Ethnically-Inclusive Education for Peacebuilding in Myanmar

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ABSTRACT

The concept of peace education highlights the role that education plays in the field of peace and conflict studies. While international frameworks and agreements tend to promote a set of standard principles to guide such a process, the literature decries one-size solutions, emphasising the context-specific nature of conflict, peace and education. Because it is an emerging field in development, there is a strong call for in-depth studies of particular cases across the world, such as this research project. Furthermore, there is a certain gap of academic knowledge about Myanmar which has only recently begun to open its doors to outsiders. This project joins a recent surge of interest in researching Myanmar, investigating in particular how ethnically-inclusive education promotes peacebuilding. It focuses on the case of one particular school which aims to deliver peace education in a movement for social change.

The case study nature of the project dictated the choice of methods, which produced in-depth qualitative data and large amounts of descriptive contextual and background information. Reflecting the particularities of Myanmar's social, political and cultural characteristics, the conclusions of this research show that the specific nature of the country's conflict shapes how education for peacebuilding is understood and delivered in the example case. Indeed, it emerges that civil society and community-based networks and organisations are thought to be key pillars of Myanmar's transition from conflict to peace. These results correspond to the theoretical assertion that conflict, peace and education are case-specific concepts. However, the research raises issues that are pertinent beyond the context of Myanmar, around language in school, community-level action, and youth civic engagement. Furthermore, it questions the usefulness of peace education as a universal goal. Indeed, more attention must be paid to the process of peace education in developing contexts, and what outcomes are desired. Many of these contexts are facing the challenge of entering the 'globalised' world which creates tension between the local and international interests of education for peacebuilding.

Key words – inclusive education, peacebuilding, conflict, ethnicity, Myanmar.
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<tr>
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<th>Full Form</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>CBO</td>
<td>Community-based organisation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CEDAW</td>
<td>Convention on the Elimination of all forms of Discrimination Against Women</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CLASS</td>
<td>Community Leadership and Social Studies</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CSO</td>
<td>Civil society organisation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>EAG</td>
<td>Ethnic armed group</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>KKEC</td>
<td>Kant Kaw Education Centre</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>MNEC</td>
<td>Mon National Education Committee</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>MPC</td>
<td>Myanmar Peace Centre</td>
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<tr>
<td>MoE</td>
<td>Ministry of Education</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>NLD</td>
<td>National League for Democracy</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>NMSP</td>
<td>New Mon State Party</td>
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<tr>
<td>RCSS</td>
<td>Restoration Council of Shan State</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>TEF</td>
<td>Thabyay Education Foundation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>TNLA</td>
<td>Ta’ang National Liberation Army</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>UDHR</td>
<td>Universal Declaration of Human Rights</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>UNCRRC</td>
<td>United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child</td>
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<td>USDP</td>
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A NOTE ON TERMINOLOGY

It is important to make two notes on terminology regarding this research. Firstly, the term ‘peace education’ is used throughout, referring generally to the concept of schooling which targets issues of conflict-to-peace transition. While it is acknowledged that there are many variations on this term with certain differences, ‘peace education’ was decided upon because it is used by informants to describe their own programme. Secondly, it is important to distinguish between the terms Myanmar, Burmese and Bamar. Myanmar is used to describe the nation of the Union of Myanmar, and all of the ethnicities and languages in it. Burmese denotes the dominant ethnicity (known as Bamar) and the language that derives from it – the official language of Myanmar.
1 INTRODUCTION

With this common goal, the different ethnic groups come and study together. They stay together, learn together, they share their differences and similarities, cultural traditions, stuff like this. In a way, it’s kind of a peacebuilding – Soe Phyoe

As the world moves through the stages of globalisation, people become ever more interconnected, states are less bounded, and communities are unified through other identifying characteristics than national territories. This shift affects the nature of social interactions, such as relations of conflict and peace. The ways in which conflict is confronted, understood and prevented must respond to the reality of circumstances ‘on the ground’ in order to effect constructive peace. A significant part of this work is paying attention to the particular historical, cultural and political context of conflict, which inform the way peacebuilding can be produced.

This research project engages with the field of conflict and peacebuilding, focusing on the role of education in Myanmar’s pathway to peace. Myanmar is transitioning out of conflict which has lasted on and off since independence in 1948. Conflicts result from a combination of social and political oppression from a half-century of authoritarian military governance, and ongoing, often violent tensions between several ethnic and cultural groups. This research focuses on the latter. Historically, relations within and between these groups have often been marked by conflict around desires for self-determination, and freedom of religion and language, as well as struggles over the control of resources. UNICEF’s Conflict Analysis of Myanmar suggests that key motives behind today’s ethnic and government fighting are control of natural resources and political power, as well as desire for democracy, and the representation and freedom of ethnic groups. They argue that recent political changes have ‘not extended quickly enough’ to the rural and ethnic populations, which has caused further grievances (2014, p. 2). In this climate of confusion and transition, Myanmar’s education system plays a critical role in reconciling difference, building stable and peaceful relations, and promoting social cohesion across the country. This project studies the case of ‘ethnically-inclusive’ education in Yangon, and the relationship with peacebuilding.
1.1 Background and Context: Education in Conflict

Schools are one of the first parts of social life to be affected in conflict, symbolically and physically. In times of war, continuing education may give families a sense of normalcy within chaos. Classrooms may be used as shelters and refuges for those affected by violence. Because of their symbolic role in communities, schools can also become deliberate targets of violence, giving access to civilians for physical attack or even military recruitment (Davies, 2010; Lopes Cardozo & Novelli, 2008; UNESCO, 2011). At the same time, education can be seen as a ‘perpetrator’ of violence, by misrepresenting truths which incites social tension, or teaching a ‘hate’ curriculum. A UNESCO report (2011, p. 131) discusses this multidimensional character:

> Education systems do not cause wars. But under certain conditions they can exacerbate the wider grievances, social tensions and inequalities that drive societies in the direction of violent conflict [...] And when classrooms are used not to nurture young minds by teaching children to think critically in a spirit of tolerance and mutual understanding, but to poison those minds with prejudice, intolerance and a distorted view of history, they can become a breeding ground for violence.

This links to Bush and Saltarelli’s (2000) concept of the different ‘faces’ of education. The negative face promotes violence and conflict through authoritarian teaching, promotion of violence or militarism in classrooms, and the harmful differentiation of social groups. The positive face sees the cultivation of tolerance and respect for diversity, and skills of critical thinking and mediation (Hilker, 2011; Davies, 2005). This latter concept connects with Davies’ idea of ‘interruptive democracy’ (2004) in which participatory processes allow for the ‘dialogue, encounter and challenge’ of ideas. Davies argues that such ideas of ‘positive conflict’ are critical for the establishment and maintenance of stability and peace, through their use in citizenship and peace education. These concepts will be discussed further in Chapter Two, emphasising their relevance to the research.

1.2 Research Rationale and Academic Relevance

The ongoing conflict and instability in Myanmar is having an inestimable effect on its young people and their possibilities for the future. Through education, they may be able to access different opportunities, and contribute to the nation’s transition to post-conflict. For this reason, it is crucial to understand the ways in which schooling can support positive social and political developments in
promoting peace and building cohesion, or be culpable of perpetuating violence and inciting tension. In particular, several key thinkers in the field of education and peacebuilding note a lack of empirical data on peace and conflict situations, and implementation of peace education in different contexts, calling for more research (Lopes Cardozo & May, 2009; Berghof Foundation, 2012). This project endeavours to respond, discussing a case study of peace education in non-formal schooling in Myanmar. Kant Kaw Education Centre (KKEC) in Yangon is an interesting fieldsite for two reasons. Firstly, the learning content and materials are specifically designed to address Myanmar’s history of conflict, and to equip its students with tools to develop personally and academically in these challenging conditions, making it a form of peace education. Secondly, the demographic of KKEC’s students is more diverse than many other schools in Myanmar due to its extensive scholarship programme, which recruits young people from all over the country. This allowed for discussions with students who have varied experiences of education, and different ideas about Myanmar’s peacebuilding process.

The broad aim of this research project is to explore the role of education in peacebuilding, particularly how it may support efforts to overcome social and political conflict, and work through some of the perceived causes. Furthermore, the project studied the experiences of young people in Myanmar's education system, and how they perceive their opportunities and hopes for the future.

1.3 Research Questions

How does ethically inclusive education at Kant Kaw Education Centre promote peacebuilding in the post-conflict context of Myanmar?

- How is Myanmar’s ethnic diversity discussed in the classroom, beyond the Burmese majority?
- How does the content of the ‘Community Leadership and Social Studies’ programme address the issue of ethnic diversity and inclusion?
- How might indigenous epistemologies from different ethnic communities play out in the classroom to support – or hinder – inclusivity?

1.4 Thesis Outline

The introductory chapter presents the broad field within which this research project is positioned – education and conflict – and gives key information about the fieldsite. It explains the rationale and
relevance, and outlines the research question and sub-questions. The rest of this thesis is divided into three main sections.

Chapter Two, the theoretical framework, presents the main concepts around which the research was built, that are derived from the research question and sub-questions. It aims to create a debate between several key thinkers around these concepts. The theories go on to inform the analysis and discussion of data in chapters Four, Five and Six.

Chapter Three describes the research framework. It outlines the epistemological and methodological assumptions that informed the methods of data collection and analysis that were used. While there is a definite emphasis on qualitative methods, some quantitative data was collected, responding to the methodological demands of the research design. This chapter also includes a description of the fieldsite, and discussion of the ethical considerations and limitations of the research.

Chapters Four, Five and Six form the analysis and discussion of the evidence gathered during fieldwork. Chapter Four outlines the school’s particular conception of peace education, and how this translates into classrooms and content, with its strong emphasis on diversity. Chapter Five critically examines this particular vision and the effects of certain strategic decisions around curriculum. It is argued that the diversity of the classrooms has implications for the educational experiences that students have, particularly around discussions of language, gender and religion. Chapter Six completes the analysis, considering the outcome of KKEC’s programme and what it means for students. The question is how graduates are equipped, and able to navigate the immense changes that Myanmar is currently facing, with the skills and experiences they gained.

Chapter Seven concludes this thesis, summarising the key findings in connection with the research questions, sub-questions, and relevant theory. Following a methodological reflection, the chapter outlines recommendations for the sector of education and peacebuilding, as well as suggestions for further research.
2 THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

This section discusses the two main concepts around which the research is organised: inclusive education (focusing on inclusion of ethnicity) and peacebuilding. These discussions will draw on academic and policy literature in these fields, introducing some of the key debates and questions around these issues.

2.1 Inclusive Education

This concept has gained momentum over the course of the 20th century as education philosophy has been influenced by discourses of human rights and capabilities. A broad definition comes from Block et al (2014, p. 1340):

An inclusive learning environment is one that provides a curriculum that caters to a diverse range of students and accommodates diverse voices and perspectives so that all children feel they belong and can contribute.

The following section presents an overview of some of the international policy literature around education, inclusion and rights, with particular regard to ethnic and cultural minorities and diversity. This is followed by a discussion of the two main dimensions of inclusive education in this research project: inclusive classrooms and teaching, and alternative views on inclusion.

2.1.1 International Discourses around Inclusive Education

The concept of inclusive education has for a long time been connected to students with disabilities or special needs, and the merits of educating them together with non-disabled/special needs students, (Taylor & Sidhu, 2012). However, in broader terms, inclusive education refers to more than ability-related identity markers. Indeed, UNESCO (2009, p. 8) defines inclusion in education as a process of addressing and responding to the diversity of needs of all children, youth and adults through increasing participation in learning, cultures and communities, and reducing and eliminating exclusion within and from education.
This ‘diversity’ includes, among others, ‘remote rural dwellers and nomads, ethnic and linguistic minorities’ (2009, p. 8). The position builds on previous international frameworks around the role and standard of education in all countries. The 1948 Universal Declaration of Human Rights (UDHR) states that

Education [...] shall promote understanding, tolerance and friendship among all nations, racial or religious groups, and shall further the activities of the United Nations for the maintenance of peace.

Furthermore, the 1989 United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC) (Arts. 29 and 30) outlines the right for children of ethnic and cultural minorities to ‘enjoy his or her own culture, to profess and practise his or her own religion, or to use his or her own language’ and the need for education to respect children’s

own cultural identity, language and values, for the national values of the country in which the child is living, the country from which he or she may originate, and for civilizations different from his or her own.

These conventions underline the international community’s determination to make education open and accessible to a wide range of social groups, and responsive to their needs as well as the needs of the state.

2.1.2 Inclusive Teaching and Inclusive Classrooms

It is often the ‘burden’ of schooling systems to counter the reproduction of inequalities or negative social relations that exist within and between communities (Davies, 2004), which many schools attempt to do through an inclusive approach. This is because, often, exclusion from education may lead to exclusion from social participation and other rights in the long-term (Osler & Starkey, 2005; Sleeter, 1996). Inclusive education for ethnic and cultural groups may pose particular challenges because of the importance of identity markers and belonging for many people in these groups. Bardhan describes ‘powerful’ rules around ‘entry and exit’ of these groups, as well as their more rigid boundaries and often overt identifying characteristics (in Davies, 2004 p. 234). Because of the strength of ethnic and cultural groups it can be argued that inclusive education is critical not only for the personal growth of students, but also for ‘building social cohesion’ in a wider context (Taylor &
Sidhu, 2012, p. 54) by fostering feelings of belonging in other social groups such as nationality. Indeed, Davies warns against the dangers of segregated education for ethnic groups, through the example of Bosnia-Herzegovina, which can lead to feelings of ‘suspicion’ and ‘divide’ rather than tolerance (Davies, 2001). This does not mean to neglect or ignore the diversity in classrooms, which is a crucial dimension of education. Ladson-Billings calls this ‘culturally relevant teaching’, which helps students ‘understand themselves and others’ and work toward positive social change (1992, p. 314). To ensure the greatest inclusion, it is crucial to consider, and mitigate, the subjective voices in education’s agenda. Junne and Verkoren suggest that this subjectivity can be found in the content and language of instruction which ‘significantly affect the attitudes and ideas of communities, contributing either to conflict or to peacebuilding’ (2005, p. 15). This is echoed by Apple, who questions the sources and organisation of the knowledge which informs schooling systems, ‘whose knowledge is of most worth?’ (1990, p. 526).

In discussing inclusive education for marginalised groups, it is useful to look at the concept of social justice. This approach argues that the inclusion of these groups contributes to stronger social cohesion, stability and justice through fair representation in ‘political spaces’ (Keddie, 2012) such as schools. In the context of justice in conflict, this discussion emphasises inclusive reconciliation, ‘building just, equitable and inclusive societies rather than merely dealing with the physical violations of the past’ (Sanchez & Rognvik, 2012, p. 6). This social justice discourse is an important dimension in the fields of indigenous and critical change perspectives, which are further discussed in the following section.

2.1.3 Alternative Perspectives on Inclusiveness

The present discussion of inclusive education is focused on the inclusion of ethnic minorities. In many cases, especially in post-colonial contexts, ethnic minorities are considered indigenous to specific areas, which connects with the academic field of indigenous studies. This thesis argues that discussions around ethnically inclusive education may benefit significantly from the theoretical perspectives of this field.

Indigenous studies engages with alternative epistemologies around growth, development, and social and political life. Epistemology can be defined as a way of knowing that is connected to power structures (Mignolo, 2009). This is framed in a Foucauldian sense of the interrelation between power, knowledge and autonomy: knowledge is made subjective in the way that it is connected with power structures and their functions of diffusing this knowledge (Foucault, 1977; Ziai, 2004). Examples of
such power structures include language systems, or educational organisations. Thus, alternative epistemologies coming from the perspective of indigenous studies have the potential to reveal new ways of thinking, and to be inclusive in different ways. The Buen Vivir movement in Latin America provides an interesting example of indigenous perspectives on education. Gudynas defines Buen Vivir as a ‘broad notion of well-being and cohabitation with others and Nature’ (2011, p. 441) which underlines its stress on social cohesion and a certain level of inclusivity. Its potential for inclusive education is illustrated in Bolivia’s 2007 ASEP policy which promotes ‘valuing the knowledge, skills and technologies of indigenous civilisations’ with the aim of increasing well-being (‘para vivir bien’). At the same time, it is seen to be distancing education discourse from western subjective ‘conceptualisations’ of the world (Lopes Cardozo, 2013) which often dominate the field of education development, thereby giving space to alternative voices in the discussion.

This move can be linked to the broader debate around critical pedagogy with authors such as Freire and Giroux (in Jackson, 1997). For Giroux, schooling is ‘implicated in the construction and organisation of knowledge, desires, values and social practices’ through pedagogy’s role in the production of meaning. He calls for a radicalisation of education, that interrogates society’s ‘fundamental categories’ in an effort to promote democracy. This includes categories such as gender, ethnicity, race or language. Similarly, Freire draws attention to pedagogy’s subjective character within the political agenda of education. His concept of ‘humanising’ education emphasises ‘conscientisation’ of the individual’s ‘presence in the world’, and consideration of individuals’ as well as others’ ‘needs and aspirations’, leading to a greater sense of inclusion. This would bring about liberation from social and political oppression, and greater freedom in society.

