

Buddhist Education and University Level Curriculum

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“Education is the most powerful weapon, which you can use to change the world.”

Mr.Nelson Mandela¹

Education is the best way to eradicate extreme poverty and hunger² from the world. The Buddhist education is more exceptional than other formal education systems because it is not only concentrates about the knowledge but also cultivates the virtuous thoughts in people’s mind. Therefore, more than other educational schemes, Buddhist education emerged through humanity. According to Oxford Advantaged Genie Dictionary, education means “a process of teaching, training and learning, especially in schools, college or university, to improve knowledge and develop skills”.³This paper

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3. Buddhist Attitude to Education, Bhikkhuni Dhammananda Nguyen-Huong,

mostly discusses the current requirement of Buddhist education to the University level curriculum, with a new anticipation to build a stable and peaceful world. Therefore, there are four sub-topics which need to pay specific consideration to establish a proper university level curriculum with Buddhist education.

1. Subjective matter
2. Teaching and learning methods
3. The mutual relationship between teachers and students
4. Ethical conduct through Buddhist education

Subjective matter

Firstly, when discuss about the Buddhist education and university level curriculum, it is important to discuss about the obstacles in primary education in the present world, because it is the basic level which students lead to the university level. Therefore, to achieve universal primary education⁴ becomes a major requirement while develops formal education in the universities.

Education is the most significant approach which makes perfect person to be a mature and responsible adult during the civilization. In the present world, in both developed and developing countries, the formal education is in a serious trouble. Classroom education is turning to the daily exercise in the book rather than adventure in new studying methods. Most students have become restless in monotonous studies and interest in drugs, unusual sex experiments and violence. In this situation, teachers are in a dilemma and dissatisfied with system, but still unable to find a meaningful solution.

In Alagaddūpama sutta, the Buddha emphasised Buddhist ideology to learn a proper subject in a proper way.

“Seyyathāpi, bhikkhave, puriso alagaddatthiko alagaddagavesī
alagaddapariyesanaṃ caramāno,...Evaṃeva kho bhikkhave
idhekacce kulaputtā dhammaṃ pariyāpunanti,...Yassa catthāya

<http://www.budsas.org/ebud/ebdha294.htm>

4. second Millennium Development goal of the United Nations (MDGs)

dhammaṃ pariyāpunaṇṭi taṃcassa atthaṃ anubhonti tesaṃ te dhammā suggahātā dīgharattaṃ hitāya sukhāya saṃvattanti⁵”

“O monks! Likewise serpent researcher knows to catch snakes in the right place (in serpent’s physique), a wise person catches/ understands the Dhamma with right understanding for his good life.”

Agreeing with above clue, to prevent defects in the modern education, scholars view on university curriculum should have to reconstruct according to current issues with exact revelation. And there is a requirement of relevant subjects in the university curriculum to improve it. In brief, whatever the study area the undergraduates/postgraduates select to study, some specific subjects should compulsory for them for future benefits. To prove it, as a common experience, though the world is technically developed, there are some conflicts arise among people, because of ideological controversies. Most importantly a lot of human beings have not enough knowledge and ability to act wisely in conflict moments. It happened, basically we cannot control emotions and also our ability to understand others emotions are still in elementary status. In this approach, Psychology which is centralised on human behaviour can present a solution. With the correct guidance, people can get away from conflict situations in the society as well as in the inner mind. Therefore Psychology should be required subject for undergraduates/postgraduate students in theoretical level.

Youth contribution is highly required to Global partnership for development⁶. When people have different religious aspects and traditional alterations, automatically it leads society for different perspectives. Therefore “science” can use as a bridge which combines all alternations together because it is a well approved substance without any instabilities. To illustrate, when Buddhists are discussing about Buddhist points with non-Buddhists in both western and eastern, they can explain some Buddhist concepts with the combination of science. Therefore, I suggest it’s better if common scientific theories become a major subject in University level studies. Likewise then bachelors able to make a universal

5. Majjhima Nikāya I, Alagaddupama sutta, P. 130 PTS

6. 8th Millennium Development goal of the United Nations (MDGs)

discussion and finally the world leads to a development with global partners. Aristotle mentioned “man as a social animal”. We all have one community surrounds us by proving his idea. As a social animal, people should have a specific knowledge about the society and its outlets. At that point Social studies also become an important subject area, which gives standard knowledge about the social order.

A lot of sexual infections spread because of lack of sex education among young generation. That is the main reason which the United Nations need to Improve Maternal Health⁷ and Combat HIV /AIDS, Malaria and Other Diseases⁸. Before fulfil educational achievements, a man or woman needs to be a healthy person. Therefore, to avoid youth infected by sexual diseases, it is important to add “sex education” as a subject in university curriculum. It will be significant to them in the whole life time, especially for girls when they expect to be a mother.

