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Peace Education in Myanmar:
An analysis of the education in the country through the peace education
perspective

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Abstract

Burma or Myanmar is a highly diverse country, with more than 130 different ethnic groups and 100 languages. The pluralism of the country is its most prominent characteristic. Since independence, Burma faced challenges to establish the unity and identity of the society.

Education in the country directly connects with the sociopolitical background of the country and impacts the construction of peace. This research aims to identify the education policies in the school system of Myanmar that can be connected with peace education. The research seeks to understand how peace education is demonstrated in the Myanmar educational system over the post-independence, military rule, and democratic periods.

Based on the literature review of peace education theory, a framework was created to identify the education policies that can be considered peace education and juxtaposed to the historical and educational developments during post-independence, military rule, and democratic periods in Myanmar.

Analysis of the education system in Myanmar concluded that many peace education policies were present during historical periods in the country. Nevertheless, key concepts of peace education were never found in the educational policies of the country.

Keywords: Peace Education, Myanmar, Burma, Negative Peace, Positive Peace

Acknowledgments

List of abbreviations

AFPFL	Anti-Fascist People's Freedom League
BSPP	Burma Socialist Progam Party
BSW	Burmese Socialist Way
CESR	Comprehensive Education Sector Review
COVID19	Coronavirus
EAO	Ethnic armed organizations
EFP	Education for Peace
EU	European Union
GDP	Gross Domestic Product
HRE	Human Rights Education
ITP	Integrative Theory of Peace
MOE	Minister of Education
NDL	National Democracy League
NESP	National Educational Strategic Plan
NGO	Non-Governmental Organization
PE	Peace Education
SPDC	State Peace and Development Council
SLORC	State Law Order and Restoration Council
STEM	Science, Technology, Engineering and Math
UN	United Nations
UNDP	United Nations Development Program
UNESCO	United Nations Education Scientific and Cultural Organization
UNICEF	United Nations Children's Fund
USA	United States of America
USDP	Union Solidarity and Development Party

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1. INTRODUCTION

It is not a secret that education can change people's life. From kindergarten to higher education, the school system supports the students to achieve a successful career. However, this is a narrow portion of the consequences that education can have. Education can have a much more significant impact on someone's life; education teaches skills and values, teaches respect to others, and how to live in society peacefully. Education has the power to contribute to the personality of the person.

This research aims to understand how peace education is demonstrated in the Myanmar educational system over the post-independence, military rule, and democratic periods. Moreover, it seeks to comprehend what peace education approaches reveal about the political contexts in which it is inserted.

In 2018 Burmese schools were questioned if they were fulfilling all the aims of education. The schools had in their official curricula religious discrimination and racial supremacy. The civic education discipline prioritized the Burmese race and Buddhist religion over others, creating a discriminatory approach in class with students from different backgrounds (Yamin Aung, 2018).

Indeed, parents and civil society were not happy with the possible consequences this could have in society. In an interview for the newspaper "The Irrawaddy," Daw Kathleen expressed her concern: "Civic education should teach children to respect different races and religions and to help each other. But now they are putting wrong thinking to young children, (…) it is very concerning that the children may mistake other religions for their enemy" (Yamin Aung, 2018).

The result of this was a joint force of more than 120 civil society groups. They wrote an open letter for president U Win Myint with a copy to the Minister of Education expressing their concerns for the extremism taught in class. The letter showed the population's will for

reform in the country's scholar curricula and the demand for changes that would teach the children to respect the differences and promote peaceful coexistence.

This event shows an active engagement of civil society in the schooling system. On top of that, it shows society's will for change, the hope for peace, and a peaceful generation. This article triggered me to understand more about education in Myanmar/ Burma, how the education policies can relate to peace. It is essential to understand how the challenges and reality of society are reflected in education policies. How the leading educational institutions, such as the Minister of Education, influence and contribute to creating a peaceful society.

As shown, schooling is not a "rescue operation" (Davies, 2003, p4). The fact that a person is educated does not mean that they have the skills and values to prevent, deal and overcome a conflict situation. (Davies, 2003)

Peace Education is the field responsible for teaching the required skills and values for dealing with a conflict situation, achieve peace, and present the threats of violence and strategies for peace (Reardon, 1988). The right type of education has direct and indirect implications on the learners, which can in the future influence conflicts; therefore, education has an essential role in the foundation of peace.

The idea of peace sought by peace education can be positive peace, negative peace, or both. Galtung (2013) defines negative peace as a scenario where there is no presence of direct conflict or violence, such as a place with a ceasefire agreement. In a negative peace context, oppression and inequalities are recurring issues of society. While a positive peace context is an environment where the society can develop and feel safe, a place with no structural violence. In this scenario, there is more equality and freedom (Galtung, 2013). Reardon (1989), in her theory, defines an environment with positive peace as an environment with positive people.

There is a need for a peace education model not just in conflict scenarios but also in peaceful and post-conflict contexts. The content of peace education is much broader than just

the concept of overcoming a conflict situation. It works toward the idea of a comprehensive peace, addressing the development of a society, an international comprehensive of the world, and a generation that has the capacity to deal with conflicts, seeking resolutions and ways of preventing them. (Harris, 2004). Each context has its approach, priorities, and techniques that can best suit the situation's demands (Harris, 2008).

Peace education can be part of the formal schooling system in the countries; even if it is not officially considered peace education, many policies can be related and be considered as part of a peace education program. One of the central institutions responsible for spreading the concept of peace education and empower the population with the required tools is the Minister of Education (MoE). Once peace education is a critical factor for a wealthy society, this research will identify policies that can be considered peace education in the education system of Myanmar.

Myanmar, or Burma, is a country full of influences, diversities, and adversities. Geographically, it is the biggest country in mainland Southeast Asia (Zhao, 2008). The country's population is 54 million (WorldData 2019), with approximately 130 different ethnics groups representing 1/3 of the country's entire population. Burma is considered one of the most diverse in the world (Topich & Leitich, 2013). With more than 100 ethnolinguistic groups, the country shows its diversity through different aspects (Lall &South, 2016).

This diversification environment also influenced the unification of the country. From its independence from the British in 1948, the country faced a complicated and challenging history. The government of a newborn country could not hold the different interests of the different groups within the society for a long time, which led to the first military coup of Burma in 1962. Since then, the country faced issues of unity and identity; civil society, including minorities, fought for space during the military rules. Lack of freedom, human rights violations, oppression, and inequalities were recurring issues in the country's history. After almost 50

years, the country could finally experience democracy beginning in 2011(Aung-Thwin, 2012). The democratic period lasted until February 2021.

The militaries impacted many spheres of society. The education in Burma also suffered changes and was struck by military rule. Many education policies present during the period can be related to peace education, such as the absence of mother-tongue instruction, the lack of critical thinking, and the discipline of moral and civic. This research will show how education is a supportive pathway to achieve peace (Lopes Cardozo & Maber, 2019).

In this context, this research aims to identify education policies that can be considered peace education in the Myanmar education system. The research seeks to understand how education was in Myanmar throughout history and what changed after the start of democracy. The main questions of this research are: (1) How is peace education demonstrated in the Myanmar educational system over the post-independence, military rule, and democratic periods? (2) What does peace education approaches reveals about the political contexts in which it is inserted?

To be able to answer these questions, the present research will be divided into seven chapters.

The first chapter is the present introduction. The second chapter will present the methodology of this research. Explaining the procedure used to gather the data, and the framework that will be used for the analysis.

The third chapter will state the literature review of the research. The definitions of peace and the theory of peace education will be addressed. The chapter will construct the framework that will be used for the analysis.

The fourth chapter will be responsible for presenting a general background of Burma. For a comprehensive understanding of the society of Burma, it is necessary to understand the origin of the name of the country, the diversity of the population, and the minority issues.

The fifth, sixth and seventh chapters will be the analysis itself, juxtaposing the peace education theory against distinct historical periods for Myanmar and its educational developments. For this, they will have a similar structure. These chapters will be divided into three main sections: history background, education history, and analysis. Each chapter will carry an analysis for a specific historical period: post-independence, military rule, and democracy.

This research aims to identify and analyze from a peace education perspective the education policies used in Myanmar from the country's independence in 1948 until recent events in February 2021.

2.   Methodology

This research will analyze the education policies and curriculum in Burma/Myanmar through the peace education lenses based on different scholars and concepts. The analysis will be based on the framework stated in the literature review (chapter 3 of this research) and the history of formal education in the country. The research will be working with the available data from scholars and with the curriculum content and policies of the education in Myanmar that can be considered peace education.

The framework for the analysis will be the scholarships, key concepts, and 4Rs. The research will identify policies in education in Myanmar that can relate to the framework and analyze the connection between the policies and the framework. Each policy identified can be connected with one or more items of the framework. At the end of this research, it will be possible to check and understand how education policies in Burma/Myanmar were related to peace education throughout history, how each policy was related, and to which period of history. Furthermore, it will also be possible to check if there were essential concepts of peace education that were never present in the education policies of Myanmar/Burma. Therefore, there are concepts in the literature review that will not be carried out in the analysis.

The main three chapters of analysis will be structured similarly. First, it will situate the reader on Burma's sociopolitical background and correlate this with the education policies and peace education theory. These three chapters will cover the independence of Burma in 1948 until the coup in February 2021. The research will focus on the dictatorship period and the democratization process, from 1962 to 2021. For this, each of the three chapters will carry an analysis for a specific period in the history of Burma: post-independence, military rule, and democratic government. The first sections of the three following chapters will present the historical background to explain the most important events that happened during the period.

The second part of the chapter will present formal education during the period, outlining the education policies applied in the country. Finally, the third section will make the analysis of the research; it will identify the policies and characteristics that can be considered or related to peace education and analyze them into positive or negative policies from a peace education perspective.

The period analyzed in the fifth chapter is from the independence in 1948 until the first coup in 1962. The challenges in the society and government after the British left and how was the education in the first period of independent Burma will be explained.

The sixth chapter will explain the military coup, analyze how the country was ruled during the period. Show how the military managed to keep the country's unity and the decline of power. The chapter will also discuss the conflicts and resolutions during this time and how the country managed to keep close to the international system for so long. Lastly, the education and identify the policies according to peace education will be presented.

The seventh chapter will present the country's recent history from the political, economic, and development perspectives—the process of building a democratic society after almost a half-century of military rule. The chapter will show how the country deals with internal conflicts if there is unity and national identity. Furthermore, the chapter will explore the more recent developments in education in Myanmar.

2.1 Important ideas of education

For an easier comprehension of the research, it is essential to explain education concepts, such as formal and nonformal education, Buddhist monastic and Christian schools, and curriculum and pedagogy.

Education has two main forms of implementation: formal and nonformal. Formal education stands for the education that is part of curricula and implemented in schools, directly connected with the government (Minister of Education); this will be the most analyzed in this research. In comparison, nonformal education is made in parallel with the formal education system made by NGOs or international organizations.

Formal education is often represented by schools in the national structure. The Ministry of Education is the agency responsible for defining the curriculum applied in the schools. It represents society's will to formulate a curriculum, training, materials, and set guidelines in peace education (Bar-Tal, 2002). Bar-Tal and Rosen (2009) express that changes can be seen just if the school system goes through changes in the entire structure and if it happens together with other factors, such as the political-societal sphere.

Parallel to formal education is nonformal, represented by civil society and mainly through nongovernmental organizations (NGOs). These organizations have the power to spread the importance of a peaceful environment. Therefore, they can help and support a peaceful education strategy (Bar-Tal and Rosen, 2009). Many locals NGOs around the world help to supplement the gaps in formal education to provide peaceful education.

International Organizations also play an important role in peace education. Important organizations worldwide, such as the UN, directly promote and influence peace education throughout the world.

Furthermore, Buddhist monastic and Christian schools can also be part of a nonformal education system. In Myanmar, these schools are responsible for filling the gap of the formal system with easier access and present in rural and remote areas. For Lorch (2008), monastic schools "considers education as a preparation for life rather than a form of life itself" (Lorch, 2008, p156).

Education is formed by two main frameworks, pedagogy, and curricula. Pedagogy is formed by occasions, activities, locations. In comparison, the curriculum is the content of these activities and what the student should learn (Demmert, 2011).

The curriculum or content is where the peace educators will put the theory into practice. Galtung (2008) defines five phases that should be followed to develop a peace education curriculum: (1) analysis, (2) goal formulation, (3) critique, (4) proposal making, (5) action[1].

First, the need to analyze the present to understand what is happening in the world and the context that the project would be implemented. It is essential to describe the relevant facts for peace issues and challenges that society is facing.

The second, the goal formulation; this is the phase to set the goal of the peace education project, to set realistic and concrete objectives and outcomes. In this phase, it is possible to explore different areas from a standard school curriculum and set the idealistic scenario.

The next phase is the critique. In this step, the research should oppose the real world to the desire world; this is the time to understand why the real world does not get better and why it does not worsen.

Furthermore, proposal-making. In this step, the guidelines for the transitional path will be set. This will define how to get from the real world to the proposed world (Galtung,2008)

This research will focus its analysis on curricula and policies of education in Burma/Myanmar.

The next chapter will present the literature review of this research; the most relevant theoretical framework that will be used to identify the education policies that can be considered as peace education approaches in the context of Myanmar will be explained.

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[1] Action is specifically relevant for a peace education project, therefore it is not relevant for this research. Actions can be demonstrations, peacekeeping activities, and the peacebuilding itself. The curriculum should also be advocating for actual actions; this is the time where peace education curriculum and actions come together (Galtung, 1972)

3. Literature Review

This chapter is responsible for the literature review of this research and features peace education's key concepts and applications. The chapter will be divided into two main sections: definitions of peace (education) and peace education theory.

The first section aims to clarify specific concepts used in the field of education and peace education. Thus, it will discuss the definitions of positive and negative peace, exploring the concepts of peace and how they can be applied to the Myanmar political background and education system. Furthermore, the section will present the main ideas of peace education as established in scholarship. It will discuss the definition of peace education, the contexts where it is applied, and the approaches.

The second section of this chapter will present the theory of peace education, which will be used as the framework for the analysis. The theory will be divided into three main subsections: scholars, key concepts, and 4Rs. For this, the field's leading authors are presented: Dewey, Montessori, Freire, and Reardon. Moreover, the main concepts of peace education will be addressed, counter militarism, human rights education, global citizenship, unity, worldview, development, and inclusive education. Lastly, the 4Rs framework and its application will be presented. For a better understanding, will be presented the main policies and curricula contents that can be analyzed through the 4Rs: mother tongue instruction, religious teaching, monastic schools, democratic citizenship, and teacher training. All these concepts will be used as the framework to identify policies in the education system of Myanmar that can be considered peace education.

3.1 Definition of Peace (Education)

This section will present the relevant definitions and concepts of this research. First, the definition of positive and negative peace will be introduced, followed by the definition of peace education and other ideas of PE.

The concept of peace is not singular; it is characterized by positive and negative peace (Bönisch, 1981; Galtung, 2003; Grewal, 2003; Reardon, 1988). Grewal (2003) emphasizes the concept created by Galtung (1981), defining negative peace as the absence of personal violence, violence as demonstrated through war, terrorism, and personal assaults. Reardon (1988) highlights the idea of negative peace as the absence of conflict and war; it is the elimination of an active armed conflict, the non-use of force and aggression. Hence, the contexts of the dictatorships and ceasefires in Myanmar can be considered a negative peace scenario.

Positive peace is defined by Galtung (1984, as cited in Grewal, 2003) as an environment without "indirect violence", that is, with no structural violence, poverty, hunger, social injustice. It is a context that allows the person to grow and develop. Galtung (2013a) defines positive peace as something that "transcends the gap between the parties, create some symbiosis, even syntheses" (Galtung, 2013a, p.136). As Bönisch reminds, it is a place where social-economic development can be achieved. Reardon (1988) emphasizes that "global justice" is the central concept of positive peace.

In addition, positive peace can be related to the absence of inequalities and oppression. A genuinely peaceful context is based on equality and equity. Galtung (2013a) emphasizes in his theory that a place where inequalities and oppression are present, sooner or later, will trigger a conflict. For him, "the formula of peace is always equality, equity, and mutual respect" (Galtung, 2013, p.153). Positive peace in the Myanmar context would mean a society in which

discrimination or repression of minorities does not occur; instead, it is an environment that validates diversity.

The positive peace defined by Galtung (1984) is based on a context where the human being can develop and feel safe, where there is no structural violence, poverty, hunger, or social injustice. Thus, in positive peace, the idea of "peace" is broader and more complete than negative peace (a place without direct violence). The Integrative Theory of Peace (ITP) defines a more complete idea of peace.

The theory comprises four sub-theories: (1) peace is a psychological, political, moral, and spiritual condition. (2) The main outcome of a unity-based worldview is peace. (3) A unit-based worldview is necessary to create a culture of peace[2] and a culture of healing[3] . (4) Quality education with a peace framework is the best approach to achieve a unity-based worldview (Danesh, 2006).

Thus, the Integrative Theory of Peace helps shape peace education; it supports the idea of transforming a context into a positive peace scenario. The name itself explains the concept of an ITP; it considers different aspects of peace, such as social, political, spiritual state, and psychological. ITP considers further than the context where the person is but also how the person and community relate and experience peace (Danesh, 2008a).

