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'Making our own schools was the only way': How community-based schools promote sustainable access to quality and inclusive education in emergencies

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'Making our own schools was the only way': How community-based schools promote

sustainable access to quality and inclusive education in emergencies

A dissertation submitted in partial satisfaction of the requirements for

the degree of Doctor of Philosophy in Education

by

C. Andrew Swindell

2022

ABSTRACT OF THE DISSERTATION


'Making our own schools was the only way': How community-based schools promote

sustainable access to quality and inclusive education in emergencies


by


C. Andrew Swindell

Doctor of Philosophy in Education

University of California, Los Angeles, 2022

Professor Edith S. Omwami, Co-Chair

Professor Richard Desjardins, Co-Chair

Global emergencies resulting from conflict, human rights violations, and natural disasters have

displaced more than 90 million people worldwide, half of whom are under 18. While the United

Nations' Sustainable Development Goal 4 (SDG4) calls for sustainable (i.e. long-lasting) access

to inclusive and quality education for all people by 2030, global education systems have thus far

fallen short, particularly in emergency settings. In Myanmar, a country affected by multiple

state-led conflicts and genocidal acts against ethnic minorities, access to quality and inclusive

education is severely limited. In response to the state's neglect of education amid war, several

ethnic minority communities have created their own education systems. These community-based

schools (CBS) are one type of non-state schooling (i.e. private or nongovernmental) where all

financing and provision of education is owned and managed by local community actors. The

research on CBS shows demonstrated benefits in the areas of culturally relevant curriculum and

local ownership of organizational practices, though challenges like inconsistent quality and lack of attention to inclusivity have also been found. Few studies have been conducted on CBS operating amidst active conflict. Accordingly, this qualitative and participatory research study investigates, through an in-depth case study, the macro-level sociopolitical history of institutions, meso-level organizational practices, and micro-level curriculum development processes of CBS operating amidst emergencies in Myanmar. In my analysis, I draw from a range of academic and practitioner-based theoretical approaches to present findings on how these macro, meso, and micro level community-based education practices reflect sustainable access to quality and inclusive education in emergencies. Ultimately, I argue that a rich historical understanding of community and their sustained engagement with CBS, from visioning to implementation and refining, are necessary to best realize educational goals. I conclude with recommendations for CBS efforts in Myanmar specifically and how this case might inform and inspire practice and research surrounding other instances of community-based education in emergencies globally.

The dissertation of C. Andrew Swindell is approved.

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University of California, Los Angeles

2022

*To my friends in Myanmar-*
*your strength, imagination, and unwavering belief in education is an inspiration.*
*Thank you for sharing and entrusting your story with me.*

TABLE OF CONTENTS

# LIST OF TABLES AND FIGURES

# ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

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**M.Ed.**   University of Missouri, Columbia                                  2016
            Learning, Teaching, and Curriculum

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*Instructor of Record*- Responsible for curriculum development, instruction, and assessments
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- *Education 3:* Global Education Policy and Organization (Winter 2022)

**University of California, Los Angeles (UCLA)**
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assessments for the following undergraduate courses:
- *Global Studies 194:* Research Seminar (Fall 2019, 2020, 2021)
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*Graduate Teaching Assistant*- Responsible for leading discussion sections of twenty students
and all course grading
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Omwami, E. M., Wright, J., & **Swindell, A.*** (2020). Comparative Perspectives on International Early Childhood Education in the Context of SDGs. In A. W. Wiseman (Ed.), *International Perspectives on Education and Society* (Vol. 39, pp. 209–227). Emerald Publishing Limited. https://doi.org/10.1108/S1479-367920200000039018

## SELECT CONFERENCE PRESENTATIONS

**Swindell, A.***, Elliot, K., Ramsey, C., Lertvorapreecha, W., Suhonen, R., Namdar, C., Khoo, S. (2022). *Place matters - the power of "ideal?" Global citizenship education in local contexts* [Formal Panel Session]. Comparative and International Education Society (CIES). Hybrid Conference, May 2022

**Swindell, A**.* and Lertvorapreecha, W. (2021). *A Comparative Analysis of Curriculum Materials for Displaced Migrant Students in Thailand* [Panel discussion]. World Congress of Comparative Education Societies (WCCES). Virtual Conference, November 2021.

Swindell, A. (2020). *Exploring the impact of globalization on community-based non-state school curriculum practices and products amidst conflict in Myanmar* [Formal Paper Presentation]. Comparative and International Education Society (CIES). Virtual Conference, May 2020

## ADDITIONAL PROFESSIONAL EXPERIENCE

**Teacher (Elementary and Middle/High School)**                                         2014-
Yangon Academy. *Yangon, Myanmar*                                                        2016
- Elementary- Grade 5 lead teacher for all subjects (Math, Language Arts, Social Studies, Science)
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**Teacher (Elementary and Adult Education)**                                             2012-
Council on International Educational Exchange (CIEE). *Dan Chang, Thailand*               2014
- Lead teacher for Math and EFL for primary grades K-6

**CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION**


Michael[1] had been working with the community-based schools (CBS) in Myanmar since they were first imaged at a community meeting in the early 2000's. While reflecting on how these CBS came to be, Michael proclaimed that "making our own schools was the only way!". This short yet incredibly telling realization stood out to me for how Michael was able to capture so many elements of CBS- the power of education, the bonds of community, the agency of local actors- while also demonstrating the extreme urgency to deliver education that exists for so many people affected by emergencies around the globe. Global emergencies resulting from conflict, human rights violations, and natural disasters have displaced nearly 90 million people worldwide today, half of whom are under 18 (UNOCHA, 2021a). While international initiatives, like the United Nations' (UN) Sustainable Development Goal 4 (SDG4) calls for sustainable (i.e. long-lasting) access to quality and inclusive education for all people by 2030, global education systems have thus far fallen short, particularly in emergency settings. Over 260 million children are out of school globally, and education for people affected by emergencies is lacking by nearly every available metric, especially in conflict-affected countries (UNESCO, 2021).

In Myanmar, multiple state-led conflicts and genocidal acts against Michael's community and countless other ethnic minorities[2] have severely limited the access to quality and inclusive education (South & Lall, 2016a; UNOCHA, 2021b). In response to the state's neglect of

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[1] Pseudonyms are used throughout this document for the names of participants, schools, towns, regions, religions, and any other identifiable information so that their complete anonymity is guaranteed for the individuals and communities involved with this project. A full list of pseudonyms can be found on page 45

[2] The term 'ethnic minority', imperfect as it may be, is used throughout this study given its usage in Myanmar. The Burmese government has 135 officially recognized ethnic classifications and the Bamar ethnic group has been the clear majority at over 60% of residents for decades. Moreover, groups like the Kachin and Kayin are imperfect and broad categories that do not accurately reflect the racial, religious, cultural, and linguistic reality of many lived experiences. The 'Rohingya' are still not recognized officially by the government (Sadan, 2014)

education in the midst of decades of political oppression and violence led by the Burmese controlled military government, several ethnic minority communities throughout the country, including Michael's, have created their own education systems that range from a few individual schools to entire centrally organized networks of schools that employ hundreds of teachers and education tens of thousands of students each year (Lall & South, 2014; UNESCO, 2021). These CBS represent one type of non-state schooling (i.e. private or nongovernmental) where all financing, provision, and delivery of education is owned and managed by local community actors. The limited research on CBS shows demonstrated benefits in increasing access to quality education by using culturally relevant curriculum (Amanti, 2017; INEE, 2021) and local ownership of organizational practices like management, staffing, and financing (Lall & South, 2014; Taniguchi & Hirakawa, 2016). It also reveals challenges such as religious-based exclusion and inconsistent quality due to inadequate monitoring and evaluation (UNESCO, 2021). Put simply, CBS present and unique model of education for people affected by emergencies globally, but the evidence is mixed on how communities can best organize, create curriculum, and ultimately provide quality education for more children. Accordingly, the purpose of this study is to address the literal gap in education that is a stark reality for millions of children in emergencies globally while also addressing the gap in the academic body of literature on community-based approaches to education in emergencies.

**Research Purpose, Questions, and Analytical Approach**

This qualitative and participatory research study explores how to improve sustainable access to quality and inclusive education for people affected by emergencies globally through an in-depth case study. The focus is on how these educational aspirations were reflected in the organizational practices and curriculum development processes of CBS operating amidst

emergencies in Myanmar. More specifically, the study is motivated by questions surrounding

how Ethnic Minority Group (EMG) communities with shared history and connections to a place

identify and (re)form amidst emergency and displacement, how these communities understand

the purpose of education and create opportunities for schooling, and the influence of local,

national, and global politics, and the emergency context on these phenomena. Given the broad

range of topics that could be included while considering such concerns, this study focuses on the

themes of sustainable access to quality and inclusive education in emergencies. The study is

specifically guided by the following specific research questions that had macro (RQ1), meso

(RQ2), and micro (RQ3) levels of focus:

RQ1- How did the sociocultural, political, and protracted emergency context influence Ethnic
Minority Group (EMG) community-based state formation, and the motivation and vision for
Community-Based Schools (CBS)?

RQ2- What organizational practices (i.e. structure, staffing, and financing) were implemented at
the institutional and school level, and how did they impact the community-based vision for
education?

RQ3- What curriculum development processes did CBS use and how did they work to create
critical pedagogies that reflect and support the broader community-based education mission?

   To address the research questions, a participatory and qualitative research methodology

was employed through the collection of interview, observation, and document data which is

analyzed using thematic coding and analysis. An analytical approach, drawing on various

academic and practitioner-based theories ranging from globalization and peace education theory

to organizational theory and critical pedagogy, is further employed to provide an analytical lens

through which to understand how the research questions relate to sustainable access to quality

and inclusive education in emergencies.

**Significance of Study**

This study seeks to reach an in-depth understanding of the under researched EMG community-based schools that are the subject of investigation. I also consider how this example of CBS can inform other emergency contexts where there is limited sustainable access to quality and inclusive education. In sum, this study produces new knowledge on one instance of CBS in emergencies to inform: 1) the understudied communities in Myanmar where the study takes place through participatory knowledge creation and implementation, 2) the research literature on international education with a focus on education in emergencies, curriculum development, and organizational practices of CBS schools, and 3) other communities globally that are planning to create or actively operating community-based schooling amidst emergencies (e.g. teachers, students, NGO workers).[3]

**Operationalization of Terms**

The following is a list of key terms and how they are operationalized for this study. I have included these terms specifically given the multiple ways in which they can be interpreted and defined, none of which are more or less correct, but rather depend on the context and author's perspective or intended use:

*Access to Education*- Access to education in this study refers to the most basic ability for people to be able to attend school and all the associated costs (i.e. books, transportation, tuition, food) not being a barrier to participation.

*Community-Based Non-State Schools*- The terms 'private' and 'non-state' are both used, sometimes interchangeably, to refer to schooling that is not provided by a government. Unlike

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[3] It is important to note that the data this study reports on was collected before the military coup in February 2021. The coup drastically changed daily life in Myanmar, both in the research setting of this study and in almost all other areas. Accordingly, the findings presented speak only to the specific time period in which they were collected from 2018-2020.

more colloquial definitions of private and non-state that typically refer only to market-based or for-profit companies, I will use *non-state* as an umbrella term that encapsulates all types of privately provided education that is designed, provided, delivered, and financed by non-governmental sources. Community-based schools (CBS) refer to a specific type of non-state schools where all elements of the schooling are organized and operated by local community actors in a particular place. This study will explore what 'community' means in the research setting, and to help clarify now- I use 'community' to refer to a group of people who self-identify as being part of the same larger group based on shared belonging to physical space, shared history, and shared ethno-cultural practices (i.e. language, religion, traditions, dress, food). There is of course some overlap with CBS and other forms of non-state schooling, such as those that are initiated by faith-based or non-governmental organizations, and these distinctions will be further explored both in the literature review and findings chapters.

*Curriculum*- I draw from Stabback (2016) who defines curriculum as "a political and social agreement that reflects a society's common vision while considering local, national and global needs and expectations. The curriculum, in other words, embodies a society's educational aims and purposes" (p. 6). Similarly, I define curriculum development processes broadly to include everything from establishing the goals of social entities or population groups in which schools are located and creating elements that are grounded in the classroom experience such as the subjects that are taught, classroom materials, language of instruction, lesson plans, and classroom activities.

*Education in Emergencies*- The 'education in emergencies' framework lies within the humanitarian approach as a theory which holds that education delivery in places affected by conflict and/or natural disaster is a central component of ensuring human rights. The term

'education in emergencies' was "chosen to solidify this link to humanitarian action and ensure the incorporation of support to education among other forms of relief aid" (Burde et al., 2017, p. 621). Thus, the conceptual framework of education in emergencies views the delivery of education services, particularly through international and humanitarian aid, as a central component of ensuring human rights for people affected by conflict and disaster (Burde et al., 2017). A myriad of types of conflict, disasters, and ultimately displacement differ depending on the context, though this study will discuss theme together and interchangeably as *emergencies* given the similar effect, they both have on limiting access to quality education.

*Globalization*- I draw from McGrew and Held (2007) who assert that globalization is a process that includes a stretching of social relations across space, an intensification of flows and networks of interaction, the increasing interpenetration of economic and social practices, and finally the emergence of a global institutional infrastructure. I further distinguish globalization as a broad set of processes and colonization as a distinct type and instance of globalization.

*Inclusive Education*- I use the term to discuss issues pertaining specifically to how the educational content available to ethnic minority communities in Myanmar reflects their cultural needs in a relevant and appropriate manner (i.e. language, religion, history, job skills). Inclusive education will also be explored relative to which ethnic minority groups are reflected in the CBS this study investigates.

*International/Global*- Influences that are "top-down" in nature or originating from places, people, and organizations that exist outside the national boundary of Myanmar. Examples of this that are relevant to the study are international non-governmental organizations (iNGOs), resources (either human or financial) from outside of Myanmar, and any

messaging/advertising/media produced outside Myanmar that is consumed nationally (i.e.

curriculum materials, university advertisements).

*Local*- Influences that are from the "bottom-up" or originating in and from people in that

specific space. Community-based stakeholders, parents, teachers, and students, for example, are

all members of the local in this study.

*National*- Influences that are re from the "top-down" or centrally produced by the state,

which in Myanmar is controlled by the Burman (Burmese) ethnic majority military government.

*Organizational Practices*- I draw from practitioner-based literature (INEE, 2020b;

UNESCO, 2021) on non-state and informal schooling in addition to evidence that emerged

throughout the data collection and analysis process to identify the following units of analysis that

comprise organizational practices: structure, staffing, and financing. Structure includes the how

the management, leadership, and decision-making processes are organized (i.e. vertical hierarchy

or distributed) to manage the operation and creation of CBS schools. Staffing includes who

works at all levels of the CBS system and how they were selected. Financing includes the

funding streams that support the CBS.

*Sustainability*- I use the term sustainability in its most literal sense as relating to the

ability for schools and organizations to continue to sustain themselves with the human, physical

infrastructure, and financial resources needed for continued and long-term operation like

developing curriculum, training teachers, and ultimately all elements of schooling like classwork

and extra-curricular activities. I acknowledge that global discourse on sustainability can instead

focus on issues like climate change and how to teach students how to live sustainable lives, but

will not focus on this use specifically.

*Quality Education*- Despite the universality in *quality* being a stated goal of education, there is little consensus on what exactly this means. One of the more useful definitions I have found come from UNESCO (2016) which states that: "quality education fosters creativity and knowledge and ensures the acquisition of the foundational skills of literacy and numeracy as well as analytical, problem solving and other high-level cognitive, interpersonal, and social skills. It also develops the skills, values and attitudes that enable citizens to lead healthy and fulfilled lives, make informed decisions, and respond to local and global challenges through education for sustainable development (ESD) and global citizenship education (GCED)" (p. 8). Using this definition as a starting point, I further use the term *quality* to include education where cultural and context specific relevance are stated goals. However, I acknowledge the wide array of other factors that influence a quality education and attempt a refined conceptualization in the concluding remarks to further the, perhaps never-ending, discussion of what exactly quality education entails.

**Overview of Chapters**

Given the overarching research purpose discussed above, the remaining chapters will be organized as follows. In chapter 2, I present a review of relevant literature on the topics of education in emergencies, community-based approaches to education, curriculum development methods, and the intersection of these in Myanmar. In chapter 3, I present the theoretical and analytical framework that guides this study. In chapter 4, I explain the research design and specific methods of data collection and analysis used to answer the research questions. In chapters 5 through 7, I discuss findings that are organized by themes that emerged through data analysis. In chapter 8, I present a series of final recommendations for practice and research based on a synthesis of the findings.

**CHAPTER 2: LITERATURE REVIEW**

A review of relevant academic and grey literature on the major themes of this study-sustainable access to quality and inclusive community-based education in emergencies- is presented below on the following topics: 1) education in emergencies, 2) non-state and community-based education, 3) approaches to curriculum development, and 4) the intersection of these issues in Myanmar.

**Education in Emergencies: Impact on Access, Quality, Inclusion, and Sustainability**

Whether they are being held in detention camps along the southern border of the United States, attempting to cross the Mediterranean Sea, or literally trapped in their own country but unable to remain in their homes due to violence, people and families are on the move, and not by choice. The United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (UNOCHA) project nearly 274 million people are in need of humanitarian assistance or protection (UNOCHA, 2021a). Many of these people are living amongst, internally displaced or fleeing from emergencies such as conflict, natural disaster, or other crises. Regarding education emergencies globally have had significant negative impacts on sustainable access to quality and inclusive education no matter the context.

In 2011, the state of education was declared a crisis in thirty low or lower-middle income countries that recently experienced conflict thus dramatically lowering access. In these places, 28 million primary-aged children were found to be out of school, a group that represented nearly half of the entire world's population of out of school youth (UNESCO, 2011). More recent estimates indicate that "127 million primary and secondary school-age children and young people living in crisis-affected countries were out of school in 2019" (INEE, 2020a, p. 7) while

the COVID-19 pandemic has inflated that number to nearly 1.6 billion at the height of global infections and lockdowns (INEE, 2020a). Refugees are more than five times more likely to be out of school (UNHCR, 2016) while Internally Displaced People (IDPs) also have limited access to education (Lai & Thyne, 2007; Mooney & French, 2005). More generally, access to education was also found to be severely reduced in conflict areas globally (Burde et al., 2017) and in countries affected by civil conflict like Liberia, Mozambique, Sudan, and Guatemala (Lai & Thyne, 2007). More specifically, "conflict, environmental disasters, health emergencies, and forced displacement are among the most significant barriers to access to and completion of a quality education" (INEE, 2020a, p. 7).

The quality and inclusiveness of education in areas affected by emergencies is also severely lacking compared to places unaffected by such challenges. Levels of literacy and educational attainment are all 15%-30% lower in the thirty countries where education was declared a state of emergency (UNESCO, 2011). Longitudinal studies of educational attainment for people affected by the Rwandan genocide (La Mattina, 2018) and conflict in Tajikistan (Shemyakina, 2011) and Pakistan (Ullah et al., 2017) all found similar results of lower of secondary attainment for people affected by conflict. Though data reporting specifically on the quality of education in conflict affected areas is limited globally, issues like finding qualified teachers, limiting class sizes, accessing proper learning materials, and creating adequate learning infrastructure were all found to be negatively impacted in these spaces (UNESCO, 2011, 2019). Underrepresented groups, like ethnic minorities, face barriers like language and discrimination which limit their ability to be meaningfully included in classrooms in emergency and post-emergency settings (Awada et al., 2018; South & Lall, 2016b). Taken together, emergencies have had devastating effects on education systems globally.

It is important to also understand that emergency settings differ if people can flee to another country or are unable, and thus remain within a national border. Forcibly displaced people are generally understood as either those who were able to cross an international boundary as refugees/asylum seekers, or Internally Displaced Persons (IDPs) who were unable or unwilling to leave their home country. Though refugees, asylum seekers, and IDPs undoubtably face a wide array of differing challenges, quality primary and secondary education is limited for all these people and at higher rates globally than people unaffected by conflict or displacement (IDMC, 2019; UNESCO, 2019). As is discussed above, refugees often have limited access to quality education, either while living in temporary camps or even once they have been permanently resettled due to nations being unable to absorb them into national systems or teach in a familiar language. In their study of non-formal education for Syrian refugees in Lebanon, Karam et al. (2017) argue that larger global forces and the role of nation-states are paramont to the life of refugees and the education they are able to access: "Refugees are both cause and effect of globalization and they will continue to be propelled by war and conflict across national borders. The basic services (particularly education) to which they do or alternately do not have access stand at the crossroads of national, international, and global policy-making" (p. 461).

Of the 90 million displaced people today, it was estimated that roughly 60 million are IDPs, thus making refugees the minority of globally displaced people (UNESCO, 2019). The Inter-Agency for Education in Emergencies (INEE) further estimates that roughly 23 million IDPs are under the age of 18 and that these children's educational opportunities are severely limited due to a multitude of challenges:

> The poverty rate in displaced communities is significantly higher than in non-displaced communities, as internally displaced family members struggle to find work to support their basic needs…Internally displaced children and young people are frequently denied access to quality education, due to discrimination and the financial, legal, and security

challenges faced by their families. In addition, education institutions in crisis contexts are often the targets of attacks by armed groups, which forces them to close or reduce enrollment rates out of fear for students' safety…Where IDPs settle after being displaced has a bearing on whether the children can access education. Two-thirds of IDPs are thought to reside in urban areas and their outskirts, while the remaining one-third reside in camps and settlements. Displaced people in towns and cities are often forced to live in collective community shelters or unfinished public buildings, or informal settlements where they face overcrowding and have little access to education. In camp settings, children may have access to education in the camp schools or the host communities, but the distance to the nearest school is often an issue. Walking to school can be a security challenge for these children, especially the girls, who face higher rates of gender-based violence and harassment in displacement…Humanitarian access to IDPs who settle in insecure rural areas may be restricted, which reduces the likelihood that those communities will receive education support. Those who opt to settle in sparsely populated rural areas sometimes have no education facilities at all…UNESCO researchers have found a correlation between a society's level of education and its likelihood of experiencing internal conflict. (INEE, 2021, p. 7)

The educational challenges and hardships faced by IDPs are comparable to refugees, if not worse regarding access, enrollment, and educational attainment (Ullah et al., 2017; UNESCO, 2019). However, the plight of IDPs receives less financial aid and media coverage than refugees (Crisp, 2017) and education in particular is often low on the list of priorities for IDPs generally (Mooney & French, 2005). One explanation for why refugees are more visible to Western media and governments in particular is that when they cross an international boarder, they are eligible for protection under the 1951 refugee convention and are supported by a dedicated UN agency, the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees, compared to IDPs who are largely dependent on the whim of their national government (IDMC, 2017).

Conflict has clearly been shown to negatively affect education systems and delivery, but the results have been mixed with regard to education's reciprocal effects on conflict. Bush and Saltarelli (2001) proposed the 'two faces of education' concept to explain how education can have either negative or positive effects on conflict. That is, they found that schooling can promote conflict when textbooks, history lessons, and rhetoric are used to promote nationalism or an 'us vs. them' attitude in children, thus propagating the surrounding conflict. Conversely,

education with the specific goal of building peace was found to do just that, and help to decrease violence over time (Bush & Saltarelli, 2001). Similar positive or negative outcomes, depending on the type of education delivered, have been found in various settings globally, thus reinforcing the idea that access to education is not enough to end conflict, but creative and peace-based pedagogy must be employed in a purposeful manner for positive educational outcomes that decrease conflict (Barakat, 2008; Cardozo, 2008; Richards & Bekele, 2011).

Perhaps the largest impact emergencies have on education is depleting resources need for sustainable access to quality and inclusive education. Schools in emergencies contexts have been shown to consistently lack the human and financial resources needed to operate and maintain adequate schooling in a sustainable manner (UNESCO, 2019). Moreover, only 2.1% of global humanitarian assistance is spent on education, thus demonstrating it is not an international priority despite the rhetoric that might suggest otherwise (UNESCO, 2018). Despite these challenges, international focus has traditionally been on other aspects of humanitarian responses like health and food security. Of course, these are incredibly important in emergency contexts, though attention and funding for education overall has suffered as a result and not improved, perhaps, as much as it could have in recent memory:

> Despite rhetorical commitments to education as an emergency response activity, it is often dismissed as non-life saving, and receives the poorer share of funding and resources from humanitarian budgets. It places lower in the consciousness of states and donors than traditional response activities, yet rates highly by affected communities. However, education is both life saving and life-sustaining when taking into account the impact of education beyond teaching and learning. The processes and effects of education as part of emergency response need to be better understood, and further research that links education and its life-saving capability will strengthen its case. (Halman et al., 2018, p. 207)

Ultimately, more resources and/or outlets are needed to create truly sustainable systems for providing access to quality and inclusive education in emergency contexts.

**Non-State Education**

        There is no one party that can be held accountable for the educational shortcomings for people affected by emergencies, though previous international initiatives that addressed education globally, like the Millennium Development Goals (MDG) and Education for All (EFA), had a distinct focus on governmental provision of education in low and middle-income countries and results indicate a failure of these state actors in ensuring quality education for all people. The more recent Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) articulated more of a focus on non-state actors and recent data suggest that the role of non-state actors in education delivery and design has increased (Clarke, 2015; MDG Gap Task Force, 2015; UNESCO, 2021). Especially in places where emergencies have resulted in governmental failures to provide adequate schooling, non-state providers have filled the void, even representing upwards of 90% of enrollment in places like the Democratic Republic of Congo and Haiti (Upadhyay et al., 2018). Households in the developing world are major financial contributors to education (Huebler & Legault, 2017) while "more than 350 million primary and secondary school students enrolled in private institutions" (UNESCO, 2021, p. 16). This trend of increased household spending on education seems to be more acute in the Global South as household expenditure on education accounts for just 18% in high income countries but nearly 40% in low and middle income countries (UNESCO, 2017, 2021). Enrollment has also increased globally in non-state education since 1990, with enrollment higher rates again in low-income countries (Steer et al., 2015). However, the organizational structure, purpose, and politics of non-state actors and schools differ significantly, and it is unclear which lead to increased and sustainable access to quality and inclusive education. Put simply, all non-state schools are not the same, thus there is a need to

interrogate the differences between non-state providers to discover best practices and lessons, especially regarding access and quality.

*Differing Organizational Practices, Purpose, and Politics of Non-State Actors*

Though the recent rise of non-state education in the developing world is relatively new, the debate surrounding privatization and marketization of education has been raging for decades and is part of the larger topic liberalization and privatization push that is consistent with neoliberal ideology. Proponents of privatization argue that education should act like a marketplace that creates efficiencies which public management does not using neoclassical and neoliberal economic reasoning. The core argument in favor of private provision is that it will lead to a free and open marketplace for education rather than a state-controlled system. This will result in competition that forces schools to perform more effectively and efficiently if they wish to continue attracting students and thus remain open. Opponents and supporters of public provision counter that education is a public good, and accordingly the positive externalities that should be realized by all citizens receiving a quality education will not occur with voucher use. In other words, competition produces winners and losers, and if any portion of the population cannot access quality education, then society will lose. Opponents also argue that privatization leads to a variety of negative outcomes like student and teacher sorting that disproportionally affect less-advantaged students and teachers. Economists thus seek to understand if the theoretical benefits of increased efficiency and allocation of resources can outweigh the negative social externalities of decreased access for marginalized communities, student sorting, and capital flight from public schools (Carl, 2011; Epple et al., 2017).

However, the private or non-state schooling takes many forms, thus differing in substantial ways depending on the context of implementation. To clarify, the distinction between

16

state and non-state actors is summarized in Table 1, generally distinguishing the two by the types

of provision and financing. Accordingly, state education is represented as the traditional public-

school system, whereas non-state school types include both for and not-for-profit private schools

that are operated by everything from transnational companies and NGOs to local community-

based organizations and churches. Community-based schools (CBS) are

bolded given the focus of this study on these specific types. Even amongst providers, though, the

| | | | Type of financing | |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| | | | **State** | **Non-state** |
| **Type of provider** | **State** | | e.g. traditional schools | e.g. adopt a school |
| | **Non-state** | Not-for-profit | e.g. charter and faith-based schools | e.g. philanthropic, NGO, faith and **community-based schools (CBS)** |
| | | For-profit | e.g. charter schools | e.g. low-fee private schools |

*Table 1- Types of Non-State Schools, adapted from Steer et al. (2015)*

purpose of schooling can differ depending on the desire to create social or financial value and the

source of financing. Outcomes like sustainability, impact, and profit also factor into how and

why different non-state education providers operate. In other words, there is a plethora of

organizational structures, motives, and politics at play regarding non-state education. CBS,

similar to those that are the subject of this study, would fall on the left end of the spectrum given

emphasis on creating social value while it has also been found that "faith-based and community

or NGO schools are typically motivated by values and charitable duties" (UNESCO, 2021, p.

31). Non-state schools also exist along a spectrum of formal and non-formal whereby 'formal'

non-state schools typically award a degree or certificate that is analogous to the national or

public system. Conversely, non-formal non-state schools account for schools that might provide

extracurricular support or only offer classes for an hour or two per day (INEE, 2020b).

