provide resources to CCA teachers to help build their confidence:** Far more worrying for the teachers than the issue of time and discipline is that many felt they might be asked questions they would not be able to answer. In a culture where the respect for teachers is so deeply ingrained having an 'ignorant' teacher could fatally undermine the teacher's position. In order to avoid such a scenario teachers said they would have to read much

more. This again was extra work and often there was no means to acquire this extra knowledge (no internet, few if any books etc.). So available resources would help teachers explore and personally develop themselves in this method. Monastic networks should be encouraged to share resources.

14. **Increase Parental involvement**, which was very low due to family and social circumstances in the schools studied, but which will be necessary in order to underpin the CCA methods and the continuation of learning at home.

Pillar 3: Recognising and celebrate successes

Engender social proof and adoption with the stakeholder community by celebrating visionary leadership and extraordinary successes through an awards structure. Help the early adopters lead the way for the majority.

15. **Celebrate creativity of teachers:** In section 8.2, the report shows challenges teachers face with huge numbers of students, a fundamentally new teaching approach, extra working hours and shortage of resources both for teaching aids and their own personal learning. Consequently where teachers have displayed outstanding levels of creativity (Discussed in Section 6.1) to successfully deploy CCA, their achievements should be recognised and celebrated both for the sake of the individual and a means for sharing innovative practice.
16. **Recognise the vision of monks:** The monastic schools often operate in cluster form with networks helping each other. The cascading methodology of a number of training providers means only works when the head monk or principal of the school is willing to propagate the new teaching method. As in mentioned in Section 6.1 even a head monk with 'a vision' can find battling the traditional monastic community difficult at times. Monks that create and implement the vision should be recognised both for the individual's sake and also to engender a common means of influencing the rest of the monastic community through social proof.

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Acronyms

ABL – Activity Based Learning
 AKES – Aga Khan Education Services
 APEF – Asia Peace and Education Foundation
 CCA – Child Centred Approach
 CFS – Child Friendly Schools
 CPME – Centre for the Promotion of Monastic Education
 GDP – Gross Domestic Product
 INGOs – International Non Governmental Organisations
 JICA – Japan International Cooperation Agency
 MDG – Millennium Development Goals
 NGOs – Non Governmental Organisations
 RWCT – Reading and Writing for Critical Thinking
 SEF – Sindh Education Foundation
 TCA – Teacher Centred Approach
 UNICEF – United Nations Children’s Fund

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Appendix 1: Origins of CCA - Historical and philosophical roots

The historical and philosophical roots of CCA go back in history to *Jean Jacques Rousseau* (1712 – 1778). His views stood in contrast to the old puritan assumptions that children were from the moment of birth ‘in a state of fallen grace from which they had to be saved.’ (Doddington and Hilton, p. XV) that had influenced the educational philosophy before the Enlightenment. Rousseau believed that childhood was a separate state of existence and that children were the product of their environment rather than of innate sinfulness. Rousseau’s book ‘*Emile*’ exemplified his thinking, which was however limited to boys and did not believe in the equal treatment of girls. *John Locke*’s ‘*Essay concerning Human Understanding*’ and ‘*Some thoughts concerning education*’ written 1690 and 1693 respectively argued for a liberal education of children (Doddington and Hilton, p. XVI). His ideas which later were picked up and developed by Bourdieu (especially with regard to the middle classes) explored the notions that the cultural capital of language, ways of thinking, talent and manners were more important than their inheritance of where the children came from. ‘This central principle, that the young child learns through the early association of sensation and ideas, and then by reflecting, comparing, uniting and splitting then develops the ability to think in the abstract, still underlies child centred educational thought.’ (Doddington and Hilton, p. XVII)

Later *the Lunar Circle of Birmingham* (second half of the 18th century) started to develop CCA as a system. The Edgeworth family, who were members of the circle and had 21 children of their own, wrote a guide entitled ‘*Practical Education*’ in 1798 based on a method of discovery in education. The principles of this method was making tools and imitation toys available to children and encourage them to undertake experiments as well as being given space to discover themselves.

In contrast to these CCA movements the industrial revolution was also developing schools catering to the slums where the poor children would be educated through rote memorisation and a system based on a rewards and punishments. The CCA approach became the system for the more privileged through charity schools catering to the children of the artisans and shopkeepers.