Having established the conceptual difference between positive and negative peace, one can consider how education is related. Peace Education can promote the concept of positive peace, negative peace, or both. Peace Education is a broad term, and its meaning differs from authors and theorists. It differs from defending that peace education is just a mindset of understanding, respect, and tolerate the enemy (Oppenheimer, Bar-Tal, & Raviv, 1999). As

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[2] Culture of peace: culture of peace refers to an environment in which the principles of equality, justice, individual and group safety and security, and freedom in the context of ethical, lawful, and democratic practices are the norm (Danesh, 2008a, p153)

[3] Culture of healing: is characterized by the principles of truth and truthfulness, trust and trustworthiness, empathy and cooperation, fairness and fair mindedness, forgiveness and reconciliation at interpersonal and intergroup levels. (Danesh, 2008a, p153)

Salomon (2002) affirms, "peace education is not a single entity" (Salomon, 2002, p5). It can be considered an umbrella term that involves teaching, policies, curricula, planning, and practices to provide learners the skills and values about a comprehensive peace (Reardon, 1988).

Harris (2004) present five main postulates that define PE. (1) Peace education can explain the origins of violence; with this, the learners will understand the "other" and deconstruct the enemy's idea. (2) It will teach a way out of the conflict and the alternatives to a conflict. (3) In peace education, the term "violence" is a broad term, and it covers different forms of violence and scenarios. (4) It addresses the specification of each conflict; it considers the different contexts and the different peace processes. (5) Peace education acknowledges the omnipresence of a conflict and that educators cannot eliminate the conflict but provide the learners with the skills and values needed.

In general, PE can be considered a way to understand and achieve social reality's conciseness. That is the values and skills needed to acknowledge the conflict situation and the necessity to end the conflict and seek peace (Galtung, 2013b).

3.1.1   Education for Negative Peace

In addressing negative peace, or interpersonal violence, PE can be a teaching process about the risks of violence and how to achieve peace, a strategy to inform people about violent threats, and how to overcome the violence (Harris, 2008).

Peace education should not just be applied in peaceful and developing environments but also be applied in scenarios of negative peace, that is, post-conflict, dictatorships, and ceasefire situations. Salomon (2002) expresses this idea, classifying three different categories where the peace education approach can be used. Two of them are connected to a negative

peace context - peace education in regions of intractable conflicts and peace education in regions of interethnic tension; and the last is connected to a positive peace context - peace education in regions of experienced tranquility.

Peace education in regions of intractable conflicts translates as a project in areas of ongoing conflicts, where there is a presence of "us" and "them"; the idea of an enemy is part of their life. In this first context, peace is absent (neither positive or negative). In this scenario, a peace education approach would aim to change mindset to understand the other and seek solutions for the end of the conflict (Salomon, 2002). Harris (2008) also addresses this situation in his theory proposing a peace education approach to demystify the enemy and to urge the war or conflict to come to an end. In this scenario, the approach would be an education for peace.

Regions of interethnic tension are another form of violence. In this case, the tension resides between a majority and minority and can be due to race, ethnicity, tribes, religion, and others; this can happen in recent post-conflict situations (Salomon, 2002). In this scenario, peace education would be to present multiculturalism and create awareness about the suffering and promote empathy towards the "other" group (Harris, 2008). This scenario is the most relevant for this research, once will be considered a negative peace context, such as Myanmar, with the presence of inequalities, oppression, and interethnic issues between groups.

Practically speaking, a suitable approach to peace education in a negative peace scenario is "conflict resolution". This approach could be beneficial for the Myanmar context. Therefore, the approach can be considered education for peace once it is directly connected to establishment of peace. It is important to stress that, a conflict is not exhaustive to a war or conflict between two parties but also means more minor conflicts, and the ones present in the daily routine. Maria Montessori (1974) expresses the school's role in the process; it should provide a nurturing and healthy environment. Prutzman et al. (1988) draw a curriculum in conflict resolution where the learner, in the end, should have open communication skills, be

comfortable in sharing their feelings, and cooperate for the solution of conflicts. A conflict resolution education aims to help the learners understand the dynamics of a conflict and acquire communication skills to manage different relationships (Harris, 2004).

For Myanmar/Burma the conflict resolution approach is directed connected to aim the end of a conflict and building a positive peace

3.1.2 Education for Positive Peace

Furthermore, peace education can be applied in regions of experienced tranquility. This context differs from the previous two scenarios; a region experiencing tranquility is a place with no active conflict or interethnic tension; therefore, it is a context with positive peace. The teaching in this scenario would aim at the causes of domestic and civil violence, discuss social problems such as poverty and hungry, and promote development (Harris, 2008).

With this, it is possible to realize that there is no suitable model neither program that would fit all the realities and necessities needed. Although there are concepts of peace and peace education, the specific content of any peace education program needs to be tailored to the local environment. Peace Education is an on-demand strategy that will be applied in a specific scenario. Bar-Tal (2000) explains that the aims of a peace education approach in different scenarios can be similar; however, each society will map out a strategy that fits its needs better.

Besides the approach of conflict resolution that is related to negative peace, there are four main approaches related to education for positive peace: international education, development education, human rights education, and environmental education (Harris, 2004)

The first type is an international education, which teaches the learner the world's concept to be aware of the international system. Heater (1984) highlights the importance of

acknowledging the states in the world, their relationships, and how that can result in war. To understand the international system is to understand the globalization of the world and how the system works. Harris (2004) addresses that in this approach, the educators are responsible for teaching the learner about a global identity and creating awareness of global problems. The outcome of international peace education is for the learners to have empathy and compassion for other citizens worldwide.

A development approach can be beneficial in a scenario with no ongoing conflict or war but a place that experiences tranquility, a positive peace context. In this type, the educators are concerned about development issues, such as structural violence, poverty, and hunger (Harris, 2008). The outcomes sought by this approach are the promotion of positive peace, the knowledge of the problems in development, and to question the development patterns existents around the world (Harris, 2004).

The human rights approach is guided by human rights principles stated in international documents, such as the Universal Declaration of Human Rights and the European Convention on Human Rights. Harris (2004) defines human rights as a way to honor human dignity. This type of peace education aims for the learners to know the struggles and rights of minorities, to understand the structural factors and failures that made the violations happen.

The environmental[4] approach differs slightly from the others once it focuses on the environment instead of social challenges, but it is still an important part of peace education.

Taking this in consideration, it was explained that five different approaches[5] could be made in peace education - international, development, human rights, conflict resolution, and

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[4] However, the consequences in the environment are directly linked with human life. Bowers (1993) critiques the western development standards and the idea of endless environmental resources. Harris (2008) emphasizes that our natural habitat's destruction is a significant threat to modern life. Furthermore, in this approach, learners should be aware of the ecological crisis and be engaged in finding a sustainable option. The outcome of this education should be that students relate and create feelings and concern for the world's well-being (Harris, 2004).

[5] The approaches can be done separately or in parallel, one approach does not exclude another (Harris, 2004).

environmental (Harris, 2004), an appropriate approach to Burma could be international education, human rights and conflict resolution (or education for peace). The international education approach would be relevant for the learners to create awareness of the world, their relations and how it could result in conflicts. The human rights approach would be beneficial to teach the struggles and minority rights, for the learners to acknowledge the structural factors that results on violence.

3.1.3   *Designing Peace Education for Specific Contexts*

There is no universal model to be followed when implementing a peace education project. It is necessary to adapt to the needs, materials, and options available. Each society and project have a specific demand that needs to be fulfilled.

PE is made to each context, it is an on-demand strategy that use different approaches aiming to contribute and achieve peace, positive, negative, or both.

To summarize, peace education can be applied in three different contexts (regions of intractable conflicts, regions of interethnic tension, regions of experienced tranquility), with five different approaches (international, development, human rights, environmental and conflict resolution). Myanmar can be considered a negative peace scenario with an inter-ethnic tension that could benefit from a conflict resolution peace education approach. Later, in this research these aspects will be taken in consideration when analyzing the education in the country.

The absence of a universal model or guideline for peace education also reflects the different outcomes intended for the learner. As stated by Harris (2004) when defining peace education, the educators are not able to eliminate the conflict, but teach the learners the values and skills to take action. The evaluation of peace education is hard to catch; however, a theory

of change can identify implicit assumptions and changes in the society, such as inner peace, interpersonal relations, and critical thinking (Ashton, 2007).

For example, as Shapiro (2002) state in her theory, children in a positive peace context, exposed to peace education and in democratic environments tends to develop more critical thinking, to have a position and critically reflect on the ideas passed from the educators.

While a peace education in negative peace scenario of post-conflict or with interethnic tension contexts, such as Myanmar, has a vital role in supporting the individuals from different spheres and groups. Furthermore, peace education can help the reconstruction of the public sphere and teach the learners about the past. Ramirez and Duthie (2015) explain how:

Education as an investment in the future also has potential to be transformative. It can make a particular contribution to redressing legacies of conflict and repression, which are often reflected in the education system as inequality, political discrimination, and social division, and play a significant role in empowering individuals in an emotional, economic, and sociopolitical manner and facilitating their process of rehabilitation and overall reintegration into society. At the same time, at the social level, education policies can contribute to reconstructing the public sphere by providing knowledge about the past and creating new opportunities for interaction among citizens while more broadly contributing to the establishment of a culture of human rights and democracy. (p.5)

Hence, it is vital to have a specific curriculum, policies, and approach for each context on PE, the curriculum should be "integrative, context-appropriate and age-specific" (Danesh, 2008b, p164). Once the complexity and specificity of a peace education approach is clarified, it is important to present the framework of concepts that build PE.

It is essential to state that this research will consider Burma as a negative peace context once there was no inherent conflict during the military rules. Myanmar can be considered a context of negative peace, a region of interethnic tension, where a conflict resolution approach could be beneficial for the country. These characteristics form an approach where the efforts are done towards the construction of a sustainable peace scenario. Later, this research will explain the political background of Myanmar and will clarify why these approaches are the most suitable for the country.

3.2 Peace Education Theory

This section will be responsible to map the framework that will be used to identify the policies of education in Myanmar. For this, the section is divided in three main sub-sections, presenting the scholars' theories, main concepts of PE and the 4R's framework.

All those concepts are part of different approaches of peace education, for a negative or positive peace scenario. Each concept depends on the context where it is inserted to be considered for negative or positive scenario. Therefore, the concepts presented in this section can be considered "context free", the inclusion of the context to the concepts will be done throughout the research. The concepts stated in this section will be used to identify the education policies that can be related to PE in schooling system of Burma/Myanmar.

First, the leading names in peace education history will be presented: John Dewey, Maria Montessori, Paulo Freire and Betty Reardon. These leading theorists have incorporated notions of positive and/or negative peace within their educational approaches.

Dewey, Montessori, and Freire can be considered the ancestors of peace education, these authors developed important ideas and concepts that can be found in peace education nowadays. Moreover, Betty Reardon will be mentioned, she is considered the most important leader in peace education.

Later, main concepts of peace education: counter militarism, human rights education, global citizenship, unity, worldview, and inclusive education will be presented. These concepts are present in PE approaches, for a negative peace, positive peace, or both scenarios. In this research, the policies that can be related with these key concepts and, therefore, the policies can be considered PE will be identified.

Lastly, the 4R's (redistribution, recognition, representation, and reconciliation) framework will be presented. This is a more practical approach of PE, it is direct connected with the construction of a positive peace scenario. The 4R's approach can be used for different purposes, in this research, the framework will be used to identify education policies that can be connected with PE. Hence, first will be presented the framework and subsequently the policies that can be related with the 4Rs.

Therefore, when identifying educational policies, a framework with the main scholars, key concepts, and the 4Rs will be used. The policies can be related to one or more items of this section.

3.2.1 The main scholars of peace education

Throughout peace education history, three leading names were essential for the development of peace education as an approach. They are John Dewey, Maria Montessori, and Paulo Freire.

John Dewey was an influential American philosopher and educational theorist in the first half of the 20th century. His theory is mainly based on the dogma "democracy is freedom". Books such as *The School and Society (1899), How We Think (1910), Democracy and Education (1916), and Experience and Education (1938)* molded the concept and theory of modern peace education (Westbrook, 1993). Dewey based his education theory on pragmatic

political arguments. His concept is based on the students' enlightenment and the presence of knowledge (Gur-Ze'ev, 2001).

History and geography were essential for the foundation of the student. Through these subjects, the learners could acquire the knowledge needed to promote internationalism. After World War I, Dewey applied his theory towards a progressive education to achieve peace. For him, an international worldview would count the ideas of patriotism and nationalism (Howlett, 2008).

Dewey stressed the importance of subjects: "We need a curriculum in history, literature, and geography which will make a different racial element in this country aware of what each has contributed and will create a mental attitude towards other people" (Dewey, 1930, p.516). With this curriculum and knowledge, the students will get a worldview concept, learn about the past, and understand what happened in the past and why this happened. Therefore, all learners should be able to have access to the disciplines of history, literature, and geography; schools or ruling powers should not have the power to choose for the learners which subject is more important.

Dewey's work for peace education was extremely important for the development of the subject in the world. It highlighted the value of democracy and the connection between education and universalism through school subjects.

The second important author for peace education was twice nominated for a Nobel Peace Prize, the Italian Maria Montessori. Scholars define her as the first educator to use peace education as a method of teaching (Guetta, 2013). She believed that the establishment of peace was a responsibility for educators, while politicians were in charge of preventing conflicts (Montessori, 1946).

For Montessori, the best environment for a child to develop was a place where they could be autonomous, explore and engage with the activities. A place with an international-

mindedness, built through discussions about peace, values, diversity (Duckworth, 2006). The teachers should not be authoritarian, and the students should have the autonomy to choose what they prefer to study and focus on. For Montessori, peace depended on a "free spirit", made of love and without restrictions (Guetta, 2013).

Therefore, for Montessori, the learner should be able to choose the subject, engage with the activities. Rathunde & Csikszentmihalyi (2005) affirms that Montessori's theory focuses on reducing the stress and anxiety of the learner, having a more task focus than exam-oriented approach, the students must feel safe and comfortable at their schools. Furthermore, her theory also approaches the authority of the classrooms, where the teacher should not detain the entire power and the students should also be part of the decisions. Lastly, a good structure and well trained teachers also contribute for the development of the learner (Rathunde & Csikszentmihalyi, 2005).

During her life, she did social experiments in "casa dei Bambini" (Children's house), a local daycare for parents who needed help while working during the day. Montessori was able to apply her techniques with the children, and it resulted in remarkable achievements. The discoveries made in the house made it possible for her to develop her own methodology, the *Montessori Method of Education* (Darshini Baligadoo, 2014). Until nowadays, her method is worldwide applied to schools and education centers; Montessori's educators understand and teach the connection between peace and education (Duckworth, 2006)

Finally, Paulo Freire was one of the most influential educational theorists and philosophers in the last century. His life in Brazil molded his way of seeing the world and was directly influenced by his principles and work as an educator (Barreto, 1998). Freire developed the known theories of the banking model of education and critical consciousness (Gounari, 2013). Besides that, he also highlights the importance of the dialogue for quality education.

The banking model is extremely important to understand the importance of peace education. In the banking model, the learner is seen as a bank, where the instructor will deposit the knowledge. Paulo Freire explains that the knowledgeable will give the information to the unknowledgeable in: "the "banking" view of education, "knowledge" is a gift from those who think they are wise to those who think they know nothing[6]" (Freire, 1991-1997a, p.65). In this type of education, the learner has no autonomy; he or she will always be the one with no knowledge.

The critical consciousness is directly connected with peace education. To have critical think is fundamental; with critical think, the learners will be capable of having their own opinions and a better understanding of the world. This was the students are capable of having conversations that lead to change and to question-imposed rules. For Freire, to have a critical consciousness is to be political. Jemal (2017) explains that a critical consciousness could be used to inform the oppressive conditions of the educational system. The critical pedagogy is not enough with just the understanding the reality but to be able to discuss the transformations, to have a dialogue that can lead to change. (Freire, 19--).

The dialogue is also directly connected with peace education; once it is through the dialogue that the banking model can be displaced, and the critical consciousness can be developed. With dialogue, horizontal learning can be built. Freire (1921-1997b) affirm it in: "And what is dialogue? It is a horizontal relationship of A with B. It is born from a critical matrix and generates criticality"[7] (Freire, 1921-1997b, p.103)

Paulo Freire was and still is one of the most influential names in peace education nowadays. His concepts shaped modern peace education and the approaches and programs that

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[6] From the original: "Na visão "bancária" da educação, o "saber" é uma doação dos que se julgam sábios aos que julgam nada saber". (Freire, 1991-1997, p.65)

[7] From the original: "E que é o diálogo? É uma relação horizontal de A com B. Nasce de uma matriz crítica e gera criticidade " (Freire, 1921-1997b, p.103)

exist and are developed by peace educators nowadays. The first author to directly mention the idea of peace education was Betty Reardon. She is part of a range of important peace educators throughout history, like Hicks and Ian Harris. They used similar concepts of egalitarian learning environments, critical thinking, and student participation. Peace educators believes on the power of education to transform society, highlighting the connection between the conflict and structural violence and a peaceful future (Ardizzone, 2011).

Betty A. Reardon is an American theorist, born in 1929. She is considered the mother of peace education and was one of the first to address the subject as peace education. She developed important theories in the field of feminism and peace education. Her main contributions are from three main fields: Theoretical Foundations of Peace and Human Rights Education; Feminism and the Gender Perspective as Pathways of Transformation Toward Peace and Justice; and Peace Education Pedagogy and Practices (Snauwaert, 2019).

Reardon develops an inclusive, comprehensive, and multilateral approach to peace education. For her, peace education is formed by different knowledges, attitudes and skills, and all these together empowers the learner to interpret, reflect, develop and apply the knowledge to overcome issues and reach a peaceful society (Ardizzone, 2001).

