

**Education and the Karen people's struggle for freedom: The impact
of the 2015 Myanmar Ceasefire agreement**



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Abstract

After a long history of ethnic conflict in Myanmar, a nationwide ceasefire agreement was signed on 15th October 2015 between the national government and representatives of Ethnic Armed Organizations (EAOs). Among of the EAOs was the Karen National Union (KNU), being the oldest revolutionary group in Myanmar that has been struggling for independence, for self-determination, and equality. This study examines the educational experience of the Karen people, and specifically some of the educational initiatives and interventions of the Karen resistance group, in relation to their struggle to maintain their independent ethnic and linguistic identity.

The study focused on developments since and impacts of the 2015 ceasefire agreement on the Karen community for their education. This extends to consideration of possibilities for Karen education within the mainstream Burmese education system, based in some consideration of the multiple challenges that Karen students have faced throughout this long conflict. Policy issues that need to be addressed are identified, including access and participation in higher education, inequities between Karen and other student groups, language of instruction, and possibilities for dedicated Karen educational institutions.

The project concludes by noting the current instability in Myanmar and the associated military coup on 1st February 2021, with implications for the ceasefire agreements and for the ongoing struggle of the Karen people.

Abbreviations

BA	Burmese Army (Tatmadaw)
DFU	Democratic Federal Union
DKBA	Democratic Karen Benevolent Army
EAOs	Ethnic Armed Organizations
INGO	International Non-Government Organization
IDPs	Internally Displacement Persons
KG	Karen Government
KECD	Karen Education and Culture Department
KESAN	Karen Environmental Social and Action Network
KNA	Karen National Association
KNU	Karen National Union
KRCEE	Karen Refugee Committee Education Entity
KSEAG	Karen State Education Assistance Group
KTWG	Karen Teacher Working Group
KIA	Kachin Independence Army
MOE	Ministry of Education
MNEL	Myanmar National Education Law
MTB-MLE	Mother-Tongue Base Multilingual Education
NCA	Nationwide Ceasefire Agreement
NESP	The National Education Strategic Plan
NLD	National League of Democracy
RCSS	Restoration Council of Shan State
SPDC	State Peace and Development Council
TVET	Technical Vocational Education
USDP	Union Solidarity and Development Party
UPC	Union Peace Conference
UWSA	United Wa State Army

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Chapter I - Introduction

This study examines how the official Myanmar State education system, and within it the Karen education systems, have developed in the context of more than seven decades of armed conflict in Myanmar (Burma). The focus extends to considerations of how education is or maybe transformed during the on-going peace process, which follows a formal Nationwide Ceasefire Agreement (NCA) between the Myanmar State Army and the Karen armed groups (Karen National Union-KNU, Democratic Karen Benevolent Army- DKBA¹, and Karen National Union/Karen National Liberation Army-Peace Council – KNU/KNLA-PC²) in 2015.

The chapter begins with contextual information about Myanmar and its political roadmaps. This information is important because without knowing about Myanmar and how complicated about ethnic conflict that over several decades could bring confusion of the struggle of Karen community for their educational outreach and linguistic freedom. Later in this chapter it also explains who Karen people and their background history that includes a brief overview of Karen community specifically for their struggle for freedom and education influences from the westernize late in 18th century to early 19th century. The Karen revolution for nation building also known as the longest civil war in the 20th century, and when the country opened up and call for the Nationwide Ceasefire Agreement in 2015. The purpose of this study and research questions also included in this chapter together with the problem statement of the research. This study is about autoethnographic research thus it included the researcher personal experience and highlight the most important part of her life where and how her academic career has begun as the last section of this chapter.

In chapter II, this includes research literature review, and it has been primarily gathered to assess the political changes in Myanmar and their effect on the education sector of the Karen population. The literature review focuses on the socio-cultural parameters of the education sector along with

¹ DKBA split from the KNU in 1994 under the name “Democratic Kayin Buddhist Army” and joined armed with State Army/ Tamataw until 2010, the fighting between DKBA and State Army broke out and renamed the group the “Democratic Karen Benevolent Army” in April 2012. The DKBA together with KNU signed the NCA in October, 2015.

² KNU-PC broke away from the KNU in 2007 under the leadership of Brigadier General Saw Htay Maung and signed a ceasefire with the State Development and Peace Council (SPDC). It is also one of the ten EAOs that have signed the NCA.

analyzing the impact of ethnic conflicts on the quality and type of education practices. In the first section, the research literature concerning the social integration of education into society has been collected. The portion analyzes the impact of social and economic ideologies including colonialism and capitalism on the schooling of minority groups. The portion establishes the phenomenon of social justice as the core approach for evaluating the educational segregation of disadvantaged groups.

In chapter III, this chapter first part aims at elaborating on the Karen educational issues by using a diverse theoretical analysis. ‘Pedagogy of the oppressed’ adopted from Freire (2018) and “decolonizing the minds” from Thiong’o (1986) in this regard provide a theoretical setting for depicting the struggle of Karen people in maintaining their cultural identity. The theories address the issues of Karen students in an era of a military coup and post-colonization. The five major aspects of social justice arguably explain the rights of Karen’s students and discrepancies in the Myanmar education system. Autoethnography approach in this regard contributed towards quoting challenges of Karen students in their struggle for education. Finally, “two faces of education” adopted from the UNICEF report has been used for arguing on the national government views about Karen education and its future trajectory. For the second part of this chapter deals with the methodological approach of the study and focuses on a critical study and an interpretation of the phenomenon of Karen education within Myanmar while using autoethnography, critical ethnography, and evaluation research as suitable research approaches.

In chapter IV, to seeks to connect the theoretical framework and literature review with the statistical data and theoretical findings of the research project. The chapter focuses on comparing the Karen and Burmese educational systems by applying the autoethnography research approach. The recent political settlement in Myanmar has led to the destruction of several higher education institutes exacerbating the Karen struggle for higher education. Both Karen students and parents are well aware of the importance of the Burmese language for ensuring their future security but for maintaining their cultural identity, the Karen local community is endorsing community schools and institutes. However, the number of IDPs has significantly increased in the country with little or no educational assistance by the Burmese government. The ethnicities, however, are not satisfied with the Nationwide ceasefire agreement (NCA) as it involves no dialogical approach for

education and is challenging for both the ethnic armed groups (EAOs) and Myanmar government to implement effectively.