As regards education for minority or marginalised groups, Keddie argues that inclusivity must address “other” ways of knowing and being. This would ‘support greater participation, motivation and achievement’ for these groups and counteract the ‘cultural disadvantage’ which pervades mainstream education and limits certain students (Keddie, 2012). Thus, critical pedagogy is also connected to a social justice conception of inclusive education. A useful theoretical model for such a conception is Fraser’s ‘Three Rs’ which is used in the analysis and discussion below. The first ‘R’ is economic redistribution which addresses ‘a more just distribution of resources and goods’ (1998, p. 1). The second is cultural recognition, by ‘positively valorising cultural diversity’ (1995, p. 73) in order to promote a ‘difference-friendly world, where assimilation to majority or dominant cultural norms is no longer the price of equal respect’ (1998, p. 1). The third ‘R’ is political representation which frames ‘inclusion in, or exclusion from, the community of those entitled to make justice claims’, as well as ‘the procedures that structure public processes of contestation’ (2007, p. 256). Fraser
argues that, although they are distinct in the system changes that they target, the three dimensions are interlinked as representation ‘tells us [...] who can make claims for redistribution and recognition’ (2007, p. 256). For this research recognition and representation are particularly interesting as they address issues around social equality, diversity and inclusion.

Social justice issues of inclusion and equality can also be linked to feminist pedagogy in questioning the categories of knowledge, science, and universal truth, their legitimacy, and the power of those who possess them (Jackson, 1997). Feminist theories of education are interesting for this research, as gender is an important part of both inclusivity and peacebuilding in the school. The connection to inclusive education is fairly straightforward and is related to gender equal classrooms, as well as content and materials that discuss issues of gender. Chapter Five addresses the link to peacebuilding, discussing the implications of how gender is framed and incorporated in KKEC’s programme, particularly as it relates to peace education. This connects to the theoretical field of women, peace and security (e.g. UNSCR, 2000) which is strongly related to the field of gender in education, as is demonstrated by this research. However, this is not clearly reflected in the literature, indicating a potential gap. This discussion is taken further in Chapter Five.

These critical perspectives on pedagogy are not unproblematic. Their vision of inclusivity may in fact exclude other social groups; their success in bringing about change may still depend on centralised or top-down political action. However, they provide a useful way to think about alternative perspectives. Often, women and indigenous groups are those most marginalised in mainstream discourses around development, and considering their voices may be a productive way to reconceptualise inclusivity.

In the field of education, translation into practice is complex because of the multitude of actors involved, from students and parents to teachers and policy-makers. The discussion becomes one about governance, and the kind of public sphere that is built for the nation. Here, critical pedagogy overlaps with the theory of peace education as they have a common demand for transformative action. These concepts come together in what Huaman calls ‘critical Indigenous peace education’, that realises social transformation through the ‘recovery of knowledge’ and restoration of ‘purposes’. The central question of this perspective is how communities can prepare youth ‘to restore and (re)build a peaceful society’ (2011, p. 256). It is pertinent in the context of this research, the transition to peace in Myanmar, demonstrating that the field of indigenous and critical education studies is highly relevant here. The concept of peace education is discussed further in the next section.
2.2 Peacebuilding

Peacebuilding is a broad concept and can be defined in different ways. In essence, it describes a process of working toward sustainable peace by preventing conflict and addressing its root causes (UN, 2016). The dynamic character of peacebuilding is critical, as it reflects an understanding that peace is not static, but a 'process of decreasing violence and increasing justice' (Berghof Foundation, 2012). This concept covers many areas, from the social and political, to security and the environment. Because this research project studies the link between peacebuilding and inclusive education, the theoretical discussion will focus on the debates around peacebuilding in education, in particular the key dimensions of peacebuilding that were important in the fieldsite. The first dimension is the link between peacebuilding and democracy, citizenship and nation-building. The second dimension is peace education, understood through a particular connection to the community as the principal site for establishing peaceful relations. The third dimension is the role of civil society as a driver for change in Myanmar.

2.2.1 Citizenship and Nation-Building

While each case of conflict-to-peace transition is unique (Davies, 2004), all require, in one form or another, rebuilding the nation and civil society. Salem-Gervais and Metro define nation-building as the 'process of constructing or structuring a national identity using the power of the state' (2012). The process often works toward establishing peace and preventing violence from reoccurring, in other words, through peacebuilding. In creating a national identity that corresponds to a particular territory, state structures are put in place which turn individuals living in those territories into citizens, whose role is dismantling conflict and preventing it in the future. The success of peacebuilding thus hinges on the success of citizenship work. This is where citizenship education becomes important, teaching people to ‘act politically, to advocate both individually and collectively for themselves and for other marginalised people’ (Sleeter, 1996, p. 246). It must be noted that due to the political underpinnings of citizenship, it has a location-specific dimension to it, with western-based literature emphasising its link with the democratic tradition (which is by no means universal).

In conflicts at the national scale the number of individuals and groups involved is immense, with complex interconnections between them, based on, among others, political motivation, economic interests and cultural belonging. Because of this it is often impossible to determine a single source for the conflict. However, identifying these connections affects how conflict and reconstruction is dealt with (Davies, 2004, p. 230); it is therefore important to include opposing voices and alternative
perspectives in analysis of peacebuilding (Novelli & Lopes Cardozo, 2008). An important arena for this kind of inclusion and critical thinking is education, which can be a peaceful and nurturing environment, and one that engages with different members of the community. This links with the discussion of the relationship between schooling and conflict (see 1.1), and stresses the importance of integrating peacebuilding projects within and through schooling, such as in civic education programmes.

In Myanmar, which has recently transitioned to democracy, the population only had access to a ‘reduced’ form of citizenship under the military regime, which denied many rights and freedoms. As the country transitions, and the relationships between state and individuals change, the question of national identity becomes important. Minority communities are able to participate more in the state system, and articulate their own interests and ideas (Lall & Hla Hla Win, 2012). While identity-formation is arguably the main task of citizenship, many authors in the field draw attention to the importance of also recognising difference. For Gutmann, this recognition is essential in order for all citizens’ rights to be guaranteed (in Osler & Starkey, 2005). Unterhalter describes the capacity for difference to ‘empower’ and warns against education’s ‘homogenising process’ that may work to remove difference as ‘obstacles’ (in Davies, 2004). In order for education to play a beneficial role it must challenge such a homogenisation and encourage the sharing of different perspectives. This is behind Davies’ concept of ‘interruptive democracy’, a form of positive conflict, which is the ability to ‘dialogue, encounter and challenge’ ideas in order to contest past or present injustice (2005, p. 366). For civic education to be relevant it must be heavily contextualised, taking into account the ‘views, experiences and priorities of children and young people’ (Lopes Cardozo, et al., 2015, p. 38). In this way, civic education can be seen to bridge the two concepts at hand in this research, inclusive education and peacebuilding, by playing a critical role in negotiating diversity and integration in nationhood. The following section builds on this discussion of education’s role in peacebuilding, looking at the concept of peace education.

2.2.2 Peace Education

Schooling is not a neutral exercise, but is actually loaded with meaning and values through the students, teachers, curricula and policies that make it (Jackson 1997; Apple 1990; Apple 2001). This corresponds to Bush and Saltarelli’s argument about the different ‘faces’ of education (see 1.1), where ‘positive’ schooling promotes values of tolerance and respect, and skills of critical thinking and creativity. A useful example of this is peace education, defined by Davies as ‘the preparation for peace’
as opposed to a ‘preparation for war’ (2001). Peace education is not a new topic of discussion. World leaders became increasingly vocal about the need to teach about conflict and non-violence from the beginning of the 20th century and especially after the two world wars. In 1993 the United Nations made explicit reference to its importance in the Vienna Declaration:

Human rights education should include peace, democracy, development and social justice, as set forth in international and regional human rights instruments, in order to achieve common understanding and awareness with a view to strengthening universal commitment to human rights.

Furthermore, the UN dedicated the International Day of Peace 2013 to peace education. Despite the growing interest in this concept, it is difficult to find a concise definition. ‘Peace education’ is an umbrella-term that captures different ideas about how peace is incorporated in schooling. Varying degrees of inclusion and formality, and the spectrum of theoretical to practical learning, are represented by the many different terms that can be seen today: peace education, education for peace, education for peacebuilding, human rights education, education for conflict resolution etc. (see e.g. Lopes Cardozo, 2008). Generally, all of these concepts overlap across several core elements:

- Creating a desire for peace between rivals
- Building knowledge about conflicts, about different societies and value systems, and about inequality
- Promoting behavioural and attitudinal changes toward inclusion, non-violence and conflict resolution
- Addressing structures that produce inequality and injustice

(Fountain, 1999; Bush & Saltarelli, 2000; Harris & Synott, 2002; Davies, 2004; Lopes Cardozo, 2008; Lopes Cardozo & May, 2009; Berghof Foundation, 2012). There is also a basic consensus that teaching methods for peace education emphasise critical thinking, learner-centred pedagogy, collaborative and ‘experiential’ learning (Davies, 2004; Lopes Cardozo, 2008).

Based on these general ideas, different forms of peace education can be found across the world, especially in currently or recently conflict-affected areas. An example is Education for Mutual Understanding in Northern Ireland, created after violent religious conflict divided communities. More recently, the debate around peace education has questioned how realistic it is to expect attitudes and knowledge about peace to decrease and prevent conflicts. Significant attention must also be paid to the wider contexts and individual characteristics of conflicts, rather than applying
one-size solutions. This is where peace education, focusing on changing behaviours, is different from peacebuilding, which addresses structural change and legal reform. Ideally, peace education would form a part of a larger process of peacebuilding that goes beyond the classroom, exerting ‘political influence’ into wider social structures (Lopes Cardozo, 2008; Berghof Foundation, 2012). This connects with Bush and Saltarelli’s vision of ‘peacebuilding education’, which ‘would self-consciously and systematically seek to have a positive peacebuilding impact’ on conflict-affection regions. Its attention to singular contexts, and grounding in affected communities, which would also be its driving force, shows how it goes beyond the more theoretical and inward-looking peace education. The emphasis on community-led peacebuilding here is important, especially, as Bush and Saltarelli envision it, across different ethnic communities (2000). Indeed, the ethnic community as a site for preventing conflict and building peaceful reconciliation is critical in this research on Myanmar. The following section builds on this idea, discussing different ways peace education can be implemented in the particular case of Myanmar.

2.2.3 Peacebuilding in Myanmar: The Role of Civil Society

Referring to the process of nation-building through civic education (2.2.1), Sleeter claims that this task belongs to the state (1996). While this may hold true for other cases of conflict-to-peace transition, this is perhaps not the most accurate description for Myanmar. Because of the country’s particular social and cultural landscape, and the history that shaped it, the state’s role is not straightforward, and for many people it is a contested body. Instead, civil society plays a key role as a driver for change in Myanmar’s transition to peace.

In Understanding Reform in Myanmar Marie Lall presents an in-depth discussion of the place of civil society in the country’s recent history, based on her own field research. In simple terms, civil society is the entire ‘space between state and family, which is autonomous and separate from the state’ (2016, p. 7). In Myanmar, however, this also excludes the political and economic sectors, as well as militarised groups. Rather, civil society is made up of ‘non-ephemeral organisations of individuals banded together to pursue a common purpose or purposes through group activities and by peaceful means’ (Steinberg in Lall, 2016, p. 7). The particular nature of Myanmar’s civil society is a product of recent history. While Myanmar has a diverse ethnic, cultural and religious landscape, its government has not been a reflection of this diversity for most of recent history. At independence, ethnically-motivated conflicts and a socialist-military government made up of ethnically Burmese and Buddhist emerged. As a result, many outlier communities were deprived of basic freedoms and services for
years. Lall argues that this gave rise to Myanmar’s ‘modern’ civil society, when local ethnic- and faith-based groups formed to participate in ceasefire agreements. Subsequently, many of them became active in delivering the welfare services that were needed in their communities, growing in number, size and influence. Lall refers to these as ‘community-based organisations’ (CBOs). For many people, these groups deliver real progress through improved health or education for their communities. Because they established themselves outside of the country's political sphere, they have not been hindered in their work by the Tatmadaw’s (Myanmar’s military organisation) imposition of its political authority.

This civil society sector has a particular way of operating in Myanmar’s challenging social and political climate. Lall explains that Myanmar’s reliance on networks as a key social structure, while originally used by the state military, was appropriated by civil society groups to become the main way for communication and growth to take place, ‘today most civil society leaders are only able to have the social and political impact they seek because of the networks and social relationships they have created over the years’ (2016, p. 9). It is important to note that these networks also included contacts within the regime, which were key to their ability to function.

In sum, civil society plays an undeniable role in Myanmar’s social landscape, as a driver for bottom-up change, as opposed to problematic top-down actions by the state. For this reason, it is important to understand civil society’s in peacebuilding processes. As Lall notes, ‘these organisations are now able to complement the role of the government, bridge the gaps between citizens and the state, and become the channels of communication between society and the government’ (2016, p. 9). As Myanmar goes through transitions to democracy, it is unclear what the effect will be on this civil society arrangement. Perhaps an internationally supported government will extend its influence into the domains previously organised by CSO/CBOs, such as post-conflict rebuilding, and peace education. This has significant implications for organisations such as the one in this research project.

Concluding Remarks –

It is worthwhile to return to the discussion of social justice, highlighting that the two core concepts, social inclusion and peace through education, have strong links to this theory. The essential aim of any peace-oriented education system is to establish equal, tolerant and positive relations, which are critical to long-term and sustainable peace. Fraser’s ‘Three Rs’ is a useful model for social justice theory, addressing political, cultural and economic issues through the dimensions representation, recognition and redistribution (Fraser, 1995, 2005; Keddie, 2012). The focus on minority
communities, and the role of civil society in this research connect foremost with representation and recognition. This model was beneficial in the analysis and discussion of several findings in this research, and is further discussed below.

### 2.3 Conceptual Scheme

Based on the theoretical discussion of these concepts, the following scheme can be used to illustrate their connections and dynamic interrelation. The central movement progresses from left to right, indicating the transition from conflict to peace. In the centre, various dimensions of peacebuilding are shown to reinforce the movement to peace, through their connection to ethnically-inclusive education. Within this process, the ‘positive’ and ‘negative’ faces of education are shown, and their effects on the conflict-to-peace transition.
3 RESEARCH FRAMEWORK

3.1 Positioning of Research and Epistemic Assumptions

A paradigm is the ‘organising framework’ which dictates how the research subject should be interpreted and the appropriate methods for data collection and analysis (Powers & Knapp in Bergman, 2010, p. 172). This project bridges several paradigms, which must be explained to best understand the research. The foundations are built on a post-positivist way of thinking, assuming that there is a reality which exists independently of the researcher. However, it is impossible to perfectly grasp this reality, so the researcher relies on contextual information, as well as the individual perspectives of informants to give weight to the argument. Indeed, these perspectives make up the core of the data, because, as in social-constructivism, it is assumed that there is no single truth to be discovered about the situation. Rather, individuals have their own truths about their social world, according to their own lived realities. Subjectivity is inherent in the research, and the researcher’s effect on the fieldsite is acknowledged (Guba & Lincoln, 1994). Finally, this research is informed by a critical change perspective, because it deals with issues of inequality and injustice, confronting the ‘value context’ and power relations at play, and discussing possibilities for action (Sumner & Tribe, 2008).

This research was envisaged with a high degree of relativity, as in anthropology, using ethnographic techniques for data collection, emphasising contextual information (‘thick description’) and grounded-theory to guide data analysis. These techniques are useful in engaging with individuals’ experiences and social interactions on a micro-level. Furthermore, a high degree of relativity is important because this research is focused on an informant group with a large diversity of backgrounds, beliefs and practices. Indeed, this characteristic of the fieldsite, and the research focus on inclusion, calls for an epistemological stance that best allows the voices of informants to come through. So-called alternative epistemologies provide useful perspectives in research with groups that are marginalised or excluded from mainstream discussion, such as feminist and indigenous studies. It is hoped that a different positioning than is usual for western social scientific research can give greater prominence to voices that may be subdued in mainstream discussion.
3.2 Unit of Analysis and Sampling

The unit of analysis is experiences of education in Myanmar. These experiences may be at the level of individuals (students, staff and teachers) and groups (ethnic, age or gender), so the unit of observation is both individuals and groups. Because of the case study nature of this project, the research site and pool of informants was identified before arrival in the field. Purposive sampling was used in order to approach informants with relevant characteristics. Research was coordinated by the local supervisor (a KKEC staff member) who facilitated introductions with the rest of the staff. Because of the small size and friendly, open atmosphere at KKEC it was easy to contact relevant individuals and plan the different phases of research.