To develop her theory, Reardon mentioned and uses concepts from previous theorists, as Freire and Dewey, adapting and discussing previous concepts in a peace education framework (such as baking model of Freire) (Reardon & Snauwaert, 2015).

Reardon developed important theoretical frameworks for the field of peace education. From the statement that peace cannot be achieved without a fundamental change, Reardon developed an inclusive framework addressing important primary concepts of democracy and power. Moreover, she continued her theory with theories of global citizenship, education for peace and human rights education (Snauwaert, 2019).

In this path, Reardon refers to militarism and disarmament in her work. For her peace education is also responsible for implementing programs that teach the importance of disarmament and alternatives for wars and arms races. Nevertheless, she believes that the nation-state should be involved in this process (Kester et al., 2016).

Betty Reardon (1988) divides her approach to peace education accord to positive and negative peace, with the purpose and goals of each one of them. Moreover, the concept of peace for Reardon is closely related to feminism. Reardon (1988) affirms that:

Education should be devoted to developing the ability to learn and should concern itself with deepening and extending the capacities that are comprehended by the notion of positive human potential. Positive peace and positive human potential are inextricably linked; both are developmental and organic (p54)

Reardon also made important developments in the niche peace education. For her peace education in negative peace scenario is an "education for the long haul, for ongoing struggle" (Reardon, 1988, p. 47). She highlighted critical thinking, the ability to solve conflicts and cooperate as key factors for a successful peace education in a negative peace scenario (Ardizzone, 2001).

3.2.2   The key concepts of peace education

In addition to the concepts developed in the theories of these theorists and practitioners, other concepts are also relevant to fully understand peace education. These core concepts are (1) countering militarism, (2) human rights education, and (3) global citizenship education, (4)

Unity, (5) worldview, and (6) inclusive education (Noddings, 2002; Reardon, 1988; Tibbitts, 2008; Oxfam, 2015).

Countering militarism is an important concept, and relevant for Myanmar, once it explains what militarism is and aims to reverse its effects. In peace education, this is done through a conflict resolution approach (Mirra, 2002).

Militarism can be defined as an attitude where war standards and preparation are used in day-to-day life; war behavior is part of the society (Mann, 1984). Reardon (1984) affirms that militarism triggers insecurity, anxiety, and fear in the society; furthermore, it results in the reallocation of resources to different aims, but education.

In this context, it is clear that peace education has a countering militarism approach; once it seeks peace, negative or positive, peace education aims to promote development in a tranquil environment, which cannot be ensured with militarism. Therefore, democratic teachings would be an important subject for teaching counter militarism.

The second concept is human rights education (HRE), which consists of pedagogical and educational approaches to inform learners and train learners to understand and advocate for human rights (Mihr, 2009). As peace education, human rights education can be applied in different ways on a specific project for the community's needs. Post-conflicts scenarios, for example, tend to have an HRE associated with the rule of law and legitimacy (Tibbitts, 2008).

HRE is a highly relevant concept for peace education once, through human rights knowledge, the person can understand when there is a violation of their right. Furthermore, the learner is capable of advocating for important standards that are indispensable for a peaceful society.

Furthermore, global citizenship education. The concept of a global citizen is defined by Oxfam (2015) as someone mindful of a wider world, respect global diversity, has a comprehensive view of the world's operation, is participative of the society, is responsible for

their actions. Furthermore, one of the most essential characteristics of a global citizen is that he or she is committed to social justice and works for the world to be a better place (Oxfam, 2015, p.4).

In this context, a global citizen education is responsible for promoting all these values and characteristics in the learner and encouraging them to take political action. In general, a global citizen education is a politicized education; it aims further than mere understands or empathy for the rest of the world; it requires action. The education is developed with the "kasa" method – knowledge, analysis, skills, and action. With this, the learner will acquire the knowledge, analyze it with a critical perspective, gain skills and, finally, act on it.

Moreover, the concept of unity is an antonym of a conflict environment; once unity is established, conflicts do not have much space in the society (Danesh, 2008a). Danesh (2008a) defines "Unity as life" (Danesh, 2008b, p.159), which is for the psychological, social, and moral spheres. The establishment of unity will make conflicts less likely to happen; they will be easily solved in case it happens. (Danesh, 2006). In the history and education of Myanmar, this idea will be explored many times from different perspectives, in general, the country had issues to achieve unity and shared identity.

For education, the concept of unity would be a place without the idea of "others". Staub (2002) describes the differentiation between "them" and "us". For him, if there is a differentiation between the two groups escalates, people will prefer one over another, they will elevate their group over the others. Education for peace, is responsible for showing that the presence of "us" and "them" can have consequences for a society, it can emphasize the negative façade of the division between groups (Staub, 2002).

Shapiro (2002) discusses worldview indirectly when addressing multiculturalism. He presents that multiculturalism gives voice for minorities, that their suffering, history, and

background will be heard by everyone through education. With multiculturalism, questions about social justice will rise, and the awareness of a real mechanistic worldview can be created.

Another relevant concept that is considered by this research as a part of PE is inclusive education. Inclusive education is an umbrella term that consider different aspects and realities, and believe on the equal access, quality, and appropriate education. This category of education acknowledges the different spheres and applications of education, such as formal and non-formal education; it is adaptable to different cultures and contexts; and it respect all differences, such as language, age, ethnicity, and religion (Stubbs, 2008). This concept is extremely relevant when analyzing the access to education, policies such as the availability in remote areas and criteria in superior education can reflect a lack of inclusive education.

The concepts are common to all approaches and scenarios of peace education, each one of the concepts can be used in one or more scenarios of peace education, for example human rights education and global citizenship can both be used in the development approach of peace education. However, as explained, peace education can be applied in different scenarios, with different goals and approaches; there is no rule or model that could fit all societies in the middle of all that we can categorize the approaches and techniques in education *through* peace when the peace education is developed in a scenario that experiences peace. The second category is education *for* peace. In this case, the context where peace education is implemented is facing tensions, conflict, or post-conflict situations; for this, education is another actor to promote peace and stability.

This section highlighted important theorists – John Dewey, Maria Montessori, Paulo Freire and Betty Reardon; and concepts – counter-militarism, human rights education and global citizenship. These theorists and concepts of peace education will be used as to identify education policies in Myanmar that can be considered peace education.

3.2.3   4Rs

The 4R's framework of redistribution, recognition, representation, and reconciliation; was developed to be implemented in peacebuilding societies. From an education perspective, it can be used to apply the concepts developed in this research in a more realistic way.

Novelli et al. (2015) conducted research on education on peacebuilding, analyzing the contribution of the 4R's in a post-conflict context. The analytical framework is composed of three main ideas: (1) long length peacebuilding depends on social transformations; (2) the social sectors must be involved; they have an important role in the achievement of the established goals; (3) the education for peace approach should be made with the combination of the four R's. It is important to state that there are close connections and possible overlap between the "R's".

The 4R's (figure 1) is composed of redistribution, recognition, representation, and reconciliation. The first "R" is responsible for providing a solution to social injustices (uneven resource distribution, lack of equality on health, education, employment, unfair opportunities). The second "R", recognition, is the possible solution for the injustices, is to recognize the inequalities and failures of the system. The third "R" stands for representation; this is the analysis of the society and its representatives, if there are transforming politics and representants or if their policies lead to an even more unequal society. The last "R" is reconciliation, a vital procedure in a post-conflict society; this would prevent the resumption of the conflict. In this "R" education is vital once it teaches how to deal with the past, the history, and all the transitional justice process. Even though Burma is not officially a peacebuilding context, many of these approaches fit the needs of the society in the country. Therefore, this research considers the 4Rs framework as a practical way to apply and measure the concepts of PE.

Figure 1 - *The 4R's*
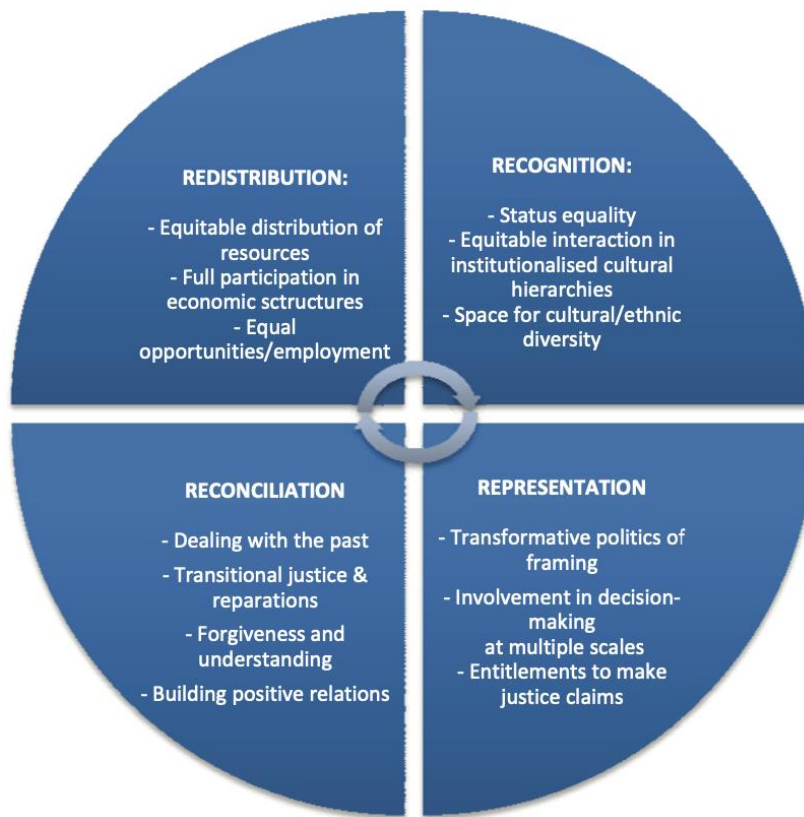
Note: From *A Theoretical Framework for Analysing the Contribution of Education to Sustainable Peacebuilding: 4Rs in Conflict-Affected Contexts.* University of Amsterdam, Research Consortium on Education and Peacebuilding

Applying the analytical definition of the 4R's into a practical education framework Novelli et al. (2015) addressed how education can contribute to sustainable peacebuilding.

In *redistribution,* the inequalities will be addressed. Thus, an analysis through existing data should be made; the focus is the inequalities relevant for education. Another point to be taken into the analysis is the existence of education reforms or policies to see if they are redistributive (Novelli et al.,2015).

Recognition is responsible for teaching to respect the differences. In this framework, it is important to analyze in the education system: the language of instruction policies; if cultural

diversity is present in the curriculum; how religion is addressed in schools; and the subjects of citizenship and civic education (Novelli et al.,2015).

In the third "R", r*epresentation,* participation should be assured. Therefore, it should be analyzed: how education policies and reforms are made with participation (at local, national, and global levels); the participation on the administration; the participation of decision making (parents, teachers, students) and how schools are managed; and how the education system promotes and support human rights (Novelli et al.,2015).

The fourth "R", *reconciliation,* is responsible for dealing with the injustices in the past, present, and future. In this framework, the analysis should be focused on which injustices are present in education; how education helps the integration and to avoid segregation; the levels of trust of schools and education system, and between different identity-based groups; and the teaching about the past and how present and future are important (Novelli et al.,2015).

Thus, important concepts stated on this research, such as mother tongue instruction, religious teaching, and monastic schools, can be analyzed from the 4R's framework.

For mother-tongue instruction, three out of the four Rs can be related. Mother tongue will help improve recognition, when developing respect for differences; will support representation when increasing participation in class; and will also contribute to reconciliation when teaching trust and cooperation.

Religious teaching is a policy that can be recognized as an advantage for the framework or as an obstacle, when is education about religion. In this case it can compromise recognition and representation, once it does not respect and recognize another religious belief.

Monastic schools are directly connected with the Rs of recognition and reconciliation, once the schools are inclusive, having an inclusive education approach, recognizing problems of identity and tolerance of minority groups.

Furthermore, another important aspect that need to be taken in consideration in education is the role of the teachers. This can also be directly connected with 4Rs framework. Teachers can be part of the theory of change, they can direct influence the learner, therefore they can help with recognition, reconciliation, and representation; teaching respect for different groups, increasing participation and building cooperation.

Moreover, religious education is also extremely relevant part of PE. It is vital to highlight the difference between "religious education" and "education about religion". The religious education is responsible for teaching the learners to respect different religious traditions, faiths, and backgrounds. The goal of this education is to promote knowledge and understanding of different religious. While education about religion is the teaching of a unique education and faith for all learners, not considering the diversification of faiths (Jackson & Fujiwara, 2007).

In PE is also relevant the presence of democratic citizenship teachings. With the knowledge of democratic citizenship, the learners are capable to participate in democratic life, acknowledging their rights and responsibilities in society (Forrester, 1999 cited by Ahmad, 2003). With democratic teachings the learners will acquire the knowledge needed about institutions, issues, and practices of democracy in their countries (Ahmar, 2003).

Furthermore, mother tongue education is extremely relevant for PE, for a learner is crucial to be able to study in their own language. The presence of mother tongue is beneficial for learning and cognition aspects of students. More important in the case of PE is that the possibility to study in a minority language in a post-conflict or negative peace context works as a tool to help building a national identity, demystifying the idea of others, recognizing and including the diversity of the country (South & Lall, 2016).

Most of these concepts from peace education can be identified in the education of Myanmar throughout history. Some of these concepts can be identified from a positive

application, while others are the opposite as stated in peace education. This research will identify policies that can be considered peace education and analyze if they are positive or negative based on this literature review. For the analysis it is important to have a fully understand of the sociopolitical and education history of Myanmar.

4. Geopolitical background of Burma/Myanmar

This short chapter will make a quick overview through the main facts of Burma/Myanmar. The facts and relevant information for a complete comprehension of the social-political context of the country that will relate to the education in the country and, subsequently, to peace education will be addressed.

Burma, or Myanmar, is one of the most diverse countries in the world (Topich & Leitich, 2013). The country has a population of 54 million people (WorldBank, 2019) and approximately 135 different ethnic groups that represent 33% of the entire population (Topich & Leitich, 2013) and more than 100 ethnolinguistic groups (Lall &South, 2016). The country is the biggest in mainland Southeast Asia, bordered by two big international powers, China and India (Zhao, 2008).

First, the name, Myanmar or Burma? This is a common confusion hitherto. The name Burma was the country's official name until 1989 when the State Law and Order Restoration Council (SLORC) decreed the internationalization of the names, Burma became Myanmar, Raangon became Yangon, and so forth. The name Myanmar recalls the 12th-century inscriptions of the country's language, while Burma is a reference to the Burmese ethnic group and Barma language. Therefore, the change is way more meaningful than mere names. The use of "Burma" represents the refusal of recognition and legitimization of the military government, and it is adopted by important leaders such as Aung Suu Kyi. However, some non-Burman ethnic groups would instead prefer the name "Myanmar", since Burma does not represent their ethnicity. (Dittmer, 2010). Dittmer (2010) raises the dispute between linguistic nominalists and realists. Nominalists believe that the name is just a way of calling the country, while realists believe that the symbology of the name is relevant.

Due to ideological political beliefs, this research will address the country as Burma when discussing history and politics. While, the name Myanmar will also be sporadically used when referring to minorities, different groups, and the different ethnicities of the country.

Another relevant aspect needed to consider to analyze the country's history is ethnic diversity. Ethnic minority groups represent one-third of the country's population (Smith, 1994). Myanmar's population is formed by 135 different ethnic groups, divided into seven main classifications: the Tibeto-Burman, Burman and Mon-Khmer, Tai, Karen, Karen and Burman, Mon-Khmer, and Burman and Shan. As represented in the map below, the largest group are the Burman, representing 68 percent of the population; the Shan group is equivalently a 9 percent, followed by 7 percent of Karen and then 4 percent of Rakhine's, the rest 11 percentage formed by other groups (Chaturvedi, 2012).

The Rohingya are a Muslim minority and one of the most famous ethnic groups in the country; unfortunately, the group is considered the world's most persecuted minority (Al Jazeera, 2017). The Sunni Muslim group is not considered one of the 135 ethnic groups of Myanmar (Chaturvedi, 2012). It is facing extreme violence, human rights violations and urges humanitarian assistance in Rakhine State when fighting for recognition (Zawacki, 2012). By UNCHR, until March 2021, there were 1.1 million refugees from Myanmar; the vast majority are Rohingyas from the Rakhine state (UNCHR, 2021). Further analysis of the ethnic conflicts in the country will be done in the following chapters.