In the 19th century *Johann Pestalozzi* (1746-1827) developed his own educational approach based on Locke. He believed in the child’s innate wisdom which had to be nurtured and that children were active learners who needed stimulation. Such notions were underscored by the romantic poets such as Wordsworth who believed in childhood innocence. Dickens too attacked mindless rote learning for the industrial poor. Pestalozzi’s curriculum and daily schedule for his pupils encompassed time for them to develop their ‘own work’ as well as an emphasis on manual work, gardening and physical exercise aside from the more academic subjects so as to give the children a ‘balanced’ upbringing.

It was however not until the Kindergarten, invented by *Friedrich Froebel* (1782-1852), which focused on the instincts and play of the young child, that CCA received an institutional boost

across Western Europe. The 'Kindergarten' was to allow children to grow like in a garden which had to be guarded and cultivated. Children he argued naturally mimic the social world around them. Froebel developed a practical guide and encouraged children to use sticks and wooden blocks and bricks to express ideas.

Throughout this period of the development of CCA, the dominant education system designed for the poor remained based on rote learning, regimentation and the increasing control of standards. Setting standards and examinations were chiefly developed to help with classroom control. This developed into a 'mechanical system of pedagogy resting on anonymous relations of disciplinary power through grouping and setting, testing and grading of child pupils.' (Doddington and Hilton, p. 22) It was only with the Hadow reports in the 1920s and 1930s that primary education was overhauled and a more child centric approach was recommended. The secondary system however remained wedded to the old ways due to the selection at age 11 for differentiated types of secondary schooling.

Beyond Rousseau, Locke and Pestalozzi, there have been a number of education specialist, mostly developing their thoughts between the 19th and the 20th century. The main CCA educationalists, who were often also psychologists and their contribution to CCA are discussed below:

The theoretical underpinnings of CCA lie in *Lev Vygotsky's* (1896 - 1934) work and social constructivism which believes that 'individual knowledge is constructed, contested, shared and changed'. Learning is not linear and 'does not occur on a time line of basic skills, but instead occurs at a very uneven pace and proceeds in many different directions at once.' (King, P.8-9) Vygotsky believed in the importance of play in early learning. Pretend play in particular allowed children to learn how to transform objects and actions symbolically by engaging many areas of the brain, involving emotion, cognition, language and sensorimotor actions. (King, p. 48)

Jean Piaget (1896 – 1980), a Swiss developmental psychologist, developed a new understanding about how people learn through his observation of young children. (Falk, p.25)

'... The creation of men and women who are capable of doing new things, not simply repeating what others have done – men and women who are creative, inventive and discoverers... who can be critical, can verify and not accept everything they are offered.'
(Piaget, cited in Greene, 1978, p.80 in Falk, p. 32)

This was based on the four stages of development that he defined as: Sensorimotor stage - from birth to age 2; Preoperational stage - from ages 2 to 7 (magical thinking predominates. Acquisition of motor skills); Concrete operational stage - from ages 7 to 12 (children begin to think logically but are very concrete in their thinking); and formal operational stage - from age 12 onwards (development of abstract reasoning). According to Basil Bernstein, Piaget's education work followed on from Vygotsky's educational understanding and was later reflected in the UK's Plowden Report (CACE 1976). (Bernstein in Daniels. H. (1993) p. XX) Both theorists however had different perspectives on the way they viewed nature and nurture. From the Piagetian perspective individuals construct a personal reality through personal knowledge and experience whilst

Vygotsky believed that both society and individuals create the reality through interactive construction. (Pei Wen Tzuo, p.35) In essence despite both being child centred the Piaget approach gives children more freedom and the Vygotsky's approach gives the children more structure and challenges.

Maria Montessori (1870 –1952) also contributed to CCA by adopting an approach which allowed the children to self direct their learning. Her work also contributed to transforming the role of the teacher: Teachers have to be 'responsive to the different learning styles and 'intelligences' of their learners as well as their learners' cultural and linguistic backgrounds'. (Falk , p.29) **John Dewey** (1859 – 1952) developed a progressive theory with democracy as the aim of schooling. The curriculum has to be rooted in the social context and teachers and children decide together which experiences are meaningful. Schools in his view have to function like a democratic society.

The theory of multiple intelligences developed by Howard Gardner's (1943 -) revolutionised the classroom (King p. 41). The old notion of intelligence did not recognise creativity, civic mindedness or if the person was ethical. Gardner identified eight different forms of intelligences: linguistic, logical mathematical, spatial, bodily kinaesthetic, musical, interpersonal, intrapersonal and naturalist intelligence. (King p.45) His theory was that if a teacher was aware of the various different forms of intelligence he/ she could use this to help individual students with their own person guided discovery according to their strengths. 'Pretend Play' was also central to his approach as children in the past used to learn by playing in a multi age group in their neighbourhood. Today computers and televisions mean that children are increasingly isolated and therefore schools have to incorporate such play styles into the classroom.