The small pool of informants constrained the sampling process, as it was necessary to approach particular individuals based on their position in the school, and to observe and interact with the maximum number of students possible. However, because of the case study nature of this project, purposive sampling does not endanger the validity of findings, because they are not intended to be generalizable outside of the fieldsite (Sumner & Tribe, 2008). Furthermore, representativeness of samples is not a decisive factor in this example, as the available population of informants is itself limited. Through purposive sampling, all informants that presented the desired characteristics were incorporated in the research.

3.3 Methods

This project was designed to collect data on the experience of education at KKEC, how it engages with peacebuilding through ethnic inclusivity. Qualitative and quantitative methods were used to access as many perspectives on this issue as possible. The research design was flexible and methods were implemented as and when appropriate opportunities presented themselves. An anonymised transparency document listing all quantifiable data collection is included in Appendix 2. As noted above, this research takes the form of a single, in-depth case study, which has certain implications for the choice of methods. Case studies are an effective design ‘when asking how or why questions about processes unknown’. A key assumption is that findings are only meaningful in the particular circumstances of the research, meaning that case studies do not produce statistically generalizable inferences, but rather an intimate and holistic insight into a particular social phenomenon (Small, 2009). To maintain the quality of research and convince readers of its authenticity, it must be
accompanied by detailed description and contextual information, to provide a ‘vicarious experience’ of the fieldsite (Guba & Lincoln, 1994).

### 3.3.1 Quantitative Survey

The first phase of research was to collect background information about the student body. This is crucial to the ‘significant context’ in which the project takes place (Fontein, 2014), and to verify the assumption on which the research was built – that KKEC’s students represent a large diversity of Myanmar’s population. With the help of the school manager and the academic coordinator, a survey of demographic questions was disseminated amongst students and collected fifty-four responses (out of an approximate total school population of sixty). It contained four questions about demographic characteristics (age, gender, ethnic background and Term) and two questions about the students’ personal future trajectories (see Appendix). This ‘census-type’ data is also critical to making sense of some of the issues and topics that arose in interviews (Fontein, 2014).

### 3.3.2 Observation

The second phase involved observation of classes with relevant subject matter, such as Peace & Conflict and Civic Education. Observation was one of the key methods, because of the way the research questions were formulated. Indeed, the focus of the research was to understand how activities, content and interactions in the classroom connect with ideas of peacebuilding in the school. Therefore, it was crucial to see them taking place as much as possible.
Ethnographic techniques were used to collect data on the subjective ‘perceptions and views’ of informants, in their own terms. They are useful for carrying out case study research, as they emphasise the singularity of a situation, the importance of ‘being there’, and of the ‘situatedness of behaviour’. Cohen et al. posit their effectiveness in studying ‘bounded phenomena and systems, such as organisations’ (2011). One such technique is participant observation, ‘taking part in the daily activities, rituals, interactions and events of the people being studied’ in order to experience the ‘explicit and tacit aspects of their culture’ (Dewalt & Dewalt, 2011, p. 260). Most of the observation took place in the classrooms during lessons. Dewalt et al. describe this as ‘moderate participation’, where one is ‘present at the scene of action but doesn’t actively participate or […] only occasionally interacts’ (2011, p. 262). The advantage of this method is that the researcher is able to learn about the fieldsite, not only by seeing it, but also by ‘doing and experiencing’ in a similar way to informants. Fontein argues that this reveals important ‘non-verbal’ data about the situation (2014). Furthermore, the data allowed interesting themes and questions to come through which formed the basis of in-depth interviews with staff, the third phase of research. It is important to note that in participant observation, a degree of reflexivity is required to understand the researcher’s own position, and potential effect on the environment. In this project, it was impossible for the researcher not to be noticed in the classroom. She was obviously not a student, and she had already been introduced to the school as a visiting researcher. However, by sitting at the back of the classroom and remaining silent, classes could be carried out as per usual. While the bulk of teaching at KKEC takes place in English, much of the informal conversation between students, and occasionally with teachers, is in other languages which the researcher was not able to understand. For this reason, it was important to capture the aforementioned ‘non-verbal clues’.

3.3.3 Semi-Structured Interviews

The questions that arose from observation notes collected in-depth qualitative data. Staff were invited for interviews based on their professional positions within the school. The interviews took a semi-structured approach wherein specific topics where set out in a guide, but the discussion was flexible and open to the directions of interviewees as to topics they wished to discuss. The advantage of this form of interview is that it emphasises the perspective of the respondent in a given phenomenon (Bryman, 2012). This ‘intersubjectivity’ (Cohen, Manion, & Morrison, 2011) means that each interview gives unique data, based on the particular ways in which respondents experience and interpret the context. In order to overcome bias, interview guides were designed so as to discuss
many of the same topics with different informants, meaning that data could be triangulated in analysis, strengthening credibility.

### 3.3.4 Student Group Discussions

Based on the data gathered through interviews with staff and observations in the classroom, three group discussions with students were organised with the help of Soe Phyo, Anisa and Win Maung San\(^1\), and formed the final phase of research. The fifteen students who participated were selected from the twenty students that make up Term Three. This is because the discussion topics required students to have attended third term classes. Students were chosen based on gender, to have one all-male, one all-female and one mixed-gender group, because of anticipated influence on the discussion topic of Gender Studies. A group setting was decided upon as the most appropriate way to engage with students for several reasons. Firstly, it permitted many informants to share their views over a small period of time. This was important considering that fieldwork coincided with a particularly busy time in the school year. In addition, the topics of discussion often touched on issues that are somewhat taboo outside of the school, and difficult for students to talk about. In this context Cohen et al. argue that group settings may be useful. Participants are less likely to experience asymmetrical power relations with the researcher, and may feel enabled to voice their own perspectives more freely (Cohen, Manion, & Morrison, 2011).

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\(^1\) Staff members of the school’s leadership. Pseudonyms are used for all individuals who participated in this research.
3.3.5 Qualitative Questionnaires

Having anticipated that group discussion participants may hesitate to openly discuss their views on controversial topics, a short questionnaire was created to accompany the discussion. Designed in a fill-in-the-boxes way, it asked respondents their opinions on the ‘benefits’ and ‘challenges’ of three different parts of the CLASS programme. A blank copy of the questionnaire is included in Appendix 3. Students were given ten minutes at the end of each group discussion to answer the three questions, and were encouraged to use ‘bullet-points’. The questionnaire had two significant benefits: it allowed every participant’s voice to be recorded, even those who did not contribute much during the discussion; it also gave them the chance to communicate opinions they were not willing or able to voice during the discussion. This was especially important for the female participants in the gender-mixed group. All questionnaires were completed in English.

3.4 Data Analysis

3.4.1 Qualitative Data Analysis

Qualitative data covers all observations, interviews, group discussions and questionnaires. Analysis was carried out upon return from the field. Recorded material was transcribed and entered into the programme Atlas.ti, as were all observation notes, and written materials. Documents were organised according to themes, using a combination of open coding and selective coding. Codes were related to particular classes (Peace & Conflict, Civic Education...), social issues (diversity, discrimination...) or concepts connected with education (skills, career, knowledge...). This enabled connections and patterns between themes to emerge. It also organised quotations or excerpts into accessible categories.

Notes were dived between observation and reflection. The former were indexed according to patterns which emerged when re-read after return from the field. They form the majority of recorded data, describing the setting, activities, content and interactions observed. The reflection notes contain more personal thoughts and experiences, which, while an integral part of the fieldwork process, are often not appropriate for analysis. They are used to accompany the reading of observation notes.
3.4.2 Quantitative Data Analysis

A small amount of quantitative data was collected through the demographic survey completed by students. It produced fifty-four responses on six different questions. This information was entered into IBM’s Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS) programme as a single data set. The ‘descriptive statistics’ tool was used to analyse the frequencies of variables (age, gender, background...) and to generate corresponding graphs.

3.4.3 Discourse Analysis

Linking to the argument about the subjectivity of educational content, materials such as textbooks must be critically analysed, and their representativeness questioned (2.1.2). Research on content and curricula at KKEC was carried out using discourse analysis. KKEC is a fascinating site for this form of research, because (1) many teaching materials used are produced within the organisation, the students of KKEC being their target audience, and (2) the language of instruction is English, which carries its own implications. The field of discourse analysis spans different disciplines and understandings. In this research, discourse is understood as 'linguistic and non-linguistic social practices and ideological assumptions’ around relations of power (Junne & Verkoren, 2005, p. 15). Discourse analysis is used to understand the relation between language and power. This comes from Foucault’s claim that ‘patterned cultural discourses maintain […] particular ways of knowing the world and a network of power relations’ (Barnard & Spencer, 2001, p. 163). Barnard argues that the Foucauldian perspective is relevant to research inspired by post-colonial and feminist theory (2000) such as this project. This is linked to van Dijk's concept of critical discourse analysis which focuses ‘on the role of discourse in the (re)production and challenge of dominance’ (1993 – emphasis in original). This method analyses data using a normative perspective, paying attention to voice, injustice, inequality and resistance. Of the classes relevant to this research, only Civic Education and Gender Studies use textbooks that were available to the researcher, as was a general textbook on Myanmar history. Therefore, discourse analysis is applied to four textbooks:

- *Active Citizenship: A Civic Education Course for Myanmar* (Mote Oo, 2014)
- *Gender Issues and Perspectives: Gender Issues in Myanmar and Around the World* (Mote Oo, 2014)
- *Gender Issues: A Social Science Module in Simplified English for Myanmar Adults* (Educasia, date unknown)
- *Kingdoms, Colonialism and Independence: Myanmar History until 1948* (Educasia, date unknown)
3.5 Ethical Considerations

Following social scientific convention, all participants were made aware of the research and its aims prior to data collection. Informants were assured that they could decline participation at any point, and retract any information given. They were notified that the research is not intended for publication but for academic use. Consent for participation and for recording was obtained verbally before the beginning of research exercises. All names of individuals have been changed, but the name of the school and organisations are real. This decision was made with the consent of the school management, as it is hoped that this research will be beneficial to the organisation, or have a transformative effect in some way. Participation was framed within the ethical research guidelines of the American Anthropological Association which emphasises responsibility toward participants and host communities, toward the scientific discipline, and toward the public (2009).

It was considered that the topic of this research project, Myanmar’s ethnic-based conflict, may be uncomfortable for participants to discuss. The research also touched on issues of politics, gender and religion, which are understood to be sensitive or contentious for some people. Research questions and exercises were purposefully designed to avoid discussions of memories or personal experiences. The more sensitive topics were broached only with staff members, whereas research with students focused on how ethnicity, conflict or gender play out in the context of KKEC. The topic of religion was not included in research with students.

At this point it is useful to examine Brooten and Metro’s discussion of research ethics in the particular case of Myanmar (2014). One important point relates to power dynamics. Often in research on conflict, participants are considered to be ‘vulnerable’, with a threat of emotional trauma associated with reliving memories. Researchers may carry a certain authority into their fieldsites based on their background and networks, producing asymmetrical power relations, that can have associations with historical or neo-colonialism. Research such as in this project is centred upon the study of ‘indigenous’ groups by a foreign scholar, which creates a situation of ‘we’ and ‘they’ where different value is attached to voices. Additionally, in Myanmar’s tense political environment, there is a danger around ‘politicisation’ of research, with requires reflexivity and attention to context to mitigate it. Another point is that ethical research on situations of conflict must necessarily contain an element of critical change. This is connected to the researcher’s own obligation of reciprocity toward informants. In initiating research focused on conflict, there is a ‘question of whether scholars create or perpetuate conflict’ by demanding that controversial or sensitive issues be brought to light and examined over
and over. This can result in a view of Myanmar’s history and present as centred on ethnic conflict, resigning the population to continuously live out this small part of their past as a subject of international scrutiny. To confront this stasis, researchers must be ‘proactive in addressing the ways in which their work may perpetuate violence’ and use their findings ‘to improve the lives of the participants’ (Brooten & Metro, 2014, p. 16). A final point to this critical change perspective is that informants and researchers may not hold the same understandings around what constitutes positive change and how it should be supported. This, again, calls for great reflexivity and attention to context.

This research project was made possible by KKEC’s school management, and designed following the permissions and guidelines of staff members, keeping power dynamics on a level ground. Furthermore, the separation of ‘we’ and ‘they’ highlighted by Brooten and Metro was not so problematic, as the fieldsite is a kind of ‘bubble’ outside of mainstream society. In the school environment, relationships are hierarchized between students, teachers and directors, rather than through cultural values or political systems. Therefore, the researcher did not significantly influence the nature of relationships. During fieldwork there was reciprocity between researcher and informants, as the former assisted several students in English reading and writing for various classes. In addition, the academic coordinator integrated the quantitative questionnaire and group discussions into a class, to present them not only as data collection for the researcher, but also as instructive activities to familiarise students with social scientific research processes. Finally, the critical change expectations around the value and use of research findings are discussed further in the concluding chapter (7.3).

### 3.6 Limitations

The main limit of this research project is its short time-span. The available research time was eight weeks. Due to the nature of the topic it was important to build rapport with informants before beginning in-depth research. Therefore, the critical phases did not occur until the fifth or sixth week. However, with the availability of English-language materials and without need for translation, it was possible to use the entire field experience for data collection. Analysis was carried out upon return.

The other obstacle facing this research was language. While formal teaching was carried out in English, the majority of students’ interactions with each other were in Myanmar languages which were not understood. This was not known prior to arrival in the field. After consideration of the issue it was decided that there was no need for translation, (1) because these interactions were minimal,
because conversations in the presence of, or directed toward the researcher were in English, and (3) because the researcher was able to ask students to translate, which they did willingly.

An important issue in data analysis is researcher’s bias in participant observation. Eriksen states that ‘one cannot entirely get rid of one’s own cultural background’ (2001, p. 27), in this case the researcher’s own experiences in educational settings. While drawing comparisons may be a helpful way to analyse observation data, it must be done reflexively in order retain dependability.

3.7 Empirical Context

According to the 2014 census, Myanmar’s population is 51 million. School-age children make up more than a quarter of the population, although less than 80% are enrolled in school². Government spending on education was estimated at less than 1% of GDP for the period 2007-2013 (UN, 2016).

Myanmar achieved independence from colonialism in 1948 and credited to General Aung San, the father of Myanmar’s current democratic leader, Aung San Suu Kyi. Between 1962 and 2011 Myanmar was under the dictatorial control of its military, in which basic freedoms such as speech, movement, religion and participation, were curtailed. From 2011 to 2015 the government was headed by the military-turned-civilian Union Solidarity and Development Party (USDP). In 2015 the National League for Democracy (NLD) won the elections, making Htin Kyaw the first civilian president ‘to be elected in free and fair polls’ (BBC, 2016). At the time of writing, Myanmar is facing the complex challenge of developing the sectors which stagnated or declined during military rule. A

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² in 2014
key area for change is ‘national reconciliation’ between the central government and the ethnic communities.

Myanmar’s seven ethnic states maintain, to varying degrees, strong separate identities, often based on different languages or religions. The majority of the ethnic population lives rurally, suffering from the ‘widening gap’ with urban communities’ standards of living. Lall pinpoints the cause of this divergence in colonial politics that bestowed certain ethnic groups a higher status than others. This led to decades of armed conflict with the Bamar-controlled military after independence. Although most ethnic communities have arranged ceasefires with the government, tens of thousands of people remain internally displaced, and several million live ‘precarious’ lives as refugees and migrants in neighbouring countries. For decades, the ethnic states received few public services such as education, which, along with issues around language of instruction and teachers, has left many of their young people disenfranchised and excluded from the political and economic development enjoyed by their Burmese counterparts (Lall, 2016).

The following sections describe the empirical context in which research was carried out, the national peace process and reconciliation, and the country’s education system, going on to introduce the fieldsite, KKEC.

### 3.7.1 National Reconciliation and the Peace Process

After the fall of the socialist military regime in 1989, the subsequent government made efforts to negotiate an end to conflict with ethnic armed groups (EAGs). By the 1990s ceasefire agreements were in place with twenty EAGs, bringing an end to the violence and upheaval suffered by many communities for decades. This paved the way for the emergence of civil society initiatives to bring services and infrastructure into underdeveloped areas. It must be noted that even with increased interaction with the state government, many ethnic areas remain largely under the control of local organisations, often the civilian or political wings of EAGs.

In 2011 President Thein Sein introduced an official process of peace and national reconciliation began. Two components of this process are important for understanding the context of this research. Firstly, Thein Sein acknowledged that ‘there can be no peace without democracy nor democracy without peace’ (in Lall, 2016). Building on this statement, his government prepared the country’s first ‘free and fair’ elections in November 2015. For a significant number of young citizens, this was their first taste of democratic participation. The largely peaceful transition of power in March 2016
set a precedent for Myanmar’s political future. The second component of Thein Sein’s peace process was engaging EAGs in political and economic reform. This came with recognition of their national identities, and their hopes for greater self-determination and autonomy. While the government has not agreed to a redistribution of power, this remains an important acknowledgement of grievances, and a step toward developing positive peace. Although the NLD forms the government today, they remain connected to the military who occupy a quarter of parliament’s seats, making it impossible for the NLD to exercise full control over the house. The military also remains in control of the government portfolios of ‘defence’, ‘border affairs’ and ‘home affairs’. The eventual transition to a fully democratic, civilian government will be a critical point in Myanmar’s journey to peace and national reconciliation, and hinges on constitutional reform.