Figure 2 - *Ethnic Mosaic in Burma/Myanmar*
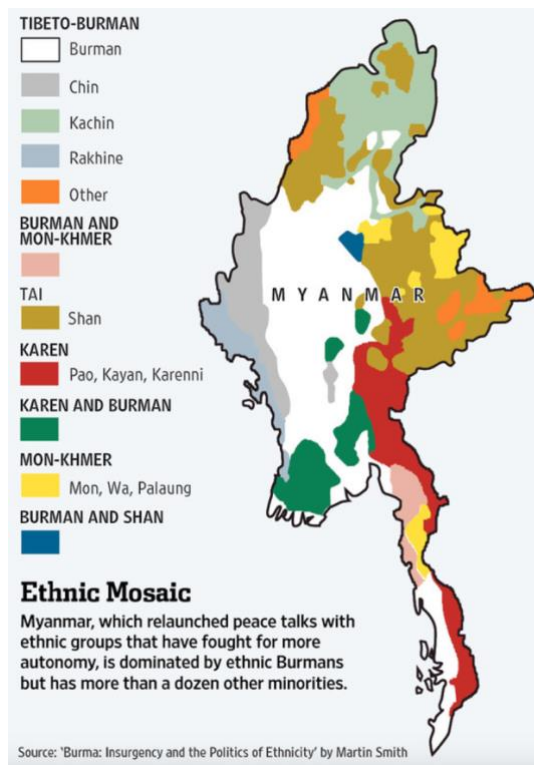
Note: From Chaturvedi, M. (2012). (Rep.). Institute of Peace and Conflict Studies. Retrieved 9th April 2021, from http://www.jstor.org.proxy.library.uu.nl/stable/resrep09338

Furthermore, religion and languages are also relevant for this analysis. In Myanmar, the majority of the population is Buddhist, representing 89.2 percent of the population, the second biggest religion is far behind the Catholics, with 5 percent; Muslims are 3.8 percent of the country's population, the rest of the population is formed by Hindus, spiritualists, and other religions. The country's diversity is also due to the existence of over 100 spoken languages (Smith, 1994). Barma, or Burmese is the most spoken language in the country, spoke by 68 percent of the population (32 million people) (Lall & South, 2016). The second most spoken language is Mon, by 11 percent of the population, followed by Shan language, by 7 percent. The many other languages represent the rest of the population (Aye & Sercombe, 2014).

The diversity is not limited to the population but also due to opposite influences from around the globe. In its history, Burma was colonized by the British throne. The annexation

process happened through the three Anglo-Burmese wars and lasted from 1885 until World War II, when the Japanese invaded the country. Just in 1948, Burma became fully independent from British rule and the Japanese invasion. Furthermore, the country's geographic position also contributes to the diversity and influences; Burma is located in between two international powers: China and India (Topich & Leitich, 2013).

All these factors contributed for building the complex history of the country. Burma was marked by multiple dictatorships, difficulties in relations with the rest of the world, and challenges to developing and unifying the population.

5. From independence to military rule (1948 – 1962)

This first analytical chapter will briefly overview the first year's post-independence (1948 – 1962), explaining how Burma became independent and the country's socio, cultural, economic scenario. Moreover, it will analyze the education in the country through peace education lenses, relating education policies existents in the schooling system with peace education.

5.1 Historical background

The first 14 years, Burma's history was marked by the challenge of building national unity after the British left a fragile state. During the independence process in 1948, Aung San, Ne win, Let Ya, Zeya, and Colonel Suzuki were essential names in the fight against the British and the Japanese. They were seeing as Burma's indigenous military heroes. General Aung San was the head of the party and military that conquered the independence; he is considered the father of Modern Burma (Steinberg,2013). He made plans to reach all groups and minorities in the country, assuring that all groups would have space in the government. However, on 19th July 1947, General Aung San was assassinated at 10:30 AM before assuming the leadership of the new country. (Aung-Thwin, & Aung-Thwin, 2012).

Anti-Fascist People's Freedom League (AFPFL), previously led by Aung San, had to find another name to replace the independence hero, U Nu assumed the party and the country on 4th January 1948 (Topich & Leitich, 2013).

The difference in the interests from the pre-colonial time remained after the independence from the British. Political parties, monks, students, and business people had different ideas for the newly born independent Burma. At a local level, there was a competition

between different groups; people were looking for self-determination and legitimacy (Aung-Thwin, & Aung-Thwin, 2012).

During the 14 years, a few key institutions were created. There was the rise of the BIA (Burma independence army), the creation of a "national" party (Anti-fascist people's freedom league – AFPLF), and the introduction of parliamentary democracy (Aung-Thwin, & Aung-Thwin, 2012).

Once the common enemy, the British, was defeated, there was a competition for the nation-state, the national unity was being tested. Once friends, leaders were fighting with each other to implement the Union of Burma. The biggest challenge of the Burmese government was to keep unity (Topich & Leitich, 2013).

Right after the independence, a civil war rose in the country. The groups defended a wide range of ideological, personal, and political reasons. The socialist regime from the British and a communist insurrection came into friction (Myint-U, 2020). The communists rebelled against the power with the support of different army units. Soon the Karen ethnic group joined the rebellion, and other dissatisfied minorities such as Mon, Karenni, Pao, Kachin, and Rakhine joined the fight against the ruler's power (Huxley, 1993). However, the cooperation between the groups was also problematic once they had different ideologies, goals, and issues with the power distribution (Topich & Leitich, 2013).

In fits and starts, some kind of democratic government lasted for more than a decade. The government tried to retake over the power and rebuild the economy; however, there was no success (Myint-U, 2020).

In 1958, Prime Minister U Nu, facing a big challenge on holding the unity of the country, handed over the power of Burma to General Ne Win to "assume the reins of government—in a 'Caretaker Government" (Myint-U, 2006,p.819). The military (Tatmadaw), represented by General Ne Win, was supposed to rebuild the stability of the country and govern

for one year. Eighteen months later, on 4th April 1960, the Tatmadaw voluntarily withdrew from the power and ran new elections, bringing U Nu back to power (Steinberg,2013).

The new government was decided to restructure the party and the democratic practices in the government. Among U Nu party's issue, divergences within Burma's "states" and groups started to rise again. Furthermore, there was an economic uncertainty and the wish for national peace by the population (Than,1993).

The success of U Nu's new government was dubious. After tasting the power, the Tatmadaw had another plan for the country's future. On 2nd March 1962, tanks and the military took over the government (Myint-U, 2006)

Clearly, the post-independence period in Burma was a tumultuous time. A new and fragile state was trying to build itself for the first time. The multicultural background of the country resulted in challenges for unity. The government was not prepared and could not support the different needs of society. As Aung-Thwin, & Aung-Thwin, (2012) affirms, few institutions were created in the country; among them; the education system was remodeled.

5.2   Education in post-independence Burma

In post-independence, education in Burma/Myanmar also received a new format. The formal education system had significant changes in its structure, and the Buddhist monastic system was reviewed, new priorities were implemented in education. All children should attend school and be encouraged to do it (James, 2005). The students could go to private (Buddhist monastic or Christian schools) or public schools.

A complete free formal education system, with a 5-3-3 system, was built in the country, composed of a nursery, primary school, middle school, high school, and vocational and technical institutes (Lwin, 2000).

The vocational and technical institutes would define the subjects according to the gender and location of the student, such as commercial subjects for students in urban areas and agricultural subjects for the ones in rural zones; and general workshops for boys and domestic science for girls (Lwin, 2000).

Furthermore, it was established that Burmese should be the main language of teaching in schools, while English was a compulsory second language after primary school. Different from the colonial times, there was no religious teaching in schools.

Moreover, the education system was responsible for teaching the principles and practices of democracy (Lwin, 2000). The government made education a tool to support democracy and to keep the unity of the country. For this, it was introduced a subject called "democratic teachings". In this discipline was developed programs that would support all population to gain literacy skills, sense of citizenship, and help the construction of a nation was done by the government (Shah & Lopes Cardozo, 2019)

Nevertheless, the education ruled by the minister of education was not the only system in Burma. Christian and Buddhist monastic schools were also present in the country, with a slightly different structure. In private schools, the education was in English, and there were no vocational classes (Lwin, 2000).

In general, the education post-colonial times in Burma created a more significant gap between rural and urban areas, as well as girls and boys. This brought more considerable inequalities and opportunities to society. It is also important to highlight that minorities were discriminated when no mother tongue education was taking into consideration (Lwin, 2000). Therefore, education reflected the government and the social-political context of the country. The status quo of the country remained and was driven by the education system, the inequalities, and minorities' discrimination in society and in the education system.

5.3   Analysis of the education system from a peace education perspective

Correlating education in the post-colonial period with peace education is not hard. During this period, it is possible to establish connections of education with peace education in the country.

It is important to highlight that the post-colonial period was the first time that the people from Burma could build their own nation based on their principles and wills. Since that time, the geopolitical scenario was complex, with challenges of building national unity and identity for the country (Aung-Thwin, & Aung-Thwin, 2012). It is necessary to take into consideration the fact of creating a nation after colonialism, the issues between ethnic groups, and identity. A peace education approach would be beneficial in this context. As Salomon (2002) discussed, peace education can be applied in scenarios with intractable conflicts, regions of interethnic tension, and regions that experienced tranquility; the case of post-colonial Burma can be considered a region of interethnic tension, a place with negative peace. Harris (2008) remembers that in this scenario, peace education would aim to multiculturalism, to create awareness and empathy towards other groups in the same region.

Stated these meaningful contexts and framework of peace education in post-colonial Burma, it is possible to relate educational policies to peace education in the country during the period. The most relevant policies during this period that can be related to PE are the vocational-technical institutes, the lack of Burmese language, and the presence of democratic teachings.

First, the vocational and technical institutes create segregation between the learners once the future profession of the learner is determined by gender and location, and it does not take into consideration the desire of the child. John Dewey's (1930) theory of the importance of history and geography to promote internationalism and Maria Montessori's (1946) theory

that encourages the learner to have autonomy can be related with the vocational and technical schools. In this case, the vocational and technical schools can be negatively connected with peace education in post-colonial Burma once it does the opposite of what PE preaches. The schools segregate the students and do not respect their will; accord to Montessori, the child should have the autonomy to choose their preferences and their career. Furthermore, this segregation also divides the subjects such as history and geography. In this case, for Dewey, it is highly relevant to the learner to have contact with those subjects to create an international idea of the world, as the international education approach of peace education preaches.

Secondly, the presence of democratic teachings can be considered a positive policy of the school in post-colonial Burma in relation to a peace education approach. In this case, it is possible to relate democratic teaching to one of the core concepts of peace education: countering militarism. This concept was developed by Betty Reardon (1988) and aimed to reverse the effects of militarism, to develop a tranquil environment without traces of militarism. In the context of Burma, the democratic teachings that aimed for a sense of citizenship and the construction of national identity have the same goals of the concept of counter-militarism in peace education.

The last relevant policy during the post-colonial Burma education is the presence of only the Burmese language in the school system. This policy can be related to PE once it is directly connected with inclusion and non-discrimination, which are relevant issues in a region of inherent tension. The inclusion of this policy could help the context to achieve peace; therefore, it can be considered peace education. Thus, the exclusivity of Burmese as the language of instruction can be considered a negative characteristic once mother tongues are absent in schools. The country was facing struggles to build a national identity, establish a democratic government, and create a nation; the conflict resolution approach is the most adequate for the country. In this context, the 4Rs approach of PE could be beneficial. The lack

of mother tongue languages is directed connected with three out of the 4R's – recognition, representation, and reconciliation. The recognition seeks for the respect of differences; this would include educational instructions in different languages accordingly to the necessities of the school. Furthermore, for representation, participation is extremely important; without the presence of mother tongues this participation and representation in schools is limited. Lastly, reconciliation, in this phase the aim is to build trust and cooperation; the presence of mother tongue in this stage could contribute to the goals and build a more solid and inclusive society.

The start of a new chapter in history was not easy for Burma. In the social-political sphere the country faced many changes to establish the new government and coordinate the different goals of the society. The education in the country followed the same path, changes, and innovations such as a free complete system and the exclusion of religious teaching were implemented. These modifications reflected the issues and wills of the government and society, such as the desire to create a democratic society and the democratic teachings in schools. In general, most of the school policies can be seen as negative from a peace education perspective, like the vocational teaching and the absence of mother tongue teachings even though there was one main policy that can be considered positive from a peace education perspective, the presence of democratic teachings.

Table 1 below summarizes the connections made in this section between the scholars and concepts and the policies in the historical period.

Table 1 - *Post-independence analysis matrix*

FRAMEWORK		HISTORICAL PERIOD
Scholars	**Concepts**	**Policies post-independence**
John Dewey	**History and Geography**	Vocational and technical institutes
Maria Montessori	**Autonomy**	Vocational and technical institutes
	Engage on activities	
	Task focus	
Paulo Freire	**Critical Consciousness**	
Betty Reardon	**Democracy**	Democratic teaching
	Militarism	
Key concepts	**Critical Thinking**	
	Counter Militarism	
	HRE	
	Global Citizenship	
	Unity	
	Worldview	
	Inclusive Education	
Policies related to the 4Rs	**Mother-tongue instruction**	Burmese instruction
	Religious teaching	
	Monastic schools	
	Democratic citizenship teachings	Democratic teaching
	Teacher training	

Note: From own authorship

6. Military rule (1962 – 2011)

This chapter will discuss the dictatorial period of Burma, the education during the period and will make an analysis of the education policies through the lenses of peace education. From the historical perspective relevant events will be explained, such as the coup d'etat, the impacts that it had on society, and the society's diversity. Besides that, it will be analyzed how the military-ruled the country and maintained the unity of Burma. Moreover, it will be presented how the transition process happened and how the military lost power. Furthermore, the second section of this chapter will discuss the education system during the period. Lastly, will be analyzed the policies that were done from a peace education perspective.

6.1 Historical background

In March of 1962, the first official military coup happened in the country. For the next half-century, Burma would be ruled by generals in a non-democratic way. Until the first decade of the 21st century, Burma suffered two coup d'etat, primarily in 1962 when General Ne Win and the Burma Socialist Programme Party (BSPP) took over the power and, subsequently in 1988, when the junta, State Law and Order Restoration Council (SLORC) assumed the leading of the country.

In the past, Myanmar faced multiple challenges to keep the unity of the country due to its diversity and multiple ethnicities. Before independence, General Aung San signed the Panglong Agreement, assuring multiculturalism in Myanmar. However, the failure to implement the agreement still permeates the society, and "ethnic conflicts continue to plague the nation" (Walton, 2008, p. 889). During both dictatorships, efforts were made to keep the country unified. The constitution of 1974 determined seven division and ethnic states, and in 1982 the nationality law identified 135 ethnic groups inside the eight main national races and

numerous ceasefire agreements. Notwithstanding, the efforts were not successful and ethnic conflicts persisted in the country (Holliday, 2010). Chatuverdi (2012) explains that over the years, the repression of the military (the official army of Burma) over the ethnic armies (non-official armies from ethnic minorities) made the demands from the different groups more concise to limited autonomy and special privileges.

The education in the country was also influenced during the period. In its report, UNESCO (2011) stated that during six decades of military rule, the "schools were a vehicle of social division", in which language was imposed, and the manipulation of textbooks was present. The schools' materials were made to influence the students and promote intolerance, violence, and segregation (UNESCO, 2011). This sphere of government will be discussed in detail later in this chapter.

Different from the previous Prime Minister U Nu, the military wanted to separate religion from politics, claiming a country with freedom of religion. In the end, it resulted in hundreds of monks being arrested for protesting against the government, and missionaries from other religions were forced out of the country (Topich & Leitich, 2013).

During these 50 years of military rule, Burma was marked by conflicts, tensions, and isolation from the rest of the international community. This section will further explain the historical-political background during both dictatorships. It is divided into two sub-sections, the SLORC mandate and the SDPC mandate.

6.1.1   The SLORC mandate

On 2nd March 1962, Prime Minister U NU and other leaders of the government were arrested, and General Ne Win assumed the head of the government (Smith, 1994; Than, 1993; Topich & Leitich, 2013). The general was the commander of the armed forces, and on 30th

April 1962, enforced the "Burmese Way to Socialism" (BSW). The document approached the social and economic guidelines for the country with a mix of socialism, Buddhist, and humanism (Myint-U, 2020).

Slowly new implementations were made; in the beginning, popular participation was encouraged, and the priority was basic necessities (food, shelter, clothes). At the end of the second year, the media could already feel the absence of freedom of expression, and social gatherings such as horse races and dance halls were banned (Topich & Leitich, 2013)

Furthermore, the BSW nationalized important sectors of the economy, such as commerce and industry. Religious and political groups were declared illegal, and there was the monopolization of education, information, and culture (Than, 1993).

The most extremist action of the BSPP in the first years of government was to transform the country into a one-party country, which meant that the only legitimate power in the country was Ne Win's party. The BWS way of governing lasted for 26 years, and it went in the opposite direction from the 1947 constitution, the previous constitution of Burma (Smith, 1994). The members of the BSPP were mainly ex-military commanders, making Burma continued to be indirectly controlled by militaries (Than, 1993).

The BSW manner of ruling Burma resulted in violations of human rights, such as forced relocations and enforced conscription of civilian laborers. In January 1974, a new constitution was introduced, which was responsible for the centralization of the economy, politics, social and cultural aspects. The civil society reacted with protests that remained for several years (Smith, 1994).

The dissatisfaction of the population in the country slowly escalated. During the 1980s, economic changes were announced as an alternative to save the economy. The debt increase, energy shortages, and rising inflation among the social and cultural issues did not please the population.

The period was considered "the most tragic period in modern Burmese history" (Topich & Leitich, 2013). During the year 1988, popular dissatisfaction escalated. Officially the BSPP failed to improve the lives of the Burmese citizens and vanished away from the hope of modernization and democratization. The combo of bad economic conditions, protests, and responses from the government resulted in the most delicate period of Burma's history since independence (Topich & Leitich, 2013).

The protests continued over the entire year of 1988. It started with university students, and slowly the rest of the population, including the working class and most of the urban population, joined the riots, counting to up to one million protesters at some point. The riots were extremely violent, and thousands of Burmese lost their lives fighting for a better future for the country.

The event reached its momentum on 8th August 1988, known as 8-8-88. The only missing piece for the fall of the regime was the split of the Tatmadaw and BSPP. The population did not trust the military, and opposition was growing in the middle of the chaos. Without the support of the party to change the constitution and allow a multi-party state, Ne Win had to step down and leave power (Topich & Leitich, 2013).