Finally, last but not least chapter is highly recommended this study need further research to better understand the Karen people struggle for freedom and education system reform in Myanmar how it is so important to solve the current and future problems.

1.1 Contextual Information

Myanmar inherited education system from British colonial in 18th century until the early independence days, but after the 1962 military coup, nationalized school with centralized administration led educational standards to deteriorate (Kyaw, 2016). Every faith-based and private schools were nationalized along with national curriculum, causing hard to exercise ethnic language as teaching medium (Naw, 1989; Jolliffe & Mears, 2016).

This country viewed as the land of the ethnic diversity land but is it the reality in state school systems for ethnic children have very limited formal education and even banned to study ethnic language and history in state control schools. The intent of this paper was to examine the educational outreach and linguistic freedom for Karen community in resistant area also marked as a black zone by the Burmese government. The section explored about the socio-economic profile of Myanmar and the diverse ethnic nationalities who live in the country (1.1.1). It also gave an overview of political structure and institutions in Myanmar how the country has been ruling by one dominated ethnic group (1.1.2) and reviewed the 2015 nationwide ceasefire agreement (1.1.3). The last part of this section also covered the current situation in Myanmar beyond the ceasefire agreement and further political developments (1.1.4).

1.1.1. Socio-economic profile of Myanmar and ethnic diversity

Myanmar, formerly known as Burma, gained independent from British since 1948 is one of the countries located in the west of Southeast Asia. China covers the northeast border of Burma while Bangladesh and India lie on its northwest border. In its east and south, Thailand and the Andaman

Sea are located while the Bay of Bengal surrounds its southwest corner. In Southeast Asia, Myanmar is the largest country and hosts about 54 million population. Throughout its history, the country adopted two different names known as Burma and Myanmar. However, in the local Burmese language, the country is also known as Myanmar. The country's location resembles very much a kite on the world's map with its tail running south along the Malay Peninsula (Burma- the World Factbook, 2021).

The country has been divided into five different physiographic localities including the coastal plains, the northern and the western mountain ranges, the central basin and lowlands, and the eastern plateau. Nay Pyi Taw became the capital of the country in 2006. It is a newly built city located near Pinyinana. The country on the whole is surrounded by different countries in terms of culture, religion, political domains, and economic positions (Phayre, 2013).

Myanmar is a diverse ethnic nationalities land and comprises of several ethnic minorities. About 135 different ethnic groups are living in Myanmar. Mostly minority ethnic groups live in concentrated areas and spread out all over the country, in addition to Bama (Burman) ethnic group who consider itself as the majority national ethnic group of the country. There are seven ethnic states in Myanmar, namely Kachin, Rakhine, Mon, Shan, Chin, Karen (Kayin), and Karenni (Kayah). These states use several different languages and dialects. Along with these prominent ethnicities, there are also other groups including Negas, Pa-O, Wa, Akha, Kokang, and Lahu living in the hillside of Myanmar. Their population is more than 100,000 and constitute another dialect of Tibetan-Burmese languages. In addition to prominent ethnic groups, there are small ethnic minorities including Christians, Hindus, Muslims, and Animists also living in Myanmar. These ethnicities makeup one-third of the total Myanmar's population and occupy more than half of the land of the country. Among these only 8 ethnic groups have been recognized by the government while several others are not ("Myanmar/Burma | World Directory of Minorities & Indigenous Peoples", 2020).

Several factors make Burma a diverse ethnic land. One of these factors is the strategic position of Myanmar. The people belonging to diverse backgrounds got settled in the remote areas where they began to grow and shape their culture and values. This specific area of ethnic states have been

regarded as the most favorable agricultural land in Myanmar. The country has vast patches of fertile soil supported by naturally irrigated water sources. The country supports almost every kind of vegetation that made it a suitable location for ethnicities. The process began about 1500 years ago when Pyu and Mon, Tibeto-Burman speaking groups inhabited Myanmar and migrated from China and Thailand. Following them, Bamar entered Burma that is among the present-day largest groups of Myanmar (Gravers, 2007).

1.1.2. Political structure and institutions in Myanmar

Burmese political history witnessed several ups and downs. Issues of ethnic polarization began to rise after the British rule of 1886 when the Brits maintained friendly relationships with a few of them. The Burmese got independence from British rule in 1948 and opted democracy. However, after the Burmese independence, General Aung San, father of Aung San Suu Kyi, signed the Panglong Agreement with ethnicities, that implied ethnicities could get liberated after 10 years. The agreement got dissolved later on after the assassination of General Aung San, and it led to the longest civil war in the world's history after 19th century. The diversity of Myanmar transformed into a struggle for representation leading to several brutal chapters of Burmese history (Fink, 2001).

Burma then got transformed into the Union of Burma in 1948, though it didn't become a member of the Commonwealth, unlike other British colonies. However, in 1962 the military rule began in Burma under the leadership of General Ne Win. Martin (1991) observed that Burma created a socialist government and introduced a new concept of the "Burmese Way to Socialism". The government began to take properties from their owners and began to focus on autarky. It impacted the economic situation of the Burma and led to mass protests against military rule. The military responded brutally to these protests and many civilians got killed during student protests of the 1970s (Martin, 1991)

After that, the reign of State Peace and Development Council (SPDC) began, as the Senior General Than Shwe held the office from 1992 to 2011 as the chairman of the SPDC. The public uprisings and military actions led to a period of economic isolation for Burma (McCarthy, 2010). Several

foreign countries stopped their operations in Myanmar that led to the social and economic burden for not only the government but also the civilians. There were serious human rights violation in Burma by the Burmese Army (Tatmadaw), upon minority ethnic groups and so do the public upriser's leader (McCarthy,2010).

