



## BUDDHIST METHODS OF EDUCATIONAL APPROACH

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Received 14 September 2023; Revised 23 December 2023; Accepted 26 December 2023

### Abstract

**Background and Objective:** Education is a human endeavor which should lead us to a world based on freedom and justice; where freedom means a minimum of constraints by others and justice means distribution of wealth, power and other values consistent with this kind of freedom. It should act as a major instrument in the development of a just world. "The basic objective of education must be an understanding of the world we live in the world we hope for, understanding which can lead to effective action." The objective of this research is to understand the concepts of Buddhist educational approach from Buddhist viewpoint.

**Methodology:** This documentary research was conducted by investigating and collecting data from the Pāli Canon and commentaries, books, documents, articles, and research reports. All the data were then analyzed to present the results of the research.

**Main Results:** The study indicated that the Buddha's style of teaching was generally one of skillful adaptation to the mood and concerns of his hearers' responding to the questions and even the non-verbalized thoughts of his audience and taking cues from events. By means of a dialogue with his questions, he gradually moved them towards sharing his own vision of truth. When Brahmins asked him about how to attain union with the god Brahma after death, he did not say that this was impossible, but it could have been attained by meditative development of deep loving kindness and compassion, rather than by bloody Vedic sacrifices. He often gave old terms new meanings, "For example calling the Arahats the "True Brahmin", and using the term Ariya, equivalent to the Sanskrit term for the "Noble" Aryan people, in the sense of spiritually noble, or holy."

**Involvement to Buddhadhamma:** This research is based on applied Buddhism in the issue of Buddhism and the development of wisdom and morality. Because, it is a study to understand the context of the Buddha's teaching and what type of teaching methods he used. To be able to make the general public understand his principles, for example, he used psychology to adapt with the people, he can teach, starting with teaching simple things such as, meditation and mindfulness in order to create peace to be ready for listening without worrying, which make it easier to understand into the listening and teachings from him.



**Conclusions:** The research indicated that the Buddha emphasized that his teachings had a practical purpose, and should not be blindly clung to. He likened the Dhamma to a raft made by a man seeking to cross from the dangerous hither shore of a river, representing the conditioned world, to the peaceful further shore, representing Nibbana. He then rhetorically asked whether such a man, on reaching the other shore, should lift up the raft and carry it around with him there. He therefore said, "Dhamma is for crossing over, not for retaining." A follower should not have grasped at Buddhist ideas and practices, but used them for their intended purpose, and then let go of them when they had fully accomplished their goal. Many ordinary Buddhists though, did have a strong attachment to Buddhism.

**Keywords:** Buddhist, Methods of Educational Approach, Buddhist Viewpoint

## Introduction

Education, in Pāli tradition, may be derived from the term "Sikkha," "Generally implying the educational process of learning, training instruction, acquisition, development and enlightenment" (Pali Text Society London, 2018). The term naturally includes "The training of advanced morality, spiritual concentration, and knowledge or wisdom," (Morris, 1999) and is always combined with the word "-Pada" in "Sikkhapada," i.e. educational code, which is normally known as "Sekhapatipada," i.e. a learner's course (Trenckner, 1993). Such a continual process of educational concern has for its functional character "Gradual training or instruction, gradual practice or performance and gradual progress (Anupubbāsikkha Anupubbakiriya Anupubbapatipada)." (Carpenter & Rhys Davids, 2020) "It gives a learner a correct, noble lead in the various spheres of life and an insight into affairs, teaches him how to act rightly and how to live successfully and happily, and leads him to all-round progress, prosperity and welfare, to the development of a good personality with perfect knowledge and behavior, and finally to the end of suffering, and salvation" (Morris, 1999); (Phra Phalat Sudthisak Sampannamedhi & Namseethan, 2022).