Multi-national for-profit education companies may have a lower educational impact and create less social value than local community based not-for-profit schools simply because of a different motive for operation and thus focus as an educational service provider. The Bridge International Academy (Bridge), for example, is a transnational for-profit company that operates hundreds of schools across several countries (including Kenya, Nigeria, and Uganda to list a few) (Edwards, 2018). In Liberia, Bridge was contracted to operate a significant number of 'public' schools, however longitudinal evaluation data showed that "any assessment of outsourcing public schools to Bridge must weigh its modest learning gains against its high operating costs and negative effects on access to education via increased dropout (Romero & Sandefur, 2020, p. 1). On the other hand, non-profit community schools, for example, would also fall under the same general umbrella of non-state school types. To associate CBS and Bridge as the same because they are both non-state, however, would be analogous to equating a Whole Foods with a farmer's market. Both Bridge International and the community schools across the globe are buildings with teachers and students, but entirely different entities that should not be categorized as similar simply because they operate without a public funding or state actor delivery of education services.

*Effects on Access*

Access and affordability of schooling is one realm of non-state education that has had mixed results. Some of the clearest gain in access were found with CBS schools in countries like Afghanistan (INEE, 2021), Myanmar (Lall & South, 2014), and Mali (UNESCO, 2021). In their study of private schooling in Kenya, Ohba (2013) found evidence that primary level Low Fee Private Schools (LFPS) were able to provide access to schooling for children in informal settings, but that private schools alone could not represent an alternative to the government

provision of primary education. That is, the LFPS provided schooling opportunities in rural spaces that were underserved by the government, but the tuition that the LFPS charged prohibited access for some children. Similarly, in their study of non-state schooling in Mozambique, Härmä (2016) found that private providers increased access by reaching communities that the government schools did not, but were not affordable to all. Private schools were also shown to increase access more for rich than poor families (Alcott & Rose, 2016), decrease the gap in enrollment between the rich and poor in urban settings, but not rural (Chudgar & Creed, 2016) and barriers to access even if tuition was already paid (Srivastava & Noronha, 2016). In their study of LFPS in South Africa, Languille (2016) also found that non-state schools deemed "affordable" were anything but for poor rural children, thus limiting and restricting access for the mostly black middle and low income earners. Though evidence also suggests that indirect fees of attendance at public schools such as uniforms and materials in some cases are more than non-state tuition that is comprehensive (Steer et al., 2015) which further muddies the picture of exactly which type of school truly increases access for all people.

Even if non-state schools can open and provide accessible and affordable education, governments sometimes restrict access to them. In their research of low-cost private schools in Jamaica, Kenya, Tanzania, Ghana, Indonesia, and Pakistan, Heyneman and Stern (2014) found that there are extremely prohibitive public policies in place in many countries with LFPS. Specifically, they found that governments in these countries restrict what these schools can do in the classroom, charge exorbitant taxes for their very existence, and generally make it difficult for them to compete with the government schools. In other words, it appears that governments in countries with a growing market for alternative education are putting up red tape to prevent these schools from succeeding. Similarly, national and international accreditation is a challenge for

many non-state and informal schools, especially in under resourced and emergency contexts

(UNESCO, 2021).

*Effects on Quality and Inclusion*

The quality of education and learning experiences in non-state schools are varied, though,

in the realm of quality, there are perhaps more promising findings particularly in alternative

approaches to pedagogy. Again, some of the clearest benefits were found with the CBS and the

Community-Based Organizations (CBO) that support state and non-state schools alike. In-depth

results from roundtable discussion on the topic specifically revealed the following benefits that

CBOs have led to in differing contexts:

> Several roundtable and survey participants mentioned the key role CBOs played in establishing non-formal educational and protection programming, providing non-food items, and rehabilitating classrooms to support the integration of internally displaced children into formal education. While support for teachers is still lacking in communities with an influx of IDPs, several survey respondents mentioned the short-term teacher training programs that have strengthened their capacity to respond to the psychosocial needs of displaced children. Finally, Spanish roundtable participants spoke to CBO-led efforts to fight the discrimination and harassment faced by new arrivals through awareness-raising community activities and advocacy to promote social cohesion…CBOs Support internally displaced families with non-food items, cash grants for education, and/or subsidies to initiate income-generating activities…Work with internally displaced families to navigate the local formal education system…Focus back-to-school campaigns on girls, including those of school age who have been forced into early marriage or are mothers….Support internally displaced learners with local language classes. (INEE, 2021, p. 15)

In their study of LFPS in Pakistan and India, Dixon (2012) found that both formal and informal

non-state schools achieved better student learning outcomes on publicly administered exams and

higher parent satisfaction than those in government schools. Similarly, non-state provided

Complementary Education (CE) schooling programs in Ghana, Honduras, and Cambodia were

found to meet the educational needs of students better than government provided options

(USAID, 2006). In addition to providing access to schooling where there were no public options,

the CE programs were also found to use more relevant and community-based pedagogy, taught in the local languages, and improved learning outcomes for math skills and literacy. In their study of schooling in Mozambique, Härmä (2016) found that parents chose higher quality private over free public schools, even if it caused more financial strain.

Comparable results were found by Lall and South (2014) who investigated community run ethnic minority not-for-profit non-state schools in Myanmar. Perhaps the greatest benefit found was that the community schools taught using their native language, compared to the public schools which only taught in the national language of Myanmar, Burmese. Thus, the non-state schools where able to avoid several problems associated with submersion, a term that describes when learners are taught in a language they do not speak. Moreover, Lall and South (2014) found that having control over the language of instruction, subjects, and content resulted in better learning experiences and outcomes for the children compared to the state system and were able to reinforce ethnic minority identities and culture. In their study of history text books used by non-state providers in Myanmar, Salem-Gervais and Metro (2012) found similar results where learning outcomes improved with non-state use of alternative materials that were superior to the government provided texts that were found to serve as propaganda for the military dictatorship.

However, Lall and South's (2014) findings also showed that children who graduated from Karen and Mon non-state schools were less able to progress to national university level due to issues like accreditation and language ability. This occurred because they lacked the Burmese language skills necessary to excel outside of Karen and Mon schools, thus noting the importance of aligning non-state school guidelines somewhat with national standards. Also, funding for the non-state schools was found to be a challenge due to school dependence on charging tuition in lieu of receiving public education funding. Similarly, in their study of private schooling in

21

Kenya, Tanzania, and Uganda, Alcott and Rose (2016) found that private schooling led to improved learning of literacy and numeracy skills relative to students in government schools in some, but that those gains were realized more for rich students than the most poor.

Ultimately, the organizational practices, purpose, and politics of non-state actors and schools differ significantly, and it is unclear which organizational structure led to increased and sustainable access to quality and inclusive education. In their conclusion of a report on non-state actors in developing countries, Steer et al. (2015) summarized this point by noting that "the appropriate role for non-state actors is that it is not a 'black and white matter' but one of degrees—and highly dependent on context" (p. 27).

**Approaches to Curriculum Development**

Regardless of the structure, purpose, and politics of non-state schools, curriculum and instruction are elements that will be found universally. I operationalize these terms in the broadest sense to include a variety of elements of schooling from the subjects taught and materials used, to teacher practices and curriculum design. There is no "correct" definition of a curriculum development process, and approaches vary greatly in schools across the world. Regardless the conceptualization, curriculum is essential to the success of a school and thus a central component of ensuring quality education in all settings (Glatthorn et al., 2016). The following section will examine traditional and critical curriculum development approaches in addition to the importance of community-based curriculum and pedagogy.

*Traditional versus Critical Approaches*

If the modern curriculum design process could be split into two frameworks, it would be divided between the traditional work of Ralph Tyler and the critical approaches that developed after (Mfum-Mensah, 2009). Tyler's conceptualization of curriculum design grew to prominence

in the mid-20<sup>th</sup> century and is perhaps the most prominent design method used today and is based on the assertion that curriculum is "all the learning experiences planned and directed by the school to attain its educational goals" (Glatthorn et al., 2016, p. 44). The nexus of Tyler's curriculum development process begins with school management defining the educational purposes from the top-down and designing the specific learning, organizational, and evaluation techniques accordingly. The traditional Tyler approach is highly technical and dependent on defining management principals within the curriculum from the top of the organization or school and filtering them down to administrators, teachers, and students. Critical approaches to curriculum design are generally more flexible, interactive, and participatory in nature. They involve the decentralization of power and planning and can be thought of more generally as bottom-up compared to the traditional top-down approach. Critical approaches rely on teachers, learners, parents, and others in the community to play an active role in creating *and recreating* the curriculum over time (Mfum-Mensah, 2009; Mfum-Mensah & Friedson-Ridenour, 2014). Moreover, critical approaches of theorists like Paulo Freire (Freire, 1968), bell hooks (hooks, 1994), Michael Apple (Apple, 1979), and Jean Anyon (Anyon, 1997) center education around the promotion of social justice and resistance to oppression as the primary goals. In regard to critical curriculum specifically, Miller, 2011 as cited in Glatthorn et al. (2016) notes that "any curriculum, then, would invoke critical consciousness, advocate for social and educational transformation, and promote the demonstration of respect, understanding, appreciation, and inclusion" (p. 152). Thus, critical approaches can generally be understood as rooted from the bottom-up, flexible, and as promoting social justice.

*Community-Based Approaches*

Regardless of the exact critical or traditional approach that a curriculum and instructional

design process might involve, community participation has been shown to be a central

component of successful curriculum design for state and non-state schools alike. Community-

based approaches to curriculum and instruction practices have led to a number of potential

benefits such as responsiveness to local needs (Amanti, 2017), holistic and healing education

(Bruce, 2018), preservation of heritage languages and local knowledge (Carreira & Kagan,

2011), success of rural schools and increased parent participation (Latham et al., 2014), creating

more meaningful problem-centered learning (Leat & Thomas, 2018), ethnic identity for

marginalized groups (Luna et al., 2015; The Leadership Institute at the Santa Fe Indian School &

Sumida Huaman, 2018), school management generally (Taniguchi & Hirakawa, 2016). In their

study of the Community-Based Approach (CBA) to curriculum and schooling for refugees,

Pausigere (2013) found a number of benefits that are outlined below:

> refugees or refugee education committees initiate, collectively decide, cooperatively plan
> and manage education and training activities in the emergency settlement
> population…The CBA to refugee education development was formally recognised by the
> UNHCR in mid-1996 after it had been successfully undertaken by Rwandan refugees at
> Ngara Refugee camp in Tanzania…Other successful community based rapid responses to
> education were recorded at Mayukwayukwa refugee camp, in Zambia between 1999 and
> 2000 within Congolese and Angolan refugees, amongst Bhutanese refugees in Nepal, in
> the late-1990s…The CBA to education development has revolutionised emergency
> education. This model ensures and promotes continuity, sustainability, effectiveness and
> is cost-effective…the other advantage of the CBA is that it gives the refugees control
> over one important element of their social function education. If refugee communities
> participate in their education programmes this will promote self-reliance and reduce
> dependency on external support…Self-initiated refugee education approaches stand a
> high chance of being successful and help to improve the refugee capacity to meet their
> own needs and solve their own problems…The fact that the community collectively
> decides what to learn promotes dialogue within the community, a basic ingredient of
> democracy and empowerment. (p. 48)

Taken together, community-based curriculum and instructional practices can help ensure that parents and community members have a role in shaping schooling which can have large impacts on the development of student ethnic and cultural identity. However community-based schooling generally may not always meet its intended goals (Langsten, 2016) and has been shown to be a complex process with questions surrounding how to best engage community in schooling (Leat & Thomas, 2018) and the "'messy' realities of curriculum policy processes" (Ledger et al., 2015).

In their study of a Complementary Education (CE) program in Ghana called School for Life (SfL), Mfum-Mensah (2009) described using a critical curriculum design process where external planners actively sought the opinions and perspectives of community stakeholders to outline key elements of the curriculum which ultimately was considered relevant and useful by the community. This critical approach involved a four-step process of deliberation, design, implementation, and outcome. The process calls particular attention to the specific stakeholders involved, the elements of curriculum that are involved in the process (content, instruction, assessment), and the cyclical nature that curriculum design demands. Mfum-Mensah and Friedson-Ridenour (2014) describe the benefits of the process in detail, offering specific commentary on each of the four stages:

> First, SfL engages local community members in designing, implementing, and evaluating the programme, and helps create a space through which they can define their own educational needs and goals. Second, the programme structure SfL has developed provides genuine opportunities for meaningful participation by providing initial skills training followed by continued capacity building and workshops for updating skills. Third, it emphasizes participation by women, who are often marginalized in the Ghanaian context. Fourth, it offers specific structures and functional means that allow community members to participate in education and to follow through on the educational opportunities that emerge as part of that participation. (p.355)

Similarly, South and Lall, (2016) found that the curriculum development process amongst Karen and Mon non-state schools depended on teacher participation based on learner experiences as they progressed through school. Findings showed that content, language of instruction and teaching methods continuously changed within the curriculum as school staff and faculty learned from children's experiences. This process relied profoundly on the participation of teachers and students in constantly adjusting the curriculum so that it would remain relevant and useful.

Context in which schools or education systems operate has also been found to be a crucial element of the curriculum design and implementation process. At a minimum, the budget and facilities available to a school or district have been found, not surprisingly, to determine the starting point in regard to feasibility of any curriculum development process (Mfum-Mensah, 2009). A school can plan in their curriculum to provide laptops to every child, for example, but budget considerations must be considered, otherwise the curriculum may not be realistic. This is especially prescient when resources are limited, which is often the case in areas of conflict and poverty (UNESCO, 2011).

Cultural context as a consideration in curriculum design has also been found to impact the context in which curriculum is designed and implemented. In their study of international curriculum specialists working with schools in Ghana, Nijhuis et al. (2013) found that culture is hard to define and harder to tangibly represent in curriculum. Despite the specialists in the study being aware of culture as a factor and the intent to develop culturally relevant curricula, they remarked that it remained a challenge to account for culture in curriculum, even with their best efforts. In their study of two schools in China using different approaches to curriculum development, Khoo (2015) found that the curriculum designers may not have considered the structural constraints specific to China enough in their process. Despite the best efforts and

intentions to produce a sustainable school through curriculum design, the structural constraints imposed by the Chinese government along with poor teacher support/training, and content omission led to ineffective student learning outcomes and non-sustainable financing for the schools. Similarly, Tibbitts and Weldon (2017) found that History curriculum in post-Apartheid South Africa was pedagogically strong, but lacked enough teachers to implement. The curriculum that the school created was visionary and thoughtful, but the context did not have teachers that could adequately teach the material, ultimately indicating the limits of the curriculum's relevance and effectiveness.

One response to the problem of teachers not being able to effectively teach content has been to design curriculum specifically for novice teachers. In their study of English language teachers in the United States, Grossman and Thompson (2008) found that high quality curriculum written explicitly for novice teachers was used by beginning teachers as resource for what to teach, instructional activities, how to understand complex content like English literature, and even for daily lesson planning. Thus, including the level of teacher experience and ability in the curriculum design process can lead to curricular materials that can improve and help novice teachers rather than confuse and complicate their role as an educator.

*Mother-Tongue Based Multilingual Education (MTB-MLE) Curriculum and Instruction*

One element of the planed and practiced curriculum that is often not addressed for displaced people and ethnic minorities is culturally relevant pedagogy and classes being taught in a comprehensible language. To address these and other issues, Mother Tongue-Based Multilingual Education (MTB-MLE) has been promoted by various international initiatives, including the United Nations' SDG4, and has since been adopted by countless schools globally. Results indicate clear improvements in primary school outcomes, like literacy and content

27

understanding, for children who can study in their mother tongue rather than a language that is literally foreign to them. However, MTB-MLE as an educational approach has had a distinct focus on the primary level and switching to a different Language of Instruction (LoI) and curriculum materials in a second (L2) or third language (L3) at the secondary level is common yet presents a range of challenges like low student/teacher proficiency. Ultimately, these challenges of implementation lead to question how MTB-MLE can best be implemented in secondary classrooms, especially in trilingual classrooms (Cummins, 2001; UNESCO, 2015, 2019).

Multilingual and native-language education is by no means new, and MTB-MLE at its core is simply a recent iteration within this long tradition which "requires the use of the mother tongue as a language of instruction in the classroom" (UNESCO, 2015, p. 4) while also actively promoting at least one other national and/or international language at some point. These approaches have led to a variety of benefits ranging from ethnic minority linguistic and cultural preservation to improved learning outcomes like literacy (UNESCO, 2015). MTB-MLE programs have been shown to specifically improve reading comprehension skills among primary school students (Jorolan-Quintero, 2018), increase relevancy of classroom teaching to students and the efficacy for instruction and literacy in particular (Parba, 2018), enhance meaning between teachers/students (De Los Reyes, 2019), and facilitate knowledge transfer of the mother tongue culture (Tagyamon, 2016). They have also been shown to increase academic improvement, social development, and even be used as a means of resistance against nation-building schemes in countries like Myanmar, Laos, and Cambodia that limited or banned ethnic minority language instruction for supposed national unity (Tupas, 2015, 2018). Other evidence of MTB-MLE implementation suggests children engage in class more, show improved academic

results and have lower dropout rates while parents are able to be more involved, marginalized communities are able to retain and promote their cultural/linguistic identities, and children have ultimately more job opportunities (UNESCO, 2015).

Of course, there have also been challenges in the implementation of MTB-MLE approaches. Specific issues include "inadequate teacher training and preparation, absence of teaching materials in the mother tongues, and lack of funding" (Tupas, 2015, p. 115), the "absence of books written in mother tongue, lack of vocabulary, and lack of teacher-training" (Lartec et al., 2014, p. 1), and the inclusion or exclusion of a national or an international language which can have limiting impacts on graduate opportunities for work or further study (Lall & South, 2014). Trilingual education in particular is one type of MTB-MLE which has been shown to be complex and requires highly skilled teachers along with careful consideration for the timing and instruction of each target language (Cummins, 2001). Low levels of teacher and student proficiency and motivation in trilingual settings have been shown to impact education, in addition to language of instruction policy on when to start written versus oral instruction for each language and how much code switching should be allowed in classrooms (Wang & Kirkpatrick, 2015). Moreover, translanguaging is a phenomenon that occurs in MTB-MLE classrooms where teachers/students switch between multiple languages to make sense of each other and the target content/language. This has been shown to have benefits in terms of meaning making, but also present challenges for learning English, particularly if the mother tongue is overutilized when the target language is English (Parba, 2018).

Perhaps the larger question that looms over all MTB-MLE programs is that of which language to focus, when to begin instruction of each, which curriculum materials to use, and how to prepare teachers for this task. In its own definition of MTB-MLE, UNESCO (2015) argues

that these programs "enable [schools] to make an effective transition into other national or international languages in due course" (p. 4), though it is unclear when exactly this switch should occur and what it entails in different contexts. Tupas (2018) identifies the disconnect between mother tongue and English language policy specifically while also questioning how MTB-MLE can best be conceptualized and implemented moving forward:

> these two policy directions – one towards English, and the other towards the mother tongues –are rarely conceptualized together. In terms of implementation, they are mobilized independently as if they are products of completely different phenomena… What arrangements are ideal (at the primary, secondary and tertiary levels) for the inclusion of the mother tongues, national languages, English and/or other dominant languages? (p.158)

MTB-MLE language policy must be conceptualized holistically, regardless of whether they are oriented towards the mother tongue, English, and/or a national language and there are no universally agreed upon ideals for implementation at any level. Moreover studies have largely been limited to basic or primary education level (Jorolan-Quintero, 2018) which begs to question what implementation looks like at the secondary level regarding LoI and curriculum materials, particularly if programs are trilingual and oriented towards the mother tongue, a national language, and international language like English. Even less is known about these factors in settings with displacement and emergency.

**Background of Conflict and Education in Myanmar**

One place where the intersection of conflict, displacement, and the rise of MTB-MLE is currently unfolding is Myanmar. Civil conflict throughout Myanmar has been ongoing since 1962 (Sadan, 2014) and the more recent Burmese military perpetrated genocide of the Rohingya, Kachin, and Kayin ethnic minorities has led to nearly one million displaced people today, both internally and internationally, who have severely limited educational opportunities (United Nations, 2019). The situation today echoes a long history of oppression through education and

language legislation whereby in 1964, the Burmese military-controlled government created a uniform and nationwide "New Education System" that declared Burmese the only medium of instruction across all levels, the elimination of all non-Burman ethnic languages/history, and the forced aggrandizement of Burman historical figures. English could only be taught as a foreign language and ethnic minority languages were virtually banned (Fen, 2005).

These restrictions on language of instruction have slowly loosened over the past two decades, which has led to a significant increase in MTB-MLE across the country over the past decade and last two years in particular (South & Lall, 2016b). According to official, yet potentially unreliable, Myanmar Ministry of Education data from 2018-2019 "54 ethnic minority languages were being taught to over 750,000 children, in 12,248 schools, by a total of 28,783 teachers, across all the States and Regions….[and] 64 languages are now being taught in 2019-2020" (Salem-Gervais & Raynaud, 2019). However, these systems vary greatly regarding philosophy, language, culture, materials, and learning outcomes. For example, the Mon ethnic minority system has been shown to be aligned with the national Burmese education system which means a focus on Burmese (the national language) and subject content that ultimately allows the children to sit for the national matriculation exam. Conversely, the Karen ethnic minority MTB-MLE system actively promotes local knowledge, like history, and aligns more closely to international standards, thus using English as the language of instruction in upper grades rather than Burmese. Accordingly, the Mon graduates were able to join the national university system which provided national work opportunities, whereas the Karen graduate were more able to work locally, with NGOs, or abroad but not necessarily with state-provided opportunities that require knowledge of Burmese language and education (Lall & South, 2014; Salem-Gervais & Metro, 2012; South & Lall, 2016a).

More recently, the Burmese led military staged a coup d'état in February of 2021. Protests erupted after across the country and were met with brutal opposition from the military. Tens of thousands of civilians have been killed or injured since, while countless more have been taken as political prisoners, including Nobel Peace Prize winner Aung San Suu Kyi (Paddock, 2022). At the time of writing, the military remains in control despite promises to hold elections in the near future. All aspects of daily life have been upended, including interruptions to schooling, rolling internet blackouts, and travel restrictions. Over a quarter of the country is estimated in need of humanitarian assistance (Goldman, 2022; UNOCHA, 2021b).

# CHAPTER 3: THEORETICAL APPROACH AND ANALYTICAL FRAMEWORK

The following describes the established theoretical approaches that inform this study, how they will each be used individually to frame the research, and how they will inform a broader analytical framework to address the research questions and core themes of sustainable access to quality and inclusive ed in emergencies. I draw on elements of the following theoretical approaches specifically to create my own conceptual framework that is unique to this study: 1) two faces of education theory, 2) education and state formation theory, 3) practitioner, academic, and feminist theories of organizational theory, 4) theories of education and globalization, and 5) critical theoretical approaches to pedagogy and curriculum.

The two faces of education theory is a perspective that interrogates the outcomes of education in contexts of ethnic conflict. Bush & Saltarelli (2001) first coined the term 'two faces of education', and argue that the results of education are not always beneficial whereby education can either lead to negative results that propagate future conflict or positive where peace and reconciliation result:

> The negative face shows itself in the uneven distribution of education to create or preserve privilege, the use of education as a weapon of cultural repression, and the production or doctoring of textbooks to promote intolerance. The positive face goes beyond the provision of education for peace programmes, reflecting the cumulative benefits of the provision of good quality education. These include the conflict-dampening impact of educational opportunity, the promotion of linguistic tolerance, the nurturing of ethnic tolerance, and the 'disarming' of history. (p. vi)

I also acknowledge what Metro (2020) calls the 'third face' of education, whereby results of schooling in contexts of violence and conflict are perhaps somewhere in between; neither fully propagating or alleviating conflict. Because this study involves an analysis of non-state schooling that is explicitly designed *by* and *for* an ethnic-minority group amidst broader ethnic-fueled conflict, I will employ the 'faces' of education in conflict to interrogate if education at the

research site is more reflective of the positive or negative face of education, or perhaps somewhere in between.

The question of how education and schooling relate to society more broadly or the 'state' specifically has been the subject of countless theorists over time. Dewey (1916) discussed the role of education and democracy during the early age of mass schooling in the US. More recently, and more related to the role education plays in state formation, Durkheim (1956) identified the connection between essential principals in a society and the role the state played, through education in maintaining and promoting them:

> there are at present, at the basis of our civilization, a certain number of principals which, implicitly or explicitly, are common to all, that few indeed, in any case, dare to deny overtly and openly: respect for reason, for science, for ideas and sentiments which are at the base of democratic morality. The role of the State is to outline these essential principals, to have them taught in schools, to see to it that nowhere are children left ignorant of them, that everywhere they should be spoken of with the respect which is due to them. There is in this connection an influence to exert. ( p. 81)

Gramsci (2011) argued in his *Prison Notebooks* that in practice, there was little distinction between the institutions of the state and civil society. Regarding their impact on society, he noted how state institutions, like government schooling, and civil society institutions, like the church, functioned to uphold and maintain Durkheim's 'essential principals' of society, while also acting as moral and ideological leaders of a society. Of course, Gramsci's experience with this in fascist Italy was viewed as means of oppression and hegemony, as is also the case of the Burmese government schooling that is the subject of this study. These previous theorists (Gramsci and Durkheim) partially comprise the foundation for Green's (2013) theory of education and state formation, which is the primary theoretical approach I draw from in this study given its direct relation to the research site. Green argues that the state, or central government, has a predominant role and incentive to use education to shape its people and ultimately the nation-

state itself. In other words, this perspective on state formation and identity places education and schooling at the center of what is a political and cultural project that is both facilitated by the state and directly maintains and propagates the administrative and cultural apparatus of the state. In chapter 5, I apply this theory to my study to help address the first research question and the role of the central Burmese state government education system as a means of control and oppression over ethnic minorities in the name of nation building. I also use Green's (2013) concept of the state to understand how the community-based schools are part of a regional network of state-like institutions. Finally, I use this lens as a way through which to view community-based education as a means of asserting reginal state-like autonomy and resistance against state-controlled schooling

To understand how the CBS and organizations work in practice, I draw from organizational theory, as it pertains to school leadership, and feminist critiques of hierarchical organizational structures. The origins of organizational theory date back to Weber's (1920) work on *Bureaucratic Theory* that analyzed how power and authority were negotiated within commercial and industrial businesses. In their historical analysis of organizational theory since Weber, Bush (2015) argues that today, organizational theory is broad in scope and 'contested terrain' which still includes the study of "authority, hierarchy and accountability" (p.35 ) within companies and organizations at all levels. Given the wide range of topics and organizational types that are included within this large body of literature, I draw specifically from models of 'school leadership', which represent a subset of organizational theory that "enhances understanding of leadership and management in schools" (Bush, 2015, p.36). Bush (2015) further identifies goals, structure, culture, and context as the four specific elements of educational organizations that the are included within the theory. Organizational structure in

particular is understood within organization theory has vertical (i.e. top-down) or horizontal (i.e bottom up) whereby vertical structures are hierarchical in nature "with little regard for individual talents and experience, and 'flexible' [horizontal] structures, which adapt to suit the capabilities of staff" (Bush, 2015, p. 36). I use this conceptualization of organizational structure to describe what the organizational practices are employed by the CBS and how these impact the educational mission of the community and organization. To explore issues of equity and responsiveness within the CBRO, I also draw from Acker (1990) and Green et al's., (2000) feminist critiques of hierarchical organizational practices that assert top-down hierarchies often result in educational organizations that privilege the male gender and are not responsive to the largely female teachers and administrators.

Globalization is a term that has a variety of different meanings ranging from the concrete and tangible to more theoretical and process-based understandings (Keohane & Nye, 2000; Nye, 2004). For this analysis, I will draw from McGrew and Held (2007) who assert that globalization is a process that includes a stretching of social relations across space, an intensification of flows and networks of interaction, the increasing interpenetration of economic and social practices, and finally the emergence of a global institutional infrastructure. Within this framework, globalization is not a thing, but rather a process that imperfectly connects people across time and space. I also draw from Appadurai's (1996) concepts of *ethnoscape, financescape, technoscape, mediascape, and ideoscape* to understand how global flows of people (ethno), ideas, technology, media, and finance impact education systems globally. Given these conceptualizations of globalization and its education related flows, I will apply globalization theory to this study to understand how international influences such as resources (i.e. human, financial, material, development assistance) and ideological (i.e. international messaging on the purpose of

schooling and curriculum) impact the community-based organization, schools, and study

participants. Accordingly, I will view the research site and participants as globally connected

through inputs like the internet, media, international schools, development assistance,

experiences in other countries, and interactions with people from other countries.

Finally, I draw from critical theoretical approaches to pedagogy and curriculum.

Traditional curriculum theorists, like Tyler (1949), argued that that curriculum development

process should incorporate broad goals of schooling (i.e. vision and mission) and should be lead

from the management of a school, and consistently reevaluated over time (Glatthorn et al., 2016).

I use this traditional perspective to view curriculum from a wide lens and as a process that ought

to be reevaluated over time. However, I more specifically draw from Paolo Freire to view

education as a political project that can be used to promote community-based goals and act as a

site of resistance to oppression and hegemony. In his seminal book *Pedagogy of the Oppressed,*

Freire (1968) called for education to be used a means for oppressed people globally to rise up

and overcome their oppressors. To Freire, education was the key for oppressed people to change

society. Freire asserted that education was a profound tool for self-realization and that "to speak

a true word is to transform the world" (Freire, 1968, p. 87). Taken together, I use these theorists

to understand education at my research site as an emancipatory project which includes elements

of promoting identity, inclusion, resistance, and overcoming oppression. I also use Freire's

concept that 'illiterate' people could meaningfully create and share knowledge and critique larger

systems of power to view how the EMG inductively came to their desired goals and values

through community discussions. Moreover, I use this lens to interpret the condition of people in

the research cite as having been subject to systemic oppression by the Burmese government and

people for decades and ongoing conflict and emergencies as a practical example of this oppression.