Normally in management studies, bachelors learn Economic as a main subject. It is much better if the authority can add basic economic theories to other study areas to develop their intellectual achievements. Extraordinary, as a Buddhist subject matter, Pāli, Tipitaka reading and most importantly Buddhist meditation should include in the Buddhist studies curriculum as prominent subjects. All Buddhist teachings have translated into English and many languages, but sometimes the real meaning is hidden while translating. Therefore, all bachelors who graduate with the knowledge of Buddhist studies, definitely have to panoply with Pāli knowledge and a proper knowledge of the Tipitaka. In addition, it might be valuable if students can concentrate their mind on this competitive educational system by the practice of meditation. It surely helps to grasp other subjects without effort by concentrated mind and assistances to complete education distinctively.

Teaching and learning methods

In the Buddhist commentaries the role of the teacher is discussed in a higher position. It always emphasized the value of the teacher in

7. 5th Millennium Development goal of the United Nations (MDGs)

8. 6th Millennium Development goal of the United Nations (MDGs)

various ways. Among his great nine attributes, the Buddha was called as “Sattthā devamanussānaṃ”⁹ which means the teacher of gods and men. To achieve this position, it is better if the teacher is brilliant with below five qualities.

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| 1. Attaññū | -He knows what is good/ beneficial |
| 2. Dhammaññū | -He knows what is true/righteous |
| 3. Mattaññū | -He knows the measure |
| 4. Kālaññū | -He knows the right time |
| 5. Parisaññū | -He knows the assemblage or the person ¹⁰ |

With the best qualities as a teacher, the Buddha had a lot of teaching methods according to the capacity of students. Always the same teaching method is not matching with all students. But in my point of view, discussing method can use as a common method while teaching. University is a multi-ethnic, multicultural society. Therefore the discussion method is the most appropriate one because it is a successful route to establish peace and precise understanding among all religions while formal education becomes success.

There is no any force to the students to accept whatever thing which their lecturer teach them. They have to understand by themselves with attentive investigation and agree the point on what the lecturer taught. It is directly explained by the Buddha as below.

“mā anusasavena, mā paramparāya, mā itikirāya, mā piṭakasampadānena, mā takkahetu, mā nayahetu, mā ākāraparivitakkena, mā diṭṭhinijjhānakkhantiyā, mā bhabbarūpatāya, mā samaṇo no garū’ti”¹¹

“Don’t go by reports, by legends, by traditions, by scripture, by logical conjecture, by inference, by analogies, by agreement through pondering views, by probability, or by the thought, ‘This contemplative

9. Saṃyutta Nikāya v , Mahā vagga ,Veludavāreyya Sutta, P 352 PTS

10. Anguttara Nikāya, iv , Mahā Vagga, Dhammaññū Sutta, , P. 113 PTS

11. Aṅguttara Nikāya 1, Ekaka nipāta, Cittapariyādāna vagga, Kālāma Sutta, P. 189 PTS

is our teacher”¹²

Young generation is an energetic and active social group. Their contribution to sustainability depend on the education and their social activeness. As a place where the young generation try to achieve their goals, it is better if university education is mostly familiar with practical method rather than lecture method.

While teaching methods are trying to use for the benefit of the students, there might be a number of learning methods which students practice to grasp knowledge. Some students might able to learn through notes while some other one is interesting to learn through practical studies.

Therefore the right techniques are essential to use by teachers for successful teaching methods.

The mutual relationship between teachers and students

The word “teacher” is explained in Buddhism as, *Satthā*, *Ācariya*, *upajjhāya*- preceptor, mentor; and *antevāsiko* is a pupil. The teacher should show compassion for the pupil. *Culla vagga Pāli*, *vattakhanddhaka* describes in details the duties of teachers (*ācariya*, *upajjhāyā*,) to the pupils, and the duties of a pupil to his mentor/ preceptor/ teacher.

The teacher and students need very good interrelationship among them. However today in most of universities conflicts arise time to time between lecturers and students because of not having proper understanding. To get away from problematic circumstances, it is better both parties do their duties well. The Buddha’s teachings on the mutual relationship between teachers and students is described in *Sigālovāda Sutta* ¹³ and can be used as a template to develop social interactions. The Buddha taught the young *Sigāla* about five duties of

12. *Kālāma Sutta: To the Kālāmas* (AN 3.65), translated from the Pali by Thanissaro Bhikkhu. Access to Insight (Legacy Edition), 30 November 2013, <http://www.accesstosight.org/tipitaka/an/an03/an03.065.than.html>

13. *Dīgha Nikāya* iii, *Pāthikavagga*, P. 180 PTS

students toward teacher as follows.

1. Uṭṭhānena- By rising from the seat in salutation
2. Uppatthānena- By attending (servicing) on him
3. Sussūsāya- By eagerness (enthusiast) to learn
4. Pāricariyāya- By personal service
5. Sakkaccam sippapaṭiggahanena - By respectful attention while receiving instructions

The word “Sippa” means skill/ knowledge in crafts or arts, this surely denotes the worldly knowledge. Thus the fifth duty of a pupil is to be careful/ attentively learning whatever he is taught. In Maṅgala sutta it is stated, ‘Bāhu-saccañ-ca sippañca, vinayo ca susikkhito¹⁴- learned and perfect in skills, disciplined and well trained.