Education requires for its maturity and success three complementary modes or factors, viz. "The primary mode of literary or academic scholarship in the Buddha's body of teachings (Pariyatti-competence, accomplishment), then the practical mode of what has been academically learnt and remembered by trying and putting these teachings into habitual practice (Patipatti-Practice, Performance), and finally the skillful mode of penetration, realization and mastery of the truth (Pativedha)" (Pali Text Society London, 2018); (Changkanyuen, 2012).

Three appropriate sources may serve to explain the above standpoint:

1. Being well taught, a learner will understand, store up, remember, resolve upon, familiarize, ponder over in his mind and fully realize in theory (Ditthiya) those teachings which are lovely in the beginning and at the end, viz. "The sayings, psalms, catechisms, songs, solemnities, speeches, birth-stories, marvels and miscellanies; Then he sets on living in accordance with those teachings, and thereby he may well be called a really, learned man who realizes the truth (Dhammaññu)" (Morris, 1999).



2. He investigates and scrutinizes the meaning of the lessons taught and remembered; "Then he approves of them and wishes them to arise in him; Doing so he, in whom zeal has sprung up, is actively engaged; Then he examines, then he endeavors, and finally he realizes with all his faculties the truth by penetrating it with full comprehension."

3. A learner, "Who has been taught and guided well, comes to know the text of the doctrine with its meaning and purpose, applies his thought to it as he has heard and learned (Yathāsutam Yathā pariyattam), sustains protracted meditation on it and habitually contemplates it in his mind, grasps some object of concentration well, thinks it out well, thoroughly keeps it in mind and thoroughly penetrates it by the virtue of wisdom" (Carpenter & Rhys Davids, 2020).

In its highest sense, the Buddhist ideal of education holds that "A person remains a learner or a pupil (Sekha), until he has attained the perfection of educational faculties of morality, of concentration, of wisdom, of emancipation and of insight and vision of emancipation." He is obliged to train himself and lives wanting to learn, because he has not yet attained the state of perfection (Arahatship), but is striving after such a state. One who is an adept, perfect, completely educated, is no longer required to train himself and will be known as "Asekha." "Alas! I still remain but a learner, one who has yet to work out his own perfection, the venerable Ananda said to himself, and the Master is about to pass away...." "A person, even if he may be an academic expert (Sumedha), who hears and learns much from the texts by heart (Bahussuta Susikkhita), is bound to the practice of what has been heard and learnt while following the right path and to the observance of the moral precepts (Sīlavatupapanna); He is but a learner." After the Buddha's Nibbana, the venerable Mahakassapa appealed to the assembly of the monks to select and accept the venerable Ananda for the purpose of convening the First Council (Sangayanā): "Honoured Sirs, this Ananda, though he still is a learner, cannot be counted as one who follows a wrong course of action, either through favouritism or hatred or delusion or fear; He has largely studied (Pariyatta) the Norm and Law under the Lord...." Thus, the educational business, in its highest sense, aims at a man's highest value of life. The life of spiritual fulfilment, enlightenment and perfection, and a truly educated person is one who achieves his emancipation, "Freedom from bondage" already indicated such a concern with education ceases for him who is perfect, who has destroyed his cankers, has lived the life, done whatever is to be done (By a Sekha), shed the burden, attained his final goal... freed by perfect, profound knowledge. These things conduce both to his abiding in ease here and now and to his mindfulness and "Clear consciousness" (Carpenter & Rhys Davids, 2020).

But there is no short-cut to attain maturity and perfection in education; It must go on continuously and must be undertaken step by step from the lower to the higher level. "Just as a yeoman farmer does not have such magic power or authority to make his crops bring up today, then be with ear tomorrow, and ripen on the following day, so one can neither force one's own education to reach its maturity and one's own mind to be emancipated today or tomorrow. It is just the due season and proper condition that make one experience one's educational maturity and one's emancipation, as one is to undergo one's educational course constantly and gradually. Therefore, one, should be really keen and deeply desirous of continually undertaking one's own



educational venture". For this purpose, "One, with a faithful mind, should go into the presence of a teacher, pay homage to him, lend one's ears and hear the Doctrine, then one should remember it, test its meaning, approve of it after satisfactorily testing its meaning, desire for it, make an enthusiastic effort to obtain it weigh and discriminate it; Striving, weighing and discriminating one should realize and penetrate the truth itself with one's own experience." With this as an example, we can say that an educational effort means a continual process of life-long experience: The experience to acquire, cultivate, develop, widen, deepen and heighten. It is a process in each individual's progressive development, a gradual process of continuous growth and reconstruction of life's value, that manifests itself in the creation of a capable, good and efficient character and the perfection of an educated person as such (Phra Sounthone Vonelayvanh, 2023).