**Analytical Framework**

I use these theoretical approaches discussed above and summarized in Figure 1 below to inform an analytical framework that is unique and can adequately capture different phenomena that are part in this study. I draw on the two faces of education theory throughout this study as themes of the role of education and conflict are recurring throughout. The remaining theories are used more specifically to each research question. Education and state formation theory is employed in chapter 5 to answer research question 1 and to reveal of the CBRO acts as a state-like institution. Organizational theory is employed in chapter 6 to address research question 2 and the impact of the CBRO organizational practices on the educational goals. Finally, critical pedagogy and globalization theories are employed in chapter 7 to address research question 3 on the curriculum development processes. I hope that by drawing on multiple theories, I can contribute something new to the existing knowledge base by attempting to create a novel framework while building on work that has been conducted with each individually. Moreover, to capture as many elements of schooling and education delivery as possible, I will view schooling as a phenomenon consisting of the three interconnected elements of organization, curriculum, and instruction that interact with each other and are impossible to fully isolate. In other words, these cannot be viewed as different and separate silos, but rather as existing because of and in relation to each other at all times. The following is a visualization of how the theoretical approaches discussed above inform an analytical framework to address each research question and their implications on the broader educational themes of sustainable access to quality and inclusive education in emergencies:

```
┌─────────────────────┐  ┌─────────────────────┐  ┌─────────────────────┐
│ RQ1- Ethnic Minority│  │ RQ2- Community-     │  │ RQ3- Community-Based│
│ State Formation and │  │ Based Organizational│  │ Curriculum Development│
│ Education           │  │ Practices           │  │ Processes           │
└─────────────────────┘  └─────────────────────┘  └─────────────────────┘
```

Two Faces of Education

┌──────────────┐   ┌─────────────────────┐   ┌─────────────────────┐
│ Education and│   │ Academic, Practitioner,│ │ Critical Theories of│
│ State        │   │ and Feminist        │   │ Pedagogy and        │
│ Formation    │   │ Organizational Theories│ │ Globalization Theory│
│ Theory       │   │                     │   │                     │
└──────────────┘   └─────────────────────┘   └─────────────────────┘

**Analytical Approach:**
Draws from theories to address research questions with analysis relating to core themes of sustainable access to quality and inclusive education in emergencies

*Figure 1- Analytical Framework*

# CHAPTER 4: RESEARCH DESIGN AND METHODS

Drawing from the analytical approach discussed in chapter 3, this qualitative research study investigates access to quality and inclusive education for people affected by emergencies globally through an in-depth case study of the organizational and curriculum development practices of Community-Based Schools (CBS) operating amidst emergencies in Myanmar. Given that my role in the study was nearly equal parts researcher and collaborator with the participants at the CBS and associated organizations, I utilized a participatory qualitative approach which allowed for both my ability to answer the research questions while also addressing community educational needs. In this chapter, I outline the setting and participants involved in the study, my positionality, the participatory action research approach I took towards research, and the specific methods of data collection and analysis that I employed to address the study's research questions.

## Research Setting

The setting of this study was a cohort of non-state CBS in Myanmar that are operated by Ethnic Minority Group (EMG) communities located in a region with ongoing conflict and displacement in Myanmar. The CBS were part of a broader education system which included: 1) the community-based schools (CBS), which all operate independently, 2) the community-based education organization (CBEO) which operates a centrally located teacher training center that serves as the locus for curriculum development/evaluation, school monitoring, administration, and financial operations, and 3) the parent community-based religious organization (CBRO) which was responsible for initially creating the CBEO and CBS. The relationship of these organizations and schools are summarized in Appendix F for clarity. Further, the CBS are related to each other because they use the same curriculum materials and teacher training facility which

are managed by the CBEO but are separate in that they are all locally financed and managed independently. Because of this, the schools vary regarding both human and financial resources and can best be described as along a spectrum of non-formal to formal with the ladder being the most well-resourced. At the time of data collection, schools also varied in the number of grades that they were able to accommodate. The schools that had been established first were teaching grades KG-7 (age 5-12), while other schools were only teaching KG-2 or other stages in between. The schools typically added a graded after the oldest students finished (i.e. when grade 6 students finished, the school added grade 7 for the next year). This study attempts to cover the full range of CBS from the least supported/informal to the most and findings will indicate which types of schools were ultimately able to be reached and included. The central Burmese government plays no role in these schools, thus making them non-state. The specific location, number of schools, language, ethnicity, and religion of the participating schools and employees are anonymized throughout this paper for protection of the participants. Most participants and others involved with the CBS are part of an ethnic minority community that is still engaged in conflict with the central Burmese government and the region has both official and unofficial IDPs.

**Positionality and Research Ethics**

I became familiar with the CBS system through volunteer work in 2015 and have been in touch with various members ever since. I am aware that these long-standing relationships have implications for the efficacy, implementation, and ethics this research. I have been friends with many participants for several years and speak with them informally throughout the year about school. I am mindful that these relationships represent much more than simply

researcher/participant and that the trust folks have given me is precious. While addressing such concerns, Kaplan et al. (2018) note that:

> it is important to work intentionally to ensure that the relationship between those collecting data and those acting as respondents protects all participants. Participatory work raises specific concerns about coercion, beneficence, and respect for persons. Research design for participatory work must be intentional, transparent, and iterative, in order to uphold research ethics. (p.16)

Accordingly, I placed a large personal emphasis on being transparent about the aims of my research, my role, and my ideas for how the CBS and CBEO can proceed. Moreover, I am aware of the power relationships at play as a white male researcher from UCLA coming to work in an area that is affected by emergencies and where many live in poverty and the reality of armed conflict. I tried to consistently assess if my time was useful to folks on the ground and that I was making myself available in a way that works towards their mission and was rooted in mutual respects and trust. As with any relationship, it is hard to tell when mutual respect and trust have truly been achieved. Though, it is in the candid moments with participants, while sharing a meal or going for a walk, when we speak freely and ask genuine questions about education and life in general that I feel this transparency and respect has come to fruition. Though, not all people were able to be candid, especially lower-level, younger, and female staff and teachers.

Ultimately, I believe research should work towards the bigger goal of all people involved and accordingly see the motivating purpose of this study truly as being to help this cohort of schools succeed, by their own definition of success. I have given my word to countless people here over the past few years and take my commitment to their mission and anonymity seriously. I travelled when they need me to be there, not when was most convenient for me. I see myself as a privileged to be able to share in a mission of providing schooling in these communities with folks who have made it their life's work. Put simply, I believe in the mission of the CBS and CBEO and am aware that this inherent belief is a lens through which I view the study.

**Participatory Research Approach**

Given my previous volunteer work and history with many participants, a participatory action research framework guided my approach to research. I adopted this due to my previous and sustained relationships with several participants, along with the pragmatic fact that I was being physically hosted by the participants during research trips for fieldwork, as will be further described below. Participants were included as co-researchers in the process of discovery and guidance was given by participants to determine which elements of the curriculum process and school leadership were most important to them for the research and work to focus on. My framework drew on literature that suggests participatory research "focuses on the political empowerment of people through participation in knowledge construction. Participants are colleagues in the research process, equally in control of the research" (Merriam et al., 2001, p. 413). This focus was communicated to participants from the beginning with the intention that data and ultimate findings will be even more meaningful, help reduce the risk of researcher bias, and to increase the usefulness of this research to the communities during data collection and in the future. Regarding participatory research in the field of education specifically, Kaplan et al. (2018) notes that "a key benefit of engaging stakeholders such as system leaders in research processes is to enhance their understanding of issues, and skill in eliciting perspectives of stakeholders" (p.16). Accordingly, I actively sought out and followed the lead of CBS and organization leaders who were instrumental in gathering other participants and constructing a role for me that accomplished my goals as well as their own. I took part in meetings, workshops, teacher trainings, and school classes while collecting data. The most natural fit for my participation was to take part in ongoing curriculum development and design. Thus, my role as a

researcher blended with that of a curriculum resource for future planning for the CBEO which

allowed me to give instantaneous feedback to participants based on my preliminary findings.

**Data Collection and Analysis**

*Participant Recruitment and Summary*

I employed a fieldwork-based approach to data collection, situating the collection

process in the environment where the CBS, CBEO, and CBRO actors were working.

Convenience sampling was used to select initial participants who then referred me to others

involved with the initiative. The inclusion criteria for participants were involvement or

knowledge of any aspect of the CBS, CBEO, or CBRO. This functionally allowed for inclusion

of participants who were involved with activities ranging from the curriculum development

process to any organizational, community, and/or instruction practices within or related to the

schools or organizations at any level. This inclusion criteria resulted in the recruitment of

participants ranging from CBS and CBEO/CBRO employees to community members, parents,

and members of the local civil society involved with the research site. This broad recruitment

strategy resulted in data that spoke to each level of the education system; from the CBS level

staff and teachers up to the leadership and management of the regional organizations. In total, 57

participants, described in Table 2, took place in this study which included staff from both the

| | |
|---|---|
| CBRO Staff (i.e. leadership, religious committee members) | 4 |
| CBEO Staff (i.e. teacher trainers, curriculum writers, leadership) | 29 |
| International Consultants | 8 |
| CBS Parents | 5 |
| CBS Teachers | 4 |
| Community Members | 7 |
| **Total** | **57** |

*Table 2- Participant Summary Table*

CBRO and CBEO, in addition to CBS teachers, CBS parents, international consultants, and

community members who are directly involved with the CBS in some capacity. The recruitment

process involved providing the study information sheet (See Appendix A) to all potential and selected participants to explain the purpose of the research, what they could expect as participants, and the anticipated benefits and potential drawbacks for participation. Merriam and Tisdell (2016) note that determining sample size can be a "difficult and ambiguous process" (p.98), thus I began with people I knew from my previous interactions and snowball sampled until a point of information saturation and redundancy occurs. Table 3 provides further detail on several key participants whose interview transcripts are highlighted throughout the finding's

| Participant | CBRO/CBEO Role |
|-------------|----------------|
| Michael | CBRO Leader |
| Betty | CBEO Staff |
| Johnathan | CBEO Staff |
| Susan | CBEO Staff |
| Alex | CBEO Staff |
| Faye | CBEO Management |
| Maya | International Consultant |
| Joy | CBEO Staff |
| Layla | CBE Staff |
| Liv | CBEO Staff |
| Lucy | CBEO Curriculum Team Member |

*Table 3- Detailed Participant List*

chapters. Many participant voices are highlighted by the use of direct passages from interviews throughout the finding's sections of the study. However, only the participants included in Table 3 were assigned pseudonyms to help protect anonymity of all participants and to provide narrative clarity.

*Data Collection: Interviews, Observations, and Document Collection*

Data collection took place from June 2018 to September 2019, during which time I travelled to the research site over four separate trips. In total, I spent approximately 3 months at the research site in Myanmar, which spanned across a geographical region roughly the size of

Connecticut. During each trip, the CBEO provided me with room and board for the duration of my stay at their centrally located offices that served as the teacher training facility and space where curriculum development, payroll, accounting, and other operational staff were located. In total, 32 interviews were conducted (See Appendix G). I also conducted nine observations; two observations of English language classes and seven of CBEO meeting spaces. Field notes were taken throughout the data collection process and included in the data analysis process. Hundreds of locally available curriculum, organizational documents, and reports were also collected to conduct a document analysis. The detailed description of each type of data collection is below.

32 conversational interviews (Sample Protocol in Appendix B) were conducted which served as the primary form of data collection. I conducted interviews with participants in a private setting, that lasted from 30 to 120 minutes and covered topics ranging from the history of the CBS, CBEO, and CBRO to the curriculum development process, instruction, and challenges associated with managing CBS in an emergency. My interview approach was guided by Kovach (2010) who describes conversational interviews specifically as involving "open-ended, semi-structured interview questions to prompt conversation where participant and researcher co-create knowledge" (p.44). Because of my previous relationship with many participants and participation in their education system for several years, I recognized that a conversational setting was both more appropriate on a personal level and proved more effective in producing useful knowledge for myself and participants. We able to uncover new knowledge through dialogue that would have been more difficult with a semi-structured interview. The dialogue that occurred through conversational interviews also served as a means to problem-solve and discuss ongoing challenges surrounding the education system which allowed the co-production of

knowledge. That is, the conversational nature of interviews provided a space for participants to ask questions of me that in turn helped both of us learn and build upon knowledge together.

In addition to interviews, I observed classroom teaching and organizational meeting spaces (Sample Protocols in Appendices C and D). I positioned myself as a passive observer for classroom observations which were conducted to determine how the written curriculum translated to classroom instruction practices. I did not record classroom observations but did take detailed notes using a pre-established protocol. I also debriefed with teachers after to discuss their thoughts on challenges/successes of that class. Conversely, I served as a participant observer at a series of curriculum workshops I facilitated and attended over the course of data collection. When I first arrived at the research site, CBEO management requested that I take part in the curriculum development process. Over the next two years, I lead four multi-day curriculum development workshops where I worked closely with the CBEO staff and CBS teachers who were involved with curriculum writing and leadership. These spaces proved invaluable in learning about the methods that the participants used to design their curriculum and schooling more generally. They also provided a space where my voice actively entered the discussion by presenting on topics that participants requested such as curriculum history and leadership strategies. I was able to share findings from my literature review on current research in the field on curriculum studies that helped participants reflect, plan, and shape their future curriculum development. Indeed, the curriculum workshops were a truly collaborative space where we combined our differing knowledge and experience to learn from each other and dialogue on the future of their curriculum goals and materials.

I also collected hundreds of pages of relevant organizational, curricular, and instruction related documents such as organizational planning documents and curriculum materials like

textbooks and lesson plans. I obtained electronic copies of the entire primary school curriculum (grades KG-6) while also collecting document samples of the secondary curricula that was being developed during data collection. A series of interview transcripts were also made available to me by an international NGO employee who was involved with the monitoring and support of the CBS. These included interviews with 37 parents of children who attended a CBS and 13 teachers working at a CBS. These interviews were performed by the international NGO employee and ranged from 15-45 minutes covering topics ranging from the parents' experience and perception of their child attending the CBS to teachers' experience with classroom instruction. Finally, understanding the realities of field work where conversations happen outside of meeting/interview spaces, I also took detailed written and oral field notes throughout my time in Myanmar which were recorded electrically and categorized by time, date, participant, and theme as they were taken.

*Data Analysis*

As is described by Bazeley (2013), thematic analysis is an approach that can yield incredibly rich results when applied carefully and systematically to qualitative data. Accordingly, thematic analysis was employed as the dominant data analysis strategy for interview and observation data. I followed a modified version of Braun and Clarke's (2006) phases of thematic analysis which included: 1) transcribing data and noting initial ideas, 2) generating initial codes, through multiple rounds of coding (at least 3) across the entire data set, using both bottom-up (i.e. in-vivo) and top-down coding techniques (i.e. using RQs and theoretical framework explicitly to create codes), 3) collating codes into initial upper level themes, 4) reviewing the themes to ensure that they are consistent with individual codes and data set as a whole, 5) generating clear and explicit language for each theme that draw from and are within my

theoretical framework and RQs, and 6) synthesizing and interpreting the themes to tell an overall story of the research and directly address the research questions.

Phases 1-3 constituted the data *analysis* by working to uncover patterns and themes in the data. The theoretical perspectives and analytical approach described in chapter 3 specifically guided top-down coding in step 2 whereby codes like 'state formation', 'international influence', and 'positive face of education', for example, were applied in a top-down manner. Similarly, bottom-up or in-vivo codes like 'religious hierarchy' and 'local curriculum capacity' were created while reading interview transcripts with the guidance of the research questions. Phases 4-6 constituted data *interpretation* by explaining the themes in the context of my RQs and study purpose. Major themes that emerged, like community-based institutions and curriculum development, were guided by the research questions and are used to structure the findings chapters below. Moreover, theoretical approaches, like Green (2013) and Freirean critical pedagogy, were used in a top-down manner to help analyze how the data about the functioning and operations of the CBS system reflected this study's main themes of sustainable access to quality and inclusive education in emergencies. Throughout the data analysis and interpretation phases, I drew from Braun and Clarke's (2006) "checklist of criteria for good thematic analysis" (Appendix E) in order to ensure rigorous and critical analysis that goes beyond just description to actually interpret meaning and draw conclusions that are related to my goal of discovering new knowledge.

Finally, the document analysis was conducted using Elo et al.'s (2014) framework for qualitative content analysis to help triangulate data from the interviews and observation. I used the thematic analysis to inform this subsequent qualitative content analysis of curriculum materials to quantify elements of the curriculum content. For example, the theme of "culturally

relevant curriculum materials" was applied to curriculum materials by counting the number of times words in the local language are used in social studies textbooks. To assist in the design and overall trustworthiness of the content analysis, I drew from Elo et al.'s (2014) checklist to guide my preparation, organization, and reporting of data specifically. Ultimately, the document analysis helped to reveal details about curriculum design that can be correlated with interview and observational data.

**Limitations**

This study was broadly motivated by global shortcomings in realizing universal access to quality and inclusive education, particularly in emergency contexts. However, as is the case with qualitative and exploratory research, the findings below are not intended to be generalizable to all instances of emergency or where education systems are lacking. The qualitative and participatory research design described above was intended to generate new knowledge on this instance of community-based schooling that was implemented by a particular group of people, in a particular place, in a particular time. Chapter 8 discusses conclusions and recommendations based on this case with the goal of informing people in this research setting specifically. Of course, these recommendations should not be generalized, however, I will present them in a way that I intend to be useful for other people living in emergency settings who feel like community-based education could be an avenue for them to explore in their own context. The economic, political and socio-cultural conditions of Myanmar generally and this research site specifically are unique. However, I do hope that universal themes and lessons regarding how communities identify and how schooling can be better designed to meet the needs of underrepresented and oppressed groups shines through.

In addition, the participants of this study asked for strict anonymity regarding not only their individual names, but also the specific details of their religion, EMG, and any other identifiable information that could be used against them by the central government and military. Given these constraints, I am only able to present findings that describe aspects of the schools, people, and organizations involved. Because of this, the narrative is lacking in details that are important to fully understand the specific socio-cultural and historical context. I have purposefully left out important elements of the full education system for protection, so I admittedly cannot tell the complete story.

Finally, the timing of data collection was imperfect due to the catastrophic events that quickly transpired thereafter. My last trip to Myanmar was in September 2019 and only a few months later the COVID-19 pandemic changed the world. As was discussed in the "Background of Conflict and Education in Myanmar" section of chapter 2, the Burmese controlled military also staged a coup in February 2021. Both the pandemic and coup have had profound effects on the people, teachers, students, and communities at my research site. However, due to travel restrictions and the military-imposed internet blackout and censorship after, follow up in-person trips proved impossible. Moreover, I was able to communicate with participants intermittently using encrypted messaging services, but I was unable to conduct any follow up or member check interviews given the risk these would have posed to participants. Ultimately, the findings below speak to a particular moment in time, and I hope they prove useful to the participants of this study and people the world over who might be inspired to start or persist with community-based education, wherever they might be.

# CHAPTER 5: COMMUNITY-BASED STATE AND EDUCATION FORMATION

*"So now education…this is our vision"*
-Michael

This chapter addresses the first research question: How did the sociocultural, political, and protracted emergency context influence Ethnic Minority Group (EMG) community-based state formation, and the motivation and vision for Community-Based Schools (CBS)? To do so, I trace the sociocultural, sociopolitical, and history of protracted emergency of the EMG over the past hundred years and employ Green's (2013) theory of state formation to reveal how community-based state-like institutions, such as the Community-Based Religious Organization (CBRO), have developed in lieu of the federalist system that was promised after the colonial era. I also draw from Green (2013)'s theory of education and state formation in multi-ethnic societies to analyze how the central Burmese military used education as part of a broader campaign of violence and oppression perpetrated against the EMG in the name of forced national unity and state building around the Burmese ethnic majority. Next, I illustrate how both the historical development of these community-based state-like institutions, in tandem with Burmese military state-led conflict, ultimately motivated the EMG to create their own a community-based schooling and what their vision for quality education entailed. I analyze how the history of EMG education and state formation relate to this study's core themes of sustainable access to quality and inclusive education throughout and conclude with a summary of key findings surrounding how community-based state-like institutions led to the creation of the modern EMG education system.

**A History of Community, Religion, and State Formation**

When I first arrived at the research site in 2018, I knew there was a network of schools and had some preconceived ideas of what 'community-based' meant. I also knew that there had been intermittent conflict between the central Burmese state military and this EMG for years. What I did not know, and was further revealed through even just the first few conversations with Community-Based School (CBS) and Community-Based Education Organization (CBEO) workers, was that the 'community' that created the schools had along and rich history that was many years in the making. The conflict and state-led oppression, which I had never personally seen but had heard stories about, also stood out as inextricably linked to how the community members and EMG people identified and chose education as a means of active resistance. Moreover, it became clear that to truly understand the schools and education efforts that first inspired the study, I would first need to take a step back to understand the socio-political, cultural, and emergency context of the community as a foundation to investigate the network of CBS.

A complete history of the EMG that created the CBS and associated organizations is of course beyond the scope of this study and would require an inquiry into thousands of years of history. Instead, I begin where a current CBRO Leader, Michael, did when we spoke about the history of their organization. Michael began his oral history of the CBRO in the early 1900's, which was when the organization was officially established by EMG religious leaders in the same geographic region that the CBRO, and several of the CBS, still operate from to this day. Michael described how their distant relatives had been involved with the creation of the CBRO and that many current members could similarly trace their family lineage back to this time and place, all with shared language, religion, customs, and cultural practices like holidays, dress,

music, and food. Even in describing these practices and people, Michael, as was the case with every other participant, referred to the EMG using a collective 'we' and 'our'. This collective identity as EMG people was one of the most consistent and powerful themes that emerged throughout data collection and analysis, and it is telling that one of the senior leaders of the CBRO used this collectivist language in describing the origins of the CBRO in the early 1900's. The role of religion was revealed as a crucial element in both this shared EMG identity and the history of the CBRO specifically. Michael considered themself a religious leader above all else and explained how the CBRO began with the primary goal of serving their religious members, which remains the CBRO's primary mission today.

At the time of its founding, the CBRO's primary focus was clearly religion, but its secondary focus was education. There were a number of religious schools in the region at the time that were run by international religious workers in conjunction with the CBRO. Given that Burma, as it was known at the time, was a colony of the British Empire, participants noted that they had heard stories from their relatives that this type of schooling was common throughout the country at the time. When reflecting on what these schools were like, Michael recalled that:

> [these] schools were very good for our people. Because of, from [these schools] many of good leaders came out from [them]. And so there's a leader, they are leading in our [region]. (Interview Transcript, Michael)

Here, Michael is recalling what was a common narrative amongst most participants, that the quality of education more than a century ago was better than today, and that the type of education schools provided trained a generation of leaders that built the foundation of the EMG society today. These schools, many of which were created or run by foreigners, also mark the first instance of globalization in this study. Many participants looked back fondly on these schools remarking that they provided a quality education and how their relatives from that time

could 'speak English better than we can!' (Interview Transcript, Johnathan). The recognition of

English language as a metric for quality and a skill to access the broader international

community (which is further discussed in chapter 7) would prove a large influence in the design

of the modern schools, thus it is important to note here its longstanding place in the EMG. These

leaders were responsible for creating, managing, and running the CBRO for the first few

decades. Over this time, the CBRO has grown into a regional network of sub-organizations that

act similarly to an unofficial regional government. The specifics of how the CBRO and its

associated sub-organizations will be discussed in chapter 6. However, it is important to note now

that when describing some of the non-education services the CBRO provides today, Michael

commented:

> there's a religious program and one program is a development program. It's for our
> [religious members] to devote to know how to have good success with agriculture, how
> to have good soil. Now we emphasize our organics program, so our development. To
> educate to our [religious members] and advocacy then… Around this so, educate them.
> So that's development…We're [providing religious services] to others and now we're
> going to [do this] at the border, that's our [EMG] people. So, we have [EMG] people
> there. They are not yet our religion so, we go to them. (Interview Transcript, Michael)

In other words, the CBRO today is responsible for providing a great number of services to

community members ranging from education and religion to agricultural training and

development. This long-standing history trust and providing religious and social services was

instrumental in creating a shared imaginary for EMG people today that is built on trust,

solidarity, and common purpose.

The origin and development of the CBRO over the early 20th century can be understood

as a type of community and EMG-based process of state formation. In this case, I draw

specifically from Green (2013) who argues that state formation includes not just the historical

processes that constructed the modern state, but also includes the construction of the political and

administrative apparatus of government and all government-controlled agencies which constitute the 'public' realm" (Green, 2013, p. 83). Of course, state formation refers to centralized, formal, and national level states. However, using the same conceptualization of state institutions, the CBRO and its affiliated organizations can be viewed as the state-like 'political and administrative apparatus' that constitutes the EMG's public realm. Beyond the religious services, the CBRO provided community development services that were paid for with a donation system, like many religious organizations, but in this case served closer to a tax collection and redistribution mechanism. A CBEO employee noted that in practice, this meant "every month, we put a one-tenth... [a religious donation] …maybe 75% they send to the [CBRO]" (Interview Transcript, Betty). This ability to collect funds from community members and spend them on collective services that were administered through the CBRO and its regional affiliates is analogous to a state in practice, and from the perspective of state formation theory can be seen as a being comprised of community-based state-like institutions. Green (2013), while drawing from Gramsci, further argues that the 'state' also includes the:

> theoretical or moral organs, such as the courts, the schools, and the Church, where the intellectuals of the state are active in promoting certain views of the world and certain ideologies through which civil society is organized…State power is not only located in the central machinery itself; it is also rooted in civil society, in all those 'so-called private organizations' which it continually seeks to shape and influence. (Green, 2013, p. 96)

Gramsci (2011) further argues that the line between state institutions and civil society, like the CBRO in this case, is often blurry if existent at all. Within the research site context, the CBRO and its leaders were viewed by participants as the moral leaders of the EMG that operate the CBRO as a local community-based civil society organization that in practice acts as a state-like institution, thus assuming a similar role regarding the use of education and community-based regional state formation. Because of their moral authority and administrative apparatus, the

CBRO also assumed the state-like role of promoting certain views and ideologies about the world. In this case, religious ideologies were the most pronounced and direct. Moreover, the ongoing conflict between the EMG and the central Burmese military state further entrenched these 'private' institutions as a regional governing body. Nearly all participants spoke of the desire for a federalist system of national politics where the CBRO was acknowledged as the would-be EMG de facto leader if such a system would ever be officially recognized.

In addition to promoting religious ideologies, the CBRO was thus instrumental in preserving and promoting ideologies surrounding federalism and resistance against the dominant Burmese military state that dated back to when the British colonial era ended, and Burma gained independence. As was the case with many former colonies, when the British left a power vacuum was created and eventually filled by the Burmese majority ethnic group. In 1947, the Panglong agreement was signed by several EMGs and established the foundation for a federalist political system with regional authority given to EMGs (Walton, 2008). Participants confirmed this shared memory of the agreement as having promised the creation of a federalist state where their EMG would have regional political autonomy, if not outright independence. However, one of the central grievances that participants consistently mentioned was how the Panglong agreement has never been fulfilled and indeed quite the opposite has occurred. The hope for a federalist state was a common vision amongst participants, and from the perspective of state formation theory, the CBRO emphatically promotes this federalist ideology as their preferred political arrangement and relation to the central Burmese state. As will be discussed below, this desire for a federalist system was both a driver for an EMG education system and was reflected in their curricular goals which are detailed in chapter 7.

Of course, the federalist state has still not come to fruition and in addition to the unfulfilled promise for political autonomy, the Burmese military has also been leading a campaign against the EMG. All participants who identified as being part of the EMG spoke to how the military had played a negative role in their life. Some had seen active fighting and violence firsthand, while nearly everyone knew someone who was affected by it. One CBS teacher remarked that "We still have so many invisible threats from the government, and they have so many operations against us. Not only us but also other ethnic groups" (CBS Teacher). A common theme that emerged in this regard too was how the Burmese military-controlled government simply did not provide the people with the social services they needed, and even stole economic resources from them as well. One of the most concrete examples of the impact violence has had are the number of Internally Displaced People (IDPs) living in the region. When discussing the CBRO response to IDPs today, Michael described that:

> Politics in [our region] also, now is also the same from five or six years. We're fighting again from [recently]. Before this our [local military] ... They're doing government cease fire. Before [recently the cease fire…But [now]they are fighting again until now. So, from our location is when they meet each other so they are fighting… Military... Government military. Now you know, [our region] we have many [local military] group… [there are many military groups here] …So last year everyone, they combine each group and they announce to fight government military. They make alliance group. So now, sometimes when they meet each other, they meet so they have fighting and then when they fight near our village, so village people they are afraid. Lastly, they arrived in IDP camp. Now in our association we have four IDP camp from this side. 4 IDP camps. 2,000 IDP…Last night they finished their conference also our [military]... The event there is a conference… They did not get any result, so they came back. The government did not [accept our] demand. So government did not allow. So they just came back. So that is... There is always fighting will be continuous. (Interview Transcript, Michael)

What is so telling about the way the CBRO is able to provide for IDPs, like a state might do for its most vulnerable members, is that they are certainly not all religious members of the organization. It also speaks to the fact that despite people being displaced from their homes, they are still within the bounds of the broader network of their EMG community. I learned while

visiting one of the IDP camps that the homes they fled were sometimes just 20-30 miles away.