In the meanwhile, in 1988, the National League of Democracy (NLD) was established. In 1990s, NLD leader Aung San Suu Kyi, got house arrested. The military didn't allow NLD to properly function in Myanmar despite the fact that they won 1990 election. Responding to it, the United States developed the "Burmese Freedom and Democracy Act" in 2003 by putting several sanctions in Burma (McCarthy,2010). During this period of sometimes late in 1990s to 2010, international community including the United Nations took several actions against the Burmese military and condemned human rights violations in ethnic states like Kachin, and Rakhine (McCarthy, 2010).

Burmese constitution was passed in 2008. The military adopted the referendum method and the constitution passed with 92.8% majority voting. After years of protests, the military finally allowed several parties to take part in the general elections of 2010 and 2012. However, in line with this constitution, the military could automatically secure 25% seats. The results of the referendum were opposed by several political parties. In the 2010 elections, 40 political parties participated, along with a few belonging to ethnicities. The Union Solidarity and Development Party won general election in year 2010. The party was alleged to be supported by the military as most party leaders were former military officials. Following the 2010 elections, successive elections took place in 2012, and then in 2015. Despite these elections, president Thein Sein, the former Burmese military general, became the leader of the State Administration Council and the military remains the de-facto head of the government. Through this authority, he can use 25% representatives of the parliament. The move thus prevents the political parties from introducing amendments to the 2008 constitution (Schuettler, 2008).

Throughout these years, the ethnicities faced political oppression (Crosissant & Kamerling, 2013). Since the 1990s elections, minority ethnic groups provided with limited representation. The ethnicities consider the Burmese political approach as a way of imposed Burmanisation in which they always experience discrimination (Crosissant & Kamerling, 2013). Since the military has

always remained against minority ethnic groups, the 2008 constitution limited the access of ethnicities to the parliament through 25 % representation. The elections were manipulated by the military where ethnicities see no chances for improvement but to fight for their rights rather than subjugation (Croissant & Kamerling, 2013).

1.1.3. The 2015 Nationwide Ceasefire Agreement

Owing to the long history of ethnic conflicts, the nationwide ceasefire agreement was signed on 15th October 2015. The agreement was signed between the government and the representatives of ethnic armed organizations (EAOs). It was signed in the presence of several international representatives including the United Nations, Japan, the United Kingdom, and the United States, while representatives of 8 out of 16 ethnic armed organizations (EAOs) also signed the agreement.

The prominent groups that signed the NCA were the Karen National Union (KNU) and the Restoration Council of Shan State. Groups that refused to sign includes the United Wa State Army and the Kachin Independence Army. Those who refused to sign the agreement held a stance that there are almost 51 ethnic armed organizations, but Burmese Army (Tatmadaw) selectively chose the groups that limited the ethnic representation in the agreement. This development not only raised political tensions in the country but also among the ethnic groups because a few of these decided to sign NCA despite huge differences (Ganesan, 2015).

The agreement consisted of seven different chapters aiming at resolving the conflicts and contributing towards confidences building and long-term peace. The agreement focused on creating a federal state in which the ethnicities would be given due representation, human rights violations would be stopped, relocation programs for IDPs would be arranged, and discriminatory practices would be eliminated. The agreement further urged deciding a future direction in which the welfare sectors of the ethnicities would be developed. They would have equal access to basic life facilities including the health and the education sector. The government would strive towards maintaining an inclusive environment for the ethnicities, their diverse religious and cultural values would not only be protected but also be promoted (NCA, 2015; Ganesan,2015; Cuddy,2021).

Addressing such cultural and identity issues, the Nationwide ceasefire agreement of Myanmar aimed at determining the future direction of ethnicities in Myanmar. Chapter 6, clause a (1) emphasizes on government and EAOs to work for the development of ethnicities as, “Projects concerning the health, education and socio-economic development of civilians” (Nationwide Ceasefire Agreement, 2015). Its clause a (3) mentions, “Efforts to preserve and promote ethnic culture, language, and literature” (Nationwide Ceasefire Agreement, 2015). Different socio-culture context is one of the restraints in the Karen educational transformations. Karen students find it difficult to grasp the knowledge which clashing with their cultural and national history. The consequences of the conflict had been adversely affecting Karen's access to education. Irrespective of the fact that the government has allowed teaching Karen language and culture in some area, yet the circumstances are still not favorable for Karen (Cheesman, 2002). Since the perception of knowledge is influenced by cultural factors, it is their right to access education on their cultural grounds and the government strictly control the teaching curriculum (Cheesman, 2002).

1.1.4. Beyond the ceasefire agreement and further political developments

The 2021 coup in Myanmar began on 1st February when the Burmese army displaced the democratic leadership of the National League of Democracy (NLD). One year state emergency has been declared in Myanmar and the power has been shifted to Commander-in-Chief of Defense Services, Min Aung Hlaing. The army denounced the electoral results of 2020. However, the election commission denied all such remarks. The central cause for it appears to be the proclamation of military power. In line with the Defense Services Act, the retirement age for the commander in chief is 65. Thus, the Armed Forces’ Commander-in-Chief. Min Aung Hlaing had to retire in the following year (Cuddy, 2021).

The election 2020 in Myanmar aims at conducting a fair election and maintaining democracy in the country. However, the protests have been brutally challenged while the leaders of NLD, political activists, artists, and protestors were detained. In March 2021, more than 100 people have been killed. The act has been condemned by the world powers; however, the situation is still unpredictable in the country. Since February 2021, more than 400 protestors have been killed. The public fury raised when a luxury military gala had been arranged by Tatmadaw. Several reports

have also been published regarding the attack of the military on the funerals. Children and women are also included in the dead. On 12th April 2021, 700 protestors got killed including prominent NLD leaders and the children during the street protests (BBC, 2021).

The military coup has been imposed several times on Myanmar and the people are protesting against it. Even the first elections in Myanmar's history were conducted in 1990. However, the democratic government failed to function as a result of military influence. The 2021 coup even the military is trying to control the situation, but the protests are getting larger and larger every coming day. It is creating enormous pressure on the military also. The situation leads to a rather predictable future for Myanmar that would reflect the brutal past. Once the protests would reach their peak, the military will use any possible means to stop these that would lead to a whole new chapter of bloodshed in Myanmar. The infrastructure will suffer leading to another period of economic isolation for Myanmar. The situation will lead to an educational crisis also as very much like the past, the students and young people all over the country these days are coming to the streets and demanding their rights. However, in the past, those movements had been eroded leading to an imminent threat for the educational sector also (Kipgen, 2021).