The Buddha advocated and indeed recommended "Being educated", especially in moral intellectual and spiritual education. Oldenberg observed that, "The mode of thinking of the world in which the Buddha lived, moves in the paths: For it all weal and woe depends on knowledge and ignorance; Ignorance is the ultimate root of all evil, while the sole power that can strike at the root of this evil, is knowledge.... Emancipation, therefore, above all, is knowledge, and the preaching of this highest aim can be nothing less or more than the exposition of this knowledge." It may be recalled that "Knowledge" here means knowledge and realization of the truth, higher spiritual knowledge. According to the Buddha, "People who live without education and without being trained in good behavior would be like blind buffalos wandering in the forest. Some people in this world are however well-established and fair to grow, namely those who are wisely educated in knowledge and good behavior along the path of virtues." "A man of little education grows old day by day, like an ox: His bodily size grows increasingly, but not his knowledge." "A man who is wise, well-educated and of high intelligence, does not consider the harm either of himself or of others or of both alike; He keeps thinking on the good of himself, of others or of both alike, and of the whole world." Of the five sorts of power or strength, namely "Physical strength, material strength, the strength of officials, the strength of nobility, and the strength of wisdom; The power of wisdom or intelligence is held to be the best," of the four types of growth, viz. "The growth of relatives, wealth, reputation, and of wisdom, the last one is reckoned the best" and of the three kinds of eye, namely "The physical eye (Mamsacakkhu), the divine eye (Dibbacakkhu), and eye of wisdom (Paññacakkhu), the third one is regarded as the best, leading to a person to the highest insight and to success in life and finally to emancipation from all ills." "By education (Sikkha) some ideas arise, said the Buddha, "And by education again others pass away." To be educated is said to be an "Auspicious thing" (Mangala) in that it brings about a creative power, and serves as the means for abandoning what is unprofitable and for creating, developing and achieving what is profitable, in that it leads to welfare and well-being both for oneself and others, and in that it is a cause and means for gradually realizing and attaining the ultimate aim of life (Boonpoo, 2009).

"A well-taught, well-trained, well-educated noble disciple is one who abandons what is unprofitable and blamable and increases what is profitable and blameless; He keeps himself pure





and free from doing evil things." It is clear from the Buddhist position that "Goodness is a function of intelligence, wrote Rhys Davids (2020), as beauty is of health." That is, knowledge is purified and justified by good behavior and vice versa; Where there is good behavior, there is knowledge, and where there is knowledge, there is good behavior. The upright man possesses knowledge and the wise man possesses good behavior; And the achievement of knowledge and good behavior characterizes the personality of the best man. Therefore, intelligence combined with discipline may be conceived as the motto, the motive, the purport and the standard of the Buddhist educational ideal. To overcome ignorance and to subdue bad conduct, a learner makes earnest efforts to acquire knowledge and good behavior in their proper perfection (Carpenter & Rhys Davids, 2020).

### **Objective**

The objective of this research article aims to understand the principles, methods, and concepts of Buddhist educational approach from Buddhist viewpoint.

### **Methodology**

This documentary research was conducted by methods and processes: Studying and collecting primary data from various sources, which included the Pāli Canon and commentaries that related to research the topics then studying secondary data from books, documents, articles, and research reports, such as academic achievements from Buddhist scholars, which included electronic data for analyzing, categorizing of all collected data, and then concluding and presenting the research results.