However, the uncertainty that conflict brings prevented them from moving home. Taken

together, the history of the CBRO reveals an organization with deep roots in the region that has

been responsible in large part not just for providing religious and social services but serving as a

quasi-state institution unto itself which ultimately served as the foundation for their education

system that is discussed below.

**Burmese Military's Use of Education in State Formation and Violence**

An examination of the full political and historical context of the violence in Myanmar is

far beyond the scope of this study and instead, I will focus on the role of education. The Burmese

military-led state took power after the British left Burma in the mid 20th century and during this

time, the military began a half-century reign where ethnic-minority groups across the country

were suppressed in the name of national unity. Violent conflict and the military/police state was

a large driver of this conflict, but education played a central role as well. When reflecting on this

time, Michael recalled that:

> The key point is that because in our background history…in 1962 at that time [the
> Burmese military-controlled state] occupied all of the [religious] schools…And from that
> time [we] does not have [our own] school, we just attended the government school, our
> children and so does we, government schools. Our government school is for our rural
> people. (Interview Transcript, Michael)

In other words, the schools that the CBRO had been affiliated with for over a half century in the

early 1900's were shut down over night in 1962. In their place, government schools opened

across the country as part of the "New Education System" that declared Burmese the only

medium of instruction across all levels, the elimination of all non-Burmese ethnic

languages/history, and the forced aggrandizement of Burman historical figures. English could

only be taught as a foreign language and ethnic minority languages were virtually banned (Fen,

2005) as is consistent with literature on schooling that serves authoritarian regimes' pursuit of forced nationalism (Bush & Saltarelli, 2001; Harber, 2019; Khoo, 2015).

Findings from this study revealed participants had similar experiences with government schools, many of whom had attended them as children or knew of children attending them today. Interestingly, *access* to education was not the issue at all, as there were state provided schools in most communities that I visited while conducting fieldwork, all of which had sturdy buildings and classrooms with chalkboards, desks and chairs. Despite the outward appearance of a potentially quality education, one CBEO employee described how the state education system left students with skills that didn't translate to their community's reality and instilled a dislike of local practices, like farming. The specific curriculum and teaching methods employed at state schools were also described by community members and CBEO staff as reliant on corporal punishment and rote memorization, focused on Burmese-centered content, and as using Burmese as the medium of instruction rather than the local indigenous language. This combination resulted in what was perceived as an irrelevant educational experience that ultimately left the community with a generation of young people incapable of navigating a prosperous future for or within their community. The same CBEO staff member described the holistic effect of these issues as leading to a high drop-out rate, hatred of education, and a threat to the mental, physical, and emotional wellbeing of the children:

> [government teachers] don't speak the local language and the students don't speak Burmese language…so it's very difficult to learn…when [the students] are not happy at school [they say] 'okay, I want to quit' And mostly... grade five and grade six, there is a lot of dropout rate…the teachers are unapproachable and the texts are not relevant with the context and then they don't understand what's written in text and they cannot engage at school very well…They don't understand what the teachers are explaining so they have to memorize, and they're just chanting, and they don't understand the meaning…so they don't feel and experience success and they don't feel safe physically, mentally, and they don't feel satisfaction… Yeah, but by attending government school, sometimes some of

> my [EMG] language becomes weaker and weaker, because at school, we just speak in Burmese. So at home, so some of the language vanish away. (Interview Transcript, Betty)

Parents of children in the CBS had similarly negative attitudes and perceptions about the government schools. They specifically discussed[4] issues like students being forced to strict standards of obedience, lacking confidence, experiencing trauma from school, and government schools not providing adequate space for parents to interact with teachers. Michael similarly criticized the government school students for not having critical thinking skills but went on to describe how the government school students also were more likely to have issues with drug use, which they noted as being a large regional concern.

The findings from this study are abundantly clear on the oppressive role that the Burmese state education system played in participants' lives. The specific educational tactics of rote memorization, teaching only in the national Burmese language, and using history books that only portray the Burmese version of recent events are also consistent with Green's (2013) theory of how education can be used to support a hegemonic ruling state. The way that the Burmese education system was structured to enforce a national Burmese linguistic and ethnic identity, was quite literally the opposite of what Green (2013) argued is needed in a multi-ethnic country like Myanmar:

> in pluralistic, multi-national and multi-cultural states, this cannot be a question of forming a singular national culture and identity. It is still important for education to promote social cohesion and solidarity; never more so, in fact, than under the socially fragmenting effects of economic globalization. But education must embrace complex

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[4] Full parent quotations: "My son attended a music camp in the summer, where there were many participants from government schools, and even university students older than my son who is in grade 5. All those other children were shy, too shy to volunteer to lead a group…or lead as a chairperson for a…session." (Parent 2) …"At first I tried to start my daughter in the government school kindergarten, but she would just cry the whole time, even to the point where I couldn't leave her, and had to stay there with her. So I finally took her out of the government school" (Parent3) …"I have no idea who my son's teachers (at the government school) are. In fact, if I went to the government school to talk to the teachers, it would be to a group of them, because of something bad my son had done. Some serious disciplinary issue for the school. It would never even come up to talk about how he's doing in class" (Parent 4) …"that kind of curiosity about future lessons is very unusual among children in the government school. Their daily lessons are already overloaded; they have no curiosity about what comes next. (Parent 5)

cultures and identities. State formation should be less about the reproduction of national identity and more about the formation of active and aware citizens. (A. Green, 2013, p. 3)

The government schools in the EMG region can be seen as promoting a collective culture of obedience to the state where citizens do not have agency or the ability to be active and aware, but only subservient. The explicit use of schools to accomplish this goal is a textbook illustration of education and state formation theory in practice, albeit in the worst possible context. Moreover, the strict outlaw of EMG language, acknowledgment of their cultural needs, and emphasis on rote memorization was viewed as state-led oppression through schooling and part of a broader genocide against the EMG (Hogan, 2018; Zarni & Cowley, 2014). However, Betty notes that discontent with the state schools also provided the necessary motivation for something new:

> …when we attend the government school, like grade one to ten, so ten years…the whole time we just chant… So we don't build the skills and the mindset and the knowledge that we really have to use in real life situations. So, most of the people... They're aware of this and then they want to…get out of that system, and they want to get a new one that's really [going to] help them. (Interview Transcript, Betty)

The end of this passage above exemplifies how community members and parents of children in the current non-state system had enough and chose to fight back by providing the next generation with something new: a CBS system that they would own and operate as they saw fit. The saw the negative face of schooling when it was used to support the hegemonic goals of the Burmese military state, but similarly recognized the power education has both in shaping individuals and society at large. In other words, access to Burmese state education was essentially meaningless, if not outright harmful, thus the EMG, through the CBRO, decided it was time to create more than just access to education, but access to a quality and relevant community-based education.

**Community-Based Non-State Education as the Solution**

In the early 2000's, the CBRO hosted a centennial gathering of religious and EMG group community members alike to celebrate the founding of their organization 100 years prior, use the

event as a space to identify what the greatest societal needs were in the next 25 years, and how to address them. This conference was a pivotal moment for the CBRO specifically and EMG community more broadly as it illustrated the importance and state-like authority of the CBRO to the community, the strong foundation of trust that it had created over the past century, and how it could be an institution for community collaboration and true societal action. In describing the conference, Michael explained how the grievances towards the Burmese state education system had reached a boiling point and education was selected as what the EMG community would focus on moving forward:

> One hundred years. So, we celebrate a big ceremony at that time. Before we arrive [to the] centennial [in 2000], at that time, we make one committee for coming, it's 100 years, at that time we have vision committee... According to that meeting, that committee, we discussed this. [Out of this came the CBEO] and the education program and then program and our [CBRO], how to establish, where to establish… We came to a three issue, education and then development, and then where to establish. (Interview Transcript, Michael)

In other words, and as is consistent with literature on education in conflict and post conflict contexts (Harber, 2019a; Lai & Thyne, 2007), at the largest gathering of community members where the explicit goal was to decide what the EMG should focus on to improve their society, education was identified as both the biggest challenge they had faced and best institution to address for progress, thus illustrating how devastating the Burmese state schooling system had been and the belief in education the community members had. Michael noted that the CBS would still be illegal which meant "our students, parents worry is about this. So our [CBS] are not legally from government. But we need to do this. Because when we do not do this, we were very, very low" (Interview Transcript). However, the risk to open schools that could be shut down by the military was worth taking. This EMG was also not the first to do so, and some inspiration and comfort was gained from this knowledge, as one CBS teacher noted "other [ethnic minority]

groups are also starting to make their own education systems as well, so we're not the only ones who see this as an important issue" (Interview Transcript, CBS Teacher). Perhaps more importantly, this decision sheds insight onto the community relied on the CBRO to provide state and institutional leadership with the added capacity to administer and implement such an ambitious educational project.

Using the lens of state formation theory, the ability to organize the conference and plan for the next several decades of EMG priorities illustrates the state-like role the CBRO played in the region and to the community. In a way, the CBRO decided to undertake a similar project as the Burmese state; to use education as a means of producing a societal and regional ethno-state identity. The difference, however, was stark in that the CBRO use of education as a means of state formation was driven by community participation and buy-in. Moreover, the conference and ideation of a new education system further illustrates what Green (2013) refers to as state formation that involves "the formation of ideologies and collective beliefs which legitimate state power and underpin concepts of nationhood and national 'character'" (p. 83). From this perspective, the CBRO leadership can clearly be viewed as state-like moral leaders that drew from community knowledge to help establish what collective ideologies and beliefs would inform the new education system.

Once the collective belief in and vision for education was established, the process of determining exactly what these schools would look like and the type of education they would offer came next. In the language of Durkheim, the next step was to determine which 'essential principals' would be taught. The oppressive and ultimately useless state system taught a stark lesson that *access* to education was not enough. Providing a *quality* education was paramount for success. Indeed, even just the ability to think about what a quality and relevant education was a

drastic change and new freedom that had been lacking from the region for over a half century. A parent of a CBS student remarked that during the conference, the guiding vision came from the religious colonial-era schools that had operated in the region from the early 1900's until the military outlawed them in 1962:

> we want to like a [religious] school…I'm not... At that time I'm not born at that time…Just I hear. Just I hear. But I know it's a very... Many good leader came up from [the old religious] school. So this is very good for us. (Interview Transcript, CBS Parent)

In other words, parent's mindsets were beginning to change and think about how education can be done differently. They began to consider that access to truly quality education was possible again. that A current CBS teacher similarly recalled that:

> it seemed like a revival of the old [religious colonial-era] schools, and I had long felt that all the best leaders in our community came from those old [religious] schools, and how the more recent generation of [our EMG] leadership doesn't measure up to that standard. So this education initiative seemed really important for our future. (Interview Transcript, CBS Teacher)

What is telling from this, is that the teacher fondly remembers the religious colonial-era schools from the previous generations, but also made the important connection between education and the survival of their EMG. The idea that a strong, relevant, and culturally rich education was necessary to produce the next generation of EMG leaders was a common theme that came up with most participants.

    After the conference, a more comprehensive process took place to select who would be in charge of the education project and how they would elicit community voices for input on a more specific vision of what quality education would entail. First, the CBRO leaders created a sub-organization that moving forward served as the Community-Based Education Organization (CBEO). As will be further detailed in chapter 6, the CBEO would eventually be responsible for all operational activities of the education system, including opening schools, training teachers,

and writing curriculum. Before these could happen, though, several community and CBRO

members were appointed as the first staff members of the CBEO and took to the road to gather

community voices to help refine the broad vision for what quality education meant. Alex, a

senior leader and founding member of the CBEO, described how this process involved travelling

to different locations in the region, gathering potential families who would send their children to

the new schools, and asking questions to see how the CBEO could best design the schools to

meet their needs:

> First... [we would ask] how do you want to see your children, when they become 18 or 19
> years old?... And then discussion with the community people for data collection…a lot of
> talking and discussion... For example, what is the population of the village and then how
> many people speak what languages - this kind of language data…For example, even for
> EMG, we have a lot of dialects. What kind of language is used for [most children] at that
> village?…[there was not a lot of disagreement between people in the community] …
> They proposed that we are happy to use [our dialect] so... Not very [much disagreement]
> ... Not much. (Interview Transcript, Alex)

This passage illustrates how the vision for quality education that began to emerge included how

parents wanted to think simply about what type of person their child would be when they

graduated, as is consistent with literature on community-based and informal education in

emergency contexts (Härmä, 2016; INEE, 2020b; UNESCO, 2021). The ability to think freely

about how quality education can shape individuals was an essential part of the new system.

Language was also a key element of the education system that emerged in these discussions and

other community-based education systems globally (Lartec et al., 2014; South & Lall, 2016b). In

one regard, teaching in the EMG native language was a central element of quality. Community

members wanted the next generation to learn the EMG language to preserve their culture and

have an easier time in class mastering subjects like Math and Science. However, even in EMG,

there are majority and minorities. Regarding language, this meant a decision on which dialect to

use. The passage above illustrates this was not large issue, per se, but it speaks to the difficulty of creating an inclusive environment when more than one language exists even amongst an EMG.

Another central component of quality education that emerged was making it relevant for future job opportunities. One community member described their vision of quality education by the specific job opportunities they thought education could generate along with fostering a greater sense of love, integrity, communication skills for peacebuilding with their ethnic rivals, and even global learning:

> we should have 25 lawyers…20 medical doctors, many businessmen, something like that, but even if we have lawyers, if they don't have love, if they don't really learn and if they're not really skillful, what are we going to do with this education system? We really want [people with integrity]. Our root cause, the main problem, is education. If we cannot have education, we cannot get a good person, whatever good confident, but humble. We cannot get these kinds of people without this education… So, we don't want our children very separate with other ethics group or other people from the Myanmar, they want to make their children to have skills and knowledge to communicate with other people. (Interview Transcript, Community Member)

Many parents of students enrolled at CBS shared this vision that schooling could have very real short and long-term positive impacts on their children's work opportunities, as research shows is often a goal in similar contexts (Steer et al., 2015). The idea of wanting children to not be separate from other ethnic groups mentioned above further illustrates the broader vision for inclusive education that fostered togetherness. One parent explained their hope that through exposure to critical thinking, creativity, and global materials, their children could make contributions in the form of businesses and community service locally once their studies were completed. Another noted the importance of the vision including education in their mother tongue and the importance of including religion too:

> the government school isn't based on any faith, while the community school is. Another important difference is that it uses the child's mother tongue, respects her culture, and also does more with international languages, which should bring more improvement. I

see so many youth corrupted with drugs. My hope is that a faith-based education can help pull society out of that. (Interview Transcript, CBS Parent)

This belief in education as a transformative social service sustained community members involved with the education initiative more than simply a dislike for the state sponsored schooling options.

Regardless of the specific vison that emerged, perhaps the greatest advantage of creating a new education system was the freedom to collectively and openly decide what quality education even meant. In other words, even just the project of having community discussions on quality education was a liberatory activity that had not happened in generations. When reflecting on what this process meant to them and the meaning of quality education, Susan noted: "Quality means, how can I say? I believe education can give good morality, good ethics, and then good motivation to see others positively…The essence of humanity they will have by the education" (Susan). The definition of a quality education is elusive, though the idea that education can help children understand the essence of humanity speaks volumes to why education matters and how control over what it entails is elemental to a society.

**Conclusion**

The development of the CBRO over time into a state-like community-based institution allowed for the creation of a new education system that has several important implications on sustainable access to quality and inclusive education in emergencies. Perhaps the most tangible is on access. Creating new schools gave access to families throughout the region that presented an alternative to government schools that had not existed for decades. This new opportunity also changed the mindsets of parents to think about an alternative vision. The schools were not free, and the implications of tuition and financing will be further explored in Chapter 6 below, but access undoubtedly increased due to the vison for a new system.

As was made clear through the discussion of participants' experiences with government

schooling, access to education is only meaningful if that education is quality in nature and

relevant to the families. To summarize some of the elements of quality education that were

presented in the analysis above, perhaps the most important element of the new system was

allowing the EMG to think independently about what quality education even meant. Government

schools in the region never allowed for EMG input, thus having freedom and autonomy meant it

was finally possible for EMG members to consider what quality meant to them. Regarding the

vision for quality education that emerged, EMG members defined quality as resisting the

Burmese military, fostering societal progress, and specific learning objectives like mother tongue

based multilingual education (MTB-MLE), critical thinking, and creativity. Participants also

thought about quality education as planning for what type of people they wanted their children to

be and what values they wanted their children to have. Schools as teaching relevant job skills

also was included in the vision along with teaching English to provide more international

opportunities like previous generations had with colonial era British influenced schooling.

The vision making process for CBS also reflected elements of inclusion and

sustainability. The community conversations allowed for EMG voices to be included in the

process while using MTB-MLE allowed for children to learn in their own first language.

Though, even EMG have majority and minorities within them, so deciding which dialect to teach

in, for example, showed that inclusivity for all is a difficult project. The CBRO acting as a

community-based state-like institution also reflects a level of sustainability for the education

system given the CBRO's deep roots in the community and high levels of trust already

established through a long-term relationship. In lieu of the federalist system that the participants

felt was promised, this also allowed for the CBRO to serve as a sustained administrator of

services and arbiter of collective community belief and ideologies surrounding regional autonomy and the role of education is sustaining their EMG as a whole.

The emergency context that the EMG has been living amidst for decades emerged as a constant negative influence, both historically and on the new CBS system. Historically, the emergency context led to the oppressive Burmese state-led education system that worked to systematically repress EMG culture and opportunity. This ultimately served as motivation to create their own schools, though the worry that CBS would be illegal and could be shut down at any moment loomed heavy on the project on the whole and individual parent decisions to send their children to these schools. Finally, and from the perspective of the two faces of education theory, the MTB-MLE and ethno-centric vision for schooling presented a risk for the result to propagate future conflict. This theme in particular will be explored further in the following chapters in regard to the specific pedagogy and subject matter the communities chose to include in their curriculum and instruction.

## CHAPTER 6: ORGANIZATIONAL PRACTICES

*"The education project showed me a way to serve*
*our community without fighting, and so that's what I did"*
*-CBS Teacher*

This chapter presents a discussion of findings related to my second research question: What organizational practices (i.e. structure, staffing, and financing)[5] were implemented at the institutional and school level, and how did they impact the community-based vision for education? I use managerial and moral models of school leadership, originating from education organizational theory (Bush, 2015), to reveal how the Community-Based Schools (CBS) operated within an hierarchical organizational structure where power and authority were held by top-level Community-Based Religious Organization (CBRO) leadership. This allowed for access to regional religious networks but reduced the bottom-up influence from 'ground level' staff like teachers, administrators, and the community at large. In my description of the organizational structure, staffing, and financing, I also employ feminist critiques of hierarchy (Acker, 1990; Green et al., 2000) to analyze how the organizational practices impact this study's core themes of sustainable access to quality and inclusive education throughout and conclude with a summary of key findings on these themes.

**Hierarchical Organizational Structure**

Findings revealed that the structure of the Ethnic Minority Group (EMG) education system was hierarchical in nature, which presented a variety of benefits and challenges towards

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[5] From chapter 1: I draw from practitioner-based literature (INEE, 2020b; UNESCO, 2021) on non-state and informal schooling in addition to evidence that emerged throughout the data collection and analysis process to identify the following units of analysis that comprise organizational practices: structure, staffing, and financing. structure includes the how the management, leadership, and decision-making processes are organized (i.e. vertical hierarchy or distributed) to manage the operation and creation of CBS schools. Staffing includes who works at all levels of the CBS system and how they were selected. Financing includes the funding streams that support the CBS.

implementing the broader EMG educational vision. CBRO religious-based leadership serving on the 'governance body' were atop the hierarchy and led strategic decisions about all aspects of CBS operations. These decisions were then filtered down first to the CBEO and a variety of management and school committees which collectively served as liaisons to the CBS (See Appendix F for detailed organizational chart). Susan, a regional CBRO leader, noted that in practice this meant "schools are for activities…Governance body is only for policy. In management committee there are [several] regional [religious] associations" (Interview Transcript, Susan). The governance body Susan referred to was comprised of religious CBRO leaders and disseminated decisions to regional management committees that were staffed by community, CBRO, and CBEO staff. Under the management committee were school committees that operated at both regional and school specific levels. In a group interview with one of the regional school committees, the members described both their role and the relationship with the CBRO management structure:

> [Our] school committee is assigned by the [CBRO management] committee. So you can say that [we] are a little responsible for the school, as a representative of this [CBRO]. So [this local school committee] is fully responsible for [management], and then [the CBS] is responsible for holistic development of the school… [the CBS] plans everything for themselves, like hiring teachers, and discussed what should be done…They are responsible for that and planning for the funding and school infrastructure, how many teachers there will be assigned. All those things are up to the CBS. (Interview Transcript, Local School Committee)

The school committee members saw themselves as being 'responsible' for the schools in their district, though in practice the CBS staff were directly in charge of the day-to-day operations of the school like hiring teachers and planning instructional activities. This hierarchical system of management bodies and committees having 'responsibility', but little involvement with the actual operations at the school level was a consistent function of the general hierarchy.

Drawing from organizational theory, the CBRO hierarchy can be understood as top-down in nature and reflective of a type of 'managerial leadership' structure, which has several key implications for its impact on school outcomes and employees. In their analysis of organizational theory within educational systems, Bush (2015) describes that 'managerial leadership' as a model of school leadership includes:

> a hierarchical authority structure, with formal chains of command between the different positions in the hierarchy…A goal orientation, with clear targets being set by formal leaders…A division of labour, with employees (teachers) specialising in particular activities on the basis of their expertise…Impersonal relationships between staff, and with clients…Accountability to the formal hierarchy, rather than to school-level stakeholders. (p. 37) …Managerial leadership treats structure as hierarchical with decision-making arising from positional authority; a top-down approach. Particularly in centralised systems, the structure is vertical and accountability is to the next level in the hierarchy, within and beyond the organisation. The positions in the structure are predominant and there is little attention to individual variables. (p. 42)

The religious CBRO leadership helped facilitate the goal making process described in chapter 5 and *implemented* this through a clear chain of operational command that began with the governance body and filtered down through a division of labor that included various regional and local committees and finally down to the school level.

The clearest impact of this hierarchy and 'managerial leadership' structure on the educational vision was exhibited through increased access and using religion as an element of quality schooling, which is consistent with literature on faith-based and non-state education systems (INEE, 2020b; Lall & South, 2014; UNESCO, 2021). The vertical CBRO hierarchy specifically allowed for the rapid promotion of the education system through instant connections to community networks and institutional infrastructure that was regarded with high levels of trust and motivation. In other words, the CBRO was able to quickly spread the idea for the new education system throughout the region which allowed for communities to start schools thus increasing access to education. Faye, a CBEO and religious leader, recalled how important the

religious connection was when the CBRO initially approached their community about starting a school in their region:

> I was a [religious leader] …with my own [religious] program in [my community]. And that was when the [CBRO] started talking about this [education] project... So the [religious members from my community were] sent to the workshop that was conducted by the [CBRO] to start this education project…. [several] communities started in 2012… [before in] 2009, the [CBRO] mobile team made a visit to [my community] to talk about this possible project that they're supposed to start. We talked about this project and [our religious organization] was also very much interested to start this kind of education. Because [the CBRO here had the great] schools during the colonial period, so the [CBRO] knows how important and beneficial to community this kind of [project is] (Interview Transcript, Faye)

Here, Faye demonstrates the importance of religion in having established trust with the community and how the effective the CBRO staff and institutional reach was within the region. Ultimately, this community conversation that were hosted by the CBRO led to the creation of schools, thus increasing access to the new school system throughout the region. A common themed that was shared amongst participants involved from the parents through the leadership was a shared trust and belief in the CBRO leadership.

In addition to increasing access, the role of the religious-based hierarchy and structure where strategic decisions and planning were done at the top level also meant that the quality and type of education was based in religious ideology that was important to religious leaders. One of the local school committees that was responsible for the oversight of several CBS noted how in practice, this meant conversations about implementing religious teaching as part of school policy making:

> we also discussed about school policy, whether it is in line with [the CBRO] or slightly different…For example, it's a [religious]-based school. If it's lacking in the kind of teaching about [religion] or something like that...It's a [religious] school, so they have to be taught in their [beliefs], something you cannot get from the government school, something like that. (Interview Transcript, Local School Committee)

The managerial leadership structure allowed for the religious vision from the CBRO leadership to filter down to the school level through the various regional committees, thus influencing what was taught in classrooms and how the quality and of education was influenced by religion.

It is also important to mention that not all of the schools were religious. Susan described that there are [many] schools…[most] schools are church-based and then three schools are community-based" (Interview Transcript, Susan). This is a crucial part of the whole education story because it speaks to the larger EMG that the CBRO and sub organizations were serving. Most schools were 'religious' in nature, in part because the majority of the EMG is that religion, but the EMG identity was bigger than this religion. The initial vision for schooling that drew more broadly from the EMG identified religion as relevant and part of a quality education, so the inclusion of religion in most schools meant a more relevant education for most people. Though, as has been previously mentioned, there were minorities *within* the EMG who practiced a different religion, meaning some students could feel less included during religious-oriented lessons.

Organizational theory again presents an analytical frame through which to view the relationship of the education hierarchical structure and how religious concepts of morality and belief were implemented at the school level. The 'moral leadership' model of organizational theory in particular, also referred to as ethical, spiritual, or poetic leadership:

> assumes that the critical focus of leadership ought to be on the values, beliefs and ethics of leaders themselves. Authority and influence are to be derived from defensible conceptions of what is right or good (Bush, 2015, p.38) …moral leadership explicitly targets goals consistent with the values of the leader. This suggests a strong emphasis on hierarchy, as in many faith-based schools, but with a strong moral framework. (Bush, 2015, p. 42)

Accordingly, the CBRO top-down approach can be understood as promoting not only strategic decisions about operations down to the school level, but also a belief and value system rooted in

religious doctrine[6]. The CBRO leaders were viewed by participants as having this moral and spiritual authority to do so, and thus the schools were the EMG chosen way to help spread values that parents and the older generation found important to their children. The moral and managerial leadership thus worked in tandem to create a strong vertical structure to disseminate religious and moral ideology, that were rooted in community-based conceptualizations of a quality education, to the school level. This authority also interacts with colonialism given that many participants looked back on the colonial era schools the CBRO were associated with in a fond and positive manner.

One of the most important tasks the CBRO undertook as both managerial and moral leaders of the EMG and education system was to reach out to communities throughout the region and support them with the creation of actual schools, as is often the case with faith-based and community-based systems (Mfum-Mensah & Friedson-Ridenour, 2014; UNESCO, 2021). Moreover, this support the CBRO provided illustrates several positive elements of how sustainable access to quality and relevant education occurred on the ground. To open a school, the CBRO relied on the CBEO and a network of regional management committees and CBRO staff that physically travelled to new communities to discuss what the school creation process would entail. After a community was informed about the project, a group of CBRO staff and leaders described how they would then follow up if only if they were explicitly invited by the community. This invitation was a crucial part of creating a sustainable system, as communities had to reach out themselves if they thought starting a school was important for their community members. After the invitation, CBRO staff would travel to the community to "meet with the community, especially to the [religious] leaders to…explain about how they need to prepare for

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[6] Religious doctrine is purposefully anonymized for participant protection

the new school: How many teachers they need, the [physical building], the budget, the [local school] committee" (Interview Transcript, Local School Committee). If a community decided to move forward after the more in-depth explanation of what specific activities were required (i.e. finding teachers and a building), the CBRO staff would then formally decide if the community was ready. The group of administrators described how this decision was not easy, and the specific metrics they used to truly understand the community's preparation and underlying motivation include a deep desire, funding, and ability to push through even if an emergency were to occur:

> So, the first thing we observed is if the majority of the community really understand about the school…And then when they have enough motivation, we also consult about their commitment. That is very important. Sometimes, they don't have a strong commitment, then this school will not happen...So, if the community really understands, and they feel this really represents a core value for them, then the motivation would be very high…So they want to go for it, that kind of motivation and how to set that commitment…. So, for example... If they have a warzone, how should you open the school? So, when they really commit for this education… if they have no building, so we go learning under the tree. That kind of motivation. If they have that, then that is good. (Interview Transcript, Local School Committee)

This passage highlights several key elements of what was needed to start a school that explicitly relate to the themes of sustainable education in emergencies. The underlying understanding and belief in education was central for the CBRO leadership to move forward with a community. The CBRO leadership knew the system was only sustainable if communities were firm in their commitment to the parents, students, and broader vision of education. The support the CBRO and CBEO staff gave to communities was instrumental in this process, and only possible due to the strong managerial and moral leadership structure that allowed for communities to truly trust that they had support from the top level.