1.2. Karen People struggle for freedom and educational outcomes

Karen in colonial period, the Karen National Association (KNA), had been founded in 1881 to promote Karen culture, literacy, and education. After independence, the political ambition of Karen state with self-determination failed in talk with Burmese political elite, and Karen went for armed resistance movement. The Karen National Union - KNU has organized Kawthoolei Government into districts, which corresponds to a Karen National Liberation Army (KNLA) brigade area. From the 1950s through to the 1980s, the KNU was one of the largest and most powerful EAOs controlling large territory in lower part of Myanmar (Lall & South,2014).

Following General Ne Win's coup d'état of Burma in 1962, Karen and other ethnic minority teach mother-tongue language in education institution was prohibited. However, some churches and monasteries informally teach Karen language outside of the school system. Karen population living in official Karen state established in 1952 are a fewer portion with major Karen speaking

population living in Yangon, Ayeyarwady, Tanintharyi, Bago Regions and Mon state (Thawghmung, 2012).

In more than half-century, persistence of armed conflict in Karen community caused insecurity and that affected on Karen education provision. The KNU's Karen Education and Culture Department (KECD) administers a school system which is accessible to many conflict-affected in Karen communities, including refugee camps in Thailand (Lall & South, 2011). KECD allied with Karen Teacher Working Group (KTWG) and refugee camp-based Karen Refugee Committee Education Entity (KRCEE) to deliver education to Karen population in KNU control area and refugee camp along the Thai Myanmar border.

The KECD vision states that "a peaceful, pluralistic and just society founded on an educational climate that provides equal access to appropriate and quality educational services and experience for individuals and their communities to realize their full potentials, and experience and maintain their cultures"(Karen Education and Culture Department, 2021). The KECD is also a co-founder of the Karen State Education Assistance Group (KSEAG), a network which include KTWG and Partners Relief and Development. KECD provided formal education for children across the areas of the southeast Myanmar, including non-KNU areas. KECD support to 11,444 teachers in 1,495 schools, which are attended by 164,875 students (Karen Education and Culture Department, 2021). The Karen peoples believe that “education is the key to open any opportunity doors” and later in this section this study explored the Karen people and their struggle for self-determination, and a review of Myanmar educational reforms and Karen community.

1.2.1. The Karen people and the struggle for self-determination

Historians believe that the Karen people migrated from Tibet and followed the Yangtze River in China to Southeast Asia nearly three thousand years ago (Joliffe, 2016). The last group of Karen people who enter Southeast Asia was around BC.739 (Thanbyan, 1913). Geographically, the Karen people are scattered from the ranges of western Thailand and cover most area in the lower part of Myanmar from the southern Irrawaddy delta across Rangoon (Yangon), Bago and Tanintharyi regions and the Shan, Karenni, Karen, and Mon states, basically the whole lower part

of Myanmar with total population of Karen people are the third biggest group in the country (Thanbyan,1913; South, 2008). Karen communities are ethnic minority to the hills and plains of south-eastern Burma Myanmar and western Thailand. Karen people inhabit the hill forests, valleys and plains as well as cities and towns along the border, while in Thailand, they live on the lower-altitude hills, valleys and from highland to lowland among the provinces of Mae Hong Song, Chiangmai, Tak, Sanklaburi, and Kanchanaburi (Tongdhamachart & Tommanon 2020).

Linguistically, the Karen also includes ethnic-related groups such as the “S’gaw Karen, Pwo Karen, Bwe Karen, Paku Karen, Mobwa Karen, Geku Geba Karen and Karen Plyu” (Karen Information Center, 2017) and even the Karen ethnic-related groups speak mutually unintelligible languages are connected through customs, traditions, regions and a long history of shared livelihoods and communities from them till now, it’s over thousands of years (Joliffe, 2016). Particularly in hill areas Tawnaw and Mutraw range and among Christian communities of Karen which the majority speak S’gaw and Pwo speaking Karen are especially in the lowlands and among Buddhist communities in Pa-an and Irrawaddy regions. Estimates of the Karen population are not reliable since the British colonial period, however based on Myanmar ethnic group population analysis (Joliffe, 2016; Thawghmung, 2012) about 6 to 7 million Karen people still literally speak S’gaw, Pwo and other speak minor dialect of Karen language. Karen also known as the Thai hill tribe and about a million habited in northern and north-west part of Thailand ((Tongdhamachart & Tommanon 2020).

In Myanmar, military rule from 1962 to 2011 witnessed the centralization of state power under the Bamar (Burman) ethnic majority. Burman as the majority and state language became the language of official (Burmese) use and the medium of institutions, while other ethnic languages were suppressed and marginalized. The Burmanisation of state and society has constituted minority communities to resist militarized central government authority (Lall & South, 2014). Relationship of conflict and school education is that school education operated by the state, and the state itself part of the conflict (Smith & Vaux, 2003).

“Regardless of which Karen one speaks to the vast majority are ready for a political and peaceful resolution to the conflict for since 1949 over 300,000 Karen lives have been lost, thousands of

villages have been razed to the ground over a million Karen have been internally displaced, over one hundred thousand Karen have been forced to flee as refugees into Thailand, and the fragile ecosystems on which their livelihood depends are being destroyed” (Fong 2008, p.523).

Education gives people a way to conserve identity in difficult situation. Karen’s teachers are encouraged to teach the Karen language, in order to preserve identity and traditions of Karen (Lall & South, 2012). The KECD curriculum encourage of identity which may have played a separatist national identity among students. The KECD schools in refugee camps are able to provide secondary education. However, Karen school graduates are unable to access the government higher education system. No pathway to integrate with the national education system developed in a context of armed and state-society conflicts. As political dialogue keeps going on to establish Federal Union, the position of ethnic national education system needs to consider convergence (South & Lall, 2016).