The **Reggio Emilia** approach (developed after the Second World War in Reggio Emilia, Italy) has been hailed as an exemplary model of early childhood education based on creating an environment where children of pre-school age can develop their own powers of thinking. This approach links in with Howard's Gardner's notion of schooling for multiple intelligences and uses art as a tool for cognitive, linguistic and social development.

Beyond these approaches detailed above there have been further developments and academics, educationalists and psychologists have moved the theoretical boundaries of CCA further. One recent approach is the theory of the *Transformatory Approach* developed by Sue Askew and Eileen Carnell (Askew and Carnell, 1998) that moves beyond both the behaviourist theories (TCA) and the cognitive intelligence theories (Piaget) and focuses on an organismic view of the person 'who is active in a change process' and which 'recognises the complexity of the interrelationship of the emotional, social, spiritual, physical and cognitive dimensions of learning'. (Askew and Carnell, p.20)

Appendix 2: Theories of CCA

At the centre of CCA lie a few central concepts which underpin the approach:

First of all childhood is a time in itself and the child is to be allowed space, opportunity and considerable freedom to develop his or her own consciousness. Education is not solely a preparation for future adulthood. The teacher child interactions are to be based on the teacher seeing the 'whole child' in his or her entirety. In order to focus on the 'whole child' the education system has to allow for (adapted from Doddington and Hilton, p. 66):

- Senses and perceptions to be cherished and strengthened through experience
- Beliefs to be taken seriously and explored
- Things that matter/ expressions of concern to be encouraged

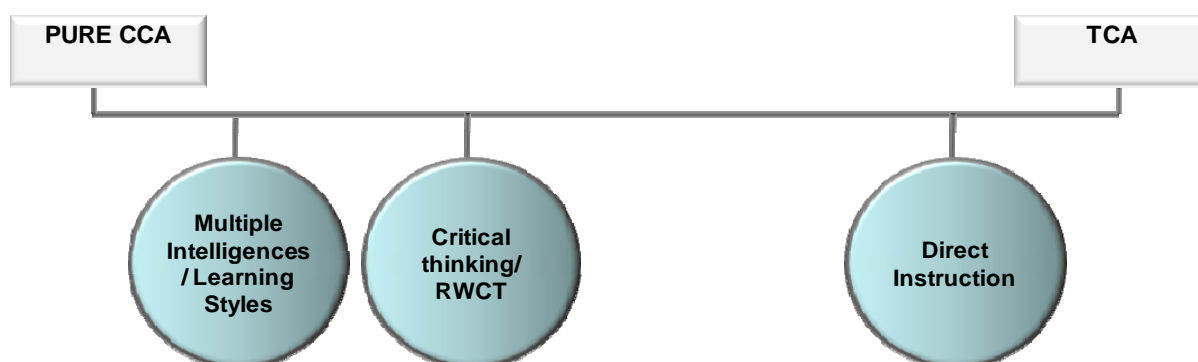
In essence the child centred approach recognises each child's unique capacity for thought and agency. This is contrary to the traditional view of education that suggests that children need to objectify their idiosyncratic experience, learning to think critically about the world and develop knowledge of how the world is constituted. CCA however believes that this approach 'eclipses the primordial relationship' that is needed to truly understand what is before them. Detached orientation is seen as impairing a meaningful understanding of the world around us and it is preferable to remain immersed in the world. (Doddington and Hilton, p. 70-4) A pure CCA approach is therefore contrary to what is generally seen as 'critical thinking'.

'The main point that many who stress the importance of children gaining objective knowledge, for instance, assume that a more detached view will necessarily give *value - neutral* view of the world. Yet if we adopt a stance towards the world that is not only distant but also critical or analytical, our relationship to and apprehension of the world change.' (Doddington and Hilton, p. 74)