The hierarchical managerial and moral leadership structure, though, was not without its challenges. One CBEO employee noted how judging the community readiness for a school was

difficult and that the CBEO and CBRO lacked the human and financial resources to meet the demands of all the communities who wanted to start a school, as is consistent with research on education in emergencies (INEE, 2020b; Upadhyay et al., 2018). They explained how their regional committee decided to limit the number of new schools to just one per year given the resource shortages and how some communities that started "couldn't manage their school and if they cannot manage, they were always depending on the [CBEO] and association, and that is not working" (Interview Transcript, CBEO Employee). In other words, the CBEO and CBRO became the safety net for communities who took on too much, which presented a strain on the overall system. In practice, evaluating community preparedness was quite difficult. Similarly, the top-down decision making also meant that some communities who felt they were ready were not allowed to start. Susan explained how in their region one member of a community that was not approved declared "No we need to start. Even you will not give the permission, we will start by ourselves" (Interview Transcript, Susan), thus illustrating the constraints of a centralized hierarchy when the organization was stretched too thin. Regarding access to education, the broad goal of providing a new type of schooling to the EMG in practice meant hard choices about which communities were read, and which were not. In other words, universal access to the schooling initiative proved impossible because of the lack of resources regionally.

Moreover, the balance of determining the 'right' number of schools to open proved part of a larger question of quality schooling versus the quantity of schools that could open. Susan described how the regional governance and management bodies actively debated how the system as a whole could balance the goal of providing a quality education with opening schools in all communities, even if the resources were not there:

> one type of person, they really want to give their energy for quality education, not quantity, but quality…But the other group, they see quantity…. in management and

governance…. So even within [our community], there is some disagreement about quality or quantity…some people, they say that they want to use the school statistic for politic or other interest…It's not clear…. Yeah, quantity and quality are always a difficult balance. (Interview Transcript, Susan)

This passage clearly illustrates the internal debate on the issue of quantity of schools the CBRO could effectively support with the quality of education that would result. The broader political context was also illustrated through the stark reminder that the CBRO was a state-like institution but did not have the full resources available to it like tax revenue. This meant that education decisions, like the balance of quality and quantity, were not made in a vacuum, but rather had political influences of the CBRO whereby they felt they had to respond to community demands, like how a politician might react to constituent demands. This balancing act of educational goals is consistent with organizational theory whereby Bush (2016) notes that "organizational goals tend to reflect the personal aims and values of senior members of the school" (p. 87). In this case, the senior members of the CBRO where those with the final authority on whether a school would open and would use their 'personal' or political aims to make such decisions.

**Staffing Practices**

Any education organization or school, regardless of their structure, are ultimately comprised of people. Regarding the people, teachers, staff, and community members who staffed the organizations and schools, the top-down hierarchical structure discussed above presented advantages for early recruiting based on the community-based vision, which initially attracted EMG staff. However, the protracted emergency context resulted in a small pool of education experts to draw from which led to burn out. Moreover, the top-down managerial leadership approach resulted in staff at the 'bottom' of the hierarchy (i.e. mostly young and female teachers and workers) as having little input on the system as a whole or autonomy in their work. In the

following, a discussion of findings surrounding an analysis is presented on of how these staffing practices impacted the broader education vision.

The broader vision for education that was established by the EMG, along with the CBRO-based dissemination to the broader region, resulted in a high level of trust and motivation for EMG community members to join as staff and teacher for the CBS and positive perceptions of them by parents. One CBS teacher noted that "I got involved in this project because I imagined a different future for our people, a future where we get a good education, and it seemed worth trying for" (CBS Teacher). Betty, a CBEO leader, similarly discussed the intrinsic motivation when reflecting on their thought process when joining that

> I want to do something really meaningful... not only for my personal things, and also for the education for the children and also for [our] people…And also for some children, even if they're not [our ethnicity] …I really want to do something at the time. (Interview Transcript, Betty)

Clearly, Betty was motivated to help their community through education, but was also striking is that they included children in the region that were not the same EMG. This recurring theme of the EMG being broader than just the members of the religious organization was a core to many participants in how they self-identified and described what community meant in the broader region. This intrinsic motivation of teachers and staff is consistent with research on schooling amidst emergencies (Diab & Schultz, 2021; Falk et al., 2019), and was shared by another teacher who also served as a CBEO curriculum writer and teacher trainer. When reflecting on how they learned about the education project and initially decided to join as a teacher, they explained how this opportunity afforded them a way to fight back against the state-led oppression of their EMG without having to pick up arms:

> …there was a lot of talk in [our EMG] society about doing something to serve the [EMG] people. But what they meant when they said that was to become a soldier and join the fight against the government. That never sat well with me. The education project showed

me a way to serve our community without fighting, and so that's what I did. (Interview Transcript, CBS Teacher)

Drawing from the 'Two Faces of Education' theory, this passage illustrates not just the belief local community members had in the education project, but also how it provided a new way to resist Burmese military oppression in a non-violent way. The 'positive' face of education was a large influence on community members to join as teachers or administrators and demonstrated the power they saw in education to resist the long -standing conflict.

It could be expected that school and organizational staff would speak highly of being involved with the program given their participation. These positive self-perceptions were corroborated by parent perspectives on the value local EMG teachers added to the schools and educational mission. Below are exemplars from parent interviews that speak to the importance of teachers being EMG community members, open to dialogue with parents and students, and ultimately better for helping support their children and other students in the classroom:

> One of the teachers is a neighbor of ours is also left-handed, she is very talented, and it was further encouraging to see her example…Teachers are open to dialogue, unlike government school… [my daughter] is happy with her teachers and the other children… teachers and students in the school have very loving relationships…One of the big differences with this community school is that I actually know the teacher of my children. I talk to my daughter's teachers (at the community school) half a dozen times a year. I have no idea who my son's teachers (at the government school) are. (Interview Transcript, CBS Parents)

To summarize, parents were impressed with the quality of the teachers, the care they exhibited towards their children, their availability compared to government teachers, and a general sense that the teachers were part of their community and 'on their side'.

The advantages of attracting local community members and positive parent perceptions, however, did not come without its challenges. In stark contrast to the parent endorsements above, another felt the opposite noting that "the community school teachers are new and relatively

unskilled" (Interview Transcript, CBS Parent). Parent feedback on teachers at any school are

anecdotal and thus vary significantly, but this comment speaks to a larger challenge where

participants perceived the emergency context as creating a small labor pool from which to draw

which further resulted in overworked staff, burnout, and low wages. When reflecting on turning

the CBRO education vision into a reality, Betty described how few people could realistically

help with the initiative, either at the organizational or school level:

> At the [beginning] we didn't have... We had nothing, just only some people, five or six people…so me and Liv every weekend, every Friday afternoon, after the training, from [one town], we came back to [our home that is 3 hours away by motor bike] and then we go back and Sunday night, afternoon, and then start the training in Monday. And our training was two months. (Interview Transcript, Betty)

One of the reasons there were so few people to hire was the same driving force that inspired the

new school system. Participants explained that the government schools had failed them for

generations, resulting in the older CBRO leadership who had an educational background that the

next generation did not. Many of the teachers were under 25 years old and CBEO staff were

under 40, which echoed a larger issue that teaching and working as 'low-level' staff in CBS was

beneath older members of the community. In describing this challenge, Layla noted that:

> I think it's been getting worse over time, because all the teachers come from the communities where the schools are, and these communities are relatively small…The system treats teachers in the system basically like interns. They get paid very little. They're given very little respect, or voice in their own future. Why would an older person sign up for that? So in the beginning, they attracted more experienced teachers because they were more available…but as each year went on, basically, the school committee…has to scrape deeper and deeper in the barrel of the local youth community to find someone that they could twist their arm into becoming a teacher. (Interview Transcript, Layla)

Simply put, older EMG community members were not attracted to teach in the CBS given the

low status that was attached with the role of a classroom teacher. This left the schools with a

younger and smaller labor pool from which to draw, where most of the potential teachers had

themselves attended government school, thus lacking the training necessary to deliver an alternative education that was consistent with the broader vision.

In practice, this meant the CBEO and CBS were often understaffed, which resulted in the teachers and lower-level staff being over worked and getting burned out. Understaffing and teacher burnout are common in emergency contexts (Falk et al., 2019; Mendenhall et al., 2021). The document analysis of organizational hiring announcements confirmed this finding, as the requirements for staff and teachers were lowered over the years in terms of previous years of experience and training. When reflecting on how the understaffing problem affected them on a personal level, one CBS teacher explained that:

> The very first year of teaching I worked closely with two other friends. We were very happy, because the students were still very young and very obedient, and we also were still very fresh and idealistic, dreaming that we would make a big breakthrough as a people. We worked through the night together, without feeling tired, making stories, drawing pictures, happy and excited for the students and what we were doing for them. But after that time, not so much, and our teachers are now often discouraged. Now, in fact, when I come to teacher training…I get even more discouraged. I see our leaders gossiping about each other, complaining that they don't get paid as much as others even though they do more work, and things like that. The idealism is gone. I feel like I just need to go back to my own school and focus on my children, and not depend on others. (Interview Transcript, CBS Teacher)

In other words, the motivation that inspired and sustained many teachers and staff at the beginning waned over time as the reality of being overworked and underpaid set in. Two other factors were found to be central in causing teacher burnout. First, teachers did not stay in a grade year after year, but rather moved up with their students. Thus, rather than be able to stay in grade 1, teachers would move to grade 2 and then 3 in subsequent years. This meant that each year they had to write entirely new lessons and learn new content that they themselves usually did not have a background in. Second, teachers that stood out as top performers were often tasked by the CBEO with curriculum development, teacher training, and other leadership responsibilities.

Many remarked how this was regarding and reaffirming of their ability. Ultimately, burnout and being overworked was perceived by participants as impacting the quality of the education and diminished the ability of the CBS in practice to carry out the broader mission. When describing this challenge, a CBT teacher noted that:

> I want to help here in this education project, but it takes up all my time and energy. Sometimes I feel the price is too high. I'd like to develop myself as a teacher, but I don't want to get pulled into all these multi-tasking roles: curriculum development, administration, etc. I want to be able to focus on one thing and do it well. (Interview Transcript, CBS Teacher)

This idea of burnout impacting sustainable and quality education arose as a major theme throughout data analysis and a key finding on the education vision and system.

Teachers and other ground-level staff experiences with burnout is consistent with organizational theory. The managerial leadership model described in the section above was noted as being impersonal, with a focus on top of the hierarchy and little feedback coming from the 'bottom' level of classroom teachers and low-level administrators. An alternative model, known as the teacher leadership model, can help understand what this 'bottom or ground level' staff includes and why top-down approaches often leave them behind. Bush (2015) describes the teacher leadership model as being comprised of "lateral structures as teachers work collaboratively with colleagues to initiate change. If this also leads to whole-school innovation, this might be seen as an inverted, or "bottom-up" structure" (p. 43). By contrast, the managerial leadership structure the CBRO and CBS employed meant that 'bottom-up' feedback from teachers and ground level staff simply did not make its way back up the hierarch to the CBRO leadership and authority.

Gender and religion were found to be two central elements of the CBRO organization structure that were associated with little 'bottom-up' influence on policy or practice. Broadly

speaking, the CBRO leadership were older male religious leaders, which benefited the system in terms of fostering high levels of trust but had some negative implications on ground level staff and teachers. At the individual level, Joy, a CBS leader, explained how the religious leaders did not necessarily have education experience while leadership, who were mostly older males, did not respect the teachers, who were mostly younger and female. Joy described one instance where they, as a CBS leader, used information from the school level to make a decision that was only later overturned by the religious hierarchy:

> I was always a good follower. I learned from the leaders. But now I am a [school leader]. Last December, the teachers and students wanted to have a gathering with another community school nearby. Our school principal was not present at school at that time. As [a leader], it fell to me to inform the [religious] school committee after we had discussed and made plans with this other school. But the response I got from the [religious] school committee was, 'This is not your school. You don't just get to decide these things on your own. You should have come to us first.' Within the [religious] culture…it is protocol to send an official letter for the [religious] leadership. But from our perspective this was not a [religious] activity, but a school activity, yet the committee saw us as an extension of the [CBRO]. I felt I was scolded unjustly. The other teachers were going to give up, but when I went back and looked at the excited students, and all the preparation work we were doing, like making presents and decorations, I decided to make a stand. I went back to the school committee and confronted them, 'This is not a [religious] activity. This is our school activity. This kind of activity is even in the curriculum. Even if you don't approve, we are going'…Finally, the school committee relented with a warning not to do it like this again. (Interview Transcript, Joy)

This passage speaks to multiple levels of how the religious and gendered hierarchy, which situated mostly male leaders at the top, impacted school level-staff and teachers, who were mostly female. In this case, the school leader had put in significant effort to organize a multi-school event, only to have it nixed by the religious CBRO leaders, who were not acting from a position of educational authority, but simply power from being atop the hierarchy.

Feminist critiques of organizational hierarchies present a unique and useful lens through which to view these issues of ground-level, mostly younger female staff, not being heard or respected by the upper-level leaders. These experiences are consistent with Acker's (1990)

argument that "organizational structure is not gender neutral…Their gendered nature is partly masked through obscuring the embodied nature of work. Abstract jobs and hierarchies, common concepts in organizational thinking assume a disembodied and universal worker " ( p. 137) which ultimately serves to negatively impact how females can contribute to organizations through diminishing their voices in hierarchical, male dominated structures. Regarding the relation between gender and power within organizations, Green, Parkin, et al. (2000) argue that

> power can be conceptualized, not only as the ability of men to physically prevent women from entering into organizations on an equal basis and being accorded advancement on merit within organizations…but also in terms of the part discourses and communication play in dissuading women from resisting or wanting to resist that situation. (p. 191)

Relating both critiques to the CBS, it is clear that female teachers and other ground-level staff are viewed by leadership as 'disembodied workers' that should not resist the religious and moral authority, but rather ignore their experience at the classroom level in place of their top-down decisions. Joy's experience above, thus, can be viewed from this feminist lens as being consistent with how females are treated at hierarchical organizations more broadly. However, their ability to push back and ultimately convince the hierarchy illustrates their determination and agency, albeit within a broader structure that makes realizing these more difficult.

**Community-Based Education Financing**

The organizational structure and staffing described above, as is the case with any other school or organization in the world, required not just human capital, but financial resources to operate. Similar to the benefits and challenges of relying on local staffing, the funding for the CBRO an CBS reflected elements of sustainability due to high levels of community buy-in and access to regional funding networks that were established and maintained by the CBRO, though the emergency context meant adequate financial support presented a perpetual challenge, as is the case in emergencies globally (Halman et al., 2018; INEE, 2020a). Findings revealed that the

CBRO and CBS received no funding from international donors or the national government and have been able to finance the schools and operations on tuition, CBRO funding, and community support alone. Because the CBRO is a non-state organization, this meant a lack of Burmese provided financial resources, but also incredibly strong community-based support network which has proved to be enough to maintain and grow the initiative. The absence of state or international funding required the CBRO to build local financing systems, which involved a process or building community trust and financial contributions. Betty described how the CBRO served as a quasi-regional tax collector, receiving, and redistributing donations provided by members: "25% [of donations] they use for the [CBEO], something like that. So they use from their [donation] to send two percent to the [CBS] education" (Interview Transcript, Betty). The CBRO was responsible for collecting donations and contributing 25% of their total donations to the education system. The donation system the CBRO established was decades in the making, and a sustainable source of financing due to community religious donations that participants described as the norm, even in areas that were characterized by extreme poverty. Betty also explained that people in the region didn't even pay national taxes, so the system described above truly worked as a quasi-governmental tax system to redistribute money for public services like the education system.

Despite the sustainable system of state-like taxes that were collected as donations through the CBRO, the protracted emergency context meant the region generally was experiencing poverty and thus had limited financial resources in the aggregate. Participants described how ongoing conflict with the central government has led to poverty in most of the communities involved with the education initiative and a lack of financial resources. Moreover, and as is described above, the CBRO did not directly open schools, but rather provided the curriculum,

teacher training, and administrative support. That is, if a community wanted to open a school, they do not receive financial or human capital from the CBRO. This means that not all communities in the greater region are able to open schools if they lack the financial capital, but the ones that do have a strong base of communal support. A group of CBRO leaders noted that when they were working with a new community to decide if they could create a school, those community-members needed to demonstrate that they had local sources of funding:

> Also, how they can organize the funding…The difficulty is that financial or political situation, that kind of situation. But if they were committed to have the education…And if they have enough funding and if they don't have enough funding, how could they find the funding. That kind of coaching we gave the consultation to the community. (Interview Transcript, Local School Committee)

In other words, community-based funding reflected the ability of certain communities to galvanize long-term funding, but the political and emergency context made this elusive for many under resourced communities.

These financial challenges are also compounded by the fact that the schools were technically illegal because they do not teach the nationally sanctioned Burmese curriculum[7]. This has resulted in many parents not being comfortable sending their children to the CBS because they are new and not certified by the central government, thus creating a challenge for enrollment. Put simply, parents were scared to pay tuition and invest in schools knowing that they could be shut down by the Burmese military. To this point, one CBEO employee summarized parent fears as resulting in a 'wait and see' approach that perhaps most succinctly

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[7] To this point, Michael noted "We will not have peace, with the continuous fighting so our [CBEO] group also will have difficulty. Because of fighting, parents maybe becoming difficult to do work and access money because they need to support their children. And also will be difficulty because of our religious, we base on our believer, because of our believer they donate to our [religious organization] and send to our association. Such as a [donation]… From our side, we want to have peace. Our state, for our country. We don't like fighting. From [our local military] side, the demand is just for help any group in our government side. Majority do not give charge for this service. Each side do not have agreement, so, fighting every time" (Interview Transcript, Michael).

describes the ultimate set of benefits and challenges associated with local ownership and education initiative more generally:

> Yes. [laughter] But some people maybe, they are not ready to accept new things, conduct new things, because being afraid of doing new things. And because this kind of education system is new, this is not a recognized by the government... So they're afraid of this, …because I think this is a kind of doing new things, so it's very challenging and risky some... they dare not. And they don't want to do anything... Some are just waiting... And let us wait and watch what you're doing, if you get okay, yeah, we follow (Interview Transcript, Betty)

One CBS parent further commented that even though they believed in the system, the precarious position of financial poverty they were in led to financial vulnerability they faced: "I have had health problems that keep me from working as much as I want to support the children. The youngest daughter volunteered to leave the community school and go to government school in order to reduce the financial burden" (Interview Transcript, CBS Parent). More than just impacting the ability for schools to stay open, the reliance on parent tuition meant that, just like in private schools across the globe, parents pay tuition and schools in turn can and will placate to their demands[8].

Ultimately, the community-based funding for the CBS, provided through a combination of tuition and CBRO support, resulted in a sustainable system of schooling. However, this

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[8] One CBS teacher illustrated this with a story: "One time there was a parent who showed up drunk, and started a fight with a teacher. He was insulting one of the teachers, and even acted like he was going to punch him. When we told the school committee about this incident, they said ""It's ok, it's ok, don't worry about that. Even if he said bad things about the teacher, please just come and apologize to him."" Actually, I wasn't here at the time, I was told about it afterward, but the school committee asked all the teachers to come and apologize to this man, to soothe his anger and make the problem go away. But when I heard about this later, I told them, ""This is not good for my teachers, to treat them this way. They did nothing wrong, why should they apologize?"" This man even went to one of the teachers' houses and shouted for them to come out, that he would teach them a lesson. This kind of thing has happened more than once, and I feel it's not good for our teachers. Not safe. And the school committee just wants to avoid a fight. But I don't want to just accept that. And so this is difficult. It's bad enough that a parent would do this, but it makes it worse when the school committee won't support us in these cases" (Interview Transcript, CBS Teacher)

sustainability existed within the broader emergency context that was at play with any institution or activity on the region.

**Conclusion**

The top down and hierarchical CBRO organizational practices that reflect elements of managerial and moral school leadership impacted the broader EMG education vision. An employee summarized how these practices ultimately presented a 'blessing and curse' on their impact on the education program as a whole:

> …it's been a blessing and a curse that the [CBRO] has been so strongly supportive of this education effort. The blessing is that they can get off the ground more quickly with facilities, and land, and community trust, and that kind of thing. In fact, a lot of them probably wouldn't have been able to get started without the [CBRO and CBEO] helping out, and that's a good thing. But the curse side of it, is that the people making the decisions are in the position to call the shots because of their link to the [religion], not because they have any insight into education. So the people at the top deciding how many people we going to hire, how much money goes towards this, what's a reasonable time frame for training, all of this stuff, just don't have a clue. And the people who do have that kind of insight... Well, they weren't there in the beginning, but then once the trainers started to see what sort of resource was required or what sort of time was required, they were younger women, they just didn't really have a leg to stand on in these meetings where those decisions were being made. (Interview Transcript, CBEO Employee)

The 'blessings and curses' were reflected in each of this study's core educational themes explored in this chapter. Regarding *access*, the religious hierarchy allowed for quick and easy diffusion of the education vision throughout the region using the CBRO network, thus increasing the number of communities, and potential parents, that were reached and ultimately CBS that could be created. Moreover, the outreach and conversations CBRO leadership had at the community level fostered a sense of support and trust that further helped more communities feel confident in opening their own school and recruiting teachers and ground level-staff when a new school would open. The model of the CBRO leaders approving community plans also worked to ensure *sustainability* of CBS, as one requirement for receiving CBRO support was a sustained

source of community funding for any new school that would open. In other words, increased sustainability was reflected from CBRO support and physical infrastructure for CBS buildings that were owned by the CBRO.

The CBRO led process of determining which communities were 'ready', however, proved difficult and reflected larger issues of universal access and sustainability amidst the protracted emergency context. The education vision established by the EMG was to create a system for all EMG members in the region, however, universal access in practice was elusive. Decades of conflict left the region with limited human and financial resources that limited how many communities could effectively open schools. Moreover, the CBRO relied on community-based institutions that could collect and redistribute some funding from community members, but certainly not at the level of tax income a full state would have access to. Accordingly, parents had to pay tuition, which limited the number of families able to make such a financial commitment. Moreover, the pressure from communities to open a school meant there were political incentives for the CBRO to open more schools than their institution could effectively operate in terms of training teachers and providing support. This meant that education decisions, like the balance of quality and quantity, were not made in a vacuum, but rather had political influences of the CBRO whereby they felt they had to respond to community demands, similar to how a politician might react to constituent demands.

In practice, the top-down managerial leadership structure meant the decision to push for a higher quantity of schools laid with CBRO leadership, most of whom lacked educational experience, which in turn impacted the *quality* of the education through teachers and ground level staff burnout. Findings did reveal that parents were pleased with the quality of education the CBS had in the way they saw their children behave and the type of values and morals that

were reflected through going to a CBS. The broad EMG vision for education truly did filter down to the ground level through the CBRO network, reflecting elements of quality education that will be further explored in chapter 7 on the curriculum development practices. However, the nature of staff burnout, combined with a limited ability for them to impact high-level organizational leaders, diminished staff motivation and the quality of instruction they felt they could give, over time. Finally, the lack of education experience that CBRO had meant the entire hierarchy was built on a power and authority structure of mostly male leaders who had not previous open schools or taught in classroom.

**CHAPTER 7: CURRICULUM DEVELOPMENT PROCESSES**

> *"And then we started the school at the time. Okay, we don't know what to do.*
> *No curriculum, no teacher training. Okay, we can start with what we can do"*
> *-Betty*

This chapter addresses the third research question: What curriculum development

processes did CBS use and how did they work to create critical pedagogies that reflect and

support the broader community-based education mission? To answer the question, I provide a

description of the curriculum development processes[9] employed by the Community-Based

Education Organization (CBEO) and analysis of how they worked to create critical pedagogies

that reflected and supported the broader community-based education mission. The discussion of

findings presents four distinct phases of curriculum development and is organized

chronologically to include: 1) establishing the initial curricular foundation of Mother Tongue

Based Multilingual Education (MTB-MLE), 2) the role of international influences on creating

the primary level curriculum, 3) the role of local actors on developing the secondary level

curriculum, and 4) the participatory process I took part in to build local curriculum development

capacity and set future goals. Within these analyses, I draw from critical Freirean theories of

pedagogy and practice (Freire, 1968; Freire & Macedo, 1987) to critique MTB-MLE and reveal

how the curriculum processes were deeply political and reflected community conscientization

and active resistance to Burmese state oppression. I also employ theories of education and

globalization (Appadurai, 1996; Held, 1999; Spring, 2008) to analyze how international

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[9] From chapter 1- I draw from Stabback (2016) who defines curriculum as "a political and social agreement that reflects a society's common vision while considering local, national and global needs and expectations. The curriculum, in other words, embodies a society's educational aims and purposes" (p. 6). Similarly, I define curriculum development processes broadly to include everything from establishing the goals of the society in which schools are located and creating elements that are grounded in the classroom experience such as the subjects that are taught, classroom materials, language of instruction, lessons plans, and classroom activities.

curriculum resources (i.e. materials and human) and language policy impacted community-based curriculum decisions and development. I conclude with a summary of key findings related to this study's broader themes of sustainable access to quality and inclusive education.

**Mother Tongue Based-Multilingual Education (MTB-MLE)**

Findings showed that the curriculum development process truly began when the community-based education system was first imagined at the EMG conference described in chapter 5. It was in the conversations with community members that core curricular goals were established; the foundation of which was built on Mother Tongue Based-Multilingual Education (MTB-MLE). This language policy served as the starting point for all subsequent material and subject selection which called for all early grade instruction and materials to be done in the EMG mother tongue, or first language (L1) of the EMG[10]. Burmese, the national language of Myanmar and mother tongue of the Burman ethnic group and Burmese military, would be taught as the second language (L2) and English as the third language (L3). Each language and the associated curricular materials and subjects came with their own political implications as well. In other words, the EMG's L1 was decided to be the primary language of both curriculum and instruction in most schools for early grades with the slow introduction and transition to Burmese and English instruction over time.

Participants at all levels (i.e. parents, teachers, curriculum developers) expressed that creating a written curriculum and classroom instruction in their EMG mother tongue had a number of benefits. When reflecting on early conversations about the importance of mother tongue-based curriculum, Michael noted that "we need our mother tongue-based in our education. But in Myanmar education they do not allow mother tongue, they put only their

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[10] For a few school locations, teachers and students spoke a different regional dialect of the dominant EMG mother tongue curriculum materials while other schools employed slight variations on the language policy

Burmese Language" (Interview Transcript, Michael), thus demonstrating the limits of the state

education system and the importance of bringing their mother tongue back to local classrooms.

The foundation of using mother tongue-based curriculum presented a means for promoting a

myriad of other community-based curricular goals. A CBEO employee recalled a series of

conversations with parents, church leaders, and community members that clarified these

curricular goals as learning their local language to preserve culture, have strong morals, and

simply becoming good people with a love of their ethnic and religious identity:

> A lot of people answered that they want their children to have a good education and preserve the old culture and the values, and the literatures, but have a good understanding of others. And then, they want their children to learn [our local] language too, because it's slowly vanishing so they want to maintain that a lot…And then they want their children to feel proud, appreciate being [our ethnicity and religion] and value their identity and respect others. (Interview Transcript, Betty)

Another CBEO employee similarly reflected on early conversations with parents that highlighted

their desire for children to learn the local language and culture, but also for the curriculum to

teach relevant skills, like farming and critical thinking, that children could actively apply in their

lives:

> And then [parents] want their children to learn [our] language and culture and history…and also want their children to have some skills and knowledge that will be useful in the contexts and also in their real-life situations [like] farming and how to live together with the communities...Like communication skills, way to behave with the parents and the community people. (Interview Transcript, Johnathan)

Taken together, the perceived benefits of mother tongue instruction included providing a

culturally relevant education, preserving their EMG language and culture, and allowing students

to better learn other subjects, like math and science, in their first language; all of which are

consistent with other research (e.g. Jorolan-Quintero, 2018; Parba, 2018; Tupas, 2015). More

broadly, they reflect a desire for a relevant education, rooted in local culture, to preserve and

protect the EMG way of life.

Drawing from the theoretical and practitioner-based literacy work of Paulo Freire helps to clarify how the decision to create mother tongue-based curriculum and instruction, rather than the national language of Burmese, was a political act that also had implications on quality and inclusive education. Freire (1965, 1968) argued for the inclusion of community voices to inform education broadly and the language selection specifically of literacy programs he worked with in countries across the globe. Freire argued that learning of the *word* (i.e. literacy) was a deeply political project that was most useful when it ultimately enabled people to read and act on issues in the *world*. He further noted that "Language is also culture. Language is the mediating force of knowledge; but it is also knowledge itself" (Freire & Macedo, 1987, p. 36). The EMG decision to use their mother tongue as the primary language can thus be seen as a political act that allowed them to promote not just language, but knowledge that was important to them. Moreover, this decision of the EMG was consistent with Freire's belief that declaring "the national language and the only vehicle for education is totally absurd" (Freire & Macedo, 1987, p. 81).

The EMG's decision to use their mother tongue as the primary language of curriculum and instruction meant relegating Burmese to a stand-alone language subject for the early grades. Freire again provides insights into how this was not just a decision about pedagogy but was an act of political resistance to the oppressive Burmese military state. In describing mother tongue-based literacy programs for indigenous populations in Cape Verde and Guinea-Bissau specifically, Freire noted the importance of language and that "This literacy cannot require that the reading of the word be done in the colonizer's language" (Freire & Macedo, 1987, p. 38). Despite the British colonial history in Myanmar, the EMG study participants more generally referred to Burmese as the language of the oppressor, or perhaps what could be considered even an internal colonizer of sorts. Participants noted that using their mother tongue as the primary

language was still illegal, but that they found power in making the controversial decision. Freire even wrestled with these decisions arguing that

> …the goal should never be to restrict students to their own vernacular…Educators should understand the value of mastering the standard dominant language of the wider society. It is through the full appropriation of the dominant standard language that students find themselves linguistically empowered to engage in dialogue with the wider sections of society. (Freire & Macedo, 1987, p. vii)

As will be discussed in the future curriculum planning below, this was an issue that the EMG still has not fully found a solution to. Some parents explained that they were nervous their children would not be able to participate in Burmese society without adequate knowledge of Burmese language, despite the inclusion of Burmese language and subject instruction in later primary grades. Ultimately, though, the value of using mother tongue-based curriculum outweighed the potential challenges with integration into Burmese society.