1.2.2. A review of Myanmar educational reforms and Karen community

Education in Myanmar is responsible of Ministry of Education (MoE). Under MoE, there is Basic Education and Higher education as a general education and Technical and Vocational Education and Training. Basic education is designed into five years of primary school, four years of middle school and two years of high school. A student had 11 years of schooling from kindergarten to grade ten before attending university level or tertiary education (Skidmore & Wilson, 2008). However, Myanmar has been excessive centralized education system (Win, 2015). It has two specific units, one for northern Myanmar – based in Mandalay and one for southern Myanmar based in Yangon. Students, faculties and universities had encountered the lack of autonomy and choice. Especially for the student, the field regarding for the Higher Education main depend on the grades and points of their matriculation examination which is managed upon the completion of secondary school as well as geographic location (Win, 2015). Technical Vocational Education and Training (TVET) in Myanmar had two parts: The first parts is formal TVET system include secondary vocational education, engineering courses and High-level engineering course and second part is non-formal and informal TVET system without pathway to formal education (Win, 2015).

Since political transition in 2011, Myanmar education reform accelerated (South & Lall, 2016). In 2014, Pyidaungsu Hluttaw (Myanmar upper house parliament) passed Myanmar National Education Law. The objectives of Myanmar National Education Law 2014 aims to produce well-developed citizens with critical thinking skills, who respect and follow the law, to develop union spirit as respect, value, preserve and develop all the ethnic groups' languages, literatures, culture, arts, traditions, and historical heritage, aware and protect mother nature, build-up human resources for economic development, upgrade the quality of teaching, learning, research and administration with the help of ICT, to become professional in every field of study, and encourage sports, outdoor education, health, and personal hygiene programs (Myanmar National Education Law, 2014).

More comprehensive education reform plan introduces in 2016 as National Education Strategic Plan for 2016-2021. Its main goal states that "Improved teaching and learning, vocational education and training, research and innovation leading to measurable improvements in student achievement in all schools and educational institutions." The National Education Strategic Plan (2016-2021) states that this NESP to provide roadmap for the government, education stakeholders and citizens in sector-wide education reforms over the next five years that will improve access to quality education in Myanmar.

Along with Myanmar government education system, there is Karen education system that incorporated with Karen Education and Culture Department under the administration of the KNU has a parallel governance system with MoE (Jolliffe & Mears, 2016). In 1956, the Karen Education and Culture Department (KECD) was founded to provide education access to Karen's children and youth (Lall & South, 2014). KECD is working with community teachers, leaders, parents and education administrators of KNU's districts, townships and schools' level. KECD managed schools in the seven districts under the KNU such as Doo Tha Htu, Taw Oo, Kler Lwee Htu, Mergui Tavoy, Mu Traw, Doo Pla Ya, and Hpa An (Karen Education and Culture Department, 2021).

In 2015, Myanmar government and KNU with other seven Ethnic Armed Organizations (EAOs) agreed to sign Nationwide Ceasefire Agreement (NCA) on 15th October, 2015. Particularly, in

NCA, article 25 (a) acknowledges, the role of Ethnic Armed Organizations for development and security in their respective area. In addition to that interim arrangements require coordination of EAOs with the Myanmar government (Nationwide Ceasefire Agreement, 2015). Undoubtedly, NCA gives hope for peace to local population in south-east Myanmar, who experiences mass human rights violations, forced labour, arbitrary taxation, land confiscation, and food insecurity (South,2010). Although the most serious violations perpetrated by Tatmadaw (state army) and their proxies. (South, 2010)

Thus far, Schools were targeted in form of shelling, closure or looting in conflict situation. Teachers to be threatened, their salaries rarely paid and lack of school material supply. In this environment, learning cannot be thrived very well. In chaos around, schools are considered in heaven for children and for their communities (Machel, 2000).

The ceasefire agreement also suggests several ways to build trust through confidence building measures, political dialogue and reconstruction under interim arrangement. Based on the result of political negotiation agreement, establishment of Democratic Federal Union was agreed among EAOs. During political dialogue and peace process negotiation, stakeholders also agreed upon provision of social services delivered by EAOs, and developmental activities in form of reconstruction (Nationwide Ceasefire Agreement, 2015).

Education convergence strategies for refugees along the Thai Myanmar border proposed by Karen education actors, together with International Non-Government Organization (INGO) provide a good basis for structuring service providers' collaboration in synchronization with progress being made through the peace process. The strategic convergence goals are to recognize and accredit teachers, to recognize student learning, to support local curriculum development, to support Mother-Tongue Based Multilingual Education and policy engagement. Where relations are strong enough, EAO-linked and state service providers might benefit from agreeing on basic objectives to work towards at different stages of the peace process (Strategic Plan towards education convergence, 2014).

It caused competition over numerous fronts, among school staff, between teachers and parents, and between school committees and government authorities. In addition, the medium of instruction as the mother tongue has been stopped where MoE teachers have been taken control. These advances have suspicion of expanding territorial control, over KNU control areas (Jolliffe & Mears, 2016).

Union Peace Conference was conducted in accordance with political roadmap in NCA, but only a few agreements were reached. The Union Peace Conference agreed on 3 parts of Union Accords, mostly principles in first and second part of Union Accord. Third part of Union Accord comes with framework agreement on implementation. However, peace process was hindered several times, with deadlocks and obstacles: Mistrust among Burma Army, EAOs and government interrupting in the peace process. In recent times, the lack of political will to implement the peace process and Covid19 pandemic paralyzed the whole state. The latest blow to Myanmar Peace Process has been faulted due to military coup d'état on February 2nd, 2021.

1.3. Purpose of the study

The purpose of this study is to explore how educational outreach and linguistic freedom in education affected in Karen State after the Karen resistance's leader signed ceasefire agreement with the Myanmar government in, 2015. The majority of the Karen people recognized "Kawthoolei³" as their independent country and established its own school curriculum while fighting to free their land from various the Burmese rulers (Karen Education and Culture Department, 2020).

This study examines the following research questions:

- 1:** What has been the impact of the 2015 Ceasefire Agreement between the state and insurgent groups in Myanmar, on the education of Karen Students?