A key assumption on which this research is built is about the nature of Myanmar’s democracy. At the time of research, President Thein Sein’s government was operating a form of democracy that Lall argues ‘cannot be measured by western standards, but rather judged by local and Southeast Asian views’ (Lall M., 2016, p. 4). This is critical to the correct understanding of concepts such as participation, representation and peacebuilding, in the context of Myanmar.

### 3.7.2 Education in Myanmar

The Myanmar government is known to be the largest provider of education through national Basic Education schools (Zobrist & McCormick, 2013) in which all aspects of ‘educational policy’ are controlled centrally by the Ministry of Education (MoE). These include curricula and teaching staff, methods and materials (MoE, 2007). The MoE emphasises the importance of education for economic growth, in producing ‘a literate, disciplined, flexible labour force’ that will allow the country to transition to an industrialised economy (2007, p. 7). This assertion indicates a human capital approach to education which can be linked to the difficulty of minority groups in securing certain rights.

Public education services are complemented by six ‘self-administered’ schooling systems in ethnic-majority areas of the country. An example is in Mon State where a parallel education system is organised by the Mon National Education Committee (MNEC), outside of the central government’s sphere of influence. The MNEC is strongly linked to the New Mon State Party (NMSP), an EAG from Mon State. While these alternative schooling systems are not legal under the constitution of Myanmar, Zobrist and McCormick argue that they ‘serve the best interests of both communities and the government’ and call for their expansion as a way to develop education in the country (2013, p. 33).
26). Lall notes that these parallel systems are crucial for the government to fulfil its guarantee of primary education to all children (2016). However, official education policy recognises as ‘disadvantaged and unreached’ only the ‘very poor’, the inhabitants of ‘remote, border or mountainous regions’, the disabled, the nomadic, and orphans (MoE 2007, p. vii). This does not explicitly refer to the ethnic population; thus no policy exists that targets them directly. Furthermore, the use of ‘national’ languages, while recognised, is supported only for ‘non-formal education related programmes’ in those communities (MoE, 2007). This corresponds to the marginalisation of ‘non-Burmese speaking ethnic groups’ in the system’s ‘over-promotion of Bamar history, culture and language’, causing increased inequalities, intolerance and tension between groups (UNICEF, 2014, p. 4). It is crucial that this issue reach consensus, so that public education may ‘meet the diverse needs and hope of all groups’ and support social cohesion and equal opportunity (Lall M., 2016 – emphasis added). In addition to these structural issues, UNICEF argues that low quality of schooling prevents young people from gaining critical thinking skills and understanding the country’s history, in order to challenge the status quo and support development and peace in their communities (2014).

Outside of the official sphere, Myanmar has a growing number of private institutions. These for-profit and not-for-profit organisations fill perceived gaps left by state education, often focusing on specific subjects (English, IT skills, business...) or on preparing students for international examinations. Kant Kaw Education Centre is one such private, not-for-profit institution.

3.7.3 Thabyay Education Foundation and Kant Kaw Education Centre

At Thabyay Education Foundation, we believe that quality education for all is essential for the development of peaceful, socially just, democratic and prosperous societies. As such, our programs are designed to support human development with a goal to promote peace and national reconciliation in Myanmar – TEF Annual Report, 2014.

Thabyay Education Foundation (TEF) is a local, Myanmar NGO, founded in 1996 in Thailand, to service the educational needs of refugees and migrant workers there, who had come from Myanmar. Specifically, their aim was to provide information on the political situation, and support ‘peace and national reconciliation in Myanmar’ (TEF, 2014). As the political changes within the country allowed more access, TEF opened KKEC in Yangon. As of 2015 the school offers a full-time Community Leadership and Social Studies (CLASS) programme which focuses more on issues of conflict and
peace. It is important to note that KKEC is not officially recognised as a school, nor accredited under current Myanmar legislation. The education system divides schools into two categories: public/not-for-profit and private/for-profit. KKEC occupies a third category, private/not-for-profit, which has no legal basis. Aung Shwe Kyaw, a school director, indicated that this is a significant obstacle for the school’s expansion, as well as market and fundraising capacities. Thus, KKEC currently operates outside of the official, state-sanctioned education system.

Across three four-month terms, the CLASS programme covers ‘English language acquisition, relevant social science subjects, professional community leadership development, and experiential learning programmes’ (TEF, 2014). Subjects are term-specific, and the overall curriculum is designed for students to gradually build skills and knowledge necessary to confront more difficult topics. The following list of classes (figure 4) gives an idea of students’ progression through the school year.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th><strong>TERM ONE</strong></th>
<th><strong>TERM TWO</strong></th>
<th><strong>TERM THREE</strong></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Speaking and Listening 1 (2 hrs)</td>
<td>Speaking and Listening 2 (2 hrs)</td>
<td>Workforce Exposure (1 hr)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Academic Reading and Writing 1 (3 hrs)</td>
<td>Academic Reading and Writing 2 (2 hrs)</td>
<td>Academic Reading and Writing 3 (2 hrs)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Study Skills and Critical Thinking (2 hrs)</td>
<td>Research Skills/Public Speaking (2 hrs)</td>
<td>Work Skills 2 (2 hrs)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Service Learning 1 (1 hr)</td>
<td>Work Skills 1 (2 hrs)</td>
<td>Service Learning 3 (2 hrs)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Health (2 hrs)</td>
<td>Service Learning 2 (1 hr)</td>
<td>Peace &amp; Conflict (2 hrs)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Civic Education (3 hrs)</td>
<td>Economics (2 hrs)</td>
<td>Gender (2 hrs)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Environment (2 hrs)</td>
<td>International Relations (2 hrs)</td>
<td>Community Leadership (2 hrs)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Political Science (2 hrs)</td>
<td>Art Class (1 hr)</td>
<td>Global Issues (3 hrs)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Figure 4 List of subjects (2015/2016)*

Terms One and Two provide the language and methodological skills necessary to learn in the English-oriented environment, as well as foundational knowledge in the social sciences. These subjects are new for most students, as they do not form part of Myanmar’s government school curriculum. This foundation is necessary for the challenging classes of Term Three. Furthermore, teachers indicated that it, in order for students to confront these difficult issues constructively and learn from them, they need to be comfortable, and to know each other well. This is why these classes are only delivered
at the end of the year’s programme. The table also indicates the amount of time allotted to each subject. As the programme progresses, students spend less hours on language or career-focused subjects and more on the social sciences that form the core of KKEC’s peace education curriculum (indicated by the shaded boxes).

A central part of the programme is Service Learning. For one month in the year, students leave Yangon and live in a different area in Myanmar, volunteering in community work. The aim is to link students ‘academic goals, professional goals and the needs of their communities’ (TEF, 2014). According to the school’s Programmes Director, a crucial part of the experience is getting to know a different part of the country, and sharing one’s own experiences. In Myanmar’s fragmented social landscape, this helps to build bridges between different ethnic and religious communities, an important part of national reconciliation.

This flowchart describes TEF’s own vision for impacting communities in Myanmar. Based on conversations with staff and students at KKEC, the two key dimensions of this vision are ‘further education’, which they carry out at KKEC, and ‘return to community’ which begins with the Service Learning programme and carries on after students graduate.

Kant Kaw Education Centre is located in a three-story building in Yangon. Three classrooms are dedicated to each of the three terms, seating around twenty students and one teacher. The same building also houses staff offices, and the curriculum department. A roof terrace area (the ‘Open Space’) seats the entire student body, and is used for workshops, extra-curricular activities, and assemblies.

KKEC aims to reflect the diversity of Myanmar’s population in the classrooms. Students are actively recruited through TEF’s networks in various communities, and receive scholarships to attend the one-year CLASS programme. The following charts describe some basic characteristics of fifty-four students attending the programme in February 2016. It is particularly interesting to note the
diversity of students’ geographical background. The majority come from the seven non-Burmese ethnic states (figure 6).

Figure 6 Students’ origins in Myanmar (from demographic survey)
For most students, Burmese is not their first, but rather their second or third language, and English their third or fourth. In the classroom, this becomes apparent with students’ varying abilities to speak and write Burmese, and in the choice of language in which to communicate with each other. Another important characteristic of the programme is the emphasis on gender equal representation, which is almost exactly balanced (figure 7).

![Gender representation at KKEC](image)

*Figure 7 Gender representation at KKEC (from demographic survey)*

It is also worth noting the age distribution of KKEC’s students (figure 8), which brings students with different life experiences together.
KKEC staff are for the most part from Myanmar. One out of six teachers is from Myanmar, and four are native English speakers. Foreign teachers can be presented as ‘outsiders’ and more neutral than locals, whose ethnic or religious belonging may carry particular assumptions that are felt by students. Students may build different kinds of relationships with them than is the norm in Myanmar, enabling students to be free to learn and express their opinions about different topics. Furthermore, foreign teachers are able to bring in ‘outside knowledge’ and perspectives, based on their backgrounds. On the other hand, students are concerned that, because of significant differences in background, they are not fully able to understand teachers, and vis-versa[^3]. As well as different ethnicities, KKEC also aims to represent Myanmar’s main religions: Buddhism, Christianity, Islam and Hinduism[^4].

Diversity being an integral part of its vision, KKEC actively recruits students from all over Myanmar to take part in the CLASS programme. This is made possible by the existence of a scholarship for each

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[^3]: From questionnaires, 11.03.2016.
[^4]: At the time of research, the student body was predominantly Christian, with a smaller group of Buddhists. It was not deemed appropriate to include a question on religious belonging in the demographic survey. All information on religion at KKEC comes from interviews with Aung Shwe Kyaw, Soe Phyo and Christina.
student. Consequently, young people from many different backgrounds can apply. The only requirement is a ‘pre-intermediate’ level of English. Interest and experience in community-level development programmes is also sought after in applications.

Referring back to the struggles faced by TEF and organisations of its type through tight government regulation of the education sector, they were often unable to carry out widespread advertising of their programmes. This is particularly the case for schools that also incorporated foreign (western) methods, links, staff members etc. Therefore, promotion and recruitment often rely on personally-developed networks with specific individuals, other communities and organisations. Soe Phyo explained, ‘we have established many community partners throughout the country, so I contact them about the school programme, and then I go to [those] places personally, physically there, and then [I give a] presentation on the purpose of the school, the type of student we would like to recruit’.

Examples of networks include religious groups, such as the YMCA/YWCA, or KKEC alumni, of whom many work in community-based education or youth-centred projects. While this means that the school often receives recurring groups of students from the same communities, Soe Phyo noted that they work to expand networks every year, to widen the net of KKEC’s intake to the level of the whole country. Aung Shwe Kyaw noted that it can be particularly difficult to widen religious inclusivity, as Muslim and Hindu communities are often more ‘closed and conservative’, making participation in outside education initiatives difficult, especially for women. However, as stated, the process is ongoing, and the school hopes to have greater religious diversity in future, by building relationship with a wider group of communities.

This descriptive section emphasises the diversity of KKEC’s student body and staff, which is critical for understanding why this case study is important. The following chapters provide an analysis of the data collected during research and outline key findings on the importance of ethnically-inclusive education for Myanmar’s peace process.

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5 From interview with Soe Phyo, 15.03.2016.
4  KKEC’S PEACE EDUCATION

This chapter discusses how KKEC works toward achieving its goal of delivering peace education for Myanmar, considering the environment of diversity it operates in. The first section sets the scene for KKEC’s schooling, describing the moment when students from around Myanmar come together. Facilitating this interaction is key as it sets the tone for their experiences of the programme, and their capacities for learning together productively. This is discussed further in the second section, which highlights the role that inclusive learning plays in KKEC’s ‘formal’ peace education, and the communication tools that help students overcome the challenges of learning in a diverse classroom. The third section discusses how inclusivity carries over into content, by examining various textbooks. This is linked to the theoretical discussion above (2.1.2) where Junne and Verkoren underscore the importance of investigating lessons and materials, as a key site of inclusion and representation. This chapter shows how KKEC’s programme corresponds to the key theories around peace education that are discussed above (2.2.2).

Being a subjective process, education contributes to the creation of particular categories which inform the organisation of social life. These categories are tied to particular assumptions around beliefs, values and behaviour. To widen the scope of inclusion to cover all categories, they must be fundamentally questioned, as must the ‘agenda’ of education. This recalls the earlier discussion of social justice theory in critical pedagogy (2.1.3). The following sections connect with Fraser’s ‘Three Rs’ model, focusing on the dimensions of ‘representation’ and ‘recognition’.

4.1  When Students Come Together

Many of Myanmar’s communities, especially in ethnic states, have historically been isolated from one another, and from heterogeneous urban centres. When students arrive in Yangon to begin the CLASS programme, for many of them it is the first time they meet young people from across the country. Students are housed in school accommodation which purposefully mixes ethnic and religious groups. Anisa, the school’s academic coordinator, explained that KKEC is

the only place in Myanmar that I know where you have young people from fifteen different ethnicities in one classroom. It’s amazing because a lot of the time they don’t even talk to each
other. [...] I don’t know how much you know about Myanmar culture but they’re very disintegrated\textsuperscript{6}.

This contact is critical for students to gain knowledge about other communities, to break down prejudices and build understanding about each other. Linking to the theoretical discussion of peace education (2.2.2), Soe Phyo describes this process of interaction:

At first [they] maybe [think] ‘Kachin people are not good, Karen people are not good, Kayah people are not good’. But by letting them sit together in the classroom, it’s also in a way teaching each other. These lessons, in a way, [are a] kind of peace education. You need to understand, [in] each group you have differences and similarities\textsuperscript{7}.

This process can be a powerful and challenging experience for students, as evidenced by a Term Three student’s own testimony\textsuperscript{8}

I didn’t have this kind of experience before. But when I arrived here I have a lot of friends from all over the country, many ethnic friends. [Gesturing] He is Rakhine, Kachin, Chin, Burmese and I am Karen.

Qualitative questionnaires revealed that while the main challenge that KKEC’s diversity produces are risk of misunderstanding, potential arguments, and difficulty working in groups, the benefits include ‘new knowledge’, learning other languages, and the ‘beauty’ of diversity. In particular, one student spoke of learning ‘the difference between thought, religion and identity’. This corresponds to what the literature calls \textit{behavioural and attitudinal changes} that support inclusion of others (2.2.2). Simultaneously, personal relations between isolated groups are established which facilitates communication and the breaking down of prejudices, as in the separating of religion from a wider idea of ‘identity’.

For KKEC to be able to deliver positive, inclusive education to their diverse student body, they must create an environment where the differences between individuals does not inhibit their capacity to interact and learn but opens a learning space for all voices to be heard. This is the premise of

\textsuperscript{6} From interview, 10.02.2016.
\textsuperscript{7} From interview, 15.03.2016.
\textsuperscript{8} From group discussion #1, 11.03.2016.
‘inclusive education’, as discussed in the theoretical framework. The following sections look at ways in which the school tries to overcome such issues of difference and voice in the discussion around peace and conflict, in order for students to learn constructively together, and from each other.

4.2 Teaching Peace and Conflict

This section addresses the space dedicated to formal teaching about peace and conflict at KKEC. The first sub-section examines how an environment of inclusivity and openness is supported to overcome the challenges of diverse classrooms. Within this environment, the curriculum engages students in the different areas of a more formal peace education, the focus of the second sub-section. This section tries to show that KKEC’s programme corresponds to the theory’s definition of ‘peace education’. It addresses difference and voice, as well as theories of conflict and peacebuilding, and is embedded within the particular context of Myanmar.

4.2.1 ‘Understanding Misunderstanding’

Diversity is a fundamental component of KKEC’s vision for the education it wants to deliver. However, one cannot expect this process to be easy and straightforward. What happens when these young people are brought together, often for the first time and asked to engage with and learn from each other? What challenges do they face? This section examines some of the steps in this process of rapprochement that takes place in the classroom over the course of the year.

Discussions with students revealed that integration in diverse classes was a significant challenge for them. A Term Three student contended that ‘my ideas are probably a bit part of my ethnic [background], but here after I arrived, month by month, I understand [the other students]’. Another noted that ‘some classmates’ idea[s] are completely different. But it makes me to see from [the] other side’. This links to the theory’s description of peace education (2.2.2) which emphasises learning about others as a core component. There is also a link to the ‘recognition’ dimension of Fraser’s social justice model which argues that ‘connecting with the histories, cultures, contributions and perspectives of non-dominant groups […] can support recognitive justice’ (in Keddie, 2012, p. 268).