6.1.2 The SDPC mandate

During the period that Burma was ruled by the SPDC, one specific name stood out in the opposition: Aung San Suu Kyi. It is extremely important to highlight her role in the process of fighting for democracy. She is the daughter of the independence hero of Burma, Aung San.

Aung San Suu Kyi defends democracy, a representative government, investments, and access to education and health, and structure for all minorities in the country (Steinberg, 2013). She represents one of the most important names in the fight for democracy in the country.

On 18th September 1988, the second official military coup happened in Burma. The Tatmadaw, now in power, responded even more violently to the demonstrations. By the end of the year, around 3,000 people had died (Steinberg, 2013).

The State Law and Order Restoration Council with General Saw Maung assumed power in the country. As soon as the new junta was governing the country, they announced changes in the economic policies; from then on, the country was going to have an "open door" for international trade. Furthermore, the "one-party state" was abolished, and the country was officially a multi-party democracy (for a brief period of time) (Smith,1994). The SLORC aimed to restore the rule of law, the peace, and tranquility of Burma (Than, 1994).

For the third time, the Tatmadaw was assuming the power of the country after the caretaker government and the first coup in 1962. This resulted in the army (Tatmadaw) being seen as a class apart from society and not like an institution in charge of the protection of the population (Smith, 2994). This time, for the next 23 years, Burma was ruled by the SLORC (or later, State Peace and Development Council – SPDC). The state faced several structural modifications and crises (Than, 1994).

During this time, ceasefire agreements between minority groups were signed. However, the actions of the SLORC differed from the agreement. For the minorities and the unity of the country, the context of the country did not improve. Almost 100,000 troops executed attacks against various groups, such as Mon, Kachin, and Karenni. The Thai and Chinese borders were scenes of fighting, and a growing number of the refugees leaving Burma, Bangladesh received around 260,000 Muslims from the Rakhine State. The fighting and repressions against minorities had a halt in April 1992, in the name of a "national unity" (Smith, 1994).
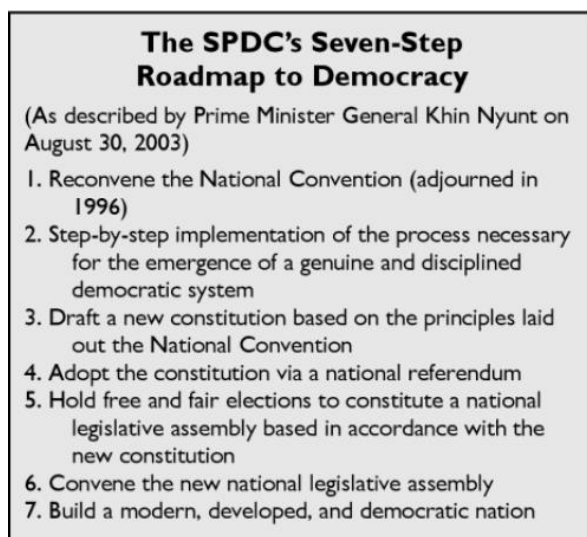
A year after gaining power, in 1989, the junta decreed the Adaptation of Expressions Law and officially changed the name of the country from Union of Burma to Union of Myanmar. Important cities in the country, such as Rangoon, also changed to Yangon, and so

forth. The change of the names goes further than just an internationalization; for some, the acceptance of the new name means the legitimacy of the military government. On the other hand, it is important to highlight that in 1989 only 68% of the population was Burmese; therefore, the name "Burma" did not represent the entire population of the country. Until nowadays, there is no consensus within the international community on the use of the name of Burma or Myanmar (Dittmer, 2010).

In 1990, as promised to the population, an election occurred in the country. The main opposition was led by Aung San Suu Kyi (Smith, 1994). Not surprisingly, NLD (National League for Democracy) won, and the SLORC refused to transfer power (Yin Hlaing, 2012).

In 2003 the General Khin Nyunt announced a seven-step road for democracy that would be followed in the next years in the country (as shown in figure 2). During the next seven years, the seven steps would slowly be fulfilled[8].

Figure 3 - *The SPDC's Seven-Step Roadmap to Democracy*

The SPDC's Seven-Step Roadmap to Democracy

(As described by Prime Minister General Khin Nyunt on August 30, 2003)

1. Reconvene the National Convention (adjourned in 1996)
2. Step-by-step implementation of the process necessary for the emergence of a genuine and disciplined democratic system
3. Draft a new constitution based on the principles laid out the National Convention
4. Adopt the constitution via a national referendum
5. Hold free and fair elections to constitute a national legislative assembly based in accordance with the new constitution
6. Convene the new national legislative assembly
7. Build a modern, developed, and democratic nation

Note: From Martin, M. F. (2010). *Burma's 2010 Elections: Implications of the New Constitution and Election Laws*. DIANE Publishing. p.2

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[8] From 2004 to 2008 the first three steps would be implemented in Burma regardless the growing opposition to the military government (Martin, 2010).

However, a clear future for the country was still uncertain. The beginning of the 21st century was not easy for Burma. The country faced another crisis that resulted in the protests of 2007. First, in 2002-03 the economy suffered a banking crisis, which resulted in an almost collapse of the economic sector in the country. Furthermore, also in 2003, the opposition NLD party led by Aung San Suu Kyi challenged the military ruling power. The junta violently responded, resulting in the Depayin Massacre[9]. In 2005 the junta decided on yet another big change for the society in the country; the capital moved from Rangoon to Naypyitaw (Sikdmore & Wilson, 2008).

The socioeconomic situation of Burma remained critical. The economy was suffering from sanctions from western countries, including the USA, which resulted in inflation and the devaluing of the local currency. Education and health services declined while the junta was leading the country; both sectors suffered a lack of funding and not enough international assistance. Furthermore, human rights abuses were reported throughout the entire period ruled by the military. The international community faced problems on entering the country to monitor the situation of the country in the period; specifically, international NGOs had limited access to the country. Therefore, it was unclear what was truly happening inside Burma (Sikdmore & Wilson, 2008).

Civil society was not happy with the situation of Burma. The promises for a better future had vanished, and internal problems remained unchanged. The only way the military could keep the unity of the country was by strengthening controls over the society, economy, and people (Skidmore & Wilson, 2008).

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[9] The Depayin Massacre was an event where approximately 70 people from the NLD or connected with the party were killed by a government sponsor mob (*Ad Hoc Commission on the Depayin Massacre (Burma), 2004*)

The dissatisfaction of the society reached a limit in the first half of 2007 when the government unexpectedly raised the price of fuel by 500 percent (Myint U, 2020).

The students from the '88 uprising were now adults in their mid-40s and again decided to fight for a better future for the country with protests in Rangoon. Sporadic demonstrations continued to happen while the government responded violently. At the beginning of September, an unexpected force joined the crowds: hundreds of monks organized a protest showing support for the demonstrations in Rangoon (Myint-U, 2020)

Around the country, many monks joined the demonstrations, with approximately 50,000 joining the crowds on 24th September 2007. Due to the colors of the monks' vestments, the movement is known as the saffron revolution. The junta responded violently to the monks. For the first time, the repression against the population was being broadcast on television and the internet; it demonstrated the violence of the military against civilians (Steinberg, 2013).

The entire society then joined the demonstrations - a national movement made up of monks, students, the political opposition, and famous personalities protested against the junta throughout Burma. The crowd chanted for the release of political prisoners, including the NLD leader, Aung San Suu Kyi. A huge part of the population was taken into custody or interrogated; torture and human rights violations were part of the actions conducted by the Tatmadaw (Topich & Leitich, 2013).

The public image of the military government reached a low point. The international community tried to articulate a plan to intervene in the critical situation in Burma. Neighboring countries positioned themselves against the junta; the UN issued a statement and calling for the release of the political prisoners; the USA and Canada tried to impose sanctions against the SPDC. However, there was a lack of coordination from within the international community (Topich & Leitich, 2013).

The riots, violence, and the Nargis Cyclone[10] did not stop the road to democracy from continuing. The referendum for a new constitution of 2008 was scheduled for May 10th and 24th, as it turns out, a few days after the cyclone. The population could vote "in favor or against" the new constitution. Throughout the country, elections observers noted that few people voted, or the ballots were already filled with "yes". Nevertheless, the junta announced that 92,48% of the population voted in favor of the new constitution. This was the beginning of a transition to a "disciplined democracy" (Seekins, 2009).

The new constitution had controversial provisions, such as the need for 25% of the chairs in the parliament to be reserved for the military. Another provision was specifically aimed at Aung San Suu Kyi[11]; from then on, no one married a foreigner could hold a political position in the country (Seekins, 2009). Finally, the government had decided to move toward the democratization of the country (Topich & Leitich, 2013).

In line with earlier plans for democratization in the country, at the end of 2010, new elections were organized by the junta. Over 20 years, Burma held elections on 7th November, the winner was the Union Solidarity and Development (USDP), with 77 percent of the votes. The USDP is the successor party of the military junta. The main opposition to the junta, the NLD, boycotted the elections (Topich & Leitich, 2013).

After the new party assumed power, the SPDC was dissolved, and the road map to democracy was being followed with the institution of a "new democratic system". Daw Aung San Suu Kyi was released from house arrest, and her travel ban was lifted, slowly allowing the

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[10] In 2008 Burma was devasted by Nargis Cyclone. Approximately 138,000 were killed, and the estimated damage was around US$2.4 billion. The lack of concern by the government towards the population attracted international attention. The junta made significant efforts to avoid international humanitarian help after the natural catastrophe. More than just a natural disaster, the cyclone brought to the surface systematic problems of the Tatmadaw government, such as the fear of international intervention (or aid), the lack of priority towards the needs of the population, and nationalism (Steinberg, 2013).

[11] Aung San Suu Kyi was married to Dr Michael Aris, a British scholar (Topich & Leitich, 2013).

democratic icon to be active in the political scenario of the country once again (Thawnghmung, 2016).

The extended period of military dictatorship had shaped Burma irretrievably. In 2010, the country suffered and faced difficulties in different aspects of society. Human Rights violations, lack of international relations, repression, and violence were present during the almost half-century where the country was ruled by dictatorships. Internal differences between the ethnic groups had never faded away, the lack of unity was present during all history of the country. Holliday (2010) explains that the political scenario in Burma was focused on protests, but there remained the need to take a closer look at the multi-ethnic context. With the new democratization scenario, the various ethnicities needed to be taken into consideration as part of the democratization process (Holliday, 2010). Important aspects of society, such as health and education, did not have a priority or were taken into consideration during the military rules.

6.2 Education during the military rule

During the military rules' education was not a priority for the government. The country faced two others different Tatmadaw powers after the caretaker government, first with the 1962 coup and followed by the 1988 coup. Throughout this time, the country faced numerous challenges, violent repression, deterioration of economy, lack of unity, violent riots, and lack of democratic standards, these facts had direct implications for the education in the country.

The five decades the military rule faced challenges to establish and equalize the education in the entire country. The Burmese Way to Socialism encouraged all children to be enrolled in basic education and science was added to the curriculum; however, only the most prominent students would be encouraged to seek higher education (James, 2005).

One of the first steps of the Tatmadaw in power was to nationalize all schools in the country. With this action, all Christian schools were closed in the country; however, contradictorily, Buddhist monastic schools were allowed to remain open in rural areas. Furthermore, basic education changed from a 5-3-3 to a 5-4-3 system, with only primary school, middle school, and high school. The students would frequent school from 5 years old until 16 years old (Lwin, 2000)

Similar to the previous chapter, this section will make an overview of how formal education was during the military rule and relate the main policies and characteristics to concepts of peace education. Since there are many characteristics in this section, for a clearer understanding, the research will first discuss the changes and issues found on the curricula of the education system and later approach the issues of the infrastructure and accessibility of the schools in Burma/Myanmar.

Important issues were found in the curriculum of the schools, such as the permanence of Burmese as the language of instruction, the forced creation of a national identity through education, and the Buddhist teachings as part of the curricula. Furthermore, there was a preference for science subjects over arts, the system was exam-oriented, and there was an absence of self-thinking on the students (Lwin, 2000; Shah & Lopes Cardozo, 2019; South & Lall, 2013; Walton, 2013).

In parallel to the curricula issues, the infrastructure and accessibility to education in the country also presented challenges. First, as already stated, only Christian schools were shut while Buddhist monastic schools could remain open. The drop-out rate was extremely high, teachers did not receive proper training, the schools were overcrowded, and there were no schools in rural areas. In general, there was a lack of funding from the government to schools. Moreover, access to higher education was also selected and exclusive to Burmese people.

Lastly, it is important to discuss the paper on the Buddhist monastic schools in Burma/Myanmar.

6.2.1 The educational curriculum during the military rule

The first issue of the curricula is the permanence of Burmese. This important characteristic from the post-independence period remained the same, Burmese was still the main language, and most of the time, the only language of instructions at schools. As Lwin (2000) highlights other indigenous vernacular languages were ignored and students had to learn Burmese to be able to study. In a country where non-Burmese had to learn Burmese to be able to survive and acquire education, most Burmese would never try to learn another local language (Walton, 2013).

The social background also reflected the issue of languages in schools. The past challenges to keep unity of the country was still present. Most ethnicities still could not find their place in society. In the past, General Aung San signed the Panglong Agreement, with the goal to ensure multiculturalism in Myanmar. Nevertheless, this was not successful and the country still faces issues to find common ground for a unification. (Walton,2008)

Thus, the exclusivity of Burmese of language of instruction was another issue. South & Lall (2013) importantly highlight the consequences of the absence of mother tongue language in schools. This way the government opens roads for the hate and discrimination between ethnic groups and the Tatmadaw to persist. The government would support an argument that the Burmese language in schools is an important fact to keep the unity in the country and to build a national identity (South & Lall, 2013).

To create this national identity the government start rewriting books to emphasize this common identity. Walton (2013) gives an example of this try of identity's creation, the

government restricted the publication of non-Burmese language books and local ethnic heroes would be shown as heroes of "Myanmar" in books, hiding their true and local identity (Walton, 2013).

This new identity was also reflected in the school curriculum that was created during the time. An entire new narrative was created highlighting the Burmese nation, its culture, and the importance of a national unity through this Burmese nation (Shah & Lopes Cardozo, 2019).

The failure of this new concept is clear. The forced creation of a national identity can have the opposite result; education can also contribute to conflicts and discrimination between groups. South and Lall (2016) remember that "education contributes to conflict, not only through the unequal distribution of education among ethnic groups, but also through educational policies that undermine or even erase certain cultures, particularly through the imposition of a dominant language as the language of instruction" (South & Lall, 2016, p137).

The efforts to create a national identity was a reality in different spheres of the country during the dictatorships. The constitution of 1974 and national law of 1982 tried to be more inclusive when recognized 135 ethnic groups and determined seven divisions and ethnic states. However, the efforts did not have positive results, conflicts were still present and the military used a big amount of force to keep the unity (Holliday, 2010).

Furthermore, officially there was no religious education in the curriculum. The curriculum elaborated by the Minister of Education during the military government did not included religions, and was so-called "secular" (Lwin, 2000). However, the Burmese Way of Socialism included Buddhist materials and elements in school. Students had to do the "five gratitudes" to Buddha, Dhamma, Sanga, teachers and parents (Shah & Lopes Cardozo, 2019). Thus, although the education was officially secular, Buddhist culture was directly present in the schools' routine, which could also indirectly influence the forced creation of the national identity. As Walton (2013) recounts that "to be Burman is to be Buddhist", emphasizing the

importance of the religion in the country, and how the religion can be related to "the feeling of belong" (Walton, 2013).

The school curriculum was not only formed by Buddhist influence. English was taught as a second language from middle school. Other subjects such as Mathematics, Physics, Chemistry, Biology, Economics, History and Geography were also taught for the students; however, not to all of them. In the end of middle school, students would take an exam and be placed in two lists, A and B. The A list students would follow the science path, and study Mathematics, Physics, Chemistry, and Biology. While the B list would study humanities: Economics, History and Geography. This created a discrimination for arts and humanities subjects such as history, sociology, and philosophy. Therefore, it also segregated the students and their future opportunities (Lwin, 2000).

This resulted in an extremely exam-oriented system, once the grades of the exam will determine the career the student can follow. Some pupils can afford private tutoring; therefore, they are expected to have better results. Those pupils' learning centers result in more inequality and unequal opportunities for the students (Lwin, 2000).

Officially, the military did not want religion to be involved in politics or education; the country was seeking freedom of religion. However, this was only the propaganda made by the military, while the actions resulted in monks being arrested for protesting against the government and missionaries of other religions were forced out of Myanmar (Topich & Leitich, 2013).

This "freedom of religion" was supposed to be reflected in the education system. A school is a place where students should develop respect for other races, cultures, religions, and traditions (Tin, 2008). In Burma/Myanmar, the subject responsible for this is "social studies", which is responsible for teaching "moral and civic" to the students. However, the subject, instead of teaching participation in society was more like a doctrine and would teach obedience

to rules. In Myanmar/Burma "Youngsters are expected to be disciplined in and out of school under the military regime. The notion of discipline invokes ideas of loyalty and the image of obedient citizens" (Lwin, 2000, p16).

In parallel with the doctrine taught in social studies, the students were also discouraged to develop self-thinking and to defend original ideas. The regime used schools to disseminate military ideas, as a political tool to prevent different thoughts in society (Lwin, 2000). The education in Myanmar/Burma is "'a system that suppresses critical thinking and...discourages creativity" (Lorch, 2008, p.155).