³ Kawthoolei -is the name that the Karen people give their homeland and have tried to establish it as a free and independent land.

2: In What ways has the national government and educational authorities facilitated better outreach of education through incentive and structural reforms in education, for Karen students?

3: How has the cultural identity of Karen people been affected through education, and since the in response to the 2015 Ceasefire agreement?

1.4. Problem statement

The problem statement in this dissertation is the reasons for the Karen community who run their education system by themselves have faced several challenging after Nationwide Ceasefire Agreement signed. Although it is knowing that the Karen people (students) have limited formal education and linguistic freedom, which creates difficulty for them to access higher level of State education system (Lall & South, 2014), there is a paucity of data of the differences of school curriculum from State schools. While doing this research based on the researcher's observation there was a need for further research to better understand of the Karen education system and how it affects the struggle of Karen people in the future.

1.5. Autoethnography and the researcher's profile

The researcher was a former Karen refugee and student activist back in Karen's refugee camp and Kawthoolei, she was denied getting the Burmese citizenship due to born and raised by a Karen resistance family. After graduated from high school from one of the Karen refugee camps in Thailand, there were three things that challenge her to continue her further study. Without a proper identity card/document to proof that she is a legal citizen to enroll herself in any higher education institutions was just a dream. Karen education is an unrecognized by any authorities neither Thailand nor Myanmar, thus there is very limited possibility to access to Thai and Burmese education institutions. Last but not least was language proficiency of English, Thai and Burmese are the medium languages as a basic requirement of admission to minorities ethnic in Thailand and Myanmar. Besides those, lack of finances, class differences, and discrimination for belonging to hill tribe and minority ethnic were induced vulnerabilities.

Based on a true story of the researcher and autoethnography research, the section covered the researcher personal experiences of the Karen educational system and how she overcome those challenges above.

I was born and raised in a very typical rebel family. I learned how to shoot my dad’s pistol before I could read and write. From home as well as from school, we were taught to fight for our people’s freedom and the teaching that “the enemy (Buman/Bama) is untrustworthy human beings” was always stressed by our parents, friends, and teachers. I have received basic education of Karen Education and Culture Department (KECD) from pre-primary school to high school. The eight core subjects that prepared by KECD are Karen, Burmese and English as main languages study subjects (KECD, 2020). Mathematics, Science, History, Geography, and Social Studies/Hygiene are basic subject that teach in different grades as shown in the table below.

	Subject						
Grade	Karen Burmese English	Math	Science	History	Geography	Social Studies	Hygiene
Grade 1-1	x	x	-	-	-	-	-
Grade 3-4	x	x	-	-	x	-	x
Grades 5-6	x	x	-	-	x	x	x
Grades 7-12	x	x	x	x	x	x	-

Reconstruction of table from Karen Education and Culture Department (KECD,2020)

As the table above shows that Karen educational system is mother tongue-based multilingual education (MTB-MLE) through primary level to high school level and it supports and strengthens curriculum development by using equally mother tongue-based languages (KECD, 2020). Even me and some Karen children refused to study Burmese language as we consider “Burmese language” as our enemy language, but our parents and teachers were demanding us to study. I failed many times of Burmese language subject in primary school level and both my mom and my teacher force me even harder to study it. At the end, I learnt the enemy language fluently after I graduated from high school. Parekh (2006) and Modood (2013) stated that by addressing the other

side of story and learn their language could help you to understand their cultures and expectations for us to accept and value one another. On the other hands, if I end up going to the state school, I wouldn't have a chance to study my own Karen language neither my own Karen history. Another subject that taught me to become who I am today was the Karen revolution history subject, without going to KECD school, I might not see both sides of the ground situation and not yet understand the root of conflict between Karen and Burmese. We were not only study Karen history under history subject, but the curriculum also covers Burmese history and world history. From this point, by learning both Karen and Burmese history from school help to reduce hatreds and more than that we are looking forward a better solution for seven decades long ethnic conflict in Myanmar.

Chapter II - Literature review

In this chapter, literature has been primarily used to assess the impact of political changes in Myanmar upon educational outcomes for the Karen community. The literature review focuses on the socio-cultural determinants of the educational outcomes, along with analyzing the impact of ethnic conflicts upon quality of education. In the first section, literature concerning the social integration of education into society has been consulted. This part of the discussion analyzed the impact of social and economic ideologies including colonialism and capitalism on the schooling of minority groups. It narrates how the phenomenon of social justice as the core approach for evaluating the educational segregation of disadvantaged groups may be visualized.

Then the literature proceeds with the discussion on how conflicts and intersectionality in education are associated. The discussion further delineates the gaps in curriculum concerning the dissemination of knowledge about the history of conflicts. The subsequent section scrutinized the effect of political clout on the educational policies. The literature in this portion analyzed the challenges faced by the governments in managing diversity in the education system created due to multilingual education systems. In this context, the relevant data regarding the educational issues of the Karen population was also collected that further elaborated on the impact of Burmese colonialism and associated identity problems.

In the following section, the interdependencies between culture, education, and sustainable development are examined. The literature in this portion focused on institutionalism as a method for the transmission of cultural and educational values. It further mentions the advantages of expansive learning in promoting sustainable development practices. The final portion deals with the constructive role of leadership in establishing effective leadership policies.

The chapter tries to explore theoretical basics to validate research questions as it addresses the determining factors like an economic burden, multilingual systems, political intervention, civil war, and ethnic segregation. All of these factors appear relevant for educational issues faced by Karen's students in Kawthoolei. Further, the chapter addresses the exigent challenges for governments in merging different ethnicities and designing all-inclusive educational policies which further serves the research objective of attracting sustainable development for Karen students. While addressing the educational issues, the literature review develops the concept of post-colonialism which is highly contingent upon satisfying the research question of assessing the impact of the Burmese curriculum on Karen students. The literature review not only gathers data from conflict-stricken regions of the globe but also aims at developing a connection with the Karen literature. The data, in turn, will be helpful for international organizations to support Karen's students on financial and moral grounds.