The final element of MTB-MLE that must be briefly discussed before an analysis of the curriculum writing process is the inclusion of English as a third language. When reflecting on the broader goals for the schools, one community member described how parents stressed the importance of including global knowledge and how English was perceived to be necessary to achieve this: "We even want to learn global things! At that time, [parents] mostly mention something like, IT skills, like some, English language" (Interview Transcript, Community Member). The desire for children to learn 'global things' and have study abroad opportunities was thus directly linked to the study of English. More than just the language, there was a more subtle perception amongst participants that language study was not enough, and that subjects one might find being taught at an international school or school in the US, like IT (information technology) or geometry, were high quality and a prerequisite for international opportunities. One parent mentioned their hope that through exposure to critical thinking, creativity, and global

materials, their children could study abroad, while a school committee member remarked that many parents simply said they wanted "an international education" (Interview Transcript, School Committee Member). In other words, from the inception of the schools, parents and employees alike saw English language proficiency as a central element to a 'global' or 'international' education.

From a Freirean perspective, the desire to include English language curriculum and instruction could reveal an insecurity about the value and purpose of the EMG mother tongue. Freire argued that legacies of oppression and colonialism impacted not just the reality of literacy rates and access to education, but the psyche of an oppressed group in how they relate to their own identity and language. He wrote:

> The ex-colonialized in many ways continue to be mentally and culturally colonized. The colonized people were told either verbally or through message systems inherent in the colonial structure that they did not possess effective cultural instruments with which to express themselves. They possessed an ugly dialect, a bastardization of the colonial language. This language profile imposed by the colonizers eventually convinced the people that their language was in fact a corrupt and inferior system unworthy of true educational status. People end up believing that the way they speak is savage. They become ashamed of speaking their own language, particularly in the presence of the colonialists who constantly proclaim the beauty and superiority of their own language. The colonizers' behaviors and tastes, including language, are the models that were imposed by the colonial structure over centuries of oppression. At some point the ex-colonialized internalize these myths and feel ashamed" (Freire & Macedo, 1987, pp. 82–83)

Of course, the EMG were ex-colonized communities from the British, but remained in a state of oppression by the Burmese state, which was similar in practice and experience to the Freirean notion of colonization. With this, no findings revealed participants being ashamed of their mother tongue or having a preference to use Burmese. Quite the opposite was true in that the EMG mother tongue curriculum and instruction was reflected a great sense of pride in their

community and culture while English was included in the curriculum given the reality of existing in a globalized world.

The desire to teach English and create an education system that provided global opportunities beyond their EMG region, and Myanmar as a country, was a consistent theme surrounding quality global education. When reflecting on their goals for the education system, one community member noted that they "want their children to go around to spread and then come back and [help with] stuff here…maybe go further study to other countries and come back and [make] some contribution here. (Interview Transcript, Community Member). Applications of globalization theory are useful to present here as a lens to understand what the use of international (English) curriculum meant to accessing knowledge that was beyond Myanmar, and indeed send their graduates *physically* outside the country. Appadurai (1996) first coined the terms "*ethnoscape, financescape, technoscape, mediascape, and ideoscape* to stress the streams or flows along which cultural material may be seen to be moving across national boundaries" (pp. 45–46). Building upon these terms in relation to education specifically, Spring (2008) further refined them in the context of global interconectedness and communication technology:

> …language of global flows of ideas, practices, institutions, and people, such as ethnoscapes, the movement of the world's peoples; financescapes, the movement of trade, money, and capital; technoscapes, the movement of technology; mediascapes, the movement of images and ideas in popular culture; and ideoscapes, the movement of ideas and practices concerning government and other institutional policies. Flow provides a general conceptual framework for the process of globalization…. Because of the Internet, networks can compress time and space with communication becoming instantaneous. Also, networks will continue to expand and attract members because being in a network increases possibilities of success in most endeavors. (p. 333)

In the following description of internationally led curriculum development and the use of English language materials specifically, ideoscapes and ethnoscapes specifically will be used to help understand how the EMG saw education as a global project. Moreover, the use of English and

international curriculum materials allowed for the flow of ideoscapes into their communities and for students to participate in global ethnoscapes by accessing higher education and work opportunities outside Myanmar. Findings revealed these global aspirations as intrinsically part of an EMG conceptualization of quality and relevant education as well.

**Internationally Led Curriculum Development for Primary Grades**

*Curriculum Writing*

The community-based vision for MTB-MLE curriculum and instruction allowed the CBEO to think beyond the restrictive national curriculum. It also started the conversation on specific curricular and learning outcomes such as fostering strong morals in students, preserving EMG culture, and exposure to world beyond Myanmar. However, no specific subjects, textbooks, assessments, or other classroom materials were created or even discussed during the early conversations that occurred at the CBRO conference in 2006. A CBEO employee remembered this as a crisis because without tangible materials, the CBEO was unable to train teachers or open schools, which made prospective parents understandably nervous:

> We haven't start and we haven't had any curriculum and any teacher training yet, but we have to start now because the government school also, they're going to start in June, and the parents were asking 'you said that you are going to have this school, now where is the school? Where the teachers? What are we going to do? (Interview Transcript, Faye)

In other words, when it came time to open schools in 2012 the CBEO quickly realized how much had to be done in terms of designing materials and training teachers to use them. Despite a strong vision for the education system and specific goal of providing instruction in the EMG mother tongue, the CBEO still lacked the physical curricular materials that students and teachers would need for instruction to begin.

To address the crisis of gathering curriculum materials to use in the schools, the CBEO relied on Maya, an international consultant, to write materials that could be used in from grade

one up to six. When reflecting on the first year of curriculum writing, Maya discussed drawing

from the community-based vision, the Myanmar national curriculum, and their extensive work as

a Basic Education curriculum developer in a range of contexts:

> In that first year I…was employed to develop [and] implement teacher training for 8 weeks. Once there, I realized they didn't have a curriculum and they were intending to use some materials just because they were available. So I wrote quite a lot of curriculum after hours during the teacher training time…I started trying to think of…how to manage the curriculum. So, I did look at the [Myanmar] national curriculum, particularly for math's and science… I worked with [several international education] programs, particularly in getting active learning in language and math's lessons, so I set up... the curriculum from that as well… That was the first time I met [the CBRO], I didn't know that they were going to be successful, so, when I was developing the curriculum, I was trying to sort of align with a lot with the national curriculum in case things went terribly wrong…But the thing is that they are such are such a good community, and…they knew what they wanted from the start, and this aligned with my own ideas about basic education (Interview Transcript, Maya)

A key takeaway here is that Maya aligned certain elements and subjects of the new CBS

curriculum around parts of the national Burmese curriculum while balancing a locally driven and

culturally relevant curriculum with the national framework. Participants expressed that this was

necessary because the CBS system was new and unproven and would be better for children to

have the national system to fall back on, regardless of its flaws. This decision was made in part

because of their trust in Maya and desire to rely on international advice in making these tough

decisions. In terms of curriculum design, this meant teaching Burmese as a standalone language

in grade 1, which is similar to Freirean literacy programs where certain communities decided to

use the dominant language of a colonizer for practical reasons (Freire, 1997; Freire & Macedo,

1987). Similarly, Maya structured the curriculum so that English was introduced as a standalone

language subject in grade 2. Maya drew from their previous international education experience in

writing the new curriculum, which demonstrated a tangible example of a global ideoscape

flowing into the CBS system. As is consistent with literature on the perception of internationally

produced materials in contexts of MTB-MLE (UNESCO, 2015), participants universally saw the inclusion of these types of international materials and structure as high-quality education that they could not produce locally.

Regarding the physical production of the classroom curriculum materials, Maya spent several weeks in Myanmar to get a sense of the community needs with a series of meetings and workshops (as will be outlined below), and then took as little as a few weeks to a couple of months to write the materials, both while leading teacher trainings and from their home outside of Myanmar. This process began in 2012 with a set of materials for grade one and would repeat each subsequent year where in 2013 the materials for grade two were written, grade three in 2014 and so on. This independent material writing would take a matter of months, after which the consultant would email word documents, averaging 20-40 pages per subject, of student and teacher materials to the community in English which would then be translated to the EMG mother tongue. Freire again can offer insight into the sheer amount of time and work this process takes. When describing the Cape Verde native language education system, he remarked: "Just imagine the capital required to change the entire educational system overnight. Cape Verde would have to quickly translate into Creole all of the basic texts required by the curriculum" (Freire & Macedo, 1987, p. 81). Participants confirmed that the human and financial capital to undertake this endeavor with the CBS was indeed significant, whereby many CBEO curriculum developers remarked that it would have been impossible to start the schools without the collaborative work Maya performed.

The document analysis of these materials showed that student books included a variety of activities and exercises for students to complete, while the teacher book provided detailed lesson plans for teachers to use. Subjects included math's, language, and 'topics' which included natural

science and social science subjects like geography, art, health, physical education, and history as well as local issues like morals, festivals, family, and the local harvest. The analysis of these curricular documents confirmed that locally relevant issues that arose during the community input sessions, like local customs and perspectives on historical events, were very much a part of the curriculum. A surprising finding of this analysis was that religion was hardly present throughout the written curriculum materials. 'Morals' and the teaching of several local religions were chosen instead to create a more inclusive classroom. EMG culture and traditions were the dominant 'locally relevant' content, but despite the emphasis placed on religion by the CBRO, these were not as apparent in the curricula itself. The documents also included in-depth lesson plans, unit schedules, assessment charts, and some classroom materials that teachers could use when teaching. Teachers and CBEO staff widely praised these details as providing a roadmap of sorts, especially for those with little previous experience in the classroom.

*Gathering Community Input*

To achieve the balance of global and local content described above, Maya drew partially from their experience working with international and national curriculum materials for Burmese language and literacy, though a primary source of local content came from community-based conversations and multi-day workshops Maya conducted with community members to elicit further detail on what they wanted to include in the curriculum. When reflecting on what these sessions entailed, Lucy, a CBEO curriculum developer and teacher trainer, explained how the process included discussions with community members and CBEO staff on what locally relevant topics to include in the materials:

> Maya would always have a meeting with all the trainers and with meeting with the local people to have some background…what we want to put in the curriculum...I participated a bit…it usually lasts a few days…we meet with the local people… [the teacher] training team and all the [religious leaders] and all the people from the area and the training team.

And then [we] discuss about... Like in history, what kind of history you want…Maybe like the traditions and cultures, and then we do some music, some handicrafts…One thing I like is the curriculum. They're very flexible with our context…When we used to the curriculum, we are doing our own... Our own... I don't know the word for that…Maybe like we are teaching our own values and our own traditions and cultures and leaving behind other Burmese culture or Burmese language… One thing I remember when we teach the [local language] traditions or [EMG] customs, it's easy because we have those kind of background knowledge. We had experienced that kind of thing. So it's easy to use. (Interview Transcript, Lucy)

Thus, it was in these workshops where participants perceived that Maya learned what specific locally relevant subjects and topic to include that ranged from local farming techniques and traditions to oral histories, music, and art. As Lucy noted, these topics were not only important for producing a quality education that was culturally relevant to children and parents, but they were also easier for teachers to use given their intimate knowledge of the content. Drawing from local voices also allowed for the CBS to address local needs like drug awareness and prevention whereby "sometimes we put anti-drugs programs in the student curriculum" (Interview Transcript, Michael). More than just resulting in day-to-day lessons and units that were easy to teach, relevant, and addressed pressing community issues, these conversations led to 'our curriculum', which speaks to the power that these had on promoting local agency and ownership. In other words, the process that Maya employed to have these workshops truly created a participatory process whereby community input was valued and actively prove curriculum writing.

*Locally Driven History Curriculum*

Findings also revealed that perhaps the most important, but also contested, locally driven subject was how to write an EMG history of Myanmar. One of the most common grievances about the national education system was the Burmese-centric version of history left out important events and interpretations that differed from the EMG collective memory and

104

understanding of their history. However, coming to agreement on elements like which dialects to include and how to teach controversial historical events was an issue that perhaps required more time. Lucy noted how EMG had differing views on their history when discussing how to write materials for classroom use:

> Histories are very different every time we heard from the old people, once we believe that all... And maybe he is really good at his job he really knew about the history, but when we went to other people and compare them, they are totally different...for example, it's the signing of Panglong agreement…. It's an agreement. Like the leaders have with Aung San, General Aung San, something like most of the [the EMG] leaders, they participated in his right so we should... We should put in our history, but some others, they didn't want to put in because the [our EMG] leaders, it's one way from general it will lead by General Aung Sung, and not all the [EMG] leaders were interested to do that so that kind of things, they don't want to put. (Interview Transcript, Lucy)

In this, Lucy details the complexities involved with using oral histories from community elders along with younger voices in the room. The Panglong agreement, as was discussed in chapter 5, was identified by nearly every curriculum developer as the most significant historical event that the national Burmese curriculum did not address properly. This agreement was remembered by the EMG as a promise made after the colonial era to give regional autonomy thorough a federalist system to their EMG but has since been unfulfilled in the name of national Burmese unity. Liv, a CBEO employee involved in these conversations, also commented how this process allowed for the curriculum to include the 'real' history of the EMG:

> …in this curriculum the students and teachers they can learn about the real [EMG] history or the real history of our... How can I say, our Myanmar history? So in the government curriculum we haven't learned the real history or sometimes the good history, but here we can learn and we can do research about not only the people's history, but we also learn the history about our village, our church or our school history like that. The students can. How can I say, can learn a lot? (Interview Transcript, Liv)

In other words, the literal writing of new curriculum materials for history allowed the education system to not just help students learn the community version, but also the teachers. Even more, the writing of specific historical events from the EMG perspective helped to shape the

communities understanding of the decades of violence as an act of oppression by the Burmese rather than just an abstract conflict.

Freirean theory helps illuminate the power that owning and writing histories can have, both as a pedagogy and for the broader society. In describing the importance of dialogue surrounding history and conflict, Freire (1968) argued that students must access "critical discourses that will enable them not only to deconstruct the colonial and hegemonic paradigms but will also help them realize that one cannot teach conflict as if, all of a sudden, it fell from the sky. The conflict must be anchored in those competing histories and ideologies that generated the conflict in the first place" (Freire, 1968, p. 24). The EMG driven history curriculum did exactly this by allowing the teaching of events like the Panglong agreement and decades of conflict from the position of the EMG rather than the Burmese made national curriculum which entirely left of EMG voices. Freire also argued for the importance of writing these histories using oral story telling (Freire & Macedo, 1987, pp. 49–50), which was a technique the EMG employed in the community conversations described above. Finally, Freirean theory also reveals that these histories served not just to tell a more applicable and useful version of the EMG conflict but allowed for a broader dialogue to be had amongst teachers and students that led to conscientization for all involved with the curriculum writing and use in schools. This proved a stark contrast to the route memorization described in Burmese government schools that taught a sanitized and entirely one-sided version of Burmese history. To draw from Freire, the EMG effectively switched the paradigm of curriculum and instruction from that of a banking system to problem-posing and conscientization:

> Whereas banking education anesthetizes and inhibits creative power, problem-posing education involves a constant unveiling of reality. The former attempts to maintain the *submersion* of consciousness; the latter strives for the *emergence* of consciousness and *critical intervention* in reality. (Freire, 1968, p. 81)

Despite the clear benefits of an EMG version of history from a Freirean perspective, the potential to propagate conflict remained. To borrow again from Green (2013), this process of developing a locally relevant and meaningful curriculum can be viewed as a kind of state-formation tactic, but rather than promoting the central Burmese state, the curriculum designers were attempting to use education to reinforce their own EMG identity and vision for a federalist system of national governance. The way contentious historical events, like the Panglong agreement, were portrayed and taught were crucial to this EMG informal state creation as it allowed for children to learn their version of history whereby agreements like this were explicitly taught as being broken by the central Burmese state. Drawing from the Two Faces of Education Theory, this meant that the teaching of EMG centered history could positively promote a federalist state for the EMG that would be realized through the next generation. However, this could also mean that students would be indoctrinated in an EMG vision that would propagate further conflict. The results are beyond the scope of this study, but of great importance whether the history curriculum would help promote peace or propagate further years of violent resistance.

*Limited Local Curriculum Development Capacity and Skills Building*

The locally relevant topics and histories discussed above were the most discussed element of the primary school curriculum development process. However, findings also showed that these existed as part of a balance of building in local knowledge and traditions with global 'academic' subjects like math and science. When reflecting on what international or global influences, Lucy recalled that:

> …and in science or what percentage of academic things do you want in the curriculum…Like for example, sometimes I mainly focus on the local knowledge and some curriculum steps but not on the level of curriculum [like] science [or] maths from global books… but one thing I remember was very difficult to teach the children. It's about democracy because we're not used to democracy, what is democracy or how to

teach them on how to practice in our current situation so it's very difficult to teach. (Interview Transcript, Lucy)

In this, Lucy makes an important distinction that the 'local knowledge' was not necessarily perceived as 'academic' in nature. Instead, 'academic' subjects included math, science, civics (i.e. democracy) and other subjects that were more closely associated with global ideas about schooling. Thus, local knowledge was important, but still held in lesser regard than academic subjects. Moreover, Lucy noted how these were more difficult to teach, and thus design curriculum materials for, given that the CBEO staff and teachers were not exposed to these as students themselves.

Theories of globalization and education can help to understand what the view of global 'academic' subjects means regarding the EMG perceptions of a quality education and the value of different types of knowledge. International ideoscapes were apparent here, both in how Lucy interpreted the need for international materials for subjects like science, but also in the reason for including them in the curriculum. In the language of globalization, these subjects and global materials allowed for EMG students to take part in global knowledge economy with a "focus on the necessity of educating students with skills for the global workplace" (Spring, 2008, p. 337). Even more than participating in a global knowledge economy, the sentiment that Lucy expressed, as was consistent with other curriculum developers, spoke to how they balanced local needs with the influence of western schooling on their community-based vision. In their analysis of globalizations impact on education, Spring (2008) explain how world culture versus culturalist theory can help articulate this balancing act:

> …schooling based on a Western model is now a global cultural ideal… Culturalists reject what they consider to be a simplistic view of world cultural theorists that national elites select the best model of schooling from a world culture of education. They also question the idea that models of schooling are simply imposed on local cultures. This group of

theorists believes that local actors borrow from multiple models in the global flow of educational ideas. (pp. 334–335)

Thus, world culture and culturalist theories of globalization and education can help unravel the balance of local and global influences. Put simply, both the western and global ideal of schooling impacted the EMG in how they perceived 'academic' subjects, though the work they did with Maya showed how adapting these to their context created a unique curriculum that met their needs, as culturalists suggest.

Ultimately, the blending of local, national, and global curriculum influences resulted in Maya writing the entire set of classroom materials up to grade six. This internationally led process of having the curriculum materials written by Maya from a distance meant that the materials provided the first cadre of novice teachers with units, activities, lesson plans, and classroom ideas which allowed the first CBO schools to open and begin instruction on-time. Without this detailed set of materials, the schools very well might not have been able to open as planned. The community conversations also were looked back upon fondly and gave a true sense of local ownership and collaboration. However, the teacher materials might have been too detailed, as some teachers remarked that they did not feel comfortable adapting the materials or lessons based on their classroom experience. The prescriptive style of materials thus provided an excellent framework for novice teachers to rely on, but in the long run this might have cost the teachers from developing autonomy in the classroom because they felt like they had to follow the materials exactly. Moreover, teachers remarked how they felt rushed trying to cover all the text in the materials, but that they had too since it was written by an expert. The materials also did not always match the level of the students or teachers, especially for English language. A teacher commented to this discussing that:

Our consultant Maya said it's very easy, but for us, it's very difficult because we are not... Our mother tongue is not English…I don't think our children know enough vocabulary. (Interview Transcript, Joy)

Another challenge that arose from this curriculum development process was the short-term benefit of having classroom ready materials cost building local curriculum development capacity. When reflecting on this process that took place in 2012, another employee remarked on the benefit of addressing a pressing priority but also the challenge the process created in terms of not being locally inclusive:

My impression was [the consultant's process] was never very collaborative...They would come in, ask questions, gather all the information they could, go away for six months and then show up for summer training and say, 'Tada'. (Interview Transcript, Layla)

Again, looking back on these issues is with total clarity and perspective, while at the time these materials were being produced, time was of the essence. The CBRO had promised to start schools imminently and the number one goal was to simply have materials ready to go and with time left over for teacher training. These findings are not meant to critique the process and those involved, but rather provide an accurate reflection of a process that undoubtedly allowed for schools to open, but at the cost of building local curriculum development skills amongst local staff so that they could continue to write curriculum in a sustainable way.

**Secondary Level Locally Led Curriculum Development Process**

*Developing Local Curriculum Capacity and Experience*

When I began my fieldwork in July of 2018, Maya was no longer available to develop materials for secondary school, as had been the agreement when the CBEO first started working with them. This meant that grade seven, which was already underway when I arrived, was developed entirely by local CBEO staff and teachers. Because the previous six years were written by one person outside of the country, this meant the CBEO employees and teachers

described feeling unsure of how to write their own materials or what the process of material gathering and writing entailed. Ultimately, the first six years of reliance on outside curriculum development assistance provided a product that allowed schools to open but was perceived to have created a system of reliance that presented difficulties for the CBEO as they planned for secondary curriculum development on their own. Betty described how the grade seven curriculum development process worked and some of the challenges that arose:

> At that time...participants were divided into the subject groups...we created some learning objectives for learning and teaching…At the time I wrote some mission and vision and some objective for competency and learning for grade seven. And after that…We have team leader but sometimes, for example in maths, it's not clear who is the team leader. Like, the one who the management team wants to be a team leader and the one who the group wants to be the team leader, its sometimes a little bit different. They said that if we say team leader... He or she should do this or should do this thing…Like an agreement like that…It was a little bit chaos last time when they do it because they didn't know who they have to contact. It means, each group, they did themselves in their respective groups, but for some issues when you want to discuss, they didn't know whether they have to contact me [other leaders] ... They didn't know. It was not very clear. (Interview Transcript, Betty)

In this, Betty describes how curriculum subject groups drafted learning objectives, the broad vision of the subject, and some material selection began. However, there was disagreement amongst the folks working in these specific teams and organizational leadership. The hierarchical CBRO structure meant that the curriculum developers, who were often high performing teachers or teacher trainers, were still lower on the organizational hierarchy than the religious leadership (as discussed in Chapter 6). In practice, this led to unclear curricular goals and lack of autonomy for designers.

Another CBEO employee described how they would take trips to observe international schools in Yangon to get ideas for which subjects to teach and materials to use. They noted:

> …we went to Yangon and did some observation at some international schools…and then came back and asked, 'can we do this kind of thing?'…Finally to choose a curriculum at the time, we had no idea to develop curriculum [and] conventional thinking was…Okay.

We are going to use this curriculum, that curriculum and we will change' (Interview Transcript, CBEO Employee)

International schools were perceived to use high quality curricula, thus the CBEO identified these materials as sources of inspiration from which to draw. These trips continued throughout data collection and have been conducted by teachers, employees, and curriculum designers for all subjects (language, math, science, social studies). The result has been a desire to design CBS subjects based on international schools, which in practice means teaching subjects that would look quite like any secondary school in the US or Australia for example. It was perceived that these schools were doing education the 'right way' and simply grafting these subjects and materials to their own local context would translate into quality 'international style' education (Field Notes, September 21, 2019). The prestige of having these internationally produced materials was clearly important to curriculum planners, and even the very fact that the books had some weight and were literally thick played into the perception of international quality and standards.

One problem with international materials, though, was that they seemed to work against the MTB-MLE ethos of promoting and maintaining cultural identity. One CBEO employee noted that the English book series was not 'suitable for culture' while another said they would prefer math problems to use local rather than international name:

For the math problem they don't want to use... *John* or something like that. They want to use [Aung Aung] is going to the market or something. The problem is relevant with the local. So I also would like to give the children like the relevant curriculum to the children. (Interview Transcript, CBEO Employee)

In other words, after taking so much care to preserve the local language and culture in primary grades, it made some participants uneasy to just switch all materials so suddenly to English with materials that were designed for other countries and cultures. However, participants also noted that the situation was difficult in that these might have been the only options because using

Burmese language curriculum, for example, might not lead to success. Moreover, since no curriculum was available in the mother tongue, then English materials might be the best choice, albeit imperfect, choice for that time.

When reflecting on the grade seven curriculum development process in its entirety, one teacher remarked that they wished they could have used a consultant, were very stressed by the amount of work, and felt incredible guilt that the curriculum was not good enough for the children:

> I feel guilty for the children because we are not professional, we are not good in [our subject] …we are not enough skilled in [our subject], but we are trying... We have to do the curriculum, we have to finish the curriculum, so we…got stressed to do the curriculum and even when we finished... and then we want to throw it away...We feel like that even now [the students] are saying that that curriculum is easy, then I feel guilty it is not good or not good enough for them. I would like to [work] with some consultant, and I want to make it again, as soon as possible. (Interview Transcript, CBS Teacher)

The CBEO did not have dedicated curriculum designers and those that were involved with the process echoed concerns of the teacher above about stress and guilt of not producing a quality product. Parents were also unsure, as one noted:

> I sent my oldest (daughter) to the community school at first, but then my confidence in the school wavered, and I sent my second child (son) to the government school. I reasoned that the government curriculum is already completed, the school system is a known quantity, it is stable, has resources, etc., while in contrast the community school teachers are new and relatively unskilled, and after all the government school is free. But then after another year or two I started to see the differences in my daughter, differences of character and being able to think for herself, and why the community school is valuable beyond reading and writing. So I changed my mind yet again and sent my youngest back to the community school. (Interview Transcript, Parent)

In other words, the feelings of the CBEO curriculum designers were consistent with parents and other community voices who felt the locally led curriculum process was of a lower, or at least less consistent, quality than the primary grades.

Ultimately, participants described the process as being unclear and feeling a bit unsettled as to the results. When describing the grade seven process, Liv similarly noted that:

> And then we have to find from many books and we have to learn a lot, but actually in our group or the whole group, we don't have enough knowledge or... Knowledge about making curriculum is very hard for us, so we do not satisfy for that…But finally we have some curriculums. We have the curriculums for grade seven. (Interview Transcript, Liv)

This description of the process speaks to two key elements of the locally led curriculum development. First, there was uncertainty that the CBEO staff had the knowledge and expertise to fully create curricula. But secondly, and more importantly, they were able to get it done. Indeed, despite the growing pains that existed when Maya was no longer able to continue, the staff banded together and created the materials needed to start grade seven.

*Mixed Results from Low English Proficiency in Classroom Use*

In practice, the transition to grade seven curriculum materials that were almost entirely in English had mixed results on teaching and instruction. Perhaps the largest and most common challenge in the classroom was that the level of English in the materials was beyond the proficiency of teachers and students. One teacher bluntly stated that "now we are in grade seven already but [the students] can't speak English properly yet" (Interview Transcript, CBS Teacher). Another teacher similarly another remarked that:

> …for the teacher, it's okay. But for students... It's a great English language challenge for them…Their English is not good enough, and that is a great barrier...But knowledge part, they know a lot, whether Second World War or the First World War, they know already. But the language barrier is a challenge for them, for students. (Interview Transcript, CBS Teacher)

In other words, student knowledge of history, for example, seemed on par with the target grade level learning objectives, but using English was just too difficult, as consistent with research on MTB-MLE where the target language of instruction does not match the proficiency level of students (Lartec et al., 2014; UNESCO, 2015). No matter the grade level or subject, teachers

unanimously felt uneasy about their students' English proficiency. Classroom observations confirmed that student proficiency did not appear to match the grade level targets, though observations were limited, and more are planned for future research. However, these perceptions of proficiency were just that, based on teacher perception. There were no secondary grade level assessments of student English proficiency and limited documentation content proficiency, so it was hard to determine the level of all students

Student proficiency was just one challenge, as teachers also discussed similar concerns for themselves. When reflecting on their own English proficiency and that of others, one teacher noted that:

> I just want to improve English. English is not [just] a language, but we have to [use it] when we study real knowledge or something like that…We have to know English and that's why we can continue studying at the other subject. (Interview Transcript, CBS Teacher)

This teacher's sentiments were consistent with many participants regarding low levels of confidence in their own English language skills and desire to learn more. What is telling from this passage is that this participant recognized the importance of English to teach subject content and access 'real knowledge'. They connected the 'international knowledge' described in previous sections very tangibly to English language proficiency and as a skill to access subject content in other areas.

The perceived low teacher proficiency presented challenges for using the curriculum materials as well. One CBEO employee noted that:

> When teachers start seeing the textbook, they [say] 'Oh my god, we will not be able to do' and then while they're really doing this, they also have some difficulties and we also need someone who will take care of this... Okay, now we have books, and then now they are going to teach... Not only like this... [We need] someone to do some follow-up and check 'are they okay with what part? [Are they effective at teaching content knowledge?]'. (Interview Transcript, CBEO Employee)

This passage shows clearly that some teachers were intimidated by the level of English in the international materials. Though what is also telling is that the CBEO staff and faculty were aware of this challenge and the need to provide additional teacher training and support, but simply did not have the resources to address the problem. They knew that extra training was necessary, but given the limited human and financial resources, that was simply not an option.