Given the various philosophical approaches and contributions by different psychologists and educationalists (See [Appendix 1: Origins of CCA - Historical and philosophical roots](#)), CCA is not a unified approach nor is there an overall agreement amongst those subscribing to the child centred view as to what the core competencies of such an approach actually are. There are some major disagreements which centre on the issues of critical thinking, multiple intelligences and learning styles. Some CCA proponents (see for example Chris Watkins) do not accept Howard Gardner's multiple intelligences and the suggestion that teachers should teach children differently according to their abilities and various learning styles. Others see this as the centre piece of a modern child centred approach. Teaching critical thinking is also disputed and whilst certain teaching styles might put the child at the centre of the classroom the notion of critical thinking goes in essence against the fact that children are supposed to experience each event in its own right without the theoretical abstraction needed for a critical approach. The CCA continuum below shows how the different approaches relate to each other. Despite all the differences, all the

methodologies mentioned (sitting towards the left) have a number of things in common. They see the child at the centre of the teaching and learning process, promote pair and group work as part of peer learning, they expect the teacher to build on the knowledge the students already possess and they expect the students, not the teacher to lead the process in the classroom. Linking learning to real life through exploration and excursions, teaching aids and games are all found in the three approaches detailed below.

The CCA continuum



Opposing views and criticisms:

As mentioned in the section above, there have always been strong voices speaking out against CCA as a better or more evolved teaching and learning approach. Whilst at first the opposition to CCA was one linked to educating the masses in industrialising urban slums where the lack of teachers and large classes made such an approach impractical, the later opposition to CCA was one based on wanting a system where performance could be measured. The understanding about learning by those propagating the teacher centred approach (TCA) is that the learner is an empty vessel which needs to be filled up. Behavioural theories also believed in the transmission of facts and skills and that learning is best controlled through sanctions and rewards. (Falk, p. 26-27) In these processes the mind is passive and the teacher is a conduit for the 'stuff' being delivered – the internal process of the student or learner is not recognised.

There are however some real drawbacks of CCA that have emerged after its use in schools across the UK, the US and Canada which go beyond the philosophical debates described above. Since children are expected to learn at their own pace, some fall behind the rest of the class and never catch up. Some parents feel that their children are not learning basic skills. The fact that children's needs are supposed to lead the curriculum also throws up the difficulty of knowing what a child's educational needs are, how these change over time and how the curriculum is to be structured around it. There are likely to be disagreements with regard to culture and contexts and a 'needs based curriculum' offers no basis for 'judging one kind of curriculum to be preferable to another.' (Darling, p.71) Generally critics of the CCA process state that it is too individualistic and too vague. (Darling, p.76) Other critiques focus more on the role of the teacher and how in CCA the

teacher's role is 'reduced' to one of a facilitator and therefore unnecessarily limits the relationship between teachers and their students. This has more recently been critiqued from a critical feminist, post modern and post structural approach. (Langford, p.113) The fact that child centred approaches have not taken part in many evaluations, make it difficult to acclaim how successful the approach actually is in practice.

So why would we want to promote CCA?

Despite all the criticisms levelled above, CCA is a much more progressive way of teaching than the variations of the alternative TCA methods. The advantages of CCA are that the students will genuinely build an understanding of the subjects they are being taught and they will learn in the process essential skills such as pair and group work. Whilst it is harder to measure understanding and learning (as opposed to memorisation), it is a more inclusive methodology, helping those who do not thrive in an environment driven by high levels of memorisation. CCA is about awaking the interest of the child and creating a learning culture which goes beyond school and beyond childhood. The move away from CCA in the west is not driven by the discovery of a better teaching and learning method - it is driven by government measurement policies. Often wealthier families will opt to have their children educated in primary schools using a form of CCA such as the Montessori or the Pestalozzi method (see Appendix 1 for different philosophical approaches). Overall children being taught CCA will learn how to understand and those being taught by rote will learn how to memorise. For Myanmar it is essential to break away from the rote learning strategy in order to raise understanding, learning levels and achievement across the whole country.

Appendix 3: Suggested methods for teaching and learning from the literature

The literature on CCA has many suggestions on how CCA can be developed and applied in the classroom. Some of the more useful tips and suggestions emanating from the literature reviewed and cited in this report are detailed in the section below.

Teaching for meaning and understanding is based on five key principles (King, 12):

- Understanding big ideas in content
- When students are asked to inquire, think at high levels and solve problems
- When students are expected to apply knowledge and skills in meaningful tasks and authentic contexts
- When teachers regularly use thought provoking, engaging and interactive instructional strategies
- When students have the opportunity to revise their assignments using clear examples of successful work, known criteria and timely feedback.

The handbook also recommends for teachers to create 'flow' for the students by showing more relevance of what is being done in class to the life of the student, making clear the goal of every lesson (and students being clear on what to achieve) as well as giving children challenges by stimulating their curiosity and building on strength of each child. The handbook also recommends differentiated instruction to offer a variety of learning options to students based on their different interests and learning profiles. (King p.53) This can be done through flexible groupings and by encouraging the student to be active explorers (ownership of their learning and independence of thought).