2.1. Education as social practice

Education is widely regarded as a social practice as it touches the social dimensions of cultural norms and basic learning skills. Individuals live in a society whereby they learn by observation and experimentation. The knowledge thus gained penetrates the fabric of the society where it manifests itself as a social practice. However, cultural and social constraints transform the way teachers respond and impart knowledge. Karen educational system is widely influenced by such cultural and social constraints prevalent in Myanmar. As ways of teaching differ in different ethnicities, the Karen students find it very difficult to continue with the existing models of education (Oh et al., 2019).

Regarding the social implications of education, Fredrick's (1990) research in Southeast Asian regions like Myanmar and Melanesia originated from the concept of introducing contemporary ideals in the existing models of education and culture. Comparing Bali and New Guinea, he observed striking cultural differences among different ethnic groups. Concerning the "Anthropology of Knowledge", he argued that the people of New Guinea believed in holding back the knowledge, in contrast to, the Balinese who believed in sharing knowledge. Religious dimensions further delineate the concept of knowledge in these regions (Barth, 1990). New Guineans adhere to Christianity and Balinese to Islam and Hinduism. In this regard, the influence of cultural and religious factors is prominent on the social dimension of education (Barth, 1990).

Clive Harber's (2014) volume elaborated on the interrelationship between such different educational requirements and development. These different educational requirements are not met suitably by colonial education. Colonialism has a social aspect as it erodes the cultural identity of people through the imposed curriculum. Colonial education sabotages the students' right to education as they are made to learn a curriculum that isn't consistent with their cultural and ethical values. It ignores their sense of identity where they can't work for the development of their ethnicity (DeJong & Love, 2015).

The societal paradigm of education in Harber's (2014) view is very diverse. The criterion for education being advantageous or not is highly contingent on the economic and cultural mechanics. Pedagogical practices are beneficial only if they don't propagate xenophobia (Harber, 2014). Through colonization, one nation not only takes control of the other's territory but also sabotages their social rights. Likewise, colonial education is to impose its educational practices on the suppressed ones. The colonizers inculcate very selective knowledge behind the façade of the so-called equal rights for education. Harber (2014) used dependency theory to represent the prevalent discrimination among developed and underdeveloped segments of countries.

To overcome these socio-economic chains of colonialism, Freire (1985) proposed an alternative approach for ethnicities like Karen to maintain their cultural identity. Freire's liberation theory argues for the liberation of humans through education. The theory criticizes this model of discrimination because such educational practices do not liberate the students but capture them in

complex societal chains. The context of the Karen community relates to all these factors. Karen children suffer more from hidden educational costs in Southeast Myanmar that imposed a huge financial burden. Karens also are unable to seek education in their native languages which makes it difficult for them to identify and relate with their cultural and ethnic demands (Arar et al., 2019).

According to Willis (1977), the education system invites a never-ending conflict between the capitalists and the labor class. He introduced two classes of working-class students and placed school as a medium for introducing bias among students. It is one of the several dimensions of the sociology of education where educational institutions shape perceived social advantages. Non-conformist students oppose school authorities which in turn plays its role in creating different social classes and reproducing their future as workers. The group has been identified to be highly racist and misogynist. The phenomenon however relates to the current community working-class mechanism, which strongly highlights racism and prejudice (Apple et al., 2010). Moreover, the institutional cultural dimension however represents a different view where Willis elaborates on the class consciousness being introduced into the students by the institutions. The fact that the rebellious and working-class students end up getting working-class jobs is not because of capitalism but of institutionalism.

Social ideologies like capitalism shape schooling practices. According to Bowles and Gintis (1976), the schooling system in regions like Myanmar works on the mechanism of the capitalist labor market. The Karen students don't only pay educational fees but also the stipends for teachers (Shiohata, 2019). Students are asked to wear uniforms and maintain discipline just like in the workplace and different classes depending on the backgrounds are also created leading to severe inequalities. Thus, such students experience prejudice from the schools which serve as the foundation for higher education. It gives rise to a series of conflicts between teachers and working-class students where teaching practices do not satisfy the educational needs of the labor class (Willis, 1977).

In response to higher educational costs, low-cost private schools have been introduced into developing countries. However, there are contradicting views concerning parental preferences. The presence of free educational institutes raises a question on the effectiveness of low-cost private

schools. Concerning this issue, Heyneman and Stern (2014) researched countries like Pakistan, Indonesia, Kenya, and Jamaica and proposed a model for designing effective public policies in such regions. Non- governmental schools for the poor have become an important part of the education system. There are also religious institutions in a few areas that impart education to specific ethnicities. However, in a few countries like Jamaica, the quality of education is being neglected at such institutes. They have an insufficient learning space where juvenile crimes have also been recorded. Thus, the government must aid such institutions by registering these and designing a specific curriculum. In the Karen context, the Myanmar government might also consider reinforcing separate free private schools for providing quality education (Heyneman & Stern, 2014).

Social justice encompasses every sector of human life including employment, healthcare, and the education system. It is an important parameter to describe minorities' educational rights while addressing the ethnic educational system. The influence of social justice on education is related to the core concept of equal growth opportunities. It allows social segments to grow equally leading to sustainable development. Tikly and Barret (2011) studied social justice in the educational context for developing countries. They related social justice with the three main variables; quality of education, the relevance of the outcomes of education, and democracy. In line with this research, social justice invigorates human capabilities to overcome educational challenges, side by side improving the quality of education. Quality education is defined to be the one that allows humans to grow at their analytical and intellectual potential. The word educated directly relates to the word developed, thus, education brings about development in nations. Further, cultural norms allow humans to identify the true meanings of positive and negative freedom in education. Socially just education provides all ethnic groups equal access to education (Tikly & Barrett, 2011).

Edward and Lall (2009) studied the political dynamics of Asia while referring to educational institutions. Since Asia remained a Western colony for a long time, the latter had a significant effect on the education and politics of that region. Edward and Lall compared Japan, India, Singapore, and Taiwan, and explained how governments try to inculcate new values and a sense of identity among the citizens, educational programs are used as a potent agent for influencing them. But according to Edward and Lall (2009), this process introduces a lack of freedom among

the citizens where they are unable to perform according to their own values and have to follow new colonial values.