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9 Both quotes from student questionnaires, 11.03.2016.
When asked about how students’ interrelations play out in the classrooms, staff members said that there had never been instances of serious conflict, based on students’ different backgrounds. Christina, a staff member at KKEC explained that Term One students are generally quiet when they arrive, and interactions increase as students get to know each other and as they acquire new communication tools. Connecting to the empirical chapter (3.7.2), the public education system in Myanmar emphasises rote learning or memorisation as the main teaching method. ‘In high school we have no debate[s] with classmate[s], we have no discussion. Just [the] teacher [who] tells us and we copy. So it’s a good concept to debate’11. Students tend to articulate their different views effectively, using communication tools that are taught throughout the CLASS programme, such as debating, negotiating and mediating. Figure 9 is part of the transcription of a group discussion, in which students explained the process and outcome of working through differences.

This connects with the ‘representation’ dimension of Fraser’s model which calls for ‘a political space that represents the voices […] of particular minority or marginalised groups’ (in Keddie, 2012, p. 268). With these, students are able to discuss more controversial or difficult topics in a constructive manner, despite differences. As one student put it: ‘the best understanding is the ability to understand misunderstanding’10, meaning that the capacity to work through issues of difference produces a higher level of appreciation of one another’s views. Another explained that through group discussions, students are able to focus on their similarities rather than differences, ‘it’s like Peace & Conflict in the class’12.

For Christina, the end-of-term group projects are a helpful way to further develop this kind of understanding, ‘they get forced to get together and talk about all these issues, and they get a lot closer by doing that’. Overall, the differences she sees between Term One and Term Three students in their capacities to interact constructively are ‘huge’10. A Term Three student explained that throughout her KKEC education, her ‘opinions and perspectives [have] changed a lot’, and that now ‘I know we

TCP: What about the diversity of the class? Do you sometimes have different beliefs or opinions?
All: Yes.
TCP: What do you do?
M1: Negotiate, explain.
M2: We argue and we fight [laughs].
M3: Debating.
TCP: So you learn?
M3: From each other’s experiences,

Figure 9 Student group discussion #1, 11.03.2016

10 From interview with Christina, 22.02.2016.
11 From student group discussion #2, 11.03.2016.
12 From student group discussion #1, 11.03.2016.
all are the same and everyone is equal’\textsuperscript{13}. This echoes Anisa’s statement that what KKEC tries to do is for ‘everyone to see each other as a person, not because of their religion or where they are from’\textsuperscript{14}. The school’s success in establishing this kind of environment is clear in Soe Phyo’s declaration that ‘after this one year they develop friendship and understanding, understanding about different cultures. You will see [a] student, a Mon student for example, and now they are wearing [a] Karen outfit, something like that’\textsuperscript{15}. This is an example of the ‘inclusive classrooms’ discussed above (2.1.2). The theory argues that the embracing of diversity in classrooms, rather than adopting a policy of segregation, not only allows individuals to express and accept their identity markers, but is also critical to fostering social cohesion in a wider environment (Taylor & Sidhu, 2012). This cohesion is produced by the kinds of social and cultural exchanges described here, and also moves toward a more socially just environment for ethnic minority groups. It is crucial groundwork for peacebuilding-oriented education which is discussed in the next section.

\textbf{4.2.2 Learning about Peace}

Learning about Myanmar’s process of peace and national reconciliation starts in Term One with Civic Education, and continues through to Peace & Conflict in Term Three. Students learn theories of conflict analysis, such as Five Dimensions of Conflict, the Struggle Spectrum, the Pyramid of Hate, and domestic vs international conflict triangles, to ‘think through how conflict works’\textsuperscript{16}. These analyses are implemented on a range of cases, both in Myanmar and in other Southeast Asian countries. For example, a Term Three student applied the conflict triangle method to illustrate the relationship between different stakeholders in his native Rakhine State’s ‘communal violence’. The classes go further and also discuss ways in which peace is achieved and conflict is prevented, looking at theories of negative vs positive peace and Myanmar’s own Peace Dialogue Framework. Christina remarked

\textsuperscript{13} From student group discussion #3, 11.03.2016
\textsuperscript{14} From interview, 10.02.2016.
\textsuperscript{15} From interview, 15.03.2016.
\textsuperscript{16} From interview with Christina, 22.02.2016.
that for Peace & Conflict it is particularly important to approach the material with great sensitivity because many students have been affected by conflict. She chooses to ground the curriculum in practice, organising field trips and student debates around key local issues, and inviting students to contribute their own thoughts and opinions on the case of Myanmar. In one class, students used role play to act out an imagined formal negotiation process between the Revolutionary Council of Shan State (RCSS) and the Ta’ang National Liberation Army (TNLA). They decided where and when this negotiation should take place, and who would act as the mediator. Each student played a different role, wearing a hat with their organisation’s name written on it. These exercises show how KKEC’s curriculum has a strong emphasis on learning about conflict and peace, how they are produced, prevented, supported, and interrelated. For many thinkers in the field of peace education, this is a central component of it. There must be recognition and analysis of conflicts in order to learn about de-escalation and prevention (Berghof Foundation, 2012). Simultaneously, students of peace education must learn to resolve conflicts and promote peaceful social environments (Lopes Cardozo & May, 2009), a process that Snauwaert calls social ‘reconstruction’ (2011). What is important about this particular case is that for many KKEC students these classes are their first time learning about conflict and peace in Myanmar in a comprehensive way, which most see as a positive component of their studies. This is revealed in the qualitative questionnaires completed by Term Three students. The following table collects some students’ answers.

![Figure 10 A conflict analysis triangle used in Peace & Conflict](image1.png)

![Figure 11 Role play of a formal peace negotiation](image2.png)
LEARNING ABOUT SOCIAL, POLITICAL AND ECONOMIC ISSUES IN MYANMAR...

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th><strong>Benefits</strong></th>
<th><strong>Challenges</strong></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>‘We know more about our country, people and situation. We realise what problems and conflicts are happening or had happened. We can find the ways to solve or overcome these problem[s]’</td>
<td>‘It makes me worry [about] Myanmar’</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>‘Different things [than] what we studied in the high school’</td>
<td>‘Myanmar is not openly in democracy’</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>‘Parents still worry about talking political because of history situation’</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The ‘challenges’ that students recorded also present an interesting discussion. The history of dictatorship and oppression continues to weigh on students and is seen as an obstacle to the discussions of peace and conflict that KKEC tries to promote. Furthermore, the ‘worry’ that comes with knowledge about the country’s social and political problems seems to impose a kind of responsibility on these students to confront them. These testimonies lead to thinking that, as well as opening students up to new knowledge and empowering them to act, this education carves a gulf between KKEC students and their peers across the country (highlighted by the reference to deficient government education). This gives the impression of KKEC being a sort of ‘bubble’ of knowledge, power and opportunity, as well as responsibility, to a greater extent than in the rest of society. From the perspective of the school, the formal teaching around conflict and peace in Myanmar exposes students to the knowledge that prepares them to confront the ‘situation’ themselves, by putting into practice what is taught in these classes. Indeed, students can be seen as a new generation of active citizens in peacebuilding, as they may possess more of the important knowledge and skills than previous generations.

The following section examines the other side of formal teaching, looking at the content and materials of KKEC’s classes. Recalling the theory around peace education, it is important for a diversity of voices to emerge in content, to support just representation and to challenge ‘single stories’ around conflict. This is pertinent for Peace & Conflict but also other challenging classes such as Gender Studies or Civic Education.

4.3 Making Content ‘Relevant’

When talking about the way content is chosen and taught, and the way materials are developed and used at KKEC, staff often used the word ‘relevant’ to describe what they are trying to achieve. This refers to a balance between covering the required subjects and connecting with students in a way
that is relatable and useful for them. This is particularly important for the curriculum’s more controversial subjects such as Peace & Conflict or Gender Studies for which students have varying degrees of openness and interest. These classes are designed to teach issues about Myanmar as much as possible, but the reality is not straightforward, as students bring different opinions and different levels of knowledge to discussion. For Christina this means that the curriculum cannot easily be standardised, and should retain a degree of flexibility to properly respond to the ‘individual needs’ of students.

An example is in the discussion of religious conflicts in Myanmar, a topical and contentious issue for many. KKEC currently has students from Rakhine State which is heavily affected by conflict. In order to be able to teach and discuss the topic constructively, Educasia’s textbooks use case studies from communities outside of Myanmar that have similar characteristics. This was explained by Clara, from the curriculum development office.

> We’re not saying ‘this group’, we’re not saying ‘Rohingya’, or this or that, we’re giving an example of something that’s quite similar and then using discussion questions and activities to see if they can make any connections.¹⁷

This also allows students to ‘make connections with global issues’, drawing parallels with their own experiences. Furthermore, the textbooks used in class often include tips to facilitate positive, constructive discussion around such issues, such as ‘make sure students avoid stereotypical jokes and hurtful language’ (Mote Oo, 2014b). On the teacher’s side, they are often faced with the additional challenge of being an outsider in Myanmar culture, less able to connect with students on the same level as a local. This issue is discussed further in the section on language, below (5.1).

Another example of the importance of ‘relevant’ content is the way in which different ‘voices’ are included in teaching materials. The history textbook explains that ‘the history of Myanmar has always been a controversial subject’, that ‘it is difficult to be sure about events that happened so long ago’ and that ‘the truth is probably between two ideas’ (Educasia). A Gender Studies textbook uses sources, examples and case studies from different ethnic groups in Myanmar, such as the story of ‘A Woman from Kachin State’ (figure 13), to discuss different attitudes toward gender (Educasia). In this way, students learn new ideas, or new perspectives on those they are already familiar with. This inclusion of diverse perspectives is a core element of peace education, as described in wider

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¹⁷ From interview with Clara, 17.03.2016
literature. It is especially important when conflict is linked to repression of diversity or social fragmentation.

This section has discussed some of the strategies around making content relevant and accessible to students. These strategies support the inclusivity that the school strives for by showing sensitivity to issues that may be difficult for students, and by including diverse voices in materials. However, it must be noted that this inclusion may not be all-encompassing, and that significant challenges remain. For example, the use of the English language in teaching and materials frames content in a particular way, which could create different exclusions, around language capabilities or the ontological perspectives that correspond to them. This idea is taken further in the following chapter.

Concluding Remarks –

This chapter has described the way KKEC delivers their unique form of peace education for Myanmar, engaging young people from different areas of the country to learn about issues of peace, conflict and reconciliation together. Based on discussions with students and staff, KKEC’s curriculum seems to succeed in this goal, responding to some of the characteristics outlined in the theoretical framework (2.2.2). However, the particular conception of the school’s peace education through diversity also has further, perhaps unintended outcomes or side-effects. This is discussed in the following chapter, which examines the effects of inclusion strategies, and in Chapter Six which reframes the school’s peace education in the context of change, both in Myanmar and globally.
When [Christian students] come here we assign them an apartment. So they will hang their clothes for drying. But the neighbours, they [say] ‘women hang their clothes out drying like this’ [...] if you dry like this, men cannot pass underneath. Here people see women’s sarong as unclean. So if a man pass under these kinds of clothes he will lose his power, something like that, from the Buddhist perspective. So we explain that ‘OK we have the clothes-dryer, you hang your longyi like this, underwear like this’ because [that’s] part of living in a flat [...] The students can’t know because in the villages they just dry like this, in the field. [That’s] the issue of drying clothes – Soe Phyoe

In this anecdote about cultural differences, gender and religion intersect, illustrating the complexity of inclusion, tolerance and reconciliation in Myanmar. As a result of historic isolation, many people are unfamiliar with the diversity of beliefs, customs and practices around the country. In the KKEC classrooms, this diversity comes not only from ethnic background, and religious beliefs that are often linked to particular groups, but also gender, and ideas about gender roles. These interconnecting and overlapping attitudes and assumptions are brought into the classroom, creating a diversity of opinions, values and behaviours, which influence the way learning can take place, and create challenges to inclusion. For example, Christina noted that gender attitudes in the classroom sometimes make it hard to ‘empower people to speak’18. This section examines some of these challenges: language, gender and religion, how they play out in the classroom, and the implications for peace education. From the moment students come into contact with different groups, a social interaction is created that is new to many people in Myanmar. Because of the unfamiliarity, this kind of interaction can be difficult for students to deal with, which is why KKEC’s role as cultural facilitator is so important. It gives students the potential to create positive outcomes and benefit from the school’s diversity. The strategies which are implemented to support these outcomes could themselves have unintended results which are equally important to understand and reflect upon.

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18 From interview, 22.02.2016.
5.1 The Issue of Language

Because of the aforementioned isolation experienced by many people in Myanmar, students who arrive at KKEC ‘... don’t know each other’s culture, they don’t know each other’s languages’\(^{19}\). Linguistic diversity in Myanmar is high, with over one hundred ‘ethno-linguistic groups’ (Lall M., 2016). Although Burmese and English are taught in government schools, the uneven level of teaching quality, and difficulties of access to schools for many students mean that levels of proficiency are varied. These are also the only common languages for many students, although they may speak up to four or five languages, because of their ethnic background. This was demonstrated in a Civic Education class where the group was asked to list the nation’s heads of state, and the student writing them on the whiteboard asked for help from his classmates in spelling Burmese names.

This linguistic diversity in the classroom leads to questions around the language of instruction. As previously stated, KKEC officially operates completely in English, both in instruction and teaching materials. This choice can be seen as a way to make KKEC’s education as neutral as possible, to give students a similar starting point. One could see that for students from ethnic states in which there have been conflicts with the government, and who may have been forced to attend government schools as a kind of ‘Burmanisation’ process, the Burmese language is laden with perceptions of foreignness, oppression or even violent power (Smith, 2002; Huaman, 2011). It may be that certain ways of speaking about particular phenomena carry negative or stereotypical connotations in that language. In that case, the conscious decision not to use the nation’s official language in curricula can be seen as a way to level the playing field and neutralise such issues as much as possible. It could make the task of learning to communicate across cultural divides a little easier for students, as the English language is not as politicised for them. This becomes particularly important when discussing topics and events that may resonate strongly with students on a personal level, such as conflict. Using the English language to approach such discussions could help to create distance between the theoretical side of what students are being taught, and the practical side informed by their own experiences. Furthermore, the use of English accommodates the foreign teachers at KKEC.

It is interesting to look at the issue of language at KKEC within the wider theoretical debate of critical education (see 2.1.3). In the sphere of indigenous education, language is a central point of discussion, because of its role as cultural identifier, and method of communication (language is often a criterion for differentiating ‘insiders’ and ‘outsiders’). At this point, it is interesting to return to the earlier theoretical discussion of Huaman (2011). Language is one ‘dimension of indigeneity’ which inform

\(^{19}\) From interview with Anisa, 10.02.2016.
the social justice struggle inherent in this movement. Based on Bourdieu’s theory of language and power which highlights language’s role in reproducing social structures from which it emerged, Huaman argues that this struggle for justice, through ‘raising consciousness’ and empowerment, emerges in local language. This connects with Giroux’s vision of critical pedagogy as shifting mainstream ‘categories’ around ethnic or racial belonging. In the case of KKEC, the social landscape is too diverse to fit neatly into this theoretical discussion. However, the school’s agenda of ethnic inclusion and social justice for marginalised communities has strong parallels with the field of indigenous education studies. Therefore, it is valid to question how KKEC aims to ‘raise consciousness’ and empower these groups in a language other than their own. Perhaps by introducing a ‘third-party’ language, KKEC is attempting to overcome the challenge facing critical pedagogy, as foreseen by Giroux, whereby globalisation and the end of indigenous communities’ isolation will make it impossible for them to remain monolingual or mono-cultural, outside of mainstream society.

Having established the central role that English plays, what is the role of Burmese, and other Myanmar languages at KKEC? It becomes obvious quickly that English is not the language used by students outside of class. Indeed, it is clear that students are more at ease, and find it easier to express themselves in these other languages. The question of what their role should/could be at KKEC did not produce a straightforward answer. Christina shared her personal vision of ‘multilingual classrooms’ wherein Burmese and English are used in the classroom for different reasons. She argued that in classes such as Gender Studies, specific or technical terms can become ‘lost in translation’, so using the Burmese terms may result in students learning more effectively: ‘I would rather they speak in the Burmese language and understand the concept as opposed to just practice their English skills’. Christina herself is proficient enough in Burmese to be able to translate such terms in order for students to gain the best possible understanding. Furthermore, she argues that group work should take place in Burmese, because ‘it helps them understand the concept’, after which writing and reporting to the class would be in English. However, on the topic of Gender Studies she suggested it needs ‘to be taught in Burmese as well’\textsuperscript{20}. Anisa also referred to the important role of Burmese in certain classes, explaining that Max was chosen to teach Gender Studies because of his proficiency in Burmese. This is because Gender Studies is undoubtedly the class that students and staff deem most controversial, and often requires mediation and negotiation between many opposing views. This is similar to her description of collaboration with the school’s only Myanmar-native teacher, Sein Min.