6.2.2   *The infrastructure of education during the military rule*

The issues of the education system in Myanmar/Burma are not exclusive to the structure of the curriculum. The country also faced different challenges on the attendance, infrastructure and access to the education system.

The country suffered from a serious shortage of educational facilities, such as infrastructure, materials and even teachers (Khin Maung Kyi et al., 2000; Lwin, 2000). Primary education in the country has faced problems at different levels such as attendance rates, lack of materials, high costs for the parents and untrained teachers (Wilson & Skidmore, 2008).

The economic background of the country plays an important role in school attendance. During the five decades of military rule the country isolated itself to international economy resulting in significant damage to the economy and huge debts. The economic system of the country directed impacted society's life (Topich & Leitich, 2013). It is important to highlight that in Burma/Myanmar the public school system is free; however, uniforms and books might be pricy and preclude children from attending school (Lwin, 2000).

The classrooms were overcrowded and teachers, most of the time, did not receive any proper treatment for teaching. The training and materials are outdated, and the structure of the schools have deteriorated. Even the Minister of Education (MoE) assumes the lack of training and infrastructure in schools (Lorch, 2008). The preparation and capacity of a teacher are extremely important as they are in a role of directly influencing the students' life. Schools are supposed to be a place for joy, fun and learning; nevertheless, in Myanmar/Burma the scenario presented was a lack of training, crowded classrooms and poor infrastructure. (Tin, 2008)

The rural area schools were especially affected by the crowded classrooms and unprepared teachers. The issue faced by the rural areas is that the teachers are not encouraged to go work in non-urban areas, resulting in a lack of professionals and even more crowded classrooms. It is also important to highlight that in many areas the education system is even inexistent in rural areas. Teachers do not want to go there due to the non-worthy salary for the effort. The government budget for education is low compared to neighboring countries, Myanmar/Burma spent only about 1 percent of the gross domestic product in 2008 (GDP) on education (Lorch, 2008).

Moreover, the discrimination installed during the military governments also included the access to universities. With the 1982 Citizenship Law, students had to prove that their ancestors were residents of Burma before 1824 to get access to university. It was clear discrimination for Indian and Chinese families that lived and immigrated to the country (Lwin, 2000).

This law is reflected in a social event of the country, the 88 uprising, that started with students at universities and slowly got the adherence of the entire population to join the riots. After the student uprise of 1988, the government started to monitor the students, and to close universities to prevent new rebellions in the country. More measures to ensure that students would not be a threat for the government were installed, such as distance education programs

and the change of more prestigious courses (such as medicine and engineer) away from urban areas (Shah & Lopes Cardozo, 2019).

Lastly, it is important to highlight the presence of Buddhist monastic schools in the country. They were the only schools apart from the state schools that were allowed to remain open after the military took over the power. Monastic schools were 100 percent free, without enrollment fees and charges, as public state schools. The key difference between the two schools was that in the monastic schools teaching materials, such as books, were provided by the school, while in public state schools the parents needed to afford this. Monastic schools are also more present in rural areas than state run schools. These reasons made the Buddhist monastic school accessible for more children in the country (Lorch, 2008).

Education in the monastic schools is a nonformal type of education. The main goals are different from the state ran schools. The monastic schools have a form of life, life-long learning, while state schools prepare the students to pass exams. Additionally, it cannot be considered a secular school, but still teach the students basic skills needed for a secular life (Lorch, 2008).

Throughout time, the government was not happy with the role played by monastic schools. Thus, the state started to regulate and close control the programs and subjects taught. The schools had to be registered and accept regular visits, reducing the power and autonomy of the monks. With time the curriculum and activities were under approval of the state and some of them got censored (Shah & Lopes Cardozo, 2019). The role played by the monastic schools in Burma/Myanmar is extremely relevant for the country. It shows a "self-help network" trying to survive the failure of the welfare state (Lorch, 2008).

A UNESCO 2011 report summarizes the reality of schooling in the country, stating that the education system is a vehicle that contributes to social division. The imposition of exclusive teaching in Burmese language, manipulation of textbooks and lack of freedom of expression contributes to the preexistent social division to be even bigger (UNESCO, 2011).

6.3   Analysis of the education system from a peace education perspective

The challenges in the socio-political and economic spheres of the country clearly impacted education in Burma. The country faced two different military powers, countless protests, extreme violence. Years later and two military rules after the same difficulties remain the same for the state of Burma, such as the challenges to keep unity and difficulties in building a national identity. Education, as the research showed was never a priority and was undermined during the period.

In this context of division and ethnocentrism, it is possible to connect policies done in schools during the military governments with peace education. Examples of positive or negative policies, from a peace education are the use of only Burmese and no mother tongues, the absence of religious education, the fact of being exam-oriented, the lack of self-thinking of the students, the lack of schools in rural areas and non-training of teachers, and the limited access to education from different levels of society.

After the first period of post-colonial Burma, many policies that could be considered positive or negative from a peace education perspective remained the same. The Burma scenario could still be considered a region of interethnic tension (from the definition of Salomon, 2002), where there was still the need to create a multicultural atmosphere, awareness, and empathy towards different ethnic groups. Among the different approaches of peace education, this research identified the education policies during the military rule as part of the approaches of international education, human rights, and conflict resolution (education for peace)

Moreover, it is important to highlight that the conflict resolution approach is especially relevant for the Burma context. During the military rule the country faced many human rights violations (such as the strong repressions for protests, lack of freedom of expression and issues

with freedom of religion), isolation from the international community, repression, and violence. The multi-ethnic context did not have any improvements (Holiday, 2010). Once again, the scenario in Burma was not exactly post-conflict, however the country could benefit from a peace approach. It would be extremely beneficial for the society in the country to reach the creation of natural national identity and unification within the different groups. This peace approach could help the population heal from past traumas and difficulties and move forward to a peaceful and developed environment. With this stated, this research will still consider Myanmar as a region of interethnic tension and agree that PE could have been beneficial for the country context during the military rule.

The education policies that can be related to a general peace education approach will be identified. The first policy that can be identified and related to PE is the moral and civic subject, during the military rule it was a subject that would teach the learners just to obey the rules. As Lwin (2016) enforces the discipline seeks to teach loyalty and obedience. Moreover, the absence of self-thinking and discouragement for the learner to develop a critical think highlighted per Lorch (2008) can also be related to peace education. Lastly, the creation of an "A list" and "B list" of students and disciplines can also be related to PE, since this resulted in history being taught to fewer learners and being seen as a less prestigious subject. This made arts and humanities less wanted and prestigious, forcing learners of the "A list" to seek specific "rewarding" careers, such as engineer or medicine. This policy is similar to the vocational and technical schools from post-colonial Burma.

All these three policies from the education during military rule can be related to a general peace education approach. Those policies can be related to the theories of John Dewey, Paulo Freire, Maria Montessori, and the core concept of global citizenship.

Montessori theory can be related to all three policies; for her the autonomy of the learner was indispensable, this would be the only way a child could totally develop. The learner should

be able to choose, to engage with activities and discussions and the teachers should not be authoritarians. The scenario in the education of Burma was the opposite with moral and civic subjects; the absence of a critical think and the A list over B list encourages the students to take the opposite actions and limit the actions of the learners. Once the learner's autonomy is limited with the existence of the lists (A and B) he or she cannot choose the subject they want to study. In the moral and civic subject when the learner is taught to obey rules instead of thinking, it shows a lack of autonomy. Lastly, the lack of critical thinking can limit the engagement of the student.

Freire can be related to the moral and civic discipline and the lack of critical thinking. He developed the theory of critical conciseness, where he believes that critical thinking is fundamental; the student should be able to have their own thoughts and opinions, to have a conversation that can lead to change. The obedience taught in moral and civics and the lack of encouragement for the students to develop a critical think are clear policies that can be related to peace education. Both are the opposite preached by Freire since there is no critical thinking and encouragement for the students to question the established rules.

Lastly, the theory of John Dewey can be related to the policy of the "A list" and "B list". In his theory history and geography were extremely important subjects, for the learner to be able to understand the world and to promote democratic values. The fact that the subjects are listed as "good" or "bad" and it is not available equalitarian for all learners result in students with more and less knowledge in the end. From a peace education perspective all students should have access to these important subjects. Moreover, those disciplines are closely related to the concept of global citizenship.

The concept of global citizenship (Oxfam, 2015) can be related to policies of the discipline of moral and civic and the lack of critical thinking. The global citizenship concept teaches that the learner should be encouraged to take political action, to be respectful and

mindful about the world context. Contradictory the subject of moral and civics and the lack of critical thinking on the students encourage the students to take actions and behaviors exactly the opposite as expected in global citizenship. In schools, students cannot develop critical think and are not encouraged to take action in politics, they have a narrow understanding of the reality of the world.

Furthermore, there are more policies that can be related to peace education. The fact that the schools are extremely exam-oriented can also be directed related to PE, this can also be considered negative policy of the education system in relation to peace education. In an exam-oriented environment, the students are exposed to stress, anxiety and pressure. Montessori affirms that the school should be an environment where the child feels safe, independent and autonomous to explore what they desire; the schools should be task-focus. Nevertheless, in the formal education system in Burma this did not occur with the exam-oriented policy.

It is important to highlight that a partnership of UN agencies (United Nations Education, UNESCO and UNDP) recognized the alarming situation of education in Burma and in March 1990 developed a program with more peace education friendly initiatives.

The lack of schools in rural areas is another relevant characteristic of the education system that can be correlated with PE. This impacted the learners' life and future, once many children did not have access to the education system in the country. For PE this is also not considered good, thus many children do not have access to the school system and do not have the opportunity to choose how their future will be like. The difficulties to the access can be directly connected to inclusive education once the access to education is based on the location of the student. Furthermore, another policy present during the military rule that can be related to access to education and hence inclusive education, is the fact that only students from a Burmese heritage could attend higher education. The university policy is directed connected

with the socio background of the period and the interest of the military to limit the access to education to monitor activities against the dictatorship.

Narrowing more the analysis to policies and characteristics that can be related to a practical way to the 4Rs approach during the military rule it is possible to highlight actions such as the absence of mother tongue language, the monopoly of the Burmese language, the English books and activities, access to education, and the fact that only Buddhist monastic schools could remain open while Christian schools were shut down.

Similar to the post-colonial period in Burma, the prevalence of only the Burmese language in schools was not a good sign and can be considered a negative characteristic of education in the country from a PE perspective. Brown (2011) states the cause and consequence relation of education and the dynamics of a conflict. For him "education can be a tool for both political inclusion and political exclusion" (Brown, 2011, p192). The use of a single language when there are minority groups with different languages can reinforce an ethnocentric nationalism. Moreover, it can reinforce divisions and discrimination (Brown, 2011). In the context of Burma this is extremely relevant, first it can be related to the minority groups' conflicts that were present in the country during the period. Furthermore, as explained previously in this research the permanence of only one main instruction language is directed connected to 3 of the 4R's approaches, recognition, representation, and reconciliation.

Another relevant policy of the schools during the military rule that can be correlated with the 4Rs approach is the presence of Buddhist teachings. Even though the schools would officially not be religious, there was the presence of Buddhist beliefs, such as the five gratitude. For the 4R's approach related to PE, this would be an obstacle for recognition, once it does not respect the differences and does not show equality with other religions. Also, for representation it would also be a problem, once the exclusivity of Buddhist beliefs and absence of other religions cannot be considered inclusive for all different beliefs. This policy was highlighted

in the introduction of this research, the article of the newspaper (The Irrawaddy, 2020) it is a concrete example of the dissatisfaction of the society with the policy, the parents were worried about issues with the integration and respect that should exist in school.

The issues of the policies present in the education system from a peace education perspective are not over. The presence of monastic schools is discussed by Shah & Cardozo (2019), through the lenses of the 4R's, monastic schools represent an important role in the education system in Burma, once it helps with recognition and reconciliation when the school touch up the problems of identity and tolerance towards other groups.

This research agrees with the arguments raised by Shah & Cardozo (2019) and believes that even though a monastic school is part of a Buddhist belief it has benefits towards the community and in the peace process in the country. The monastic schools deal with many issues that state education cannot, such as the availability in rural areas and issues of identity and tolerance with different groups.

Lastly, it is important to discuss the role of teachers from an PE perspective. As stated by Lorch (2008), these professionals have the capacity to direct impact and influence the environment where they work, acting as peacebuilders. Teachers have the power to act as agents for change, the manner and actions performed towards the learners impact the pupils' life. This way the pupils can learn respect, inclusiveness, and representation. However, it is necessary to state that the opposite can happen and the teacher could promote inequity, conflict and segregation within groups (Lorch, 2008).

If the teacher decides to work as an agent of change it could be a positive relationship with PE. Through the 4R's approach this behavior can help with recognition, reconciliation, and representation. It is important to recall that the teachers in Burma did not receive enough training and were working with an overcapacity of students during the military rules. However, the program developed by the UN planned better training for teachers around the country.

The education during the military rules in Burma has many policies that can be related to peace education. Most of them are considered negative policies; however, few characteristics can be considered positive. The main policies that can be correlated with peace education are the discipline of morals and civics, the absence of self-thinking, the "A list" and "B list", and the exam-oriented structure, and the lack of schools in rural areas and lack of access to universities. All those policies can be considered negative from a peace education perspective, once all of them go against what is preached on the peace education theory. The education policies applied during the dictatorships are not aligned with the key concepts and authors of peace education.

Similarly happens to the policies that can be associate with the 4Rs approach are the absence of mother tongue and the presence of Buddhist teachings. Those policies can be considered negative from a peaceful perspective approach once they do not comply with the concepts and ideas of PE. The analyzes are done through the perspective of the 4Rs, applying each one Rs the policy. In general, the policies do not contribute to the 4Rs framework and presents contradictions to what the frameworks preach. Nevertheless, the presence of monastic schools throughout the country and the role of teachers can be considered a positive characteristic of the schooling system during the military rule from a PE perspective. They are aligned with the 4Rs framework concepts and contribute to recognition, reconciliation, and representation.

During military rule, Burma faced different challenges compared to the post-independence period. The military rule was marked by the excessive use of power, a forced creation of national identity, and the lack of recognition of the minorities. All those characteristics were also present in the education of the country. The education system reflected issues and challenges of society. However, the end of the military rule brought to the country hope of democracy and improvements for the education system.

Table 2 below summarizes and compares the policies and approaches found in the education of Myanmar during the post-independence and military rules.

Table 2 - *Post-independence and military rule analysis matrix*

FRAMEWORK		HISTORICAL PERIODS	
Scholars	**Concepts**	**Policies post-independence**	**Policies military rule**
John Dewey	**History and Geography**	Vocational and technical institutes	"List A" "List B"
Maria Montessori	**Autonomy**	Vocational and technical institutes	Moral and civic subject / "List A" "List B"
	Engage on activities		Lack of critical thinking
	Task focus		Exam-oriented
Paulo Freire	**Critical Consciousness**		Moral and civic subject
Betty Reardon	**Democracy**	Democratic teaching	
	Militarism		
Key concepts	**Critical Thinking**		Lack of critical thinking
	Counter Militarism		
	HRE		
	Global Citizenship		Moral and civic / lack of critical thinking
	Unity		
	Worldview		
	Inclusive Education		Lack of schools in rural areas / Limited access to higher education
Policies related to the 4Rs	**Mother-tongue instruction**	Burmese instruction	Burmese instruction
	Religious teaching		Buddhist teachings
	Monastic schools		Monastic schools
	Democratic citizenship teachings	Democratic teaching	
	Teacher training		Lack of teacher training

Note: From own authorship

7. The hope of a democratic government (2011 – 2020)

After the rough military rule, Burma experienced a democratic government for the first time. Following the steps towards democracy, the junta was solved, elections were held in the country and the USDP assumed. The government was considered a pseudo civilian rule since the party on power was formed by the previous junta; therefore, the government was still connected with the military (Than, 2016).

This chapter will focus on the past ten years, from 2011 to February 2021. The country's recent history and the process of building a democratic society after almost a half-century of military rule will be presented. This chapter will emphasize the country's diversity and its consequences, explaining how Burma deals with internal conflicts. The main question made is about the Burmese people if the country finally reached a unity and national identity. Lastly, the education in the country during the period and the analysis of the education policies from a perspective of peace education will be presented.

7.1 Historical background

The democratic decade was marked by two governments, the first one from 2011 to 2015 with president Thein Sein and the second one from 2016 to 2020, when, Daw Aung San Suu Kyi assumed the leadership of Burma.

For the first time, the power was not centralized in one institution or in a few people. The power of the new government was shared between the president, parliament, party, and military. It is essential to highlight that the military indirectly had the power to veto in the country; once 25% of the parliament chairs are reserved for them, they can approve or deny the new regulations and projects for the country (Hlaing, 2012).

The first government of Burma was marked by many innovations and a considerable liberalization of the country. Hlaing (2012) highlights that Burma was still in the early stages of democratization, but progress could already be noted. Civil society groups could now function; there was more freedom of expression from the media, members of the parliament could raise questions about the government. The international community also acknowledged the progress in the country; the EU suspended most sanctions, and the US re-established diplomatic relations and allowed investments in Burma again. The new president Thein Sein acknowledged the importance of Aung San Suu Kyi for the democratization and national politics of Burma (Hlaing, 2012).

In 2011 a new phase for the integration of minorities started in the country when ceasefires were agreed upon with most of Myanmar's ethnic armed groups, and the negotiations of the nationwide ceasefire agreement progressed. A "listening project" was created to monitor the experiences and expectations of the population, especially women, during the ceasefire process. The levels of fear of the population decreased, and displaced people started to return home and rebuild their life (South & Lall, 2016).