Limited resources also meant that not all materials were available to every teacher, at every school. International materials often come in sets with separate materials for teachers and students and one teacher trainer noted that this resulted in only having access to a student book without the teacher resource guide that contained valuable lesson plans, answers to assignments, and other teaching materials: "And also this a little bit tricky. I also don't have the teacher resource… [so I use] just the student book [to teach]" (Interview Transcript, CBEO Teacher Trainer). Field notes taken at curriculum meetings revealed that no subject teachers had a full set of teacher and student materials for grade seven or eight, leaving teachers to struggle with planning lessons from a student book only in most cases (Field Notes, September 19, 2019). This may sound like a minor point of contention, but as a former primary and secondary school teacher myself, teacher resource materials saved me countless hours for lesson planning and having to compute problem sets on my own, just to name a few benefits. Not all teachers knew that teacher volumes were available, and were extremely happy when they were given access to

them for use in their own classrooms. Figure 2 below displays a student book that was being

used by a teacher who did not have access to the teacher resource. The many translations show

the very real challenge in using materials designed for use in the USA, for example, but also how
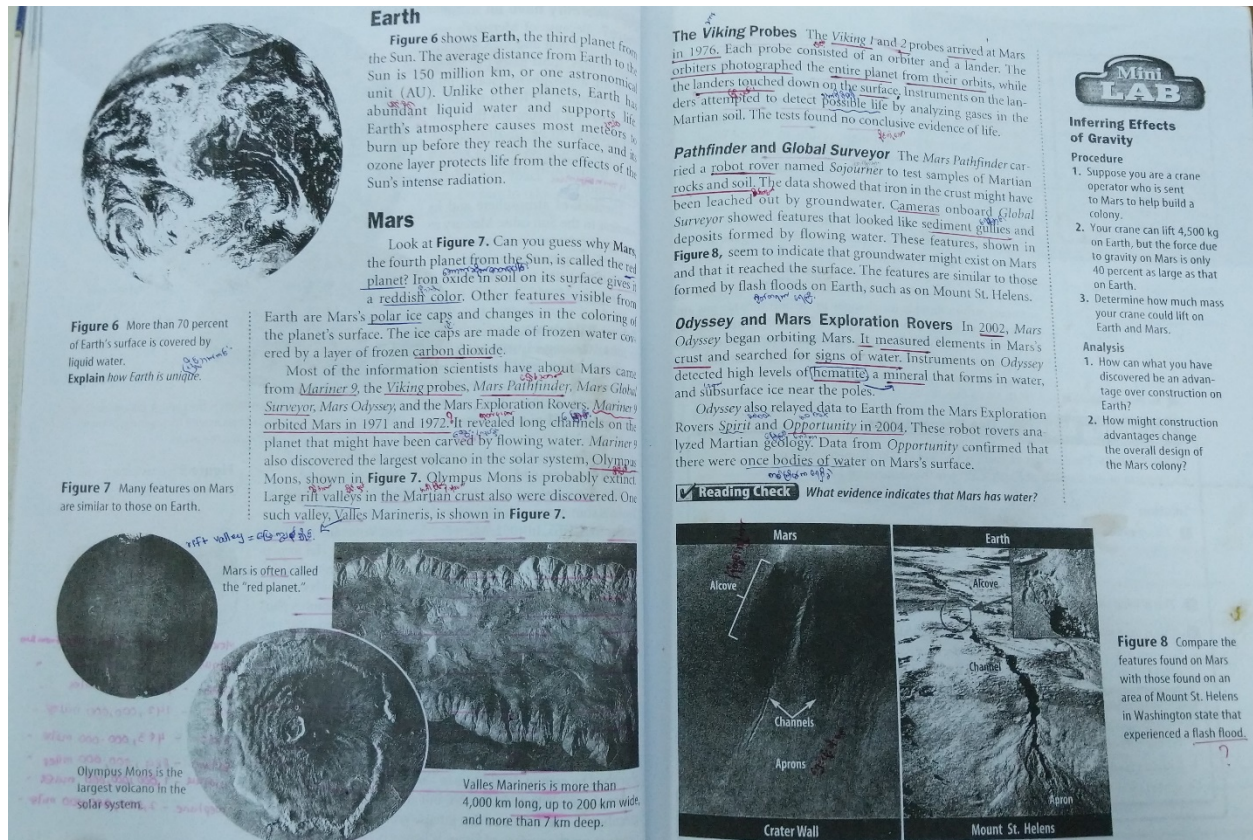


*Figure 2- Science Student Book Used by Teacher for Lesson Planning and Instruction*

much more effort is needed to plan lessons when the accompanying teacher resource is absent.

English proficiency may have been lacking in part due to reliance on the L1/L2 in

primary classrooms when the English was the target language and thus inconsistent enforcement

of the MTB-MLE language policy. One reason for this was that teachers noted how their

insecurities surrounding English meant they could be shy to use it in the classroom. One teacher

commented that: My speaking is not good enough. Sometimes, I'm shy to speak up English and...

I can't explain them directly and they don't understand sometime. (Interview Transcript, CBS

Teacher). Moreover, teacher trainers acknowledged the challenges for trainees regarding English proficiency and how being shy could result in a vicious cycle where teachers don't use English because they are insecure, and then don't advance because they don't practice enough. On this issue, one teacher trainer noted that their trainees preferred English and that: "If I explain in English they stare and teacher no, no, no, no, no, no, we don't want to... Please speak in [our mother tongue]!" (Interview Transcript, CBS Teacher). Classroom observations and field notes confirmed that teachers at the primary level especially were prone to using the mother tongue when English was the target language.

Perhaps the best summation of the language challenges in secondary were expressed by a CBS leader who captured how folks all feel responsible, are aware of the challenges, but also unsure of how best to address them given limited resources:

> I feel like that is my job… I had to take all the responsibility. So I try to ask [other teachers] to talk to the children in English, but they also don't have enough skill to speak English. I provide the outside teacher to come and teach our teacher…and I feel good. I want all the children speaking English at English time, speaking Burmese properly at Burmese time, and I want them to be interested in all the subject. (Interview Transcript, CBS Leader)

Moreover, curriculum planners, teachers, and staff knew all too well the challenges that they faced and how difficult implementation would be. They knew this was an ambitious project, but still wanted to try even in the face of limited resources. Perhaps the best way to ultimately summarize the findings was an excerpt from one of the leaders of the initiative who succinctly expressed the desire to use English in secondary and how it was up to them to never forget all the considerations:

> I think it's very important take some time to think and discuss some issues that we really need to adapt [curriculum and instruction] for language issues... if you want to use English as a medium of language, so not only as a [language] subject, and also for that help and support for other languages and other subject to learn in order for the students and teachers in order to learn and teach properly to use the language. So, this needs to be [considered] and when we choose the book or the series, always to think about language

118

level, of what we have, so what we have to do for the [teacher] training program. So, I think that this is my reflection on what we did last year. It's very important to not to forget that. (Interview Transcript, Alex)

Taken together, these challenges led to uncertainty for curriculum designers and teachers alike, which resulted in difficulty knowing which level books to use for which grades and several subjects switching materials after use. One teacher remarked how Burmese language materials were used for social studies:

> History of Burma and Civic education is in Burmese. And some subjects are in English, and some [materials] are in Burmese. In Burmese, it's okay, but English more [difficult]…I think that is the problem that the curriculum, and last year... Grade seven…we are not ready for grade seven curriculum, that's why we have a challenge and we just kept curriculum [in Burmese]. (Interview Transcript, CBEO Teacher Trainer)

In other courses, if a material was perceived by students to be 'too easy', designers felt obliged to provide a more challenging book right away. One curriculum designer noted that: "We feel like that even now [the students] are saying that that curriculum is easy, then I feel guilty it is not good or not good enough for them" (Interview Transcript, CBS Teacher). In some cases, perceptions that students found the material too easy resulted in re-working the curriculum over time, and in others it led to more immediate changes where books would be swapped out mid-course. This practice resulted in an inconsistent classroom experience, though it could just be temporary where subsequent years will work more smoothly. In other words, this could potentially be as much an issue any new school would face rather than one with the implementation of MTB-MLE specifically.

Freirean theory can help interpret some of the linguistic challenges that arose in the grade seven curriculum along with larger political implications. For example, the use of Burmese language over English or even the mother tongue is consistent with Freirean literacy programs discussed above. That is, mother tongue materials are often unavailable, and when the EMG curriculum developers felt their knowledge was inadequate, they fell back on the use of Burmese

language materials given that students could understand the content more easily than English. The uneasiness they felt with this decision speaks a loss of power and agency that was realized in the primary grade mother tongue language materials. In a Freirean sense, the use of Burmese, or the language of their oppressor, was defeating and a step back on their larger goals. However, the decision was partially forced upon them given the limited resources from which to draw.

Theories of globalization and education can also help unpack the experience of using English language materials that were difficult to use but perceived as being higher quality. The ideoscapes of global curriculum has already been discussed regarding how globally produced materials were thought of having higher quality educational content and learning. In their study of Cambridge International curriculum materials specifically, Lim (2012) argues that these types of resources "engage in the ideological project of shaping our commonsense understandings of what thinking and reasoning is/should be in ways that both connect to neoliberal commitments and privilege a particular fraction of the middle class" (p. 481). The EMG curriculum developers use of English language and internationally produced materials can thus be seen as part of a large ideological system that puts greater value on the type and manner of western thinking over their own indigenous knowledge. The 'locally' led curriculum development process led to an overreliance, perhaps, on English language materials due to their perceived quality and despite the difficulty teachers and students expressed with their classroom use. Ultimately, participants noted a feeling of uneasiness with the process on a whole and the desire for something to change moving forward.

## Participatory Future Curriculum Planning

The findings and analysis above drew entirely from interview, observation, and document analysis data that was oriented towards what had already come to pass before I arrived at the

research site. When I first arrived, my initial conversations with the CBEO leadership were focused on what my role could be in terms of collaborating with the program. Given my background in curriculum design, it quickly became clear that I would be of most use by joining their staff working on curriculum development. In practice, this meant that over the 14 months of data collection from July 2018 to September 2019, I co-led a series of curriculum development workshops to assist with the design for the grade 8-12 curricula. In the following section, I discuss findings from these workshops and how the CBEO ultimately continued to build local curriculum capacity building for long-term strategic curricular planning.

As is discussed above, several informal curriculum groups on different subjects (i.e. math group, social studies group) were created during the curriculum development for grade seven. When the CBEO approached me to assist with further curriculum work, I first encouraged the CBEO to turn these informal groups into formalized curriculum teams. In response, the CBEO created Curriculum Subject Teams (CST) that drew from the informal groups but formalized the members and roles. They also decided to create a Curriculum Coordination Team (CCT) that was comprised of CST leaders and CBEO management. Participants communicated that these teams were seen as a positive step in the direction of having permanent curriculum developers in lieu of relying on external support for the writing and adapting of classroom resources.

At the workshops that would take place from 2018-2019, the curriculum teams served as the leaders in all aspects of curriculum development, including subject selection, material design, and long-term strategic planning. Field notes from conversations I had with curriculum team members and observation notes revealed that the long-term planning that took place during these meetings was a transformative moment for the CBEO to truly think through where the schools were at in terms of student learning, how these initial outcomes aligned with the early goals, and

what they wanted for their students when they graduated. In other words, the strategic planning

that took place during these workshops was intended to help refining the vision of the

educational program eight years in. One of the common issues that participants discussed was

being nervous to engage with parents of the sixth and seventh grade students because they were

worried that the actual learning outcomes were not up to parent expectations. In other words,

despite strong community involvement at the initial stages of imagining the education system,

there was less of a feedback look that had developed over time. For example, a CBEO

curriculum developer explained that initially, parents had envisioned their children graduating

with good morals high-skill job opportunities in medicine or engineering:

> …parents said 'we want our sons and daughters to become doctors, engineers and great
> people'…But at last, again and again... think about what kind of people are really needed
> in the community, spiritually or mentally that an average leader should be…spiritually
> healthy, perfect and smart…Because now the leaders and the authorities are not very
> smart. Their mindsets and morals are not very good. They're very corrupted people...
> now here in our community. They want to change these kinds of things. The community
> wants to transform the community to become a peaceful and healthy community.
> (Interview Transcript, Betty)

In other words, when the schools were first envisioned, parents and community members set a

very high bar in terms of student learning and academic achievement. However, eight years in

conversations needed to be had about how the schooling had progressed thus far and what the

impending graduation would mean in 2024 for the first cohort of students. Regarding vocations

like law medicine and engineering, this meant reassessing what type of post-graduate

opportunities were realistic for the current cohort of eighth grade students. It also meant

specifically planning different tracks that were realistic for students to follow upon graduation.

Participants realized it was very possible for some students to go on for university study in

medicine or engineering, for example, but it was time to truly think through what grades 8-12

curriculum needed for study in the local region versus Myanmar versus Thailand versus

Australia.

To plan for these different tracks, the curriculum teams decided to map out what specific

entrance requirements were in place at local, national, and international universities and colleges

they envisioned student might want to attend. Figure 3 below displays a chart that was created at
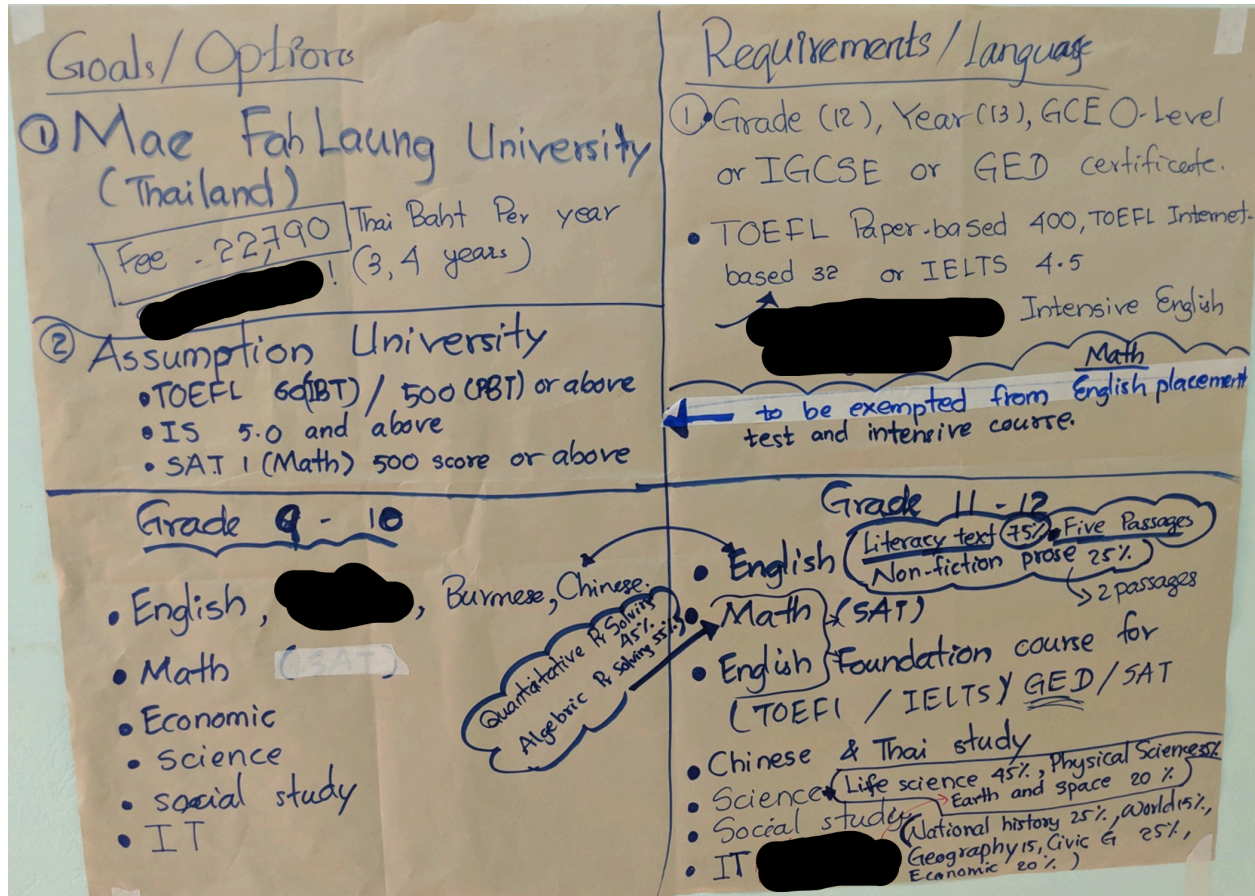


*Figure 3- Curriculum Planning for International Post-Graduate Opportunities*

a curriculum workshop where curriculum team members outlined the language and academic

requirements at two universities in Thailand. The academic requirements included International

General Certificate of Secondary Education (IGCSE) or equivalent and minimum scores for the

Test of English as a Foreign Language (TOEFL). In the bottom row, curriculum designers listed

the subjects that would need to be offered in grades 9-12 for students to have adequate academic

and language training to meet these requirements. For example, Life Sciences and Physical Science were identified as subjects that would fit within the IGCSE curricular system. Moreover, curriculum teams searched in bookstores and online to determine which materials would be within their budget to purchase and which might even be available in Burmese if the level of English was too demanding. Similarly, Figure 4 displays vocational and community-based
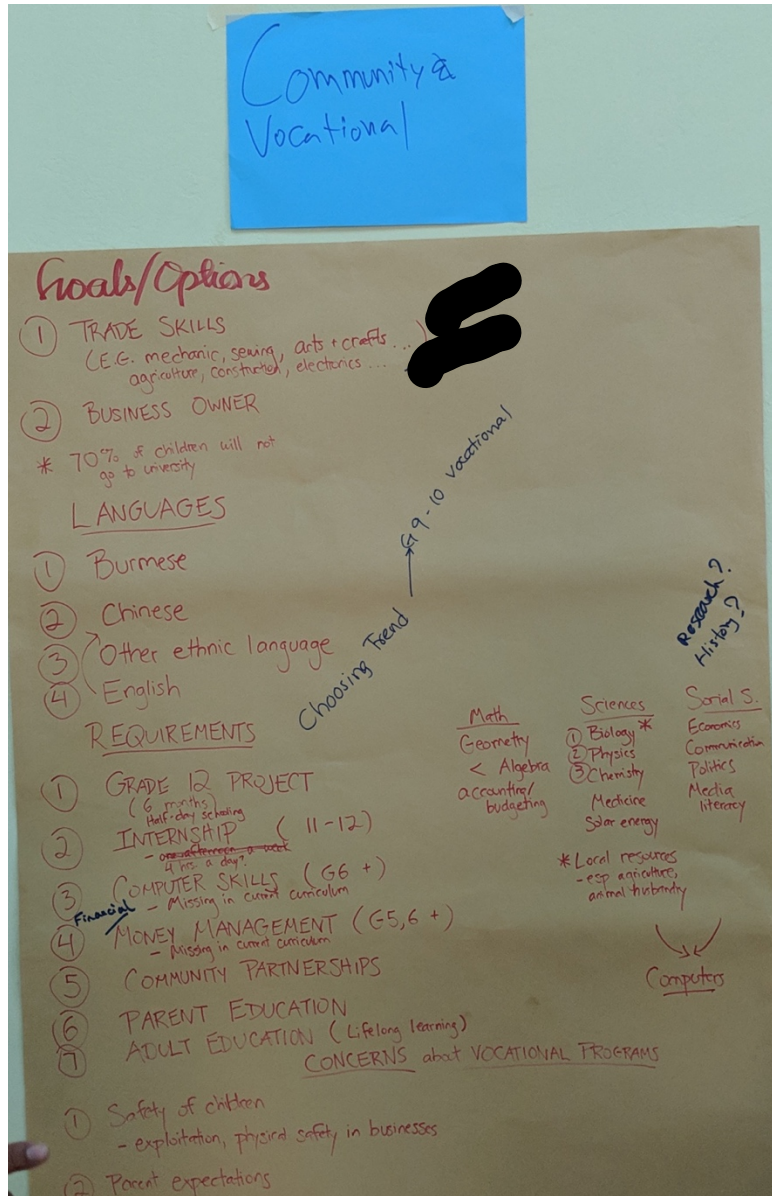


*Figure 4- Curriculum Planning for Vocational and Community-Based Post-Graduate Opportunities*

opportunities for graduates that ranged from opening local businesses to trade skills like crafts,

agriculture, and mechanics. Requirements for these were quite different than international university, thus the grade 9-12 subjects and topics differed. Despite the 'local' knowledge of what type of academic training was required for these opportunities, participants noted how the planning was almost more difficult because there weren't specific requirements that aligned with a book they could purchase. Accordingly, they outlined alternative academic pursuits like internships and community-based projects in upper secondary that would better prepare students for these lines of work. Given that my role in these workshops and conversations was both as a researcher and active participant in the curriculum planning, it is nearly impossible to separate my own biased interpretation of the planning process from what was actually useful to the CBEO. Moreover, the subsequent curriculum workshops that were planned for 2020 and 2021 were cancelled due to the COVID-19 pandemic and later the military coup in Myanmar. Despite these challenges, the results are still important to understand where the education system was at that specific moment in time.

Globalization and Freirean theory are again useful to help analyze what impact these curriculum workshops might have had and to interpret how the curriculum teams perceived their role and curriculum development. Simply the desire for children to 'learn global things' and go abroad from Myanmar for further study is a tangible example of how ideoscapes from beyond Myanmar influenced the education system. International schools, the internet, and media were all mentioned by participants as influencing how they perceived education outside their region and wanting their children to access those types of opportunities. Moreover, the ability for curriculum designers to search online to find IGCSE requirements and materials made the possibility seem well within their grasp. Unfortunately, there is no available data on whether

students were able to take IGCSE or TOEFL exams, though these results are of interest for future study.

However, Freire again offers a counter narrative to the impact of international ideoscapes on the local education system. The consideration of IGCSE and TOEFL exams and materials introduced an element of 'banking education' where curriculum developers were faced with deciding between teaching to a test or ensuring strong morals and locally relevant educational outcomes. Susan explained how they didn't care about exams or an education system based on banking knowledge, but rather articulated a more holistic vision for the promise of education:

> …some people just see that education is passing the exam. The reason why I'm serving in this education is focusing for morality…Education means not sharing or teaching or giving some opinion, idea from someone. Because I see that education come is from children inside. Not from outside banking…Many people they see that education is school. But I say education is not school. Children can get education at school and at communities, many places. (Interview Transcript, Susan)

Other participants discussed at the workshops how they were unsure of which track to follow given the tradeoffs each presented. Preparing students only for community and vocational training would not meet parent expectations of their children becoming doctors or engineers. Conversely, preparing students for IGCSE or international testing regimes seemed antithetical to the vision of schooling where children would attend for a love of learning and to become good people. These tradeoffs will be discussed fully in the conclusion, but these findings were central to understanding education in this context as an endeavor with unlimited potential, but schooling as a tangible set of buildings, people, and materials that had limitations. Vavrus (2021) describes this phenomenon as 'uncertainty', whereby

> Without question, schooling has the potential to mitigate uncertainty, but it is not always a reliable prophylactic; instead, schooling can become a source of uncertainty itself. If we ignore the Janus-faced nature of schooling, we also brush aside the culture, political, and economic forces that greatly affect how it can be used, and by whom, to make life safer and more secure. (p. 3)

Regarding the EMG education system, schooling was envisioned to change society and mitigate uncertainty that had resulted from decades of inadequate and oppressive national schooling. However, after nearly a decade of running schools, curriculum developers and participants generally began to see how education and schooling specifically are never certain.

**Conclusion**

In developing and implementing MTB-MLE classroom level curricula, the EMG vision for education was truly put in action while demonstrating key findings on sustainable access to quality and inclusive education in the emergency setting. Regarding access, perhaps the clearest finding was that the internationally led curriculum writing and development process allowed schools to open. Simply put, without these materials, the schools would not have been able to function and access to education would have not been realized. The significant use of human and financial resources that were required to write a full curriculum worth of student and teacher materials, translate them into the mother tongue, and print them for physical distribution cannot be understated. Especially in an emergency context, and one where many community members lacked formal education training; this was a remarkable achievement and evidence that accessing education is no small accomplishment. Access was also increased because the CBEO leadership made the curriculum freely available to schools in the entire region. To this end, Susan noted that the curriculum was not only for the CBEO, but "for all [EMG] communities…They said, they're very happy to come and see them and pleased working together hand to hand [our region] …not only for [their region or religion] but also for all children" (Interview Transcript, Susan).

Beyond access, the curriculum materials also reflected several elements of quality that were part of the EMG vision. The use of MTB-MLE was demonstrated to be a political act of

resistance against the oppressive Burmese military state and aimed towards promoting broader societal goals. Ethnic-minority languages had been outlawed for decades and a MTB-MLE system unto itself was revolutionary and allowed for a type of education that had not previously been thinkable. The inclusion of local forms of knowledge, traditions, culture, work skills, and history were all perceived by participants as reflecting a quality education. Writing a history curriculum that drew from oral stories and knowledge was also perceived as allowing for students, teachers, and CBEO employees to have open dialogue that confronted the violent Burmese oppression and exclusion from a federalist national politics. Moreover, the quasi-secular and multicultural approach to materials reflected an inclusive pedagogy for children outside the EMG main religion. Also central to a quality education was teachers commenting on how local topics like history were easier to teach given their personal experience and knowledge with the content. However, the promotion of a local history could ultimately promote a negative face of education, though this is far beyond the scope of this study.

The incorporation of global curriculum influences and English language materials was also found to have a mixed impact on quality of education. The use of these aligned with the broad educational vision to teach global subjects and provide students with potential to study abroad. However, the balancing act of global versus local types of knowledge created a situation where it was nearly impossible to tell what that right balance *should* be. This was especially true given how difficult MTB-MLE was found to be in practice. Student English proficiency was perceived to be too low for meaningful engagement with many materials, while teachers also found them difficult given their own lack of English language and subject content knowledge. Taken together, these illustrated the need for a consistent language policy and enforcement for MTB-MLE to achieve its fullest potential and trilingual students. Moreover, the MTB-MLE

system benefited the majority of EMG families, though it was not possible in practice to include more than one EMG dialect, thus diminishing inclusivity for some.

Finally, the curriculum development processes reflected tradeoffs regarding sustainability and the emergency context. The clearest connection to sustainability was found in the internationally led process that resulted in the development of classroom materials and allowed initial schools to open. Despite the crucial materials that these provided, the process did not develop local capacity for curriculum development. By the time I arrived at the research site, the CBEO was still struggling to design curriculum materials, thus demonstrating the level of time and expertise that are required. The price of international materials was also prohibitive and adapting the locally available materials proved insufficient in terms of subjects available. Finally, the use of the EMG language meant that school could be shut down at any time. This has been noted in previous chapters, but it is worth reiterating given the shadow the military cast over the curriculum process and education system broadly.

**CHAPTER 8: CONCLUSION**

*"Many ethnic peoples are running their education system in Myanmar; they don't know about that. So we need to give our finding, our suggestion to other people"*
*-Susan*

The purpose of this study was to explore how to improve sustainable access to quality and inclusive education for people affected by emergencies globally through an in-depth case study of an Ethnic Minority Group (EMG) community-based education system in Myanmar. Using a qualitative and participatory research approach, I sought to tell the EMG education story through their voices, while drawing from literature and various theoretical perspectives to analyze how their experience could inform questions about education in other emergency contexts. In the following, I first present a summary of findings that emerged in chapters 5 through 7. Next, I synthesize and build upon these findings to conclude with a series of recommendations for practice and research on sustainable access to quality and inclusive education, both within the research site and in emergencies beyond Myanmar.

**Summary of Findings**

Chapter 5 presents findings on the first research question through an exploration of the macro-level relationship between the sociocultural and political context of the EMG and their vision for community-based education. Evidence showed that the EMG Community-Based Religious Organization (CBRO) had operated in the region for over a century, establishing and defining its functioning as a community-based state-like governance institution. This history of sustained civil society and strong institutions were instrumental in allowing the EMG today to galvanize regional communities and identify education as a means for social change. Education was recognized specifically given the long-standing socio-political context whereby the Burmese-led military state had engaged in violent oppression through public schooling for

decades. In response, the CBRO led a community-based collaboration that resulted in a new vision for an EMG run education system to resist the Burmese state and define what a quality education meant to the EMG community. The resulting community-based vision for quality education included the usage of the EMG mother tongue for instruction, preservation and promotion of local EMG culture, providing national and international opportunities for students upon graduation, and ultimately training the next generation of EMG leaders.

Chapter 6 addresses the second research question on what impact the meso-level organizational practices (i.e., structure, staffing, and financing) employed by the CBRO had on the broader EMG educational vision. The process of turning this community-based education vision into functioning schools was found to have relied on the CBRO top-down hierarchy and regional network of staff and community-based fundraising sources. The hierarchy exhibited benefits like allowing for quick dissemination of the education vision throughout the region and the creation of schools that used CBRO physical infrastructure (i.e. school buildings) and resources (human and financial). The CBRO hierarchy and regional network of sub-organizations also fostered increased access to education through the hiring of school-level staff and teachers who were intrinsically motivated and reflected a locally relevant vision for quality education in their pedagogy. However, the top-down hierarchical structure also led to staff burnout and lack of feedback and recognition of school level staff like teachers and administrators, who were often young and female. A community-based financing model allowed the education system access to a sustainable stream of local financial resources, though these were limited in nature given the ever-present threat of renewed conflict.