On the part of teachers, they have to,

1. Suvinītaṃ vinenti- They train them in the best discipline
2. Suggahitaṃ gāhāpenti- They see that they grasp (teach) their lessons well
3. Sabba sippasuttaṃ samakkhāyino bhavanti- They instruct them in all art and crafts which has learned
4. Mitta maccesu patiyādenti- They introduce them to their friends and associates
5. Disāsu parittānaṃ karoti- They provide for their safety in every quarter (directions)

Ethical conduct through Buddhist education

“Kāyena saṃvuta dhira atho vacaya samvuta
Manasa samvuta dhira te ve suparisamvuta”¹⁵

“A person controlled by body, word and mind. Finally a wise person controlled by all”

The aim of Buddhist education is to create a man who is qualified

14. Khuddaka Nikāya , Khuddakapāṭhapāli, Maṅgala Sutta, P. 003 PTS

15. Dhammapada, Kodha vagga. Verse 234

with formal subject areas as well as perfect man with ethical and moral development. When the western people are reading the Buddhist ethics they are so excited to know about the Buddhism. After they see the real practical part of some Buddhist people most of them are getting disappointed.

Therefore the Buddhist education in university curriculum must be based on the knowledge as well as ethics. The present education system leads people to a competition which occurs jealousy, anger, hatred, etc... Currently parents want their offspring to earn a degree, ensure a better social status with sufficient money. Unfortunately they rarely expect to improve ethical manner of the children. As a result, the children are going far from ethical part and become closed to the competition in the society. Most parents have already decided what would be their children's future status such as becoming doctor, engineer, businessman etc.. At the end, the most of the children become robots without emotions.

The aim of Buddhist education is to make a respectable person in the society, who can understand the value of parents, teachers and elders more than money. The foremost significance of Buddhist education can be seen after they graduate and it reflects their attitudes through behaviour. When they engage with the society, crime level should decrease while using Buddhist concepts in a practical way which bases on the ethics and morality.

Everyone must treat similarly with the quality of "Samānattatā" means equality. Buddhism does not consider about the status and caste of the people. All human beings are equal under the theme of Buddhism. Therefore, we need to make an equal position in the lecture rooms, at all educational institutes and in the university system. Then, with compassionate mind and loving kindness they never forget the values of humanity.

Generally, Buddhist monks and nuns contribute a lot and sacrifice their entire life for the future of Buddhism. It is the administration's responsibility to give priority to them in Buddhist universities to make their effort easy and comfortable. If a person feels to enter the Sangha order by own determination, he understood the reality of

life and willing to sacrifice life for the benefit of Buddhism. With the correct guidance he knows what to do and he will do the best service with right understanding. It can be defined as below by similes the Buddha used to describe a wise man.

“Udakaṃ hi nayanti nettikā
usukara namayanti tejanaṃ
dārum namayanti tacchakā
attānam damayanti panditā”¹⁶

Farmers channel the water, fletchers straighten the arrow, carpenters work the timber, and the Wise tames themselves.¹⁷

If bachelors armoured with the accurate knowledge, he/she has always known to guide his/her path in a proper way. Then efficiently the society becomes a better biosphere without conflicts and diverse among each other due to the caste, social status or traditional controversies.

In addition, while university students, learning together without concerning about gender, it helps to promote gender equality and empower women¹⁸. While the world is developing, it should not cling to narrow social decisions such as discriminate woman with ancient thoughts. Therefore, it is female bachelor's responsibility to learn well and show the rest of others that they also can achieve a same position as well as man.

To conclude, the main effort of this paper is to erase the wrong methods of education in present world and establish the Buddhist ways to learn at university level. Buddhist education which leads us to the better way without jealous and harm others, also cultivate the moral part of the human world which has loosed in the present society. If we can change above discussed topics such as subjective

16. Dhammapada, Panditavagga, verse 80

17. Translated by Daw Mya Tin, M.A., Burma Pitaka Association, Rangoon, Burma 1986, http://What-Buddha-Said.net/Canon/Sutta/KN/Dhammapada.Verse_80.story.htm

18. 3th Millennium Development goal of the United Nations (MDGs)

matter, teaching methods, mutual relationship among students and teachers and develop ethical part from people, which leads us to a better future and it will be the best way to eradicate extreme poverty and hunger¹⁹.

While the people are focusing on the business as well as wealth, Buddhist education leads us gain a proper knowledge to understand the reality of the life. Peace in inner mind which is the main root of harmony gradually establish within us in this situation. Therefore the formal education must change which manufacturing the robots who do not have feelings and only considerate about the currency in their life. Finally it results a humble person to the society with superior qualities as mentioned in Dhammapada.

“Yathāpi rahādo gambhiro
vippasanno anavilo
evam dhammani sutvana
vippasidanti panditā”²⁰

“Like a lake which is deep, clear and calm, the wise after listening to the Teaching (Dhamma) become serene”.²¹

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