### **Results and Discussion**

In propagating his religion, the Buddha adopted various methodological approaches for teaching and learning, which may be summarized as follows:

#### **1. Gradual Approach**

For imparting instructions to beginners, the Buddha, utilizing a psychological principle, was very careful to take into consideration their particular background and not to preach the profound, detailed principles of the subject all at once, as that would scare them away. It was the more elementary doctrines that were imparted to them at first. Those who intended to follow his teachings were urged to accept at first the tenets and practices that were suitable to their aptitudes, tendencies and interests, and then the more profound doctrines were placed before them by stages. In this way too, the Buddha did not speak from the outset, of the things that constituted the scope and kernel of his teaching, but he began by urging his listeners to the practice of virtues such as generosity and rectitude of behavior in their worldly vocation. He spoke of heaven with its rewards awaiting those who lead a life of earnest purpose here below; And as soon as he knew that his hearers were fit to learn something deeper and higher, he proceeded to instruct them in the higher doctrines of the four Noble Truths, and so forth (Phra Sakda Chandako & Boonpoo, 2015).



Even in teaching the Four Noble Truths, he proceeded in stages, from the concrete to the abstract principle, from effect to cause, i.e., from the phenomenal element of suffering as the obvious, to its causes, its cessation and the ways leading to its cessation. This approach shows the Buddha's attitude: "I do not maintain that the attainment of profound knowledge comes straightway; On the contrary it comes by gradual learning, practice and progressive operation" (Changkwan-yuen, 2012).

## 2. Approach of Adaptation

The present situation and circumstance were also used by the Buddha to impart his ideals to people. In order to gain over the hearers or the opponents to his view, the Buddha made use of a style which Rhys Davids (2020) characterized as "Pouring new wine into the old bottles." This consisted in the Buddha's giving a new meaning to words that were already current. He adopted traditional ideas and practices and adjusted his sermons to suit the temperaments of his hearers, a method that came to be known as *Upaya-kosalam*, i.e., the skillful policy (expedient means) of converting people, by which was meant that the Buddha possessed as one of his intellectual faculties the ability to comprehend the dispositions or tendencies of his fellow men (*Nānā. dhimuttikata*), of those to whom he spoke. Here, he claimed to know "Brahma-God" and also preached the path leading to companionship with Brahma God, by cultivating "*Brahmaviharadhamma*," i.e., "The four virtues for Excellent Abiding." To mention another example, "He also gave a Brahmin an instruction in the "Ritualistic tenet of washing away the sin" instead of going into the river and washing it away by bathing, the latter was advised to take a bath in spiritual culture by harming no living beings" (Panapram, 2023).

## 3. Illustrative Approach.

By the expression "Illustrative approach is meant the use of analogy, simile, parable (*Upama*), the use of fable and story drawn from ordinary life, in the Buddha's speeches along with beautiful verses in order to make them sweet, effective and attractive." It is often said in the texts: "I will give you an analogy, for by means of an analogy some people of intelligence (*Viññūpurisa*) understand the meaning of what is said" and "A simile is employed in order to make the sense of a teaching clear." Thus, to teach the meaning of the "Middle Way" (*Majjhimāpatipada*) to the Venerable Sona Kolivisa who was an expert in playing the lute in his earlier life, the Buddha made use of the analogy of playing the lute and observed that "Only when the lute's strings were neither overstrung nor overlaxed, it was tuneful and playable." Similarly, the analogy of "lust, hatred and delusion (*Raga, Dosa, Moha*)" with fiery flames (*Aggi*) was used to instruct the three brothers Jatilas, who, as the Buddha knew beforehand, believed in "The Fire Worship." He started: "Everything is in fiery flames: The eye, etc... are all in fiery flames..." By the fiery flames of lust, of hatred and of delusion by which all are kindled, produce and kindle the further fires of birth, etc... Here and there in the Pali canon, especially in the *Jātakas*, the Buddha is reported to teach his disciples by the use of fables and stories, and he added at the end of every instruction the moral the fable illustrated (Changkwan-yuen, 2012).