Thein Sein's achievements around the ceasefire are one of the main achievements of his mandate. The peace negotiation was the biggest one since the independence of Myanmar; a base agreement for the national ceasefire and political dialogue was discussed. However, only eight out of the seventeen armed ethnic groups joined the negotiation in October 2015 (Clapp, 2016).

In April 2012, Daw Aung Sang Suu Kyi joined the government as part of the lower house parliament after the country held internal elections. For the first time, the national parliament had diversity and its members, formed by former political prisoners, retired generals, and ethnic minority leaders (Egreteau, 2014).

The plans for the economy were ambitious, with a liberalization program. However, the growth of the economy was not experienced by most of the population. Most of the population (53 percent) reported that their economic conditions have worsened since the end of military rule. It is believed that the economic scenario is one of the key factors that pushed the changes resulting from the elections of 2015 (Welsh et al., 2016).

On 8th November 2015, "something rare and extraordinary happened in Burma: Democracy won" (Barany, 2018, p. 1). The country held new elections, the second elections in five years. Observers considered this election "the most genuinely competitive, free, fair, and orderly parliamentary elections in the nation since 1990" (Thawnghmung, 2016, p. 1).

The NLD, led by Aung San Suu Kyi with the slogan "Time for Change"; "For Real Change Let's Vote for NLD" had a landslide victory. The party won the majority at the parliament and did not need any coalitions to build a government. The people's desire for change, to move away from the military rule, helped Suu Kyi to get to power (Than, 2016).

However, the constitution of 2008 made it impossible for Daw Aung San Suu Kyi to assume the presidency chair in Burma, once the document banned people who had foreign espouses from being the president of the country. The solution for the problem came in March 2016, when the parliament chose Htin Kyaw (Suu Kyi's advisor) to be the president; for Suu Kyi was created a new post as "state counselor", a post above the president, which made possible for her to rule the country legally (Barany, 2018).

The new government was formed mainly by the two biggest parties in the country, the NLD and the USDP. Nevertheless, minority parties were also part of the new parliament; the new house was a diverse group formed by women, smaller parties from different ages, backgrounds, ethnic groups, and professions (Thawnghmung, 2016).

The circumstances that made possible the victory of the NLD in 2015 were diverse. First, the representation of Aung San Suu Kyi, her years fighting for democracy, sacrifices, and

perseverance were finally compensated. Her power of charisma and eloquence were the perfect combo for the victory; she had more popularity than any other politician in Burma (Thawnghmung, 2016).

The economy directly influenced the decision of the population. The majority did not feel any improvements during the first "democratic" government (Welsh et al., 2016). Furthermore, the NLD had supporters countrywide from various minority groups. The party provided humanitarian aid, education activities, and organizational support for isolated groups (Thawnghmung, 2016).

As mentioned by Than (2016) and Thawnghmung (2016), the population had a desire to sweep away any memory of the military. Since the USDP was the party remaining from the military junta and still had some association with the Tatmadaw, there was no support from the population for keeping the relationship between politics and the military.

The NLD had a big challenge ahead. For the first time in six decades, Burma was ruled by a government that was not connected with the military. Nevertheless, some military leaders did not believe that this was possible. For them, the democratization of the country was not mature yet, and this would lead the society into chaos and conflict again. This argument was used in 2015 when the Tatmadaw voted against a law that would reduce the military power in the government (Clapp, 2016).

In general, the state of Burma faced many challenges and needs after the dissolution of the junta. Besides the peace agreement process, there is a need for constitutional, economic, land, educational and legal reforms (South, 2018).

During the military rule, the violence and repression kept the country together and hid the true desires and needs of the ethnic minorities. The ethnic armed groups had been part of the history of the country's overall political phases. Since the military's 62 coups, minority

groups could not find their space in society. The cultural, linguistic, and values agenda were always centered on the majority community.

Since independence in 1948, ethnic groups had fought for their legitimacy and space inside the community in Myanmar; these groups mobilized themselves to enter the political and economic spheres of the society. Nevertheless, the ruling powers had always responded with brutal state repression and violence (South, 2018).

The fight for self-determination many times included the ethnic armed organizations (EAOs). Even after eight out of seventeen EAOs signed the ceasefire agreement during Sein's government, such organizations were still present in Myanmar (Clapp, 2016). Some EAOs had been operating as the de-facto government in their territories, thus, they want recognition. The internal legitimacy of those organizations was their shared language, identity, and notions of morality. The EAOs demanded federalism, where both federal and provincial-level institutions would be recognized or, as Kingston and Spears (2004) calls "states within states". There was an ongoing process to enable this after a peace agreement was signed. However, they were not fully recognized as governance actors by the state of Myanmar. The recognition and federalism demanded by the EAOs were to be discussed by the government once "Myanmar moves towards a more institutionalized democracy" (Harrisson & Kyed, 2019, p319), considering the participation of the minorities in the parliament (Harrisson & Kyed, 2019). Thus, although the limited self-governance of ethnic communities was not fully resolved after 2011, there was a new wave of hope for this recognition (South, 2018).

Aung San, the father of Aung San Suu Kyi and the leader of the independence of Burma, once said that the inclusion of minorities and a peaceful country with all different ethnicities was his priority. Daw Aung San Suu Kyi made his words her words. Since the beginning of her mandate, she has focused and spent much energy on ceasefires and reconciliation between the minorities (Barany, 2008).

During the NLD mandate, improvements towards the peace agreement were also made. The participation of minorities was a priority for the ethnic minority leaders. Furthermore, another critical issue to be touch on during the Suu Kyi government was narcotics trafficking, which increased rapidly during the previous five years of the Thein Sein government (Clapp, 2016).

Nevertheless, there were also criticisms of Aung San Suu Kyi. Barany (2008) highlights her characteristic of centralizing decisions and lack of dialogue. All decisions inside the government needed to be approved by her, making developments difficult without her approval. Furthermore, there was a lack of an overall strategy by Suu Kyi, including the failure to decide on a successor. Moreover, the efforts, time, money, and energy to make the peace agreement real had taken resources that might have been applied to other parts of society, such as education and health reforms (Barany, 2008).

One of the most shocking features of Suu Kyi's period as ruler was the setbacks in human rights (Barany, 2008). The Rohingya situation in Myanmar in the past years was one of the most disappointing events in the past decade in the country, and the existence of communal violence between Buddhists and Muslims resulted in one of the biggest refugee crises of the 21st century.

The Rohingya people are a Sunni Muslim minority located in the Rakhine state, close to the border with Bangladesh. The minority suffers systemic discrimination; major hate events, such as displacement to other countries and deadly attacks. The main attacks happened in 1978, 1992, 2001, 2009, and it is happening since 2012. The ethnic group is not recognized by the state of Myanmar; therefore, it is not part of the 135 ethnic groups of the country. The Rohingya people are descendent from South Asia and speak the dialect of Bengali. In 1982, General Ne Win declared that the Rohingyas were illegal immigrants in the country and should have their citizenship rights revoked. In 2012 an incident between Rohingyas and Rakhinese

Budhhists restarted the tensions between the two groups in the state, resulting in thousands of victims and displaced people. At the time, neither the former president Thein Sein neither Aung San Suu Kyi reacted to the event. This resulted in repression from the state (once the group is officially stateless) as well as from the Buddhist community (Chaturvedi, 2012).

The Rohingya nowadays are the largest stateless group in the world. Since they have no access to citizenship in Myanmar, they do not enjoy civil rights in the country; exceptions were made on the 2008 referendum and 2010 elections, in which the Rohingya could participate (Zawacki, 2012). This minority is the largest group of refugees leaving Myanmar; until March 2021, there were 1.1 million Rohingya refugees (UNCHR, 2021).

Aung San Suu Kyi avoided touching on the subject, especially during her presidential campaign in 2015, to avoid losing votes from the Buddhist community in the country (since Buddhists had been anti-Rohingya). Nevertheless, since she got into power, Suu Kyi has taken some steps toward the Rohingya issue. She established a commission with the former UN Secretary-General Kofi Annan and addressed the many human rights violations that happen toward the minority.

Unfortunately, in October 2016, the situation worsened again. An incident between the Rohingya and the Tatmadaw resulted in an increase in tensions between the government and the minority. The military answered with extrajudicial killings, rapes, and the burning of villages. The fact resulted in a new refugee crisis, with thousands of Rohingyas going to Bangladesh. The international community heavily criticized the government of Myanmar (Barany, 2018). The international community, including the UN, condemned the actual situation in Myanmar, calling the massive killings and rapes a "genocidal intent" towards the minority. The International Court of Justice (ICJ) called for emergency measures to protect the Rohingya (BBC, 2020).

In general, the political situation in the country still favored Aung San Suu Kyi; the majority of Burmese people still supported the leader. However, she and the NLD had already lost some support in areas of ethnic minority groups (Barany, 2018). In November of 2020, despite the COVID19 pandemic, Burma held new elections. The victorious party was again the NLD, chaired by Aung San Suu Kyi (Kipgen, 2021).

Only few days after the elections the USDP alleged that there was fraud on the results and demanded new elections. The USDP is a party formed by former military from the Tatmadaw, therefore they had support from the military (Kipgen, 2021). International and national observers concluded that there was no fraud and that the electors could choose their preferred candidate on the ballots (BBC, 2021).

During the following months the USDP unsuccessfully tried to prove the fraud and mistakes of the electoral process. On 1st February, the USDP declared that there was a "mass fraud" in the elections. Hours before the first meeting of the newly elected candidates, the military detained the key leaders of the government, among them Aung San Suu Kyi and the president Win Myint. The Tatmadaw declared a state of emergency for one year, with the excuse being the failure to address the fraud of the elections (Kipgen, 2021).

By the time of writing this research, in June 2021, the military is still holding the power of the country and the next steps of Burma are still unclear.

The history of Burma/Myanmar has been marked by dictatorships, civil wars, internal conflicts, protests, and human rights violations. Critical areas such as health and education have been left aside during many years of the country's history. The democratic governments presented few improvements in the creation of unity, ceasefires, and integration. However, this did not last long, and the military is back in power. In this context, it is essential to have a closer look to understand the relationship between society and education throughout the democratic years, how they were connected and reflected one another. Education is a vital part

of society to promote development. As seen in the past chapters of this research, peace education policies could assist the creation of a peaceful society.

7.2 Education during democracy

The socio-political scenario of Burma after 2011 had some general improvements; for the first time the country had democratic elections and transitional power after almost 50 years. Daw Aung San Suu Kyi finally reached power; improvements could also be seen in the economy with significant reforms. Furthermore, considerable efforts were finally made towards the end of conflicts in the country (Thawnghmung,2016). Thein Sein and Aung San Suu Kyi achieved much progress on the peace agreements and ceasefire between most of the ethnic minority armed groups (Clapp, 2016). Much happened from a different sphere of the society, the education received more attention and programs during the decade. In general, the country could taste a feeling of democracy after the long-lasting military rule (South, 2018).

The education sector was part of an extensive reform during the Aung San Suu Kyi government. Education was less centralized, there was a bigger budget for education, and a slight inclusion of mother tongue language on the teachings. Furthermore, the presence of monastic schools was still relevant for education in the country.

This section will analyze the main changes that happened in education during the democratic decade in the country. For this, a similar structure from the last chapters will be used, first the presentation of the education policies during the period, subsequently the analysis to peace education and its relations to the subject.

The environment of the society after the new beginning allowed different inner changes in the population. The level of fear of the people decreased after the ceasefires and peace

agreements, which resulted in displaced people going back to their homes and restarting a new life (South & Lall, 2016).

As stated by South (2018), the new government implemented reforms in different spheres of society. The education reform is significant for the perpetuation of the achievements reached in the country, of democracy and ceasefires. Education can contribute to building conflict but also to a peaceful future, as stated by South & Lall (2016):

Education contributes to conflict, not only through the unequal distribution of education among ethnic groups, but also through educational policies that undermine or even erase certain cultures, mainly through the imposition of a dominant language as the language of instruction (p.137).

In this scenario an education reform is essential for the context of the country, to help concretize the efforts done by other spheres of the society and help to build a democratic environment in the country. The reform had a general goal to modernize the education in the country, to build a society capable of facing the challenges of the country; the government aimed to build "a modern developed nation through education" (MoE, 2012, p1).

In 2011, in the government of Thein Sein, the most extensive educational reform ever done started in the country, with new education laws. The Comprehensive Education Sector Review (CESR)[12] was created, at the beginning of 2012, to complement the agenda.

The Suu Kyi government maintained the goals and plans for education and added few crucial aspects for the education program, where the most important was the consideration of mother tongues in the language of instruction. The governments made clear actions to solve

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[12] The CESR was a conducted in three phases, between 2012 and 2014, the main goal of the review was to formulate recommendations for the reform on the education system The review worked in parallel with the Education Promotion Implementation Committee (EPIC), which was responsible for draft policies and develop educational laws in Myanmar (CESR, 2018).

important stepbacks set during the military rule, such as the barriers to access and the quality of education in the country (Shah et al., 2019). The context of the country, with the peace agreements and ceasefires, together with education and economic reforms, made it possible for the country to enter a new phase of integration (South & Lall, 2016).

An essential input of the reform that shows concrete those efforts is that the education budget increased considerably, to 5 percent of the Union budget. This new allowance was mainly implemented in teacher salaries and infrastructure around the country (South & Lall, 2016).

The reallocation of the budget went to solve specific challenges and areas with an expressive lack of resources. Teachers were one main change, there was an increase in salaries for all teachers in the country, with some of them had the income doubled. There was a specific bigger reward for teachers that work in rural and conflict areas; this worked as an incentive to attract professionals to "unwanted" areas. Furthermore, the workforce was also increased, new teachers were hired throughout the country (Shah et al., 2019).

Moreover, the new budget also made it possible for the construction of new school facilities. From kindergarten to secondary schools, thousands of new classrooms were built in Myanmar after 2015. Libraries were also included in the project throughout the country (Shah et al., 2019).

Furthermore, in 2012, the new budget allowed the schools to grant scholarships for students to go to middle schools. The best students that had no opportunity to keep studying due to financial issues now had the chance to stay in school for a more extended period (Shah et al., 2019).

Another substantial improvement that was made due to the increased budget is that the government was able to supply an old demand from the society, the hidden costs of school. A factor that before would keep many students out of school or forward the students to monastic

schools was not a problem anymore. After 2012 the government provided the students with free textbooks (Shah et al., 2019).

Shah et al. (2019) arguments that all those actions are part of a plan of making education more centralized, to have all the fragments systems under only "one umbrella". For many years the non-formal education was responsible for filling the gaps of formal education and for promoting ethnic education in local communities. As affirmed by Harrisson & Kyed, (2019) in the previous section, many minority groups took the place of the state and fought to build an identity. Parallel to the efforts of the minority groups to build an identity, the national government, since the military rule, made considerable efforts to construct a national identity. The promotion of ethnic education represented a threat for the government to this national unity once it would comply and help local ethnic's minorities to construct an identity. Thus, the government's idea was to centralize education, under only one umbrella (Shah et al., 2019).

After all the work made by ethnic groups, it is essential to take into consideration multiple ethnics and education approaches in the system. The ceasefire and peace agreements brought this idea into the discussion. The NESP draft even acknowledged the importance of those different ethnic schools in the education system of the country (Shah et al., 2019).

In general, there was a hope that the education would be more decentralized in Myanmar so that states could integrate and address issues of mother tongue languages and cultural differences in the curricula (South & Lall, 2016).

A good example where this fusion was already happening in the Mon state. The ceasefire allowed the state and the Mon education authorities to work together in mixed teaching. In this case, the government curriculum is used at schools, but the teaching language for primary school is in the indigenous language. A slightly different case is the Karen state, which remains two separated systems but managed to integrate it into schools, with a summer learning project and after-school activities that teach culture and local language for the students

(Shah et al., 2019). Bago and Tanintharyi regions also have introduced minority languages into the government curricula (South & Lall, 2016).

Nevertheless, the negative side of those initiatives around Myanmar is the lack of resources. Many of them struggle and are under-resourced, facing difficulties to find mother-tongue speaking teachers, budget to pay them and limited material. This results in a dilemma from the minorities groups of where to reallocate efforts, towards building a mixed system such as the Mon state or making parallel approaches such as the Karen state (South & Lall, 2016).

In 2016 it was implemented a five-year national education strategic plan (NESP). In general, the NESP presented important and ambitious goals for education reform in the country.

The NESP had nine main goals, all presented in Figure 4. The key goals are primary education access, quality, and inclusion, which address the costs and the infrastructure in remote and rural areas. Furthermore, the project also addresses the creation and updated curriculum, to be applied nationwide with updated skills and the importance of teacher training. Lastly, the NESP also focuses on the student's assessment, seeking a less exam-oriented format for the learners (NESP, 2021).

Figure 4 - *NESP Goals*

Note: From NESP, 2021

Furthermore, it is important to highlight that during the democratic period monastic schools were still present in the country. They were still responsible for filling the gaps of the state-run schools, in areas where schools are not available or for students who could not get the scholarship or afford education (Hayden & Martin, 2013).