Chapter 7 addressed the third research question through a description of the curriculum development processes employed by the Community-Based Education Organization (CBEO) and

analysis of how they worked to create critical pedagogies that reflected and supported the broader community-based education mission. Mother Tongue-Based Multilingual Education (MTB-MLE) was found to be the curricular foundation which resulted in an amalgamation of local (mother tongue) national (Burmese) and international (English) curriculum materials, learning objectives, and influences. However, successfully fostering trilingual abilities in students and teachers proved difficult while also raising questions related to which local, national, or global goals were realistic to achieve given the limited pool of local teachers. Regardless of the learning outcomes, though, the ability for EMG curriculum developers to collectively decide and act upon these challenges resulted in local ownership of education that reflected locally relevant content and conceptualizations of quality. Sharing curriculum with schools throughout the region also worked to increase access by opening schools, though a sustainable curriculum development process was difficult given already over-burdened CBEO employees and the difficulties in fostering consistent technical support.

**Recommendations**

Findings revealed that envisioning, creating, and operating Community-Based Schools (CBS) amidst emergencies presented contradictions, hard decisions, and competing influences; all of which impacted sustainable access to quality and inclusive education. Below are a series of the recommendations for future practice and research that emerged based on these findings. They are organized according to this study's core themes of sustainable access to quality and inclusive education in emergencies, and focused on the importance of defining community within its sociopolitical and historical context, and exploring its crucial role in envisioning, implementing, and refining the CBS system.

*Practice*

Access and Inclusion

Perhaps the most important recommendation regarding access to education is that creating a new system for education rooted in community needs from the ground up is *possible* in emergency contexts and should be considered as an option for oppressed and marginalized people globally. The very fact that the EMG, which was subjected to decades of brutal state violence and oppression, was able to galvanize resources to create numerous CBS is important because it illustrates that the project is achievable, despite active state-led violence and legal restrictions. Even in the face of active conflict with the Burmese state military, the EMG leveraged its CBRO hierarchy and community-based state-like institutional resources and networks to create access to education that was meaningful to the communities in the region. People in similar emergency situations, particularly with existing community-based or regional networks, like the hierarchical CBRO structure in this study, could leverage them to create a shared vision for education and provide the necessary human, physical, and financial resources to begin operation of schools. Susan noted that "we need to give our finding, our suggestion to other people (Interview Transcript, Susan) which captures how the EMG recognized the importance of their work and how it could inspire others, either in Myanmar or otherwise, to take education ownership and operation into their own hands.

The second recommendation surrounding access is for CBS systems serving EMGs to critically examine who has meaningful access based on factors like religion and language of curriculum and instruction. The education system in this study undoubtedly increased access to education for the EMG broadly, which may in fact be enough. However, as findings showed throughout this study, even EMGs have majority and minority identities within. Regarding the

133

education system in this study, this meant the dominant EMG mother tongue language was selected as the language of curriculum and instruction despite the existence of several other regional dialects, nationalities, and religious groups that lived in the same communities. It was beyond the human and financial resources of the EMG to write curriculum in multiple local languages, though an open and inclusive classroom environment was encouraged by actively promoting multiculturalism in the curriculum along with strong morals and empathy. That is, language of curriculum is important to inclusivity, but there may be other ways to promote an open and inclusive classroom environment. The quasi-secular approach to curriculum found in chapter seven also illustrated how religious organizations can create educational opportunities that serve their religious members while also being inclusive of other denominations or religions. It is beyond the scope of this study to suggest how similar communities might address these challenges, though an important recommendation for practice is to simply be aware of these challenges and alternative pathways to inclusivity, like promoting multiculturalism and empathy in the curriculum.

Lastly, it is recommended that community-based education leaders seriously consider how to balance the *quantity* of schooling with the *quality* of the education provided. Findings revealed that expanding access though increasing the quantity of new schools too rapidly impacted the quality of education. As a non-state education system, schools relied on a combination of parent tuition and financing from the regional CBRO and community sub-organizations. In practice, this meant families who could not afford tuition thus could not access the CBS schooling. It also added pressure to open schools for increased revenue, even if communities might not have been ready. The impact on quality was shown by the stretching of human resources at the bottom of the CBRO hierarchy throughout the region whereby top

performing staff were asked to take on tasks like teacher training and curriculum development. Moreover, findings showed that some schools were opened despite the CBRO deeming them not ready. Accordingly, a recommendation from this study is for similar CBS systems to thoughtfully balance the quantity of schooling with its impact on resource usage and thus the quality of the education provided.

Quality

Similar to access, the central recommendation from this study on quality education is that designing community-based education, curriculum, and instruction is possible in emergency contexts and should rely on sustained community buy-in and involvement to define and reflect quality education. The CBRO regional networks of state-like institutions allowed the EMG to collectively gather diverse voices and outline what educational quality meant to them, like teaching in the mother tongue and including locally and internationally relevant opportunities for graduates. Regardless of the specific goals, however, the most important reflection of quality education was simply the opportunity to decide what quality education entailed as a community and to use education as a means to reflect on and set new societal goals. Community buy-in gave people a voice which in turn created a mutually agreed upon standard for quality. However, findings also revealed that community meaning making was an ongoing process that must be maintained over time. Accordingly, it is recommended that when community members are included in the initial stages of educational goal setting, yearly follow-up is conducted; especially for curriculum review and to help (re)align curriculum and learning goals based on implementation. This feedback should come from ground level school staff, like teachers and curriculum writers, in addition to parents and community members (i.e. young or female) that might not have high standing within the organizational structure.

The second recommendation on quality education is for community-based schools operating as MTB-MLE programs to have clear and consistent language policy and learning objectives for graduation. Findings showed that the MTB-MLE program was selected by the CBRO leaders to ensure the EMG mother tongue language would be used as the dominant language of curriculum and instruction while the national language (Burmese) and English were also included in schooling. However, by the time students reached grade seven, over-reliance on the mother tongue resulted in low levels of student Burmese and English proficiency. Accordingly, a recommendation for MTB-MLE practice is for schools to develop and enforce clear language policies to ensure adequate student language proficiency by the target grade level. Moreover, the MTB-MLE program that was adopted at the research site was used to provide local, national, and international opportunities for student upon graduation. However, the lofty goals set at the outset of the program may not be realized for international opportunities given low levels of English proficiency. Thus, it is recommended for MTB-MLE programs to not only have clear language policy, but established tracks for students upon graduation (i.e. local employment vs international university). These tracks may be difficult to choose between, but these decisions are crucial to ensure that manageable learning outcomes are agreed upon and able to be realized.

Finally, it is recommended that school systems, regardless of how long they have been in operation, take time to reflect on what quality education means to stakeholders like parents, students, teachers, staff, and community members at large. Findings revealed that there was real value in the purposeful reflection the EMG undertook on how to preserve and improve their society. At the research site, these reflections allowed for school planners and staff to see value in creating an education that gave their children access to a globalized world while balancing the

desire to preserve traditional EMG society. In the case of this study, that reflection was done before opening schools, and is recommended for communities that might be at a similar stage. Further, there may also be value in established schools to undertake these reflections on education as well to help see what they might be missing. This seemingly rare opportunity to reflect on education as a whole and its connection to moral character development, for example, maybe be useful in instances of community-based schooling in emergencies or beyond.

<u>Sustainability Amidst Emergencies</u>

While no two emergency contexts are the same, one common characteristic is a lack of human, physical, and financial resources (UNESCO, 2011, 2019). Accordingly, the primary recommendation from this study for sustaining education in emergencies is for schools and education staff to ensure community buy-in on the purpose, staffing, and funding of education. In this study, benefits of community buy-in were realized first in creating a collaborative vision for quality education. The way this vision was translated to curriculum and instruction, for example, led to more general interest amongst parents and increased enrollment in schools, thus raising funding through tuition and helping establish a positive reputation. Schools and the CBRO were also staffed with local teachers, staff, and administrators which resulted in parents feeling more comfortable sending their children. Community buy-in also created a foundation of school workers that were able to push through difficulties that emerged, whether it was outbursts of conflict or long hours. That is, community members who were intrinsically motivated and believed in the system provided the best means to carry on in the face of obstacles. The reliance on community members, however, also meant a shortage of qualified workers and general burnout amongst the best performing staff. Funding streams were also sustainable given the community support, but ultimately limited given the regional conflict and emergency context.

Thus, it is recommended that communities in similar situations rely on community buy-in, but also provide human support needed to prevent issues like burnout.

Finally, it must be discussed that the only truly sustainable way to create and maintain community-based systems of education amidst emergencies is to fundamentally solve the underlying causes of those emergency situations. The conflict at the research site between the Burmese-led state and EMG has been ongoing for decades, and it is of course far beyond the scope of this study to address solutions to this. However, as was exhibited by the military coup in Myanmar in February 2021 after data collection had finished, such tenuous circumstances are often on the verge of escalation. Thus, the only truly sustainable way to ensure EMG education in this region or other similar contexts would be ending state conflict and fostering state support of EMG education. There is no recommendation on how to make this happen in Myanmar, or any other context, though it must be discussed as a serious barrier to real sustainability. Susan noted how the role of international donors must be considered in supporting these types of projects: "Only one or two donors are supporting for our ethnic education. They never see other ethnic peoples, many ethnic peoples are running their education system in Myanmar, they don't know about that" (Interview Transcript, Susan). That is, if state support and funding are not possible, then international assistance is one potential avenue at least for intermediary funding.

*Research*

The body of research on non-state actors providing education in emergencies is significant; drawing from both practitioner-based and academic research (Burde et al., 2017; INEE, 2020a; UNESCO, 2019, 2021). The findings and recommendations discussed above can thus be used to formulate a series of guiding questions and areas of concern for future research. This study was able to foster an in-depth understanding of one instance of community-based

schooling which revealed a myriad of inter-related elements ranging from community history and institutions to organizational practices and community-based curriculum development processes. Accordingly, it is recommended that future research similarly investigate these phenomena holistically to inform a clearer analysis of how these impact access to quality and inclusive education. This study was mostly limited to the curriculum development process regarding pedagogy, thus more research on instruction and the realization of learning outcomes is also needed with future research.

The role of community and indeed *defining* community is also important for future research. Despite clearly articulated typologies of non-state actors within the literature (INEE, 2020b; Steer et al., 2015; UNESCO, 2021), defining who constitutes an EMG community, how long that group has existed, and why are all important questions for consideration given their impact on educational outcomes. Future research on community and faith-based education should consider incorporating diverse community voices in their studies to achieve this level of community understanding that incorporates the socio-political and historical context that is necessary for holistic understanding. It is also recommended that participatory and action research be used as a methodology to help link practice to theory. Participants at the research site would not have been able to volunteer the time needed for interviews if not for my active participation in their education project. Moreover, this relationship allowed for the direct application of academic and theoretical insight for the education system, while I was able to collect data on an active practice of schooling to inform such academic pursuits. Ultimately, the lived reality of countless people across the globe who lack sustainable access to quality and inclusive education is reason enough for more research on community-based responses to education in emergencies.

# APPENDIX

## A- Study Information Sheet

## Study Information Sheet

*'Making our own schools was the only way': How community-based schools promote sustainable access to quality and inclusive education in emergency settings in Myanmar*

Andrew Swindell and Dr. Edith Omwami, from the Graduate School of Education and Information Studies at the University of California, Los Angeles (UCLA) are conducting a research study.

You were selected as a possible participant in this study because of your experience with the curriculum development process in Myanmar. Your participation in this research study is voluntary and your confidentiality will be guaranteed if you choose to participate.

## Why is this study being done?

This study seeks to investigate how the organizational, curriculum, and instruction practices reflect quality, inclusion, and sustainability at community-based non-state schools in emergency settings in Myanmar. The specific research questions I will address over the course of my study are:

RQ1- How did the sociocultural, political, and protracted emergency context influence Ethnic Minority Group (EMG) community-based state formation, and the motivation and vision for Community-Based Schools (CBS)?

RQ2- What organizational practices were implemented at the institutional and school level, and how did they impact the community-based vision for education?

RQ3- What curriculum development processes did CBS use and how did they work to create critical pedagogies that reflect and support the broader community-based education mission?

## What will happen if I take part in this research study?

If you volunteer to participate in this study, the researcher will ask you to do the following:

- Interview participants will first be contacted to set up a time to meet or speak by email with the researcher, have an opportunity to ask any questions or concerns, and provide voluntary written consent.
- Possibly, ask/share my study with other community members who you may believe fit my research criteria.
- The study will begin in 2018 and data collection will take place until 2021. I will conduct 60-90-minute one-on-one interviews at a convenient location of your choosing
- The types of questions being asked will entail questions related to your experiences with the

curriculum development process, how you decided where to become involved, how you developed and used curriculum at your school, and your overall impressions of the process over time.

**How long will I be in the research study?**

Participants will spend approximately 60-90 minutes in an initial individual interview. Then, each participant will have the opportunity to meet for follow up interviews depending on necessity and interest.

**Are there any potential risks or discomforts that I can expect from this study?**

A discussion of your experience with the curriculum development process could potentially be uncomfortable if these experiences are negative. Your participation in this study will only require you to think about and discuss aspects of your lived experiences and as such poses minimal risk to you.

**Are there any potential benefits if I participate?**

You may benefit from the study by thoughtfully reflecting upon your experiences. The results of this research study may inform areas of improvement in the curriculum development process in Myanmar and beyond. You will be updated throughout the research process and notified of findings once data is compiled and reviewed.

**Will I be paid for participating?**

No.

**Will information about me and my participation be kept confidential?**

Any information that is obtained in connection with this study and that can identify you will remain confidential. It will be disclosed only with your permission or as required by law. Confidentiality will be maintained by means of recording interviews on a digital recorder then immediately uploading them to my private computer/OneDrive and deleting the recorder file. The electronic recording will be stored on a password protected computer/OneDrive and only I will have access to the recording, during transcription and after. If you complete the interview, your name and contact information will be scrubbed from the data before analysis and a pseudonym will be created so that your identifying information is not linked to your responses. Further, you may be asked if you are amenable to being contacted about future research participation opportunities. If you agree, your name and contact information will be kept in a secure, password protected file that only I will have access to.

**What are my rights if I take part in this study?**

- You can choose whether or not you want to be in this study, and you may withdraw your consent and discontinue participation at any time.

- Whatever decision you make, there will be no penalty to you, and no loss of benefits to which you were otherwise entitled.
- You may refuse to answer any questions that you do not want to answer and still remain in the study.

**Who can I contact if I have questions about this study?**

**The research team:**
If you have any questions, comments or concerns about the research, you can talk to the one of the researchers. Please contact:

*Andrew Swindell*                                      *Dr. Edith Omwami*
*(978) 987-7584*                                       *(310) 825-1791*
*aswindell@ucla.edu*                                   *omwami@gseis.ucla.edu*

**UCLA Office of the Human Research Protection Program (OHRPP):**

If you have questions about your rights as a research subject, or you have concerns or suggestions and you want to talk to someone other than the researchers, you may contact the UCLA OHRPP by phone: (310) 206-2040; by email: participants@research.ucla.edu or by mail: Box 951406, Los Angeles, CA 90095-1406.

**B- Conversational Interview Guiding Questions**

The following are intended to show some potential probes/topics I will discuss in interviews. These will vary by participant, and before each interview, I will highlight particular elements I want to discuss depending on the role of the person with whom I will speak. In other words, this is an example of potential questions/topics I will broach, though not an exhaustive list or structured interview protocol:

**Background and Community-** RQ1- How did the sociocultural, political, and protracted emergency context influence Ethnic Minority Group (EMG) community-based state formation, and the motivation and vision for Community-Based Schools (CBS)?

1. What was/is your role with the [school/organization]?
2. When did you start with the [school/organization]?
3. What were you doing before you began working here?
4. How do you define the community here?
    a. Who is part of the community? Who is not?
    b. What are common characteristics? What to folks have in common?
    c. How has the conflict affected the community?
    d. What happens when people are forced to move in or out?

**Organization-** RQ2- What organizational practices were implemented at the institutional and school level, and how did they impact the community-based vision for education?

1. Politics and Management
    a. Tell me your story of the organization! I want to hear how you understand all the ins and outs! For example, when did it start and why?
    b. How do you understand the mission of the organization/school and how it works?
    c. How do you understand the management and operation of the organization/school?
    d. How does the school/organization fit into the local/national/global politics?
2. Community Involvement
    a. What community stakeholders are present?
    b. How did they come to be involved?
    c. Are they still active?
3. Do you feel like the following are reflected in the work of the school/organization?
    a. Access
    b. Inclusion
    c. Quality
    d. Sustainability
4. Summative Check
    a. What are the biggest successes/challenges of how the school/organization functions?

**Curriculum-** RQ3- What curriculum development processes did CBS use and how did they work to create critical pedagogies that reflect and support the broader community-based education mission?

1. Curriculum Design and Product
    a. Tell me the story of your participation in the curriculum design process!
    b. Take me through the whole curriculum development process…before, during, and after your role is complete. What happened and how did it go? Who was there? Who wasn't?
    c. Is there a particular approach you take to curriculum or the development process?
        i. Defining curriculum narrow/broad, critical approach?
    d. How do you determine the curriculum goals for a school/district?
    e. Tell me about an aspect of the curriculum you really love. Tell me about the process for developing this piece of the curriculum
    f. Where there times when you felt more included than others? Where there times when you didn't feel heard? Do you remember a moment when you felt like you were really part of the group?
    g. What are the strengths of your curriculum development process?
    h. What are the challenges of your curriculum development process?
2. Community Involvement
    a. You described this community earlier as _____ How is the community involved in the curriculum process?
    b. Who was included, who was not and why?
    c. How are all the needs of the community met?
    d. How was community knowledge drawn on?
3. Do you feel like the following are reflected in the curriculum design and product?
    a. Inclusion
    b. Quality
    c. Sustainability
4. Summary, check for understanding
    a. So it looks like the process generally involves_____
    b. The following people assume these roles_____
    c. You thought these factors where most important_____

## C- Classroom Observation Protocol

Classroom Observation Protocol

| Observer: Andrew Swindell | Observation # |
|---|---|
| Study Title: | Location: TBD |
| Date: | Activity: |
| Time: | Language: English and/or Burmese and/or Local |
| Participants:<br>    1. | Comments: |

**Visual Map**
I will draw a map of the room, my field of view, who is present and how is not (ex. Front or back of the room)

**Notes**

| Time | Observation | Observer Comment |
|---|---|---|
| | I saw this… | It made me think… |
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**Context and Purpose**
I plan on attending several classes in at least 2-3 different schools. Communities have varying degrees of financial and human resources, along with different settings and local influences, which I plan to capture by visiting multiple sites. I will plan to observe classes taught in English, primarily, which will include English language classes at the primary and secondary level as well

as subject classes (i.e. science and social studies) at the secondary level. The goal is to observe how the curriculum translates to classroom instruction (i.e. do the materials works as intended?) and student learning/engagement with attention to quality and inclusion specifically.

**Frame**

I am interested in capturing the class from a "wide lens" in regard to the general tone and level of engagement with regard to inclusion and quality especially. I also will use a "narrow lens" to observe how specific units and materials are used and lesson plans envisioned in the curriculum design stage translate in the classroom environment. Accordingly, I will generally try to observe the class as a whole, though depending on the situation I may also follow one student in particular or the teacher specifically. Thus, I will take some classes from a wide view and other more narrow.

**Guiding Questions:**
1. Background Information
   a. Number and role of participants
   b. Observable participant demographics
   c. School/district context
   d. Class subject
2. How does the planned/written curriculum translate during instruction?
   a. Language, teaching, student involvement/comprehension, quality/relevance?
   b. Is the classroom environment inclusive (language, relevant)?
   c. Do the lessons/materials/activities envisioned when planning curriculum work in the classroom?
   d. Are learning objectives achieved?

**Accuracy**

I will take pictures of the room (with participants in it with permission), draw a map of the room with basic identifying information (person on left, person in front) for my own records. No personally identifiable information (name, contact etc…) will be included in my observation notes (aside from my pictures. Considering the students are children and I was a teacher in Myanmar prior to my doctoral studies, I hope to make set the room at ease and talk about my previous experience teaching. I will also take detailed field notes and write site visit reports using the basic model above immediately after.

**D- Meeting Observation Protocol**

Observation Protocol

| Observer: Andrew Swindell | Observation # |
|---|---|
| Study Title: | Location: TBD |
| Date: | Activity and Purpose: |
| Time: | Language: English and/or Burmese and/or Local |
| Participants: | Comments: |

**Visual Map**

**Notes**

| Time | Observation | Observer Comment |
|---|---|---|
| | I saw this… | It made me think… |
| | | |
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**Context**
I plan on attending curriculum development meetings and workshops. I have already participated in several of these, thus when I travel for fieldwork it will be expected and planned for gathering the curriculum designers and for me to lead a workshop focused on developing new curriculum materials.

**Purpose**
The goal is to observe who is involved, what techniques the group uses to discuss, plan, and create curriculum, and generally observe the curriculum process that schools and districts employ. I want to capture questions surrounding R1 and R2 here to see how the organizational practices manifest in the curriculum design processes as well as how those processes unfold.

**Frame**
I am interested in capturing the meeting or event space from a "wide lens" in regard to the general type of information being shared, questions asked, and discussion of curriculum. Since part of my research involves viewing curriculum as dynamic, I hope to use this space to observe how curriculum is conceptualized, planned, and created. I also will use a "narrow lens" to observe how specific units and materials are planned and created for immediate use.

As a participant observer, I will be busy mostly with leading discussions and working with different teams. I will also focus on the needs of participants during meetings, so will take notes in between working with different groups. Realistically, I will take as many written notes as possible, but will also rely on taking short notes on my phone via audio recording and short note features.
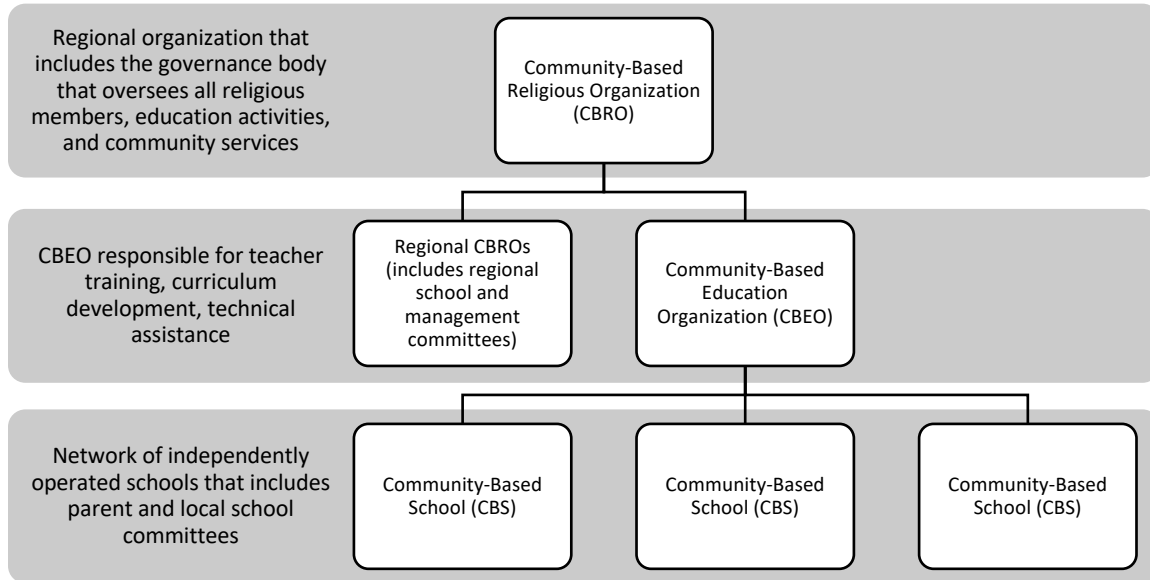
**E- Guiding questions for thematic analysis-**

"What does this theme mean?' 'What are the assumptions underpinning it?' 'What are the implications of this theme?' 'What conditions are likely to have given rise to it?' 'Why do people talk about this thing in this particular way (as opposed to other ways)?' and 'What is the overall story the different themes reveal about the topic?'. These sorts of questions should guide the analysis once you have a clear sense of your thematic map" (Braun & Clarke, 2006, p. 94)

**"15-point checklist of criteria for good thematic analysis"** (Braun & Clarke, 2006, p. 96)

| Process | No. | Criteria |
|---|---|---|
| Transcription | 1 | The data have been transcribed to an appropriate level of detail, and the transcripts have been checked against the tapes for 'accuracy'. |
| Coding | 2 | Each data item has been given equal attention in the coding process. |
| | 3 | Themes have not been generated from a few vivid examples (an anecdotal approach), but instead the coding process has been thorough, inclusive and comprehensive. |
| | 4 | All relevant extracts for all each theme have been collated. |
| | 5 | Themes have been checked against each other and back to the original data set. |
| | 6 | Themes are internally coherent, consistent, and distinctive. |
| Analysis | 7 | Data have been analysed – interpreted, made sense of – rather than just paraphrased or described. |
| | 8 | Analysis and data match each other – the extracts illustrate the analytic claims. |
| | 9 | Analysis tells a convincing and well-organized story about the data and topic. |
| | 10 | A good balance between analytic narrative and illustrative extracts is provided. |
| Overall | 11 | Enough time has been allocated to complete all phases of the analysis adequately, without rushing a phase or giving it a once-over-lightly. |
| Written report | 12 | The assumptions about, and specific approach to, thematic analysis are clearly explicated. |
| | 13 | There is a good fit between what you claim you do, and what you show you have done – ie, described method and reported analysis are consistent. |
| | 14 | The language and concepts used in the report are consistent with the epistemological position of the analysis. |
| | 15 | The researcher is positioned as *active* in the research process; themes do not just 'emerge'. |

## F- Detailed Community-Based Organizational Chart

Regional organization that includes the governance body that oversees all religious members, education activities, and community services — **Community-Based Religious Organization (CBRO)**

CBEO responsible for teacher training, curriculum development, technical assistance — **Regional CBROs (includes regional school and management committees)** — **Community-Based Education Organization (CBEO)**

Network of independently operated schools that includes parent and local school committees — **Community-Based School (CBS)** — **Community-Based School (CBS)** — **Community-Based School (CBS)**

**G- Detailed Interview Schedule**

| Number | Date | Interview Type | Medium | Participant Title | Length (hours) |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| 1 | 6/20/18 | Interview | Phone | International Consultant | 1 |
| 2 | 6/23/18 | Interview | Skype | International Consultant | 1.25 |
| 3 | 6/26/18 | Interview | In-person | International Consultant | 2 |
| 4 | 6/29/18 | Interview | In-person | CBEO Employee | 2 |
| 5 | 6/29/18 | Interview | In-person | CBEO Employee | 0.6 |
| 6 | 6/29/18 | Interview | In-person | CBEO Management | 0.75 |
| 7 | 7/1/18 | Interview | In-person | CBEO Curriculum Team Member | 0.6 |
| 8 | 7/1/18 | Interview | In-person | CBEO Employee | 0.5 |
| 9 | 7/1/18 | Interview | In-person | CBEO Management | 1 |
| 10 | 7/5/18 | Group Interview | In-person | CBRO Employee<br>CBRO Employee<br>CBRO Employee<br>CBRO Employee | 1 |
| 11 | 7/7/18 | Interview | In-person | CBEO Employee | 0.75 |
| 12 | 7/9/18 | Interview | In-person | International Consultant | 1.25 |
| 13 | 7/9/18 | Interview | In-person | International Consultant | 0.75 |
| 14 | 7/11/18 | Interview | In-person | CBEO Employee | 0.5 |
| 15 | 7/11/18 | Interview | In-person | CBRO Employee | 0.75 |
| 16 | 7/12/18 | Interview | In-person | CBS Teacher<br>CBS Teacher | 1 |
| 17 | 7/16/18 | Group Interview | In-person | School Committee | 0.33 |
| 18 | 7/16/18 | Interview | In-person | CBRO Leader | 0.25 |
| 19 | 7/17/18 | Interview | In-person | CBEO Employee | 0.75 |

| 20 | 7/18/18 | Interview | In-person | CBRO Employee | 1 |
|----|---------|-----------|-----------|---------------|---|
| 21 | 7/18/18 | Interview | In-person | CBS Teacher<br>CBS Teacher | 0.5 |
| 22 | 7/23/18 | Interview | In-person | CBEO Employee<br>CBEO Employee | 1.5 |
| 23 | 7/24/18 | Interview | In-person | CBEO Employee | 0.25 |
| 24 | 7/25/18 | Interview | In-person | CBS Teacher | 0.66 |
| 25 | 7/25/18 | Interview | In-person | CBEO Curriculum Team Member | 0.75 |
| 26 | 7/25/18 | Interview | In-person | CBEO Employee | 0.75 |
| 27 | 7/25/18 | Interview | In-person | Parent Focus Group (5) | 0.5 |
| 28 | 7/26/18 | Interview | In-person | CBRO Leader | 1.33 |
| 29 | 7/26/18 | Interview | In-person | CBRO Leader | 0.33 |
| 30 | 7/27/18 | Interview | In-person | CBEO Employee | 0.66 |
| 31 | 7/27/18 | Interview | In-person | CBEO Management | 1.66 |
| 32 | 7/27/18 | Interview | In-person | CBEO Employee | 0.33 |

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