## 4. Analytical Approach

The analytical approach of teaching is one of the most important characteristics found in the earlier texts. This is especially the case when the doctrine was meant for the more intelligent



hearers or followers. The entire teaching of the Buddha is described as one which is of a critical outlook, to be verified and realized by the intelligent (Viññu, prudent, wise), who represent for the Buddha the impartial critic at the level of intellectual common sense. The Buddha himself claimed to be an "Analyst" (Vibhajjavāda); When he was asked for his explanation of the truth of the proposition: "The householder is accomplishing the right path...; The monk is not accomplishing the right path; He answered that one could not make an absolute assertion as to the truth or falsity of some propositions, but one should first analytically examine the nature of the subject of the discussions; The proposition in question means that, if both the householder and the monk were guilty of wrong conduct, then they are to be blamed, but if both of them conducted themselves rightly, they are to be praised." The Buddha analytically reasoned with those who, being dialectically minded, came to discuss and debate with him, and this shows his approach of teaching in what Oldenberg called "Socratic fashion." According to the Buddha, "A teacher who is possessed of the four analytical powers will be not at a loss as regards both the meaning and the letter or theory of what he teaches." This refers to the teacher's capacity for the analysis of meanings (Attha), of reason or conditions (Dhamma), of educational medium (Nirutti), and of intellectual mastery or, rather, presence of mind, self-confidence (Patibbhana): "That is, he is capable of grasping the analysis of meaning, specifically and according to the letter, to explain the lesson in various ways, to teach it, expound it, lay it down, open it up, classify it and make it clear, and the same with the rest" (Panapram, 2023).

#### 5. Experimental Approach

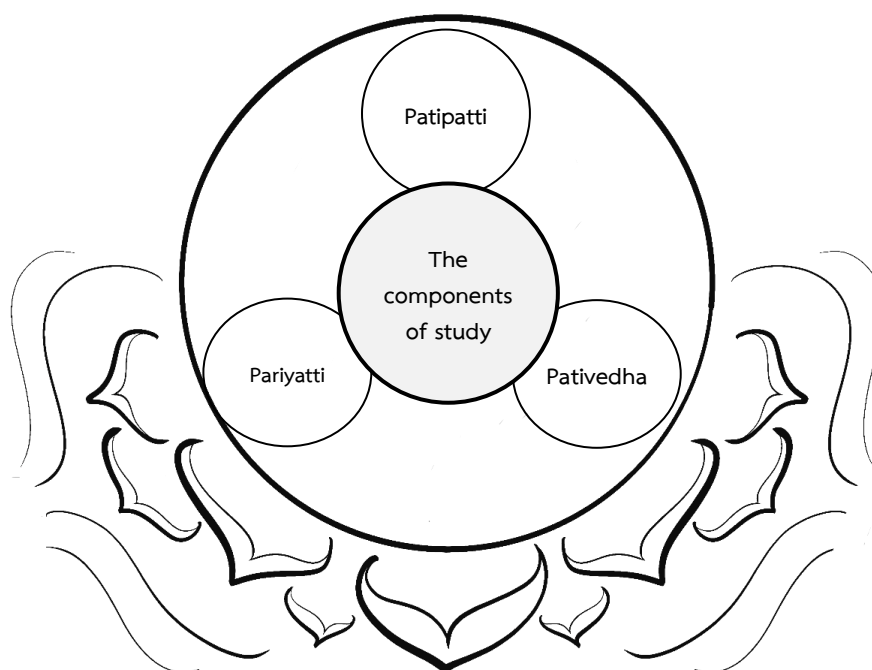
The Buddha did not want anybody to accept his teachings without one's critical spirit of experimentation. Since it is generally regarded as "Pragmatism" and "Rationalism" in the sense of "Utilitarian pragmatism," "Canonical Buddhism is a verifiable system of philosophy experimentally discovered by the Buddha in the light of both failure and success in his experimental quest for that truth," which is synthesized on scientific principles regardless of past traditions: "Observation of actual life, experiments in asceticism, final deduction of a way to end ills, seeking the knowledge of nature the knowledge which may be characterized of verification, etc." as scientific The Buddha on account of its basis showed the disciples the experimental course of his "Noble quest", through his own example, by having tried the various methods practiced by various systems prevalent in his time. Therefore, his success in achieving enlightenment is not considered to be a mysterious single act, but an achievement through the development of natural facilities. Even knowledge of salvation is achieved only as the final phase of a gradual process of practice. He also identified himself as one of the Experimentalists (Ditthadhamma-bhiññāvosanaparamippatta), i.e., those who have a personal knowledge of the truth through their own experience. He closed his discourses to the Kālāmas and to Bhaddiya, the Licchavi, with the remark that one should accept a doctrine as true only when one had experimentally realized by oneself its practical validity. "Let an intelligent person come to me, sincere, honest and straightforward; One shall instruct him in the doctrine so that on my instruction he could practice by himself in such a way that before long he would himself know and himself realize..." (Phra Phalat Sudthisak Sampannamedhi & Namseethan, 2022).