A second method recommends teachers using '*dialogic teaching*' – meaning that teachers engage in discussions with the students and allow them to learn that way. (Mercer and Littleton, p.42)

This book bases its method on the following suggestions:

- Students are given opportunities and encouragement to ask questions, state points of view, and comment on ideas and issues that arise in lessons;
- The teacher engages in discussions with the students which explore and support the development of their understanding of content;
- The teacher takes students' contributions into account in developing the subject theme of the lesson and in devising activities that enable students to pursue their understanding themselves, through talk and other activity;
- The teacher uses talk to provide a cumulative, continuing, contextual frame to enable students' involvement with the new knowledge they are encountering.

Suggestions on how to *develop a curriculum for understanding* which underpins the suggestions given above (adapted from Falk pp.48-63) is listed here:

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- Teachers need to be knowledgeable about how children learn;
- Teachers need to create a context for learning that fosters exploration of the ideas and themes considered important for all to know (classrooms with maps, charts of class discussions, animals, grouping of tables, artwork etc);
- Teachers have to realise that students can give the 'right' answer but must own the answer otherwise there is little meaning;
- Teachers need to know ways into content learning (curious and intellectual passion);
- Teachers need strategies and methods to teach different subject matters and skills);
- Teachers need to listen to students;
- Teachers need to keep ongoing records of individual students and record of class discussions;
- Teachers need to focus on what pupils can do – not what they can't do;
- Teachers should prepare whole year teaching and select an entry point and how to build around it;
- Teachers need to plan for hands on explorations;
- Teachers need to be careful not to let their ideas dominate, and need to ask open ended questions;

'It is not how fast children progress through the curriculum that counts, but how far they go towards understanding that curriculum.' (Falk, p 63)

Appendix 4: Methodology of the fieldwork

The fieldwork part of the research was conducted over 18 days in Myanmar in June 2010. Given the aims of the research the main stakeholders were defined as being the principals, teachers and parents of monastic schools, as well as CCA teacher trainers and training providers. It was a priority to access voices from sections of all stakeholders to feed into the report and the recommendations.

Pyoe Pin selected four monastic schools in Yangon Division, Mandalay Division and Ayeyarwady Division, covering both rural and urban areas. The schools selected had a close relationship with Pyoe Pin and are well networked amongst each other. They also have access to training, funding and alternative view points. As such they are at the more progressive end of monastic schools and have developed further than many other schools, especially because of their training access. Despite this there were great differences between the schools not only because of their size, but also in terms of how long they had been receiving help. The results reflect the fact that the sample was focused on such schools as opposed to a random sample.

Fieldwork was also conducted in three other schools in Mandalay, loosely connected with the main selected monastery, three extra schools in Ayeyarwady division all of which were closely connected to the main selected monastery and one non monastic institution in Yangon catering to out of school teenagers (but which uses CCA). The focus was on primary and upper primary school education but a number of the monastic schools visited had middle school sections and two had high school sections as well.

In each case the review encompassed a walk around the school grounds, an interview with the principal, a period of classroom observation – two or three where this was possible, between one and three focus groups with teachers and between one and three focus groups with parents. In Yangon division two days were spent in one school located in the industrial suburbs of Yangon. One full day was spent in the school located outside of Yangon, in a rural areas feeding into Yangon's industrial belt. The Mandalay and Ayeyarwady clusters were visited over three days each. Overall individual semi structured interviews were conducted with 4 principals over one and a half to two hours each. Focus groups of 45 min to one hour were held with 66 teachers in small groups. Focus groups were also held with 58 parents or grandparents across four schools. Their families comprised 236 children or grandchildren.

Pyoe Pin also organised individual interviews with 6 training providers and a 7th was contacted separately. Each interview lasted between one and two hours and was often conducted with more than one person. Focus groups were held with 19 teacher trainers in Yangon and Mandalay. All in all just two days were spent with training providers.

Appendix 5: Demographics of the schools visited and the resident population

School 1 is located in one of Yangon's industrial suburbs. It runs a two shift system. It is a very cramped environment with 619 students and 15 teachers teaching years 1-8. One big room holds several classes which each have between 80-100 students to one teacher. There are some other small buildings with classrooms as well. The children come from the poorest sections of society, parents being rickshaw drivers and ambulant vendors. Teachers have had a limited amount of training in CCA. Most families seemed to be living hand to mouth and had on average four or five children.