\textsuperscript{20} From interview, 22.02.2016.
Kang. In Peace & Conflict studies ‘if something is difficult he’ll come in and talk for twenty minutes. If there’s a translation issue, he’ll present for twenty minutes’\textsuperscript{21}, to facilitate proper understanding and constructive discussion around these topics.

This strategic use of different languages seems to come from a desire to respond to complex circumstances in the best way that is possible, and there are positive reasons for using either language. It must also be noted that there are words and concepts in both English and Burmese that do not translate accurately. Supplementing one language with the other may communicate to students with the greatest nuance and precision. However, neither language is free of subjectivity.

The outcome of KKEC’s language strategy is that students proceed through this peace education learning the knowledge, tools and skills for peacebuilding with different sets of assumptions and value-judgements, based on the languages of instruction. This could influence how they are able to implement them in different settings, based on the language they are able to employ. Rather than giving students greater abilities to act in all situations, perhaps the language schism separates the kinds of work they are able to do. Teaching in English also reinforces KKEC’s position outside of the country’s official education system, which begs the question of how, and indeed whether, students are able to integrate national institutions upon graduation, such as the labour market, higher education or civic organisations. This tension is discussed further in Chapter Six.

Finally, as most students’ native language is neither Burmese nor English, other Myanmar languages factor into the discussion. While the use of the two dominant languages means that other languages are not officially incorporated into the curriculum, they must be acknowledged as playing a role in shaping student experiences and interactions with. Out of the fifteen Term Three students who completed the questionnaire, six explicitly referred to language as a challenge regarding the diversity of their classmates’ backgrounds. One student noted that misunderstandings result from differing ideas ‘because our language is not the same’. Conversations in other Myanmar languages evidently make up an important part of the overall experiences of students at KKEC, and while the school strives to include linguistic diversity in the classroom, it is unclear what role this diversity plays in KKEC’s peace education. Furthermore, it is interesting to question how KKEC’s language decisions could affect students’ abilities to transfer knowledge and experiences into their native language contexts. Chapter Six further explores the complicated terrain that faces students after graduation.

To conclude this section, field data indicates that language usage at KKEC is complex and internally debated. It links with several different theoretical debates in the fields of critical pedagogy,

\textsuperscript{21} From interview with Anisa, 10.02.2016.
indigenous, and peace education. The role of language is understood differently in each of them, meaning that there is no straightforward model to call upon. Rather, KKEC may be presenting an interesting case for working through some of the challenges in these different fields. In terms of peacebuilding, choices around language use would indicate in basic terms the level of engagement with addressing root causes of conflict, and with the reconstruction of post-conflict society, connected to issues of justice and representation (see discussion of Huaman above). For this reason, these choices are even more important in such heterogeneous contexts as Myanmar.

5.2 Gender in Peace Education

Of all the classes taught at KKEC, Gender Studies is deemed the most ‘controversial’ and challenging. This results from issues with the academic study of this topic, and from the different experiences that students bring to the class. Many of Myanmar’s religious and ethnic communities are socially conservative. Gender is often the arena in which conflict plays out between these communities. Furthermore, public discussions around gender issues are often taboo, or at least discouraged, meaning that students arriving at KKEC are often unfamiliar and uncomfortable with this subject. KKEC’s Gender Studies class blends local and international perceptions of gender through teaching materials, student and teacher discussions. This section examines the role of studying gender in peace education, through the case of KKEC’s peace curriculum, and drawing on literature and theory. Gender Studies is a Term Three subject, meaning that students take it in their last three months in the programme. While in these classes students’ familiarity with each other is obvious in their friendly and relaxed interactions, the atmosphere in Gender Studies is different. Male and female students are more separated, physically, and female students are less talkative. This behaviour is perhaps due to the organisation of the class. Indeed, one of the textbooks notes that ‘some activities and discussions might be easier in groups of the same gender’, suggesting that teachers may ‘split the class into males and females, and do separate class discussions sometimes’ (Mote Oo, 2014b). It is critical to mitigate the silencing of a particular group in this way, to maintain inclusion of different perspectives. In this case, female students’ voices must be heard in discussions about gender in Myanmar, in order for inequalities and injustices to be confronted and addressed.

22 A well-known example is the rape of Buddhist woman in Rakhine State in 2012 which incited the ongoing ‘communal violence’ with Muslim communities.
To overcome the uneasy environment of this class, a group discussion was organised with five female students from Term Three. They agreed that while the class can be challenging, they enjoyed it, and gained a lot of useful knowledge, ‘we can know more women’s rights’. They explained that, to overcome challenges and engage with the topic, students debate with one another in class, although ‘sometimes people, they don’t want to accept gender equality, especially women’\(^{23}\). This corresponds to Clara’s assertion that many students’ perspectives are shaped growing up with ‘conservative, traditional mind-sets’ around gender relations and roles,\(^{24}\) which was corroborated by Anisa\(^ {25}\). Furthermore, Christina revealed that many young people in Myanmar are educated in gender-segregated classrooms where ‘girls and boys can’t even sit next to each other’\(^ {26}\).

At KKEC, students are faced with the double-challenge of learning in a mixed-gender environment, as well as being exposed to new and different understandings of gender and what that means. These different understandings come through in reading the two textbooks used in Gender Studies. In this excerpt from Educasia’s *Gender Issues* textbook (figure 14), a woman discusses the Buddhist institution in Myanmar, questioning the link with gender attitudes by highlighting some of the issues that are created. The text untangles religious ideology from destructive social practices around gender, inviting a critical reflection on this contentious issue. The other textbook used in this class describes some of the key ‘lessons’ students are expected to take away (figure 15), including ‘differentiating’ between sex and gender, understanding ‘socialisation’ and ‘gender roles’, and

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\(^{23}\) From group discussion #3, 11.03.2016.
\(^{24}\) From interview with Clara, 17.03.2016.
\(^{25}\) From interview with Anisa, 10.02.2016.
\(^{26}\) From interview with Christina, 22.02.2016.
reflecting on gender equality. The group discussion with female students revealed that such concepts as 'socialisation' and 'internalisation' are new to their understandings of gender.

Students are also exposed to new ideas through teachers with western backgrounds. This is important because, as teachers inevitably bring their ideas and beliefs into the classroom (Keddie, 2012), students can come into contact with 'quite liberal perspectives' on these kinds of issues. An example is learning about LGBT issues, which are not openly accepted by many people in Myanmar. This contributes to the idea of the classroom becoming a kind of 'bubble', as argued above (4.2.2). Issues which are not widely talked about in mainstream society, can be discussed openly. Thus, students are renegotiating culturally-formed ideas and beliefs, through the school's liberal-leaning curriculum. This begs the question of whether there are consequences of such a shift, in terms of students’ abilities to relate back to the conventions of their own communities, and reintegrate successfully. It would be a test of their education whether students are able to exit KKEC’s bubble, retaining the knowledge and skills they have learned, and effectively carry out the peacebuilding and development work they have been trained for, in their communities. This tension is discussed further in Chapter Six.

Linking back to the earlier discussion of ‘making content relevant’, Gender Studies seems to be an area where there is less cultural relativity and more Western influence. Clara, who works in the curriculum department, highlighted the difficulty of remaining culturally sensitive and neutral, while still trying to teach gender equality in textbooks. Based on discussions she has had with students she thinks they often struggle with the transition from their own background to the discourse that is presented in this class, which some see as ‘foreign’ and ‘extreme’. ‘I feel like they're going from one place where they're told how to think to maybe another’. Perhaps to address this challenge, and mitigate the imposition of a liberal conception of gender, Mote Oo’s gender textbook contains the note ‘students do not necessarily have to agree with all the ideas mentioned in the texts, but they

27 From interview with Clara, 17.03.2016.
should provide a starting point for discussions’ (2014b). Clara also suggested that for future Gender Studies textbooks there should be real questioning around these issues, ‘what do we include? What is helpful, and what actually pushes students more in the wrong direction?’

At this point, the complex relationship between Myanmar and the rest of the world must be considered. Myanmar was an early signatory of the UDHR, whose preamble highlights ‘the equal rights of men and women’ (1948), thereby committing the country to adopt this as a fundamental value; while it lacks enforcing mechanisms, the UDHR is understood to be customary international law (Burma Link, 2014). Furthermore, Myanmar has been party to the Convention on the Elimination of all forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW) since 1997, which reinforces the commitment to gender equality as a national value and goal. These facts shift the present discussion around local vs western understandings of gender, because in reality Myanmar officially supports equal rights and freedoms between men and women, although this commitment is not comprehensively enforced (UNGA, 2011; Burma Link, 2014). Therefore, the discussion of gender equality as a requisite for peacebuilding at KKEC can also be framed as an element of civic education, in that young citizens are being familiarised with a set of civic rights and values to which they also have access. Such an increased awareness around human rights simultaneously supports a top-down process of change and development for Myanmar, while also encouraging young people to explore their global citizenship and connections to an international community.

Thus far, this section has presented some of the issues around the subject of Gender Studies. It is clear that this is a difficult topic, for students, teachers and staff. Indeed, the school faces significant obstacles and challenges in delivering this class. However, it is also clear, in the school’s determination, that gender is an important part of KKEC’s whole curriculum. The school works hard to recruit gender balanced classes (3.7.3). In figure 16, the class discussion is shown to have a critical dimension, encouraging students to reflect on the role of gender in their own communities and share their thoughts about it. This links to the theoretical discussion of peace education (2.2.2) as

![Figure 16 Gender Issues and Perspectives (Mote Oo, 2014b)](image)

Figure 16 Gender Issues and Perspectives (Mote Oo, 2014b)
promoting ‘attitudinal’ changes toward inclusion and critical pedagogy (2.1.3), and education’s role of producing social meaning, through specific ordering of knowledge, value and practices. While the theory is clearly applicable to the subject of gender, gender seems to be absent from the general literature on peace education. This is a puzzling theoretical gap, as it would seem evident that gender is a significant dimension, and site, of social conflict and violence, and hence, peace education must address gender equality as one way to promote justice and peaceful relations. One way to work towards this is through a human rights approach, where the commitment to gender equality is framed in a discussion of global citizenship.

In sum, KKEC’s commitment to teaching new and different gender conceptions, emphasising values of equality and freedom, shows that this is a key part of the school’s idea of peace education. This is also another example of where KKEC’s peace curriculum brings together local and international discourses, possibly making it hard for students to navigate a coherent path for themselves between the two.

5.3 Religious Diversity?

Religion is a complex political topic in Myanmar. Although the majority of the population identifies as Buddhist, there are significant Christian, Muslim and Hindu populations. In rural and ethnic areas, these communities often live fairly segregated from each other. There has been a rise of religious-based violence in the past years, especially between Buddhist and Muslim groups (for example ‘communal violence’ in Rakhine State). KKEC does not currently have a high religious diversity; the majority of their students are Christian, and the rest are Buddhist. For many Christian students, KKEC is their first opportunity to interact with Buddhists and discover beliefs and practices attached to their religion. This is elegantly described in Soe Phyo’s anecdote at the beginning of this chapter. Many Christian students grow up with prejudices against Buddhist communities because of the association between the Buddhist religious institution and the Tatmadaw. Similarly, many Buddhist students have preconceived ideas about Myanmar’s Muslim communities. However, at KKEC they meet students from other backgrounds and religions. Christians meet Buddhists from other ethnic states such as Rakhine, Mon and Shan, of whom many have an equally conflicted history with the military. From the first contact students have with each other some of their ideas are challenged, to break down barriers of prejudice between each other by learning about each other’s experiences and beliefs, as illustrated by a Term Three student:
Sometimes we have arguments about belief. Some people are Christian, some are Buddhist. So sometimes, if they say ‘why you believe in god? Or why you believe in Buddha?’ we sometimes have a little bit [of conflict]. We are strong because we are [be]coming angry, but we all are friends so we understand each other. If they touch our belief or if we touch their belief we have a strong [disagreement, but] later we’re OK.  

This recalls the earlier discussion (4.2.1) about achieving mutual understanding through open debate and communication in the class. KKEC does not offer a distinct class on religion, but addresses the subject throughout many of the other classes. For example, this excerpt from a Gender Studies textbook (figure 17) critically discusses the role of Buddhism in establishing gender relations for many people in Myanmar, separating the spiritual and dogmatic dimensions of religion. This echoes a Term Three student’s earlier assertion that through KKEC’s curriculum and diverse classrooms they learn ‘the difference between thought, religion and identity’. Recurring tension between local and international perspectives is also discussed, as in this excerpt from Gender Issues and Perspectives: ‘nations with high numbers of atheists are often the most equal in the world and very religious nations are often the most oppressive’ (Mote Oo, 2014a). This statement suggests a particular view on the place of religion in society, as a hindrance to democracy, in a way that is highly western-influenced. It brings issues of justice, freedom and equality into the discussion of religion, connecting with aforementioned ‘liberal’ values, reiterating the challenge of combining external and internal ideas, a western-oriented framework and local understanding. The statement also illustrates how problematic the nexus of culture, politics and religion is in the context of Myanmar, leading to the question of how young people can be prepared to confront and engage with it. Considering religious difference is such a significant driver of conflict in Myanmar at this time, it is a critical part of any peacebuilding initiatives for the country. However, KKEC faces several significant

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28 From student group discussion #3, 11.03.2016.
challenges on its path of delivering peace education: firstly, the inclusion of all of Myanmar’s religious communities in the classroom; secondly reconciling the important roles religion plays in many communities, and in the relations between them. Whilst recognising the importance of many students’ religious identities, the reality of religion’s power in Myanmar must be problematized as part of the whole work of peace education.

Islam in Myanmar Today

While I was researching in Yangon I became good friends with a student at the university. He is Buddhist, from Shan State. His English is excellent so he helped me adjust to life in Myanmar and I asked him questions on the sensitive issues that I could not discuss with my informants at KKEC. As I was putting together questions for my interview with the school’s director, I asked him what proportion of Myanmar’s population is actually Muslim. He said he did not know the exact number but that it is around 40%, which he attributed to Islam’s ‘conversion ideology’ and tendency to have large families. I was surprised at this high number and looked it up online. The official statistic is 4%. When I told my friend he said ‘you’d better use Wikipedia’s number in your research’.

This interaction brought to light a key dimension of Myanmar’s religious landscape, a prejudice against Islam, most strongly manifested by the country’s Buddhist institution which is strongly connected to the Bamar ethnicity, the state government and the military. This prejudice is at the heart of Rakhine’s communal violence, and the persecution of Rohingya communities all over the country. The way in which my friend spoke of Islam in Myanmar implies a feeling of threat and antagonism. It also highlights a culture of misinformation surrounding religious belonging. These can be connected to Myanmar’s Buddhist nationalist movement with groups such as Ma Ba Tha (the Association for the Protection of Race and Religion) or the anti-Muslim 969 Movement.

Concluding Remarks –

This chapter has examined the repercussions of KKEC’s diversity policy and how the school works to overcome the challenges that diverse classrooms pose. It has outlined some of the perhaps unintended effects of the school’s inclusion strategies, in the realms of language, gender and religion. This discussion has tried to show that the moments of interaction between students, and the way in which the school responds to and facilitates this interaction has implications for the students’ learning experiences. For KKEC to be able to deliver on their idea of inclusive peace education these implications must be confronted, and assessed within the overall vision of this education. The following chapter opens the analysis beyond the limits of the school, discussing the real outcomes of
KKEC’s peace education. What does it mean for students to have completed the CLASS programme? What does it prepare them for after the graduate?
6 WHERE DOES THIS PROGRAMME TAKE ITS STUDENTS?

Before KKEC we think one way, we don’t think [about] controversial view[s], now we can think [about] what we want to do and we know more about ourselves – Term Three student

KKEC’s particular vision of peacebuilding is to put peace education skills and experiences into practice, for students to be able to become effective community leaders, in their own local areas and other parts of the country. The process of putting peace education into practice can be seen through two core dimensions of KKEC’s curriculum: the importance of teaching students how to become active community members and citizens, and the key role that the Service Learning experience plays in the CLASS programme. This section examines these two phenomena to highlight the link between peace education at the level of KKEC’s classrooms, and the way the school understands its role in peacebuilding in Myanmar more generally.

6.1 ‘Learn to Lead by Serving’

As has been discussed above, community engagement is at the core of KKEC’s vision of peacebuilding in Myanmar. Since 2014 this is reflected in the name of the school’s programme: Community Leadership and Social Studies. Rather than facilitating entry to foreign universities, students are now encouraged to stay in the country, and apply their skills and knowledge at the community level. Although some do still leave to complete higher education, they ‘come back and serve’ in their communities afterwards. The concept of ‘service’ is inextricably linked to the school’s idea of leadership and development, as illustrated by the phrase ‘learn to lead by serving’. Having outlined some of the key elements of the CLASS programme in the previous chapter, this phrase highlights an interesting opposition. While KKEC purportedly focuses on preparing its students for community-based peacebuilding and development work, their preparation depends on acquiring knowledge and skills in an external environment that is greatly inspired by foreign ideas and policies, outside of Myanmar’s public sphere. Indeed, that students are supported to study in non-state education, and even outside of the country, can be seen as a contradiction to the locally-grounded, service-oriented philosophy of the school. The following sections explore KKEC’s particular vision of peace education, the emphasis on community-driven action, and the role of experiential learning. Subsequently, the

29 From interview with Soe Phyo, 15.03.2016.
30 From interview with Aung Shwe Kyaw, 01.03.2016.
discussion will investigate how this philosophy connects to the programme’s other dimension, a more global orientation.