The Buddha did not want his own statements easily accepted on his authority nor easily rejected but he rather demanded that they should be tested and worked out in the light of one's own experience, otherwise such statements would be fruitless. "Like a beautiful flower that processes color, but lacks perfume, so well-spoken words are fruitless to him who do not work them out." The Buddha suggested, on the other hand, well-spoken words are fruitful to him who sincerely practices them, like a beautiful flower that possesses both color and perfume. When asked to what extent one attained truth, he replied: "There is an attainment of the truth only by gradually following, developing, practicing and experiencing the doctrines themselves" (Phra Sakda Chandako & Boonpoo, 2015).

The educational course has been formulated and pointed out by the Buddha for his disciples. Only by energetically practicing, trying and experimenting with it, they may come to realize through their experience here and now the truth. "Monks, what should be done by the Teacher for his disciples, seeking their good, out of compassion, that has been done by me for you... concentrate on it and be not careless; Do not reproach yourself afterwards. This is our command to you..." When Gonaka Moggallana put a question to him: "Sir, what is the cause and reason why, though Nibbana does exist, though the way leading to Nibbana exists, and even though you exist as adviser, some of your disciples on being exhorted and instructed thus by you, attain the goal, Nibbana, but some do not?" the Buddha replied: "...What can I do, Brahmin, in this matter? (It must be always remembered that) a Tathāgata (only) shows the way" (Changkwan-yuen, 2012).

### Originality and Body of Knowledge



**Figure 1** The components of studying of Thai Buddhist monks and education in Thai Society.





Figure 1 indicates role of Thai Buddhist monks and education in Thai Society. that there is adherence to the teachings of the Buddha, from which all teachings are used as guidelines for study Summarized into three components: Pativedha is the result which is the true purpose of life, Patipatti is the path that leads to the goal, and Pariyatti is the correct knowledge that will be used as the basis for practice, which includes all the Dhamma principles of Buddha as appropriate and correct, this is because the Buddha did not teach one to believe and then follow but he wants students to see the answer for themselves and then believe it. With these three elements as a guideline.

## Conclusions and Recommendations

From the study, the Buddha emphasized self-reliance and the experiential testing-out of all teaching, including his own. He was well aware of the many conflicting doctrines of his day, a time of intellectual ferment. Rejecting teachings based on authoritative tradition, or mere rational speculation, he emphasized the examination and analysis of actual experience. This is seen in a famous Sutta passage where he spoke to the Kālāma people, "Who had a string of teachers visiting them, speaking in praise of their own teachings and disparaging those of others." In response to their perplexity over what is true or false, the Buddha said that they were right to feel uncertain. They should not accept anything: On the grounds of revelation, tradition or report, or because it is a product of mere reasoning, or because it is true from a standpoint, or because of a superficial assessment of the facts, or because it conforms to one's preconceived notions, or because it is authoritative, or because of the prestige of your teacher.

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