School 2 is located outside of Yangon city in Yangon Division in a rural area. Local residents usually work in the industrial suburbs. However the parents of the children in this school did not work in the factories but were carpenters, masons and vendors, and much poorer than the factory workers. On average the families had 3 children. The school has 439 students and 11 teachers, one of which has had some CCA training. The school offers class 1 to 6 but supports children who want to continue middle school in the state system. All classes are held in one big building with scant partitions. The individual classroom spaces are so overfilled that the teachers have to walk on the benches the students sit on to reach the rear of the classroom. On average the classes have 80 students for one teacher. The school also feeds the children and even those who have left come back for meals after their school day ends.

School 3 is located in the centre of the Delta. It is a large school with over 1000 students and a number of dependent monastic schools in nearby villages. It runs a two shift system. The school is registered to offer classes 1-9 but also offers year 10 and 11. The novices of the monastery are taught separately, but novices from nearby monasteries attend this school as well. On average a classroom will hold 80 children – some slightly more. Given the size of the school grounds and the new buildings some classrooms have their own rooms and others are in great halls with partitions. A large number of the teachers here have had various forms of training. The parents are poor – most are vendors or fishermen. The average number of children per family is 3 or 4. There are a number of orphans and many families seem to have lost family members due to Cyclone Nargis in 2008.

School 4 is located in Mandalay and has over 7000 students and 280 teachers. It offers classes from year 1 to year 11. It operates a two track system with a small number of students selected every year in year 1 to join the fast track (FT) where the classroom size will not exceed 30 students (average 25) and where instruction is in English. The other classes however hold well over 100 students per class. The school runs in two shifts with some of the higher classes in the morning and most of the younger classes taking place in the afternoon. Apart from the FT which runs 5 hours exclusively in English, the primary section receives 3.5 hours a day, the middle school 4

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hours a day and only the high school receives 5 hours a day – the language of instruction is Myanmar.

The school offers residential options for its novices, girls, Nargis orphans, street children and ethnic minority children who are held in separate hostels on campus. The families who send their children to this school are from various sections of society. Most are poor (vendors, rickshaw drivers), but an increasing number are from the lower middle classes (shop keepers, etc.), especially families whose children are in the fast track section. On average the families had 2 to 3 children.

Appendix 6: The Workshop - Details

The style of the collaborative part of the workshop was World Café style with 7 tables of 5 or 6 participants. Each table elected a table host and was given large sheets of paper. All participants were encouraged to write on the paper and discuss their thoughts around three questions.¹³ Coffee and tea was available throughout and participants could help themselves from a table in the midst of the room. The participants changed tables between every question – apart from the table host who also kept the sheets. At the end every table host gave a summary presentation of the discussion at his or her table and the flip chart paper was taped to the wall for all to see. The workshop was entirely Myanmar centric with no discussion in English.¹⁴ The results emanating from these 7 tables are presented below.

Question 1 - For teaching to be child centred – what are the minimum elements that a teacher needs to apply?

The question was answered very differently from table to table. A few tables decided to list all they knew about CCA and deviated from the question which wanted them to focus on the minimum competencies. But other tables did focus on what was possible given the difficulties of large classes and reduced space. The main points mentioned were that the teacher should prepare a lesson plan, that students and teachers should have a close/ good relationship; that children should be working in groups; that there should be continuous assessment; that there should be discipline; that teaching aids such as flash cards should be used; that students should be singing songs and reciting poetry. Some talked about teachers praising the children and giving precise instructions. The fact that children would be able to ask and answer questions was also mentioned by many. One table mentioned that fact that there should be no physical punishment for the children. For others this seemed self evident. None of the elements mentioned above are incompatible with the logistical problems of student-teacher ratios and therefore could form the basis of commonly agreed CCA practice in Myanmar's monastic schools.

There were a number of 'wish list' items – such as reduced class sizes, space for a learning corner and that teachers should know more about child psychology and have more training. One table mentioned that it would be good if all teachers of all subject – presumably in the same school were using CCA methods.

¹³ There were a wide variety of participants – some very senior such as head monks and older teachers or trainers. This meant that every table quickly developed a hierarchy on who could speak and some participants tended to dominate. In order to counter this it was agreed that the person who spoke would have to hold a tea cup and pass it on after 5 minutes. This way all participants at every table were able to speak, no matter how experience they were or where they figured in the traditional Myanmar hierarchy.