6.1.1  Becoming Active in the Community

The school’s curriculum imparts its particular vision by focusing on the community as a key social entity, and site for change. In Peace & Conflict the importance of community leaders is underscored in their identity as ‘respected insider’, against the ‘professional outsider’ of international experts and third-party mediators. Mote Oo's Active Citizenship textbook asks students ‘what are the effects of poverty and discrimination in your community? What can be done to promote social justice in your community?’ This reinforcement is reflected by a Term Three student’s assertion that widespread underdevelopment in Myanmar means ‘we need to serve our community, so we need to produce a lot of leader[s] for our community’\textsuperscript{31}. At the same time, students are exposed to development and peacebuilding processes at the international level, enabling them to make connections between their community experiences and wider global issues.

The emphasis on community-led change is also addressed on a practical level. Students learn ‘career-oriented skills’ such as leadership and project management. This new knowledge combines with their previous experiences of community service and engagement, and gives them tools to go beyond their own native communities, to work across different groups and diverse environments\textsuperscript{32}. An example of students combining practical skills and experiences of local activism is Term One’s end-of-term projects for Civic Education. In groups of two to five, students chose a particular issue that they witnessed in their communities, and developed a campaign to impact this issue in a certain way. They actively implemented these campaigns at school and in the local neighbourhood, to draw attention to and spread awareness of the issue. One example, called ‘No Hydropower Project on the Salween River’, examined the political and environmental impacts of damming on local communities, and made recommendations for government regulation and civic lobbying against this issue. Another presentation showed the significant problem of child labour in Myanmar, discussing some of the reasons for its prevalence, and ways in which it can be counteracted: ‘we are not a rich country or a developed country so we need to change the way the country works so that families do not need to rely on their children’s income\textsuperscript{33}.

\textsuperscript{31} From student group discussion #1, 11.03.2016.
\textsuperscript{32} From interview with Aung Shwe Kyaw, 01.03.2016.
\textsuperscript{33} Term One student in ‘Fight Against Child Labors’ presentation, 17.03.2016.
This kind of activity serves a dual purpose. It connects students with issues from communities all around the country, that many may not be familiar with, or that are similar to those faced by their own communities. It also gives students the skills to be active citizens, locally and on a national level, to become involved in social, political or environmental justice issues, encouraging them to speak out and engage others in such causes. This framing of civic engagement and activism is then brought into practice through the school’s Service Learning, a central pillar of the CLASS programme, discussed in the following section.

6.1.2 Service Learning

Service Learning is an educational practice employed across the world in many different ways. In basic terms it seeks to combine academic and practical learning around issues of civic engagement or community service. This ‘experiential’ learning allows students to ‘engage in activities that address human and community needs together with structured opportunity for reflection’ (Jacoby, 1996). The idea is to build reciprocal relations between school and community, and allow students to put into practice their skills and knowledge. At KKEC the Service Learning programme is a key component in the CLASS curriculum. Every year around April/May, all students leave the school and live in new communities for thirty days, carrying out a wide range of community service projects. The aim of this programme is three-fold. It encourages students’ ‘spirit of volunteerism’ and awareness of community-driven change processes. It also helps students to give their academic skills and knowledge a practical basis, linking ‘their academic goals, professional goals and the needs of their communities’ (TEF, 2014). Finally, it gives students the opportunity to discover new and different parts of Myanmar, and share their own background with these communities. The impact of this programme was described by Soe Phyo through one student’s story:

‘Their service learning opportunity can be [a] lifetime experience for them, because this is the time during the year they can go [to other parts of the country]. So for example there is one student, he is a pampered son [from] a Karen family. He is the only son, quite an easy-going life. He came to study here […] and his turning point was when he did the Service Learning. He was assigned to stay in a remote village in area where there is no electricity, no running water, something like that. So when the night comes, you sleep. And water, you get it from the river, something like that. So there, staying in the village, he started to learn how [to ride] a tractor, teaching the kids. I think it touched his heart, knowing the villages, and the daily
experiences of the villagers. So after graduation, he wanted to teach. He wanted to serve the under-served children. So he went to work somewhere, teaching the children. Then, later, he got a job with World Vision in Mon State, to be coordinator for children’s education programmes.’

This story illustrates some of those components of experiential learning, in particular the effect of building relationships with different groups across the country through community-level development work.

In one group discussion with students, four out of five said that the most important experience they had at KKEC was the Service Learning programme. ‘I’d like to service my community, because my division is a poor division so I will work there. So I like Service Learning to see how can I serve to the people, the community’34. Aung Shwe Kyaw explained that the programme teaches students how to apply their leadership and project management skills in different communities, enabling them to work effectively in multi-ethnic environments and diverse situations. This also contributes to the rebuilding of relations between many of the country’s fragmented communities. For KKEC, these types of leaders are to play a critical role in Myanmar’s process of national reconciliation and peacebuilding.

Another interesting point that is raised in Soe Phyo’s story is that the student in question went on to work for World Vision, an international NGO, in Mon State. This point simultaneously links back to the discussion of whether KKEC is, to a certain extent, endorsing the bypassing of Myanmar’s state institutions and official sphere of operation. This situation links to the discussion of ‘NGOisation’, fears around the de-politicisation of civil society movements, and limiting the capacities of local systems around change and development. There is further discussion of this topic in subsequent sections, and in Chapter Seven.

The two previous sections have endeavoured to explain that KKEC’s programme sponsors peace education with a particular understanding of how such transitions from conflict are brought about, and where this work is to be located, in the case of Myanmar. What are the outcomes of this approach? What does this mean for the students in these programmes? What options do they see for themselves upon graduating from the programme? The following section continues this discussion, arguing that KKEC’s own brand of education, with a particular vision for the implications in peacebuilding, aims

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34 From student group discussion #2, 11.03.2016.
to form a ‘new generation’ of leaders linked to community-driven development in Myanmar. How far this corresponds to the reality lived by students is investigated below.

6.2 Future Perspectives: Local and International

Throughout TEF’s history, providing education to Myanmar adults in disadvantaged communities, their intended aim has been to ‘support human development with a goal to promote peace and national reconciliation in Myanmar’ (2014). As was discussed above, this is carried out at KKEC with a particular understanding of which kinds of experiences, skills and knowledge are necessary to fulfil this aim. This section continues the discussion, taking it from school to the next level. What kinds of leaders would come out of KKEC? How far does their education enable them or constrain them in their futures? What does this say about the kind of education they have had?

6.2.1 From KKEC to the Community

As shown above, the concept of ‘community’ is KKEC’s core social entity. The level of community is used to create a diverse student body. The importance of cooperation and communication between communities in the country is emphasised. Community is seen as the ground level for carrying out change and development. In short, ‘community’ is the site of immense potential in fulfilling KKEC’s vision of peace, reconciliation and development in Myanmar.

In a survey of fifty-four students across the three term groups, the question ‘what do you hope to do when you leave KKEC?’ was posed to elicit a general idea of students’ own plans for their future, incorporating their experiences from the programme. There is a noteworthy trend toward community-focused work, with around half of the students in each term expressing an interest in it at some point in their futures. For example, a Term Three student wrote:

My first plan is to get [a] scholarship in another country’s university. [If] I don’t succeed [in] my plan, I will be working in our organisation (NEED) and share the knowledge, experiences, from KKEC. The last, I would like to run [an] Environment Conservation Centre in my community.

Another Term Three student wrote:
When I am leaving the school, I would like to serve in my community. To help to develop my community and also would like to develop the abilities of youth and children. The biggest one I would like to do is to establish my own org for youth in my community.

A Term One student wrote:

First, I want to work as [a] volunteer in [a] NGO organisation. Then, I want to apply [for a] scholarship to [study] abroad. My dream [is] to make business opportunities for my people from Rakhine and to help children who can’t go to school.

These testimonies would indicate that KKEC’s particular vision of peacebuilding is connecting with students and perhaps influencing their perspectives. To problematize this idea, it must be noted that the students recruited to the school are already likely to be involved in community work in different ways, as this is a criterion that is sought after in applications. Furthermore, as was explained above, students are often connected to KKEC through organisations in their own communities, which reinforces the idea that KKEC students already present a high level of interest in this sphere. Another key factor in the current group of students’ wishes to work at their community level is the potential for immense changes that was felt in Myanmar at the time of research, resulting from the transition to democracy that began with the first fair elections since the 1960s. It is also interesting that these student testimonies blend several spheres together in the envisioned futures: returning to their communities, leaving Myanmar for further education, and engaging with international non-state actors. Thus far these spheres have been seen as somewhat opposing or exclusive, however, the students themselves present these different experiences as combinable or even mutually reinforcing. This indicates that students understand and utilise their KKEC education in different and perhaps unanticipated ways.

In sum, there is a certain trend in students’ interests toward community-level engagement after they graduate from KKEC. This trend can be seen to result from a number of factors, of which the KKEC philosophy of peace education is one. What remains to be seen is how far this education meets the demands of the economic and political landscape facing graduates, in their communities, in Myanmar and abroad, and how students recognise the opportunities that are made available to them.
6.2.2 Looking Beyond the Community and Facing Change

Going beyond individual students' perspectives, this section aims to open up the discussion of what exactly KKEC’s education prepares students for, upon leaving the school. As discussed above, the curriculum can be seen to capitalise on students’ prior interests, and to encourage them to develop their support for community-level engagement. Indeed, academic and practical experiences retain this level as a focal point. At the same time, the curriculum is designed to widen students’ perspectives. For example, subjects such as Global Issues help students to make connections between issues they observe or experience at their community level, with those happening on a national or international level, in different areas across the world. Gender Studies introduces students to a particular dimension of development they may not be familiar with, asking them to critically reflect on their own beliefs and backgrounds. Perhaps the greatest effect is made by the use of English as the dominant language in classrooms. Upon graduation, students have the capacity to work in English-speaking environments, and the knowledge of how international labour and higher education markets function. Furthermore, students are encouraged to learn about and engage with groups in Myanmar that operate at the community level.

Through the Service Learning programme, many students build strong relationships with communities from which they do not originate, illustrated by Soe Phyoe's anecdote (6.1.2). In the demographic survey students shared a wide range of ideas for their futures: ‘reforming the rights of minority’; studying ‘business administration’; being able to ‘communicate with foreigner[s]’; working ‘in a political party or embassy’; and becoming ‘a trainer and teacher’. This open-mindedness that comes from the wide range of knowledge and experiences students gain at KKEC, results in them being encouraged to not only look into their communities, but also laterally, across Myanmar, and outwards, at the rest of the world. This duality also highlights a tension around the outcomes of this education. Being an unofficial, unaccredited, private school, KKEC already operates somewhat removed from the national education system. On top of this, through its curriculum, teaching and the opportunities it gives students, KKEC provides certain channels for engaging in change and development systems that are outside of the public sphere. It is possible that this form of organisation contributes to the bypassing of state institutions, for example in so-called ‘NGOisation’. This is problematic as it may pose a threat to national power structures, by promoting a more neo-liberal system of decentralised, privatised governance, jeopardising the capabilities of public institutions to respond to address these issues.

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On the other hand, it also connects with Fraser’s writing about social justice theory (2.1.3). She argues that the increased interconnections between communities at the global scale pushes struggles around political justice away from the national sphere, into the domain of international institutions and organisations (2007). In that case, the promotion of non-state systems of change for KKEC’s diverse students follows a global trend. This would signify opportunities for connection within a completely different, and potentially more active sphere.

The different future plans outlined by students translate into different choices for them. For this case study it is particularly important to think about their future in light of the changing political situation in Myanmar. April 2016 marked the transition to a fairly-elected, democratic government for the first time since independence. Many people anticipate great changes to follow, and many young people in particular are impatiently waiting for new chances to shape their futures in new ways. Soe Phyo notes that this anticipation also affects students’ future plans,

> The students, they feel that they should be part of this transition. So if [they] go to study abroad, they will like to study a very short time because they don't want to be away from the country [...] then you’d miss some of these interesting opportunities35.

Furthermore, the democratic government has the potential to lead Myanmar to occupy a greater position on the international stage, rapidly bringing globalisation and all of its properties into the country, which have been for the most part absent, until now. It is hoped by many in Myanmar that these changes will extend into the national education system in reforms, expansion of access and improved quality. Problems in these areas are the primary reasons for which young people leave the country for higher education. The question that KKEC should be asking itself is how far its curriculum enables students to enter this ‘new world’ and take an active position in effecting system change, on any level. In other words, will students be able to implement the skills and knowledge they have learned, to carry out KKEC’s vision of peace?

**Concluding Remarks –**

To conclude this chapter, it has tried to answer the question of what kind of education KKEC is delivering to its students. While the school’s main concern is understood to be peace and community leadership studies for the current context of Myanmar, evidence from students and staff leads to

35 From interview with Soe Phyo, 15.03.2016.
thinking that KKEC’s education goes beyond community-level peacebuilding. The knowledge and experiences that students gain not only enable them to learn more about their own contexts, they also open these young people up to the rest of the country, and the rest of the world. The result is a perhaps conflicting message around what peacebuilding in Myanmar looks like, and the role that students are to play in this process.
7 CONCLUSION

Through education we will have understanding about ourselves and then there will be peacebuilding – Soe Phyo

7.1 Summary of Main Findings and Answer to RQs

This thesis has sought to examine the relationship between education and peacebuilding, within the particular context of ethnic-based conflict in Myanmar. The case study of a particular school in Yangon has tried to show that while the circumstances of conflict, and the work of peacebuilding are necessarily unique in each instance, there are valuable lessons to be learned from each one. As the field of education, conflict and peace affects many communities across the world, it is vital that research be carried out on this topic to respond to those affected, so that sustainable peace may lead to long-term rebuilding and redevelopment of society.

The research led to two main findings which are summarised here. Firstly, the study of KKEC’s vision of peacebuilding for Myanmar can be seen as a response to the particularity of this country’s conflict, which is understood to stem from historic, political oppression, as well as ethnic and religious difference. Both of these dimensions are addressed through KKEC’s ‘peace curriculum’. Through citizenship education, students are given knowledge and skills to engage in civic processes, to advocate for rights and freedoms, and to participate in the country’s political sphere. Simultaneously, the school places a strong emphasis on addressing and embracing the nation’s cultural diversity in the classroom, encouraging young people from many different communities to come together, to learn together and about each other. The importance of community in KKEC’s vision of peacebuilding is the second key finding of this research. It is the core social entity for understanding conflict, bringing about change, peace and development. In this way, the school makes a case for national peacebuilding to be a bottom-up, locally-informed exercise, as a way to address the particular context effectively. This idea supports peace education theory which demands strong attention to ‘various social, political, economic, historical and cultural contexts’, to be able to respond to realities on the ground (Berghof Foundation, 2012). For this reason, KKEC’s peace education is an interesting and relevant case beyond Myanmar. The flexibility of the framework could make it transferable to other circumstances, as long as context is addressed.

To answer the research questions which guided this thesis, it is useful recall them here:
How does ethnically-inclusive education at KKEC promote peacebuilding in the post-conflict context of Myanmar?

What discourses characterise the discussion of Myanmar's ethnic diversity, beyond the Burmese majority, in the classroom?

How does the content of the CLASS programme address the issue of ethnic diversity and inclusion?

How might indigenous epistemologies from different ethnic communities play out in the classroom to support – or hinder – inclusivity?

