

Is there need to update Teaching Techniques in Abhidhamma in Theravāda Buddhism?

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ABSTRACT

Buddhist Studies is the favorite subject of Myanmar population especially amongst monks. Buddhist literature is taught by two types of teaching techniques i.e., Mandalay and Pakokku techniques are popular in the monasteries and universities. Some universities use the modern techniques and teach the students using computers and internet. The CDs, videos, blogs, websites have developed that provide brief content to the readers and learners. But, not all teaching institutions have accepted it and are not updated. Today, almost all the academic fields have included Modern methods in their curriculum for the better understanding of the subjects. But the religious studies still follow the old methods. The reason may be many like, lack of contact with technical world, belief in old methods and lack of interest in bringing in development in curriculum. Although, both of teaching techniques are very effective for monks, as they are used to learning and teaching through old methods. But, like other fields, would it not be better to teach and train young novice using newer techniques? Will the modern techniques be useful for the religious studies?

The paper will explore and compare the old teaching techniques with the modern by assessing their impact on the knowledge of the monks who have been learning through these techniques.

Keywords: Teaching methods, Conventional, Technique, Mandalay, Pakokku, Modern, Abhidhamma, Abhidhammattha-saṅgaha

Introduction

Theravāda Buddhism follows the doctrines of Buddha which are *Tipitaka* or *Pāli* Canon and its basic teachings. Buddhist literature is taught in monasteries as well as in

Intermediate Colleges and Universities (Altbach et al., 2009). These learning center help to promote the *Sāsana* and especially teaching and learning of

the *Theravāda Abhidhamma* literature (Ñāṇīndāsabha Mahāthera Ashin, 1920). These organizations not only encourage teaching and learning but also the translation of literature from *Pāḷi* to Myanmar language. Usually, they do this by lecture method and religious discourses and Buddhist literature is taught by two types of teaching techniques (*The Conference in Abhidhamma Pitakamahāthāna*, 2016) i.e., *Mandalay* and *Pakkoku* which are most popular in the universities. The *Mandalay* teaching technique has a detailed study followed by the exam that the scholar needs to qualify. The *Pakkoku* teaching technique, emphasizes that the scholars first study all *Pāḷi* literature and then, attended the higher literature. There is no formal exam that measures the knowledge of the learner, at the end of the completion of the study.

The Modern teaching methods started in Myanmar with the exchange of knowledge with other countries. The monks who wished study the foreign authors and western opinion and wanted the syllabus to be completed along with the development of cross-cultural understanding in short time followed by an examination. The colleges and universities issuing many subjects and teaching techniques and most of monks learning and approaching the modern

teaching technique after having completed *Dhammācariya* degree, B. A and highest grade in *Pāḷipathamabyan*. In modern teaching technique, the course material, at both primary and secondary level, is divided into teaching units. This approach has been considered to enable the teacher work systematically through the literature (Hu, Y.L., Hung, C.H. and Ching, G.S. (2015). The aim of this research is to compare the knowledge of the monks and nuns who have been learning through the three techniques.

Research Methodology

Research Design

In this research, a combination of an Exploratory and Experimental Research Design was used, to define the teaching techniques of *Abhidhammattha-Saṅgaha* being used in the Academic Organizations, Universities and Monasteries of Myanmar and compare the achievements of the students studying *Abhidhammattha-Saṅgaha* with such teaching techniques, i.e., *Mandalay*, *Pakkoku* & Modern. Exploratory research is mentioned as accustomed investigation of a problem that isn't clearly outlined. It has been conducted to own a higher understanding of the prevailing problem, however, that would give conclusive results.

Sampling Design

The Researcher has used the cluster sampling method for conducting cluster sampling and divided the population into smaller groups referred to as cluster of Buddhists that lie in Universities and Monasteries.

Sample size

The sample of 90 was divided into three groups of 30 each, first learning *Abhidhammattha-Saṅgaha* through Mandalay techniques, Second Learning through Pakokku techniques and the third one learning through Modern techniques.

Data Collection

The knowledge test papers (n= 10) from *Abhidhammattha-Saṅgaha* were prepared with the help of five subject experts and the subjects were given objective test. The knowledge of each group on each test paper was assessed and compared with the other groups to assess the effectiveness of all three methods.