¹⁴ I had a translator with me throughout.

Question 2 - How do we overcome the difficulties? (Practical suggestions)

Various difficulties were discussed at every table – some chose to work on two difficulties some discussed solution to three or four difficulties. The issues discussed and the answers as they were given in Myanmar are listed below with a short comment regarding each group of answers.

Classroom space/ size, desks, benches - The ratio of a teacher and students

- To have income-generating programmes
- To have multi-donation programmes
- To get out of the class (in summer, teachings can be done under the shades of the trees, in the free plots of land)
- In small classrooms having long big desks, benches which are difficult to be moved, students are to sit face-to-face without moving desks and benches
- The students are asked to sit around moving desks, benches.
- Get into groups with group leaders
- To select students' leaders and to give duties to teach among themselves
- The principal chooses two students to keep the class in order

It was clear that this was the predominant issue across all groups and one all stakeholders felt hardest to deal with. In many cases they agreed that it boiled down to money to build larger premises or more classrooms. The suggestions that the schools increase their income through income generating programmes or by soliciting more donations was seen as a longer term solution. In the immediate future group work and group leaders were seen as the main way forward.

Insufficient teaching aids

- To co-operate with parents, students, community
- To have low-cost materials e.g. newspapers, journals
- Regional products, recycled things are used again
- Teachers, students co-operatively create things
- The easily-got-things in the surrounding are to be used - recycled things; cut pictures from old journals, etc
- To use the old things as teaching aids in the classrooms
- To use such real things, living beings as fruit, animals, insects
- To apply storytelling, role playing, singing songs, reciting poems to make the students visualize in their minds' eyes
- To set up school committees that include parents to provide aids

Most teachers felt that teaching aids could be created by them or in cooperation with the students

and parents. The issue ignored here is the time it takes to make props and aids. However the idea to get parents on board and get them involved by keeping old materials is a good way forward. There was also an understanding that things readily available in nature (fruit, plants etc.) were not sufficiently used.

Noisy environments

- The disciplines for a school, classrooms are to be made and obeyed by the students themselves

A very good suggestion which allows all students to get on board the rules and make them easier to enforce. This was already being practiced in one school visited in Mandalay.

Not enough time

- In advance, getting understanding and making compromise
- Change the time-table, a lesson is divided into two parts, extension of time in which knowledge is to be transformed into skills.
- To achieve the objective, the lesson plan must be drawn up efficiently.

Once principals are on board the timetable can be adjusted to allow for more efficient CCA teaching. But good time management and lesson planning can also help and this means that teachers have to learn to be more disciplined.

Insufficient teachers

- The middle school students are to keep the children in order.
- To recruit more teachers

It would probably be better to start training teaching assistants – but this was not proposed by the groups.

Lack of teaching methods knowledge

- To undergo teaching trainings, to acquire books, papers (documents)
- To invite the expert trainers from other associations to get training
- To send teachers to undergo trainings
- To arrange correspondence courses for teachers
- Active participation, brainstorming to promote children's thinking abilities

Most importantly the groups identified that there was not enough sharing of expertise within the same schools and that teachers also had to start using self reflective methods and needed time for reading in order to improve their teaching practices.

No application to reality

- To raise the awareness, to get access to more supplies, needs i.e. teachers, children trainings

In order to make what was happening in the classroom more applicable to the real world, one

group suggested increased materials and the raising of awareness across the board for teachers and children.

Question 3 - How do we develop a Myanmar centric CCA? What should be the core competencies of such an approach?

This was a theme which seemed present in every school visited and was broached by a number of teachers, principals and trainers despite the fact that the interview questions had not discussed the 'cultural' dimension. Given its centrality in the research findings, it was included in the workshop. In order for the stakeholders to 'own' CCA, they will have to find a way to adapt it to the Myanmar culture. Below are the main themes emanating from the groups in how to develop such an approach. They fall into several categories and are illustrated by quotes from the groups:

1. *Involving the outside community by explaining the objectives of CCA and how it benefits the students:*

'To give advocacy trainings to school teachers, community leaders'

'There must be co-operation of parents, community and schools (always or from time to time)'

'Parents must be shared educational sense'

'Between teachers and parents, there will be meetings, discussions, suggestions and sharing (knowledge, experience ?)'

2. *Adapting curriculum, course content and teaching aids to local circumstances*

'Should develop relevant content supplement e.g. curriculum with Asia, Myanmar content'

'Curriculum (materials development in Myanmar context)'

'To do workshops which do analysis to get CCA which is in harmony with Myanmar culture'

'Religious point of view'

'Such teaching aids as bricks, branches can be used without buying them'

'There will be no cultural shock in questioning, playing games, singing and dancing through awareness.'