In parallel to the formal education system, important actors such as civil society and UNESCO also contributed to education in the country. UNESCO developed the STEM (Strengthening Pre-Service Teacher Education in Myanmar) Project from July 2014 to 2023. The project was divided into three phases; each phase was founded by a specific government (Australia, Finland and United Kingdom). The project focuses on four key issues of the pre-service teacher education: new policies and framework to help teachers, restructure and redesign the curriculum, supporting the management issues of the education colleges, and focus

on inclusion and equity problems of the teacher education (UNESCO, 2020a). The project worked in a partnership with the Minister of Education of Myanmar to improve the quality of the schoolteachers of all levels (UNESCO, 2020b).

Civil society also had the opportunity to have a more considerable engagement in education in the past decade. NGOs around Myanmar developed projects to support education in different sectors. In 2017, "Peter"[13] , an activist in the field of PE informed that 41 NGOs developed peace education programs in Myanmar covering curriculum and training content, books and materials, and multi-media content. In September 2020 the MIMU mapped 56 organizations with education projects in Burma. The projects covered different sectors, such as disaster preparedness, early childhood development, budget for education, non-formal education, and quality primary education (MIMU, 2020).

Recently, in February 2021 Burma faced another coup d'etat; the Tatmadaw reassumed the power in the country. By the time of writing this research the changes of the new rule also affected education.

The military occupied more than 60 schools throughout the country and stopped the classes. Save the Children, UNESCO, and UNICEF (2021) made a statement against the occupation of the education facilities and called for action for schools not to be used by the military. The statement highlighted the right to education of 12 million children around the country (Save the Children, UNESCO and UNICEF, 2021).

Moreover, teachers and students joined the protests. The military arrested teachers that joined movements against the Tatmadaw (Artz, 2021). Weeks later the junta decided to open schools; nevertheless, the staff, students, and teachers refused to go back to school and comply with the new rule. The movement was called civil disobedience and many spheres of the society joined (Reuters, 2021).

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[13] Name has been changed due to privacy reasons

In May, 2021 schools were attacked by explosives putting the life of the children at risk. Until June, 2021, schools were still occupied by the military and its remains unknown who were responsible for the attacks. Students were afraid to go back to school. The minority of students who decided to go back faced the military presence in educational buildings, monitoring schools, classes and even encouraging students to hold guns (AlJazeera, 2021).

7.3   Analysis of the education from a peace education perspective

With an accurate picture of the school system in the past decade in Burma it is possible to identify the education policies that have connections with peace education. This research will analyze if the policies are positive or negative policy from the lenses of peace education.

The increase in the salary of the teachers, the fact that there are more professionals throughout the country and the improvements of the infrastructure of the school system can be considered a good policy from a peace education perspective in Burma. These improvements made available inclusive education for more students throughout the country. With trained teachers they can act as change actors, be more prepared and give better support for the learners, resulting in a better opportunity. The fact that the government starts to offer scholarships also impacted the access to education in the country. As Montessori preaches in her theory, the child needs a good environment where they can develop and engage with activities, the fact that schools are more accessible, with a better structure and better-trained teachers direct reflect this environment.

A relevant policy for PE was the presence of mother tongue languages in the instruction of the schools. The fact that few successful cases of integration between the two schools' systems (formal and non-formal) with the inclusion of mother tongue in the curriculum or as an extra-curricular activity are already a significant achievement for PE. As explained before,

the inclusion of the mother tongue has a direct impact on the 4R's approach to a post-conflict environment. The new languages are beneficial for redistribution, representation and recognition, once it emphasizes the respect for differences, encourages participation and, most importantly, recognizes ethnic minority groups.

Shah et al. (2019) highlight the importance of this achievement for the 4R's approach and its relation to the recognition of minorities and the creation of multiple national identities. However, the authors also emphasize that this policy still restricted a few communities and minority groups and it still does not address important minority issues in the country, such as the Rohingya situation (Shah et al., 2019)

In general, in the past decade, education in Myanmar/Burma made progress, becoming more inclusive and prepared. Actions such as the increase of budget and inclusion of mother tongue – in few communities, gave the country hope for better education in the future. From both perspectives, curricula and infrastructure the country had development on education. This progress was just able due to the hard work from different spheres of society. As mentioned, the government planned the reform with the CESR and in 2015 introduced the NESP, which is a National Strategic Plan to improve education in the country. Furthermore, the international community also contributed to the education system; UNESCO developed a new program called STEM from 2016 to 2021, which also aims to improve and support education in Burma/Myanmar. Lastly, the civil society, represented by NGOs, is also highly relevant for the materialization of the education reform faced in the last decade, the engagement of non-formal education actors is vital for the success of education.

The NESP program from the Minister of Education, as well as the parallel education programs of UNESCO and civil society has policies that can be identified as peace education.

The MoE program, NESP, has the goal to ensure access, to quality and inclusion education. The project addresses important points, such as the costs of education that were a

problem in the past for part of the society; and the presence of schools in remote and rural areas, which were also an issue in the past. These two foci of the project are considered good policies from a peace education perspective, once it helps the education moves towards being more inclusive and increase the access to education. Both these policies can be directly connected with peace education once access to education is part of an inclusive education approach. The students should have equal access to the education system, no matter their location or economic background.

However, an important aspect for inclusion and PE was left behind in the NESP program, the mother tongue instruction. One of the key issues of education in Burma was not taken into consideration in the national program, the inclusion of mother tongue would be an excellent input for the inclusion and creation of unity in the country. As seen in the 4Rs, the presence of mother tongue would contribute to the recognition, respect the differences, representation to include participation; and reconciliation to build trust and cooperation. Nevertheless, it is essential to recognize the advances that happened during the democracy period for mother-tongue instruction; in the past decade, parallel projects were created to include some kind of mother tongue, as already discussed in this chapter.

Furthermore, the NESP program also addressed the issue of the education system being extremely exam-oriented. This policy was already analyzed in this research, as a bad policy from a peace education perspective during the military rule. An exam-oriented is an environment of pressure, stress and anxiety and do not help the learner to develop and feel safe. As already stated, the concepts developed by Montessori of the environment where a child should be, must be safe, independent and autonomous, allowing the learner to develop in a task-oriented environment. It is important to recognize the efforts of the government to improve education, including the change of the assessment style.

In parallel with NESP, two other actors have important projects that can have their policies connected with peace education. First, the STEM project, developed by UNESCO was a project that focused on the teacher rather than directly in the education system (UNESCO, 2020b). This is as important as the education system since the teachers are the ones responsible for tutoring the learners. As already mentioned, teachers are professionals who have the capacity to impact the learner's life directly, to act for change (Lorch, 2008). If the teachers decide to work in favor of the change and peace, they can positively influence the learners and contribute to peace education helping with recognition, reconciliation, and representation.

Moreover, civil society also engaged in education, more specifically in peace education. "Peter"[14], who works with peace education in Myanmar, in 2017, mapped the peace education programs that were happening in the country during the time. He highlighted 41 projects, that included curriculum and training content, books and materials, and multi-media content. The main findings of the mapping were: (1) four of them are major curriculum content developers, (2) the majority of programs are for youth and adults, and (3) some content is made explicitly for religious content.

Therefore, the engagement of the civil society is directly connected with the curriculum and content of peace education, sharing, and teaching the main concepts from multiples authors and theorists. The projects are part of non-formal education and work in parallel with MoE, to construct a better education system in the country. Clearly, the approach of civil society is a positive asset for a peace education approach in the country. The fact that NGOs have specific programs for peace education is a sign of engagement and acknowledgment of the needs of the society to construct a better base for education in the country.

Table 3 below summarizes the policies that were found during the historical periods and how they can relate to the concepts and scholars of peace education.

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[14] Name has been changed due to privacy reasons

Table 3 - *Historical Periods analysis matrix*

FRAMEWORK		HISTORICAL PERIODS		
Scholars	**Concepts**	**Policies post-independence**	**Policies military rule**	**Policies democracy**
John Dewey	**History and Geography**	Vocational and technical institutes	"List A" "List B"	
Maria Montessori	**Autonomy**	Vocational and technical institutes	Moral and civic subject / "List A" "List B"	
	Engage on activities		Lack of critical thinking	Scholarships
	Task focus		Exam-oriented	Task focus (NESP)
Paulo Freire	**Critical Consciousness**		Moral and civic subject	
Betty Reardon	**Democracy**	Democratic teaching		
	Militarism			
Key concepts	**Critical Thinking**		Lack of critical thinking	
	Counter Militarism			
	HRE			
	Global Citizenship		Moral and civic / lack of critical thinking	
	Unity			
	Worldview			
	Inclusive Education		Lack of schools in rural areas / Limited access to higher education	Increase of salaries / Quality education (NESP)
Policies related to the 4Rs	**Mother-tongue instruction**	Burmese instruction	Burmese instruction	Mother tongue instruction
	Religious teaching		Buddhist teachings	
	Monastic schools		Monastic schools	
	Democratic citizenship teachings	Democratic teaching		
	Teacher training		Lack of teacher training	Increase of salaries and training / STEM project

Note: From own authorship

In the past years, many signs of progress were seen in many different spheres of society was done in Myanmar. The acknowledge of the weakness and issues of the education system, and the implementation of essential reforms was a sign that education was placed as one of the priorities for the government. The steps were made towards a more prominent future in the education of Burma. However, once again the future is unclear in the country after the most recent coup. It is uncertain what will be the next steps of education, it might suffer a step back and fall into a non-priority role again. Once again, the ruling power goals can be reflected in education, putting the efforts done aside and bringing back the absence of self-thinking, discouragement for civil engagement and the exclusivity of Burmese as instructor language. The fear, lack of democracy, and uncertainty are back in the picture of the society in Burma.

FINAL REMARKS

The education path in Burma/Myanmar had many policies that can be identified as peace education. In the past 70 years, the schooling system in the country faced many different challenges and modifications, most of them following the political context of the respective historical period of the country. The Irrawaddy article (2020) in the introduction of this research highlighted the concern of the society towards the curricula and education of the formal education system in Burma.

This research sought to understand how peace education is demonstrated in the Myanmar educational system over the post-independence, military rule, and democratic periods. Furthermore, the research also found what peace education approaches reveal about the political contexts in which it is inserted.

Peace education teaches different learners an asset of skills and values with the goal of establishing peace. Each peace education project is unique with its own needs and goals, based on the context, necessities, and possibilities of each society. This research showed this unique feature of peace education.

The PE program is made for a specific scenario, with characteristics seeking positive and negative peace. Each PE program has approaches that have concepts taken from both scenarios (negative and positive peace); therefore, the concepts are called "context-free", once it depends on the scenario that it is inserted to be considered as a positive or negative peace approach. In the case of Burma, during this research, it was considered a context of negative peace, a region of interethnic tension that is seeking a positive peace scenario. A country that has no ongoing conflicts, but seeks integration, national identity, peace and development.

As shown, Burma is an extremely diverse country; not even its name is a consensus for the world. The country has more than 130 different ethnic groups and 100 languages; the

culture, language, and religion differ from group to group. The pluralism of the country is its most prominent characteristic; however, the ruling powers rarely gave the needed attention to the diversity and only allocated efforts to build a single identity in the country. Only in the democratic period these critical aspects were included in the agenda and efforts aiming the diversity were done.

Since independence the country faced challenges to establish the unity and identity of the society. The government of a newborn country could not hold for a long time the different interests of the different groups within the society. This led to the first military coup of Burma in 1962. Since then, the issues of unity and identity were not solved, civil society, including minorities, fought for space during the military rules. Lack of freedom, human rights violations, oppression, and inequalities were recurring issues in the history of the country. After almost 50 years, the country could finally experience democracy beginning in 2010. Ceasefires and peace agreements between the groups were finally signed. Finally, the society could feel efforts from the government for the recognition of the pluralism existent in Burma. Thus, the history of the country itself shows that the country was always a negative peace scenario, facing oppression and inequalities.

In this tumultuous and complex scenario of Myanmar, it is important to highlight the fundamental role of education. The policies, structure and content of education are directly connected with the sociopolitical sphere of the country. Once, the discrimination, poor structures and precarious socio-economic background of the schools and governments contribute and influence the permanence of the conflict that has been present in the country. The divisions and segregation reinforce the tension and discrimination between the multiple groups present in Myanmar (South & Lall, 2016).

Hence, this research sought to identify education policies throughout the history of Burma that could be considered peace education, and analyze the connection between the policies and the content of peace education.

For this, the analysis was based on three main pillars: the theoretical framework of peace education, the sociopolitical background, and the education policies throughout the history of Myanmar. The framework used to identify the policies that were related to PE was based on three main categories: scholars (John Dewey, Maria Montessori, Paulo Freire and Betty Reardon), key concepts (critical thinking, counter militarism, HRE, global citizenship, unity, worldview, and inclusive education), and 4Rs framework (related with the policies of mother-tongue instruction, religious teaching, monastic schools, democratic citizenship teachings, and teacher training).

The main outcome of this research was the identification of different policies throughout the education of the country that can be related to peace education. Through the analysis it was possible to determine which policies of education could be related to peace education and which important concepts of peace education were never present in the education system in Myanmar/ Burma. Furthermore, the analysis showed the specifics of PE, which has a different approach and goals in each context. Each period of history in Burma had its policies that could be considered peace education.

In the post-independence Burma period, from 1948 to 1962, the country was a fragile state, full of uncertainties and challenges that were trying to create a new country and institutions. The education in the country was facing a similar scenario, being new and trying to establish itself to build a community for the first time. Since then the education in the country has had policies that can be considered peace education, such as democratic teachings in schools. However, most of the policies at the time were considered negative from a PE

perspective; once they preached opposite values from a PE approach, those policies were the absence of mother tongue and the vocational teachings.

Furthermore, the military rule, from 1962 to 2011, was a period in Burma full of oppression, inequalities, discrimination, lack of freedom and poor structure. Peace education policies could be identified through the entire period, the MoE was the main actor in the education of the country. From a peace education perspective, many policies were out of alignment with the theory, such as the exam-oriented approach, the absence of mother-tongue instruction, lack of access to education (rural areas and universities), inadequate training of teachers, and lack of critical thinking. In general, the military rule period worsened the education in Burma; most of the policies did not contribute to peace education. The country faced a hard time in the sociopolitical sphere as well as in education.

The democratic period, from 2011 to 2021, was seen as the hope for the country. From the political perspective, a new focus and priority were given towards society. The country started to prosper, there was a beginning of integration, ceasefires and peace agreements were signed. Burma was finally moving towards a democratic path. The education followed the same path, reforms were done and more budged was allocate to education. This allowed investments in precarious and needed areas of education. In general, there was hope for change also in education. From a peace education perspective, the country made positive efforts to make education better in the country with the increase of salaries of teachers, better infrastructure, and better access to education in rural areas.

Among the new features of the democratic period there was the insurgence of new actors. In the past decade there were new policies from the government, and a significant increase of participation of other spheres of society in peace education, such as civil society. Therefore, there was an improvement not only from the MoE approach, the policies and how constrained they were, but also the creation of space for a new actor to contribute to PE in

Myanmar. The civil society positively engaged, filling gaps of the formal education. An important policy approached by civil society was the beginning of the inclusion of mother-tongue instruction in education as a parallel project to the formal curricula in the country. Peace education is not constructed only by policies, the content of the curricula, and schools, but with the involvement of the society and other actors of education.

Improvements from a peace education perspective were seen in the past decade in education in Burma. However, it is possible to see that many important concepts that were presented in the literature review could never be found in the education system of the country. Those concepts are HRE, counter militarism, unity, and worldview. It would have been beneficial for the society to seek a positive peace, once they reflect exactly the sociopolitical challenges that the country was facing. The absence of these concepts in education and society reflects many of the issues that the society faced in the past, such as the struggle to maintain unity, internal conflicts and difficulty to build a national shared identity.

A secondary outcome of this research was the proof of the connection between ruling power and education policies. This was showed throughout the research; there was a symbiosis between the posture, goals, and ideals of the ruling power and the education. From a newborn country without clear guidance, to the military rules with oppression and inequalities, to the democratic period with the hope for a better future, the policies of education reflected aspects and goals and of the sociopolitical sphere of the country. What was being faced in politics was directed reflected in the policies applied in classrooms. Education and politics are reflected in each other.

This research had as its main goal to identify and analyze policies of education in Burma/Myanmar. However, due to the lack of previous studies in the field, time, the COVID19 pandemic, and the recent coup d'état in Burma, the research had limitations. Peace education in Myanmar/Burma is still a field that can be more explored; there is still a lack of scholars and

data information. Moreover, this research had a time limit to be developed. Lastly, the COVID19 pandemic and the 2020 coup d'état directly impacted this research once interviews and field research could not be done.

Further research avenue for this research is a general study of peace education in Myanmar/Burma and its relationship with society. Furthermore, in the past five years in the country important reforms happened in education and actors such as the Minister of Education, UNESCO, and civil society took essential roles in education, these actions could have research, and analysis deepened.

Myanmar, or Burma is a country that faced a problematic history. It is a country full of diversities, different groups, ethnicities, languages, and religions, a country that deserves to learn how to coexist. Peace education has an important role in supporting the development and construction of peace (negative and positive). During the majority of the time, the ruling powers and the Minister of Education in Myanmar did not have as a priority the construction of a peaceful scenario. This research understood how peace education is demonstrated in the Myanmar educational system. Many key concepts of peace education could be found in the educational policies in Myanmar; however, many important concepts that could support the construction of a peaceful scenario were left aside. The democratic period brought hope to Burma, new actors arose in the educational sphere and new policies were implements resulting in progress towards better education in the country.

In the past few years, the country had many improvements in the political and educational spheres that hopefully it will not be lost. Once again, the future of Burma is unclear after the coup d'etat in February 2021. By the time of writing this research, it is still unclear the political and educational future of the country.

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