Locale

The data was gathered from various national and international universities that teach Buddhist Studies and run graduate and post graduate program

Tools and Techniques

Lesson Tests consisting of multiple-choice questions were prepared in English

and translated in Myanmar language and content validity checked by five subject experts, by sending them for suggestions. Their suggestions were incorporated to prepare the final question papers. The papers consisted the questions from *Abhidhammattha-Saṅgaha* based on Compendium of consciousness, Compendium of mental factors, Compendium of Miscellaneous, Compendium of Mental Process, Compendium of the passive mental process, Compendium of matter, Compendium of Categories, Compendium of causality, Compendium of meditation subjects, and Combination of all above topics.

Statistical Analysis

To test the data pertaining to the research paper, the data was put in the Statistical Software, SPSS 26 to calculate ANOVA (Between- Within), with the level of significance set at .05 for the comparison between the groups.

Results and Discussions

To test the null hypothesis, “There is no difference in the knowledge of monks learning through Mandalay, Pakokku and Modern teaching techniques of *Abhidhammattha-Saṅgaha*”, the data was put for analysis and being presented below-

Table 1: One-way ANOVA for the knowledge of Monks learning through Mandalay, Pakokku and Modern teaching techniques

source	sum of squares SS	degrees of freedom vv	mean square MS	F statistic	p-value
treatment	7,088.6667	2	3,544.3333	17.9239	2.8045e-07
error	17,796.9032	90	197.7434		
total	24,885.5699	92			

**.05 Significance level*

An analysis of variance (ANOVA) on these scores again yielded significant variation among conditions, $F(2, 90) = 17.9239$, $p = 2.8045e-07$ (Table 1).

Table 2: Post-hoc Tukey HSD Test of Monks learning through Mandalay, Pakokku and Modern teaching techniques

treatments pair	Tukey HSD Q statistic	Tukey HSD p-value	Tukey HSD inference
Mandalay vs Pakokku	8.3531	0.0010053	** $p < 0.01$
Mandalay vs Modern	2.9759	0.0946569	insignificant
Pakokku vs Modern	5.3771	0.0010053	** $p < 0.01$

**.05 Significance level*

A post hoc Tukey test (Table 7) showed that the Group Mandalay vs Pakokku (Mean= 88.9032 and 67.8065 ; SD= 12.918 and 16.7838) and Pakokku vs Modern (Mean 67.8065 and 81.3871; SD= 16.7838 and 21.3473) differed significantly while the groups Mandalay vs Modern (Mean= 88.9032 and 81.3871; SD= 12.918 and 21.3473) were not significantly

different at $p < .05$, clearly stating that as modern teaching technique is not yet popular, Mandalay Technique still works best for them.

The modern teaching techniques of *Abhidhammattha-Saṅgaha* are not suitable as compared to the conventional teaching techniques of *Abhidhammattha-Saṅgaha*.

Welch ttest comparison for Conventional and Modern Teaching Techniques

	Modern	Conventional	t value	p value
Mean	78.49	71.53	2.4054	0.0175
SD	17.36	20.17		
SEM	2.22	1.86		
N	61	118		

*.05 Significance level

The subjects who received education through Mandalay (M = 78.49, SD = 17.3) compared to the Monks subjects (M = 71.53, SD = 20.17) demonstrated significantly different scores, $t(2.4054)$, $p = 0.0175$ at .05 level of significance. However, Pakokku technique was not found to be that effective. Also, a combination of Mandalay

and Modern techniques will be quite beneficial with the changing scenario.

Modern teaching technique is more effective than Mandalay and Pakokku teaching technique because it completes the syllabus within a short period of time, using different modes of teaching aids i.e. visual, auditory and body kinesthetic, as mentioned

by the Buddha also, that the knowledge attained by all the faculties is retained better.

To conclude, it was found that Mandalay technique was highly effective in *Abhidhammattha-saṅgaha* education, following which modern technique that uses various IT Tools like graphs, tables, diagrams, through audio, zoom, google meet, video aids was found to be effective.

The Pakokku technique was found to be least effective of all. The reason may be that, the students become more regular and put in efforts to reach to highest knowledge when they have to take examination. The offers of degree and certificates, the opportunities to participate in seminar and conference attract students to learn through Mandalay and Modern techniques. Then, most students did interested-lessness through Pakokku technique.

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