3. *Getting students more involved*

'To make students involve in making classroom disciplines'

'To practise the reward system e.g. students of the month'

'Teacher-student- agreed classroom disciplines are necessary'

'No rote learning but to express one's feeling'

4. *Getting teachers more involved*

'To change the type of assessment, not to define ratings'

'Networking'

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‘All the teachers co-operate in drawing up time tables and tables for teaching time, lesson divisions’

‘Teachers must always study and learn.’

‘A change of attitudes is required.’

‘Flexibility (informal, culture, meaningful, application in reality, link to the daily life.’

5. *Appropriate training*

‘To give more and more CCA trainings’

‘Model lessons are to be taught’

‘Need competent trainers’

‘To improve CCA trainers' skills’

Or as one group wrote at the bottom of their sheet: ‘Do it, achieve it’

Appendix 7: Children learn what they live...

Children learn what they live (Dorothy Law Nolte, 1972)

If children live with criticism, they learn to condemn

If children live with hostility, they learn to fight

If children live with ridicule, they learn to feel shy

If children live with shame, they learn to feel guilty

If children live with encouragement, they learn confidence

If children live with tolerance, they learn patience

If children live with praise, they learn appreciation

If children live with acceptance, they learn to love

If children live with approval, they learn to like themselves

If children live with honesty, they learn truthfulness

If children live with security, they learn to have faith in themselves and those about them.

If children live with friendliness, they learn the world is a nice place in which to live.



Appendix 8: Number of Students attending Monastic and Nunnery schools

Number of students attending Monastic and Nunary (Female) schools in Academic Year 2007-2008																						
sr.	state & division	Primary Students					Post Primary Students					Secondary Students					High School Students					Total
		Male Novice	Female Novice	Male student	female student	sub-total	Male Novice	Female Novice	Male student	female student	sub-total	Male Novice	Female Novice	Male student	female student	sub-total	Male Novice	Female Novice	Male student	female student	sub-total	
1	1 Kachin	58	109	1,140	955	2,262	10		20	23	53					0					0	2,315
2	2 Kayah	13	123	304	188	628					0					0					0	628
3	3 Kayin	81	15	2,668	2,588	5,352			114	87	201					0					0	5,553
4	4 Chin	31	3	368	241	643	10		21	14	45					0					0	688
5	5 Sagaing	559	297	9,185	8,609	18,650	63	63	367	340	833	62	7	243	265	577					0	20,060
6	6 Taninthayi	124	15	3,084	2,916	6,139					0	11	1	556	511	1,079					0	7,218
7	7 Paga (East)	455	18	5,340	4,470	10,283	6		36	25	67	126	9	462	396	993					0	11,343
8	8 Paga (West)	100	5	1,655	1,520	3,280	36	4	99	102	241			36	16	52					0	3,573
9	9 Magway	378	36	5,384	4,525	10,323	38		257	250	545			205	160	365					0	11,233
10	10 Mandalay	1,626	168	24,296	21,695	47,785	6		88	85	179	808	46	1,774	1,843	4,471			2,220	1,793	4,013	56,448
11	11 Mon	490	26	3,668	3,433	7,617	48		343	366	757	34		297	431	762					0	9,136
12	12 Rakhine	56		3,319	2,827	6,202	1		133	117	251	93		351	243	687					0	7,140
13	13 Yangon	2,814	494	14,285	12,025	29,618	225	237	915	812	2,189	1,144	186	794	747	2,871					0	34,678
14	14 Shan (East)	108		395	323	826			25	28	53					0					0	879
15	15 Shan (North)	1,031	291	1,757	1,784	4,863	76		226	300	602					0					0	5,465
16	16 Shan (South)	196		1,425	1,339	2,960	45	1	96	84	226					0					0	3,186
17	17 Ayeyawaddy	644	78	7,734	7,272	15,728	53		228	248	529			368	290	658					0	16,915
18																						
19																						
20		8,764	1,678	86,007	76,710	173,159	617	305	2,968	2,881	6,771	2,278	249	5,086	4,902	12,515	0	0	2,220	1,793	4,013	196,458

Ministry of Religious Affairs, Monastic Education Monitoring Group, *List of Monastic and Nunnery Schools, 2008-2009 Academic Year*, Published with support from Taw Taike Monastery.