The main research question is discussed throughout the three analysis chapters. Chapter Four finds that KKEC's programme does indeed correspond to a form of peace education, in that it addresses issues of conflict prevention and resolution, both as formal processes but also on an interpersonal level. Section 4.1 analyses the important ‘first encounter’ between KKEC’s diverse students as they get to know and learn from each other. Section 4.2 goes on to discuss the ‘formal’ peace and conflict studies, and section 4.3 looks at teaching materials and content. At the same time, this peace education goes beyond curriculum, as it confronts a key factor of Myanmar’s decades-long conflict, the relations between different ethnic and religious communities. This is achieved by bringing together young people from across the country and facilitating mutual understanding between them by encouraging communication, debate and negotiation (4.2.1). This interaction, and the learning process that comes from it, are framed by certain values connected to KKEC’s wider goals: openness, tolerance and participation. Those values are also seen in classes which make up the CLASS programme: Peace & Conflict, Gender Studies, Civic Education, Global Issues etc. They are all geared toward exposing students to information, knowledge, ideas and skills that are not accessible through the public education system, and are part of the school’s vision for fostering peace. The other crucial part of this vision is instilling a sense of responsibility toward the community as the essential site of peacebuilding and development in Myanmar (6.1). In sum, and connecting to the second sub-question, through the whole-school experience, curriculum, content and student interaction, education, inclusion and peacebuilding are brought together. While the CLASS programme is undoubtedly unconventional in Myanmar and perhaps the rest of the world as well, it is equally undoubtedly a context-specific form of peace education, again recalling parts of the theory.
The research sub-questions address issues of inclusion, equality and voice in the school’s programme. Chapter Five examines the subjectivity of the curriculum on a more hidden level, looking at the implications of language choices (5.1), as well as the approach to gender and religion in the school (5.2 and 5.3). It is clear that there are strategic decisions made around these issues with particular intentions around equality and neutrality, possibly to retain the open and tolerant environment necessary for the diverse class to thrive. In particular, by removing the Burmese language from the official curriculum, a significant step is made to reduce the pervasiveness of the Burmese identity as majority in Myanmar. By using sources and stories emanating from all over Myanmar (see 4.3) the diversity of voices in the classroom is recognised and efforts are made to accommodate them. It must be repeated, however, that inclusivity is a complex goal that is difficult to achieve for a myriad of reasons. For example, social, cultural and linguistic factors may be preventing female students at KKEC from fully articulating themselves in Gender Studies, an unintended outcome of the class’ design. Nevertheless, there is a strong, overt emphasis on expression of students’ own voices, for their communities and their interests through the teaching of civic engagement and active participation (see 6.1.1).

The research questions were designed in consideration of theoretical debates on the topics of inclusion, peacebuilding and education. Looking back at this theory with the research findings in mind, it seems that ‘peace education’ is a useful concept to describe what is happening in KKEC’s Peace & Conflict and Civic Education classes. One example is the particular communication and mediation practices (4.2.1) which correspond to the teaching of conflict resolution (Lopes Cardozo & May, 2009). Another example is the programme’s efforts to ground peace education in practical or ‘experiential’ learning (Lopes Cardozo, 2008) within communities (6.1.2). Most importantly perhaps, is the school’s commitment to supporting ‘the encounter with “the other”’ (Berghof Foundation, 2012), where young people from historically conflicting groups come together in a classroom (4.1).

However, this research also argues that the theoretical concept of ‘peace education’ is too narrow to cover any kind of schooling that aims to go beyond basic conflict analysis, prevention and resolution skills. This limitation is perhaps due to the serious lack of empirical data from diverse cases of peace-oriented education, as well as the ‘lessons learned’ that further research can provide (Lopes Cardozo & May, 2009; Lopes Cardozo, et al., 2015). The research concurs with the literature’s demand for context-conscious peace education as the way to make it relevant and practical (Berghof Foundation, 2012) as well as the need for inclusivity in order to respond to ethnic or religious-based conflict and support participation in the style of Davies’ ‘interruptive democracy’ (2004). The case of KKEC exemplifies the extent to which context informs such a curriculum: experiential learning plays a
critical role in peace education for Myanmar, because of the importance of civil society and community-based peacebuilding and development (Chapter Six). Hence, this case fits the theory around peace education, although it is the understanding of the researcher that the theory does not extend far enough to represent the reality of this case. Indeed, the importance of attention to context underscores the individuality of each case of conflict-to-peace transition, in the social and political landscape and the configuration of stakeholders (see 1.1), and the ways in which an education system is called upon to intervene, which necessarily reflect the particular ways in which schooling is conceptualised and practiced in each case (this links to 2.1.3). In other words, general theories around incorporating peace into education do not go much further than generalities, reflecting a vast field of disparate cases.

Connecting to this issue of general representations of conflict and peace, another important theoretical critique is around the inclusion of so-called ‘alternative’ perspectives. Based on this research, the fields of critical pedagogy and indigenous studies, through their link to the field of social justice, have great potential to add to understandings of peace education. Conflicts so often have roots in issues of social, political and economic inequality. Therefore, it is important to address, in particular, representation and recognition as part of transitions to sustainable peace. It is suggested that Huaman’s concept of ‘critical Indigenous peace education’ is a helpful starting point for such a discussion (2011).

A final point of this conclusion is that, while the case of KKEC in many ways corroborates and adds to existing ideas around peace education, the research found that the programme goes beyond just addressing peace and conflict. The focus on civic engagement, community experience and global issues, along with teaching language and career-oriented skills, contributes to ‘widening the gaze’ of students and showing them different opportunities for their own lives. As Chapter Six explained, the question of what KKEC students do after they graduate has a complicated answer. It seems that the school presents a particular pathway to students as a useful way to implement the knowledge and skills they are taught. This pathway encourages a kind of ‘return to the community’, to work toward peacebuilding. The extent to which students follow this plan varies, as many of them see more and different options for themselves. There is a visible tension between local and international spheres, and where the students feel prepared or inspired to work in.

At this point, it is interesting to return to the discussion of social justice theory (2.1.3). Fraser’s argument that transformations in the global social and political landscape are affecting processes of redressing justice for indigenous and minority groups (2007), can be seen to correspond to this case
study. As was discussed in Chapter Six, KKEC’s programme can be seen, to a certain extent, to be encouraging young people in Myanmar to turn outside of the national, public sphere to engage in change movements, bypassing state institutions for education and development (among others), in favour of trans- and international options. In this changing environment, Fraser argues that the dimension of representation will continue to become a central issue in struggles for justice claims, as responsibility shifts more and more onto international organisations and institutions.

The following section provides a revised conceptual scheme which tries to incorporate the theoretical critiques raised in this conclusion, into the original visualisation.

7.2 Revised Conceptual Scheme

This conceptualisation of the main issues in this research project is based on a contextualised understanding of the concepts. As in the theoretical scheme (2.3) the movement progresses from left to right to denote the transition from conflict to peace. In addition, the movement from the ‘ground up’ and from the ‘top down’ are shown, as the context and fieldsite affect the transition in the centre. This scheme also tries to visualise the argument that the concept of ‘peace education’ does not fully cover the complexity of KKEC’s programme. Indeed, important components of this programme such as inclusive classrooms and teaching have implications for the situation of conflict in Myanmar.
beyond their role in forming peace education. These elements are highlighted in purple. In sum, this scheme seeks to underline how essential it is to recognise context in designing education for peacebuilding, and that the general, ‘formal’ elements of peace education that were discussed in the theoretical framework only make up one part of the overall design process.

7.3 Methodological Reflection

As is fairly typical of single case-study research, the methodological framework was not fixed prior to the begin of data collection. While several appropriate methods were selected and prepared to a certain extent, the overall framework remained flexible, in order to best respond to sampling. This was a highly beneficial approach, as the research was not confined to a particular pathway, but was organised according to the availabilities of informants and the gradual revelation of information. On the whole, all methods proved to be successful as they collected useful data. Upon reflection, it would perhaps have strengthened the research to have more data from students, however, it is deemed that this was not possible considering the time and sampling constraints. As it is, the decision to use KKEC as a single fieldsite for this research was made because it offered access to a large diversity of voices and perspectives in one location, considering to the limited time available.

It must be noted that, while the student discussion method was intended and designed to take the form of focus group discussions, upon reflection it more closely resembles group interviewing. This is mainly due to the fact that participants did not interact with each other much, instead preferring to answer direct questions of the researcher. It is likely that this was due to the researcher’s failure in correctly explaining the procedure of the method. Upon reflection, these participants were most likely unfamiliar with this form of western, academic, qualitative social research, and would have benefited from more guidance from the researcher. However, this did not present a serious problem as the discussion was able to progress as intended, only with more intervention from the researcher through direct and targeted questioning.

Returning to an earlier point about case-study research, although its restricted sampling possibilities limit generalisability, it is able to give a valid and reliable reflection of one particular situation. By providing copious, detailed, contextual information, being reflexive, and triangulating data with various sources, there is strong transferability, dependability and credibility, to strengthen the quality of research. Furthermore, it is hoped that this case gives support for grounded-theory research design wherein theory is investigated based on empirical findings in particular fieldsite. In this case, the theory around inclusive education and peacebuilding was largely corroborated by the
research findings, although they also push theoretical boundaries and give suggestions for future study.

Finally, a reflection on ethics in this research project highlights in particular the importance of implementing a critical change perspective, as stated by Brooten and Metro (2014) (see 3.5). From its inception, this research was also designed to be useful for the organisation, as an outside, academic perspective on KKEC’s programme within wider debates around education and peacebuilding. For that reason, the analysis and findings will be made available to the school, in the hope that they can support the development and expansion of the organisation in future. This also links with Brooten and Metro’s call for reciprocity between researchers and informants.

7.4  Relevance and Suggestions for Further Research

Despite the particular context of Myanmar's conflict, an argument can be made for the relevance of this research, especially in the wider Southeast Asian region, where ethnic-based conflicts have some similarities around issues of representation, democracy and development. Indeed, this research makes a case for community-based, civil society-led movements to peace through education, as well as the importance of bottom-up, locally-informed change. This is especially important where minorities, such as different ethnic, or indigenous groups, are involved. The relevance of KKEC’s work was noted by Anisa, reflecting on her own background:

“It really shifts the way I see things, the way I see young people, the way I see my own country. You know, like the way I see history, like my own history. Because I think Indonesia and Myanmar politics is kind of similar.

This also corresponds to Huaman’s statement assertion that ‘peace-building is situated within historical and cultural contexts, but communities can still learn from each other’ (2011, p. 255). Of course, this depends on the production of more research in the areas of peacebuilding, education and inclusion, in different contexts.

It is important to understand that this research, and its findings, are a reflection of the particular context in which it was carried out. In April 2016 Myanmar was completing the transition to a democratically-elected civilian government, and there were many expectations for the future and the changes the new government would bring. At the same time, the historical context was still important, in shaping the social, political and economic landscape, and the climate of civil society. Chapter Six discussed the potential implications of change for KKEC and its work, but it is worth
discussing this again. It is unclear what changes are in store for Myanmar’s communities, in particular for conflict resolution and peacebuilding, so it is also unclear if, and how, KKEC’s educational programme is to remain an effective, practical response to this situation. Indeed, it is hoped, also by KKEC’s management, that Myanmar’s education system undergoes significant transformation in coming years, which would affect them as well. In the face of this potential for immense change, it is uncertain for how long this research will itself remain relevant to the context of Myanmar. Indeed, such a fast-changing environment will benefit from renewed and further research shortly.

7.5 Recommendations for Policy and Practice

In regards to Myanmar’s education system, as it currently stands there is no legal category for schools that operate not-for-profit in the private sector, as is the case for KKEC. Because of this, it is not allowed to officially call itself a ‘school’. There are important implications for accreditation, funding and recruitment, which currently impede the optimal functioning of the institution, and its expansion. Should the country’s legal framework change to accommodate this third category, it would allow for more schools, with peacebuilding interests in the style of KKEC, to open.

Alternatively, or simultaneously, the incorporation of a context-sensitive peace curriculum in public education could significantly aid national peace processes and reconciliation. This is true not only for Myanmar but other situations in which ethnic or religious difference contribute to conflict. In particular, what is transferable in the case of KKEC is the emphasis on including diversity and encouraging open communication. This engages with discussions around educational reform in Myanmar, where recognition of educational needs of minority groups is not yet widely accepted.

This research has also drawn attention to the general deficiency of Myanmar’s public education sector, suggesting that this may prompt young people to engage in private systems of schooling and employment (Chapter Six). This could lead to a bifurcation of civil society initiatives for peacebuilding and reconciliation, potentially causing new exclusions or conflicts. The solution would be to work toward a national education system which encourages interaction and movement between all sectors of society, politics and the economy. In particular, this system would need to include remote and minority communities to support their participation.

On the question of international policy for peace education, the main findings from this research would argue against the creation of a universal, one-size framework. Indeed, they have demonstrated

36 From interview with Aung Shwe Kyaw, 01.03.2016.
that context is central to shaping any kind of peacebuilding initiative in education, which could be undermined by global strategies. However, there is undoubtedly value in promoting the field of peace education on an international stage, especially as the changing nature of global conflict today is affecting ever more communities. Furthermore, a global understanding of peace education could be effectively connected to existing conventions and treaties (e.g. UDHR, UNCRC, CEDAW), which also offers a way to negotiate the tension between local and western-imposed ideas of conflict and peace (see 5.2). Another example could be the inclusion of conflict prevention and peace studies in the Education for All goals. However, this leads to the question of what role the international community may play in national peace education. The ratification of international legislation creates a responsibility of intervention in cases of violation. Whether this is a constructive way to frame national peace education initiatives is unclear, and would likely find international development scholars on both sides of the argument.
8 REFERENCES


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   *New Left Review, 1*(212).


UN. (1948). *Universal Declaration of Human Rights*. 


## APPENDIX 1. Operationalisation Table

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Concept</th>
<th>Dimension</th>
<th>Variable</th>
<th>Indicator</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Inclusive education</td>
<td>Inclusive Classroom</td>
<td>Ethnic background of staff and students</td>
<td>How much does the classroom represent the diversity of the nation?</td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Positive acknowledgement of diverse backgrounds</td>
<td>Does the school consider diversity to be important?</td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>In what ways are ethnic identities acknowledged?</td>
<td>In what ways are ethnic identities acknowledged?</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>What are students and teachers' attitudes toward other ethnic groups?</td>
<td>What are students and teachers' attitudes toward other ethnic groups?</td>
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<td>How are different languages approached in the classroom and in the curriculum?</td>
<td>How are different languages approached in the classroom and in the curriculum?</td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Addressing ethnic difference in classroom</td>
<td>Addressing ethnic difference in classroom</td>
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<td>In what ways are issues around difference addressed?</td>
<td>In what ways are issues around difference addressed?</td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>How are conflicts mediated/resolved?</td>
<td>How are conflicts mediated/resolved?</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Inclusive Teaching</td>
<td>Inclusion of alternative perspectives</td>
<td>What is taught about different ethnic groups?</td>
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<td></td>
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<td>How is the language/perspective of instruction decided upon?</td>
<td>How is the language/perspective of instruction decided upon?</td>
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<td>Inclusion of multiple narratives</td>
<td>What is the dominant narrative taught in school?</td>
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<td></td>
<td>How are different narratives included in teaching?</td>
<td>How are different narratives included in teaching?</td>
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<td>Citizenship Education</td>
<td>Teaching of collective national belonging</td>
<td>How is collective national identity taught?</td>
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<td></td>
<td>How is national identity reconciled with belonging to other social groups?</td>
<td>How is national identity reconciled with belonging to other social groups?</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Affirmation of Myanmar’s ethnic diversity</td>
<td>How is the nation’s diversity taught?</td>
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<td>What kind of discourse characterises the teaching of difference?</td>
<td>What kind of discourse characterises the teaching of difference?</td>
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<td>Peace Education</td>
<td>Teaching of nation-building</td>
<td>How is civic engagement promoted in the school?</td>
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<td></td>
<td>To what extent are diverse voices included?</td>
<td>To what extent are diverse voices included?</td>
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<td>Peacebuilding</td>
<td>Promotion of peace</td>
<td>How is peace addressed?</td>
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<td>What examples are used to teach about conflicts and peace?</td>
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<td>Conflict Resolution</td>
<td>Are real conflicts addressed in class?</td>
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<td>To what extent are conflict resolution skills taught?</td>
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<td>Addressing injustice and inequality</td>
<td>What is taught about Myanmar’s own systems of inequality?</td>
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<td>How are structural inequality and injustice addressed?</td>
<td>How are structural inequality and injustice addressed?</td>
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<td>Civil Society</td>
<td>Community-level engagement</td>
<td>What is the role of the community in teaching of peace and conflict?</td>
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<td>To what extent is community work encouraged?</td>
<td>To what extent is community work encouraged?</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Personal networks</td>
<td>What is the role of personal networks in school organisation?</td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>How are students encouraged to build their own networks?</td>
<td>How are students encouraged to build their own networks?</td>
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</tbody>
</table>
10 APPENDIX 3. Demographic Survey and Group Discussion Questionnaire

Demographic Survey for Students of CLASS

1. How old are you? ______

2. What is your gender? M □ F □

3. Which state/region/district in Myanmar are you from? _____________________________

4. How did you find out about Thabyay?
________________________________________________________________________________
________________________________________________________________________________
________________________________________________________________________________
________________________________________________________________________________

5. When did you start studying at Thabyay? _____________________________

6. What do you hope to do when you leave Thabyay?
________________________________________________________________________________
________________________________________________________________________________
________________________________________________________________________________
________________________________________________________________________________
________________________________________________________________________________
________________________________________________________________________________

Thank you very much for filling this out! 😊
Questionnaire for Term Three Students
(Group Discussions, 11.03.2016)

**Learning about social, political and economic issues in Myanmar**

<table>
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<th>Challenges</th>
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**Being taught by non-Myanmar teachers**

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<th>Challenges</th>
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**Having classmates from diverse background**

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<th>Challenges</th>
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