Stein (2018) called this behavior as 'contagion' which is artificial and is opposite to one's true identity and is harmful to true nation-building. According to Kuroiwa & Verkuyten (2008), Karen's right to receive education according to their values has been sabotaged. The process of homogenization by the Myanmar government is still creating two opposite poles in the education department making it difficult for Karen students to act on the principle of self-efficacy. Self-efficacy guides the individual to focus more on his capabilities and find solutions by himself (Lall & Vickers, 2009). In such context, Williams (2017) related the primary education department in Rwanda. Rwandan educational system faces several limiting factors like resistance to change and political influence.

Following the Rwandan genocide of 1994, the government introduced several changes in the formal education patterns of Rwanda. The public sector of Rwanda made an effort to lift the economic conditions of the country, however, the education department still observed no positive outcome. The educational quality is primarily suffering due to political intervention. The governmental efforts of replacing French with English as an educational language have also been negated. However, these attempts might lead to a well-defined curriculum, yet the capacity of institutions is being ignored. There is no sufficient learning space in Rwanda and Myanmar leading to a mass dropout in primary institutions of the country (Williams, 2017).

Tikly (1999) related postcolonial theory with the existing educational system. He observed that the European rule of the 18th and 19th-century penetrated not only the curriculum but also the language and civilization. These outcomes are also a quintessence of the effects of multiculturalism. The phenomenon relates to power and influence where colonized have to stick to the culture and principles of the colonizers. Thus, colonized observe both mental and physical control by the colonizers. In this way, colonial education disrupts their knowledge of their history and practices. They adopt those values that are not their own and will be taken away from them at any time (Tikly, 1999).

Paulo Freire (2018) further studied the effect of colonialism on the social practices of education. However, the author also included the ways of reciprocation by the oppressed. He critiqued the “Banking model of education” by mentioning that the students are like empty receptacles who are receptive to all kinds of knowledge and skills. The radical views in the education department are necessary for the fight against colonialism if the colonized students want to retain their identity. It is the process of dehumanization because students are no more treated as humans but as objects which portray the exact image of whatever they perceive. Such educational practices give rise to passive modes of education which engulf the curiosity of the students where they can’t raise questions about the knowledge that have been receiving (Freire, 2018).

Laura Bohannan (1966) in this regard, elaborated on her experience of reading Shakespeare in West Africa. As Shakespeare represented pure English literature, Laura, being an American was thought to be unable to grasp the true essence. However, the radical views in education advocate in the favour of universal human nature. Regardless of the cultural and ethnic differences, the ability of humans to relate to knowledge is essentially the same worldwide. The research highlights the importance of socio-cultural context in knowledge. Socio-cultural dynamics influence the thinking process of people. Language and learning are both the subsequent facets of socio-cultural factors. Knowledge is perceived depending upon the social setting of the people where culture further provides a view of the acceptable and unacceptable contexts. So, people belonging to different regions derive meaning in their specific way which varies from region to region. In such a way, every individual belonging to different background must be taught differently (Bohannan, 1966).

Before the ceasefire agreement, the Karen National Union (KNU) has been striving to keep its educational system separate from Burma and Thailand. As the Karen state is controlled by Myanmar, there are only a few chances for the Karen students to maintain their cultural identities. However, after the ceasefire agreement, the NLD government ordered to allocate special ethnic classes for ethnic children. Learning in their languages fosters their cultural identity (Lall & South, 2013). Such improvements reflect the impact of the agreement on the cultural identity of the Karen. However, the military coup’ nullified all the orders of the democratic government creating the same issues for ethnicities (Reuters, 2020). The Karen educational system isn't about learning only

but depicts an untiring struggle of the Karen people to keep their identity by promoting their cultural values and history (Cheesman, 2002).

2.2. Education, conflict and intersectionality

Ethnic conflicts arise due to differences of opinion and values leading to ethnic discrepancies in the socio-cultural environment. The whole world is under the influence of several conflicts based on religion, territory, or language. However, throughout human history, the stringent implications of the conflicts have been observed in the educational department. Post-conflict educational institutions suffer due to huge capital losses. Core (2009) argued in this regard by addressing the challenges of the ceasefire agreement in Myanmar. The agreement didn't effectively address the ethnic educational issues. The prominent cause for Karen struggle for freedom is the development of their own education system that would be effective enough in overcoming the language, culture, and curriculum barriers (Core, 2009).

The Nationwide Ceasefire Agreement of Myanmar focused on creating federalism and providing equal rights to ethnicities. For minimizing the chances of future conflicts, Chapter 6, item 25a (3) of the ceasefire agreement mentions, efforts to preserve and promote ethnic culture, language, and literature. The efforts coincide with the joint role of the government and EAOs in alleviating the ethnic issues. On the same grounds, Chapter 3, item 9 (h) of the ceasefire agreement suggests, avoiding restrictions on the right to education in accordance with the law; stopping destruction of schools and educational buildings, including educational tools; and to deal with the disturbance and hindrance of students and teachers. However, with time the ethnic conflicts are ongoing and educational access got limited due to the military coup of 2021 (Lall, 2020).

Joshee and Sihra (2009) studied the interrelationship of religion, language, cultural norms, and educational facilities in India. In line with her research, educational gaps are explained as a consequence of economic and social differences. The research identified huge gaps between theory and practice across the educational systems. Regarding Ogbu's cultural-ecological approach, the merged cultural system for ethnicities is devastating. However, countries like India are the future economic centers of the world where any educational changes would have a significant impact on

world dynamics. The educational sector in India is still developing and offers a diversity of cultural values. Post-independence legal policies of 1951, 1953, and 1966 have directed the country towards educational equality. Article 29 of the Protection of minority Interest signifies the principles of sovereignty and non-discrimination. Since Asian countries like India and Myanmar faced several conflicts through the course of history, their educational policies evolved with time. Implications of non-discriminatory laws, in this case, have the potential of fighting back the prevalent multiculturalism and homogenization (Joshee & Sihra, 2009).

The prominent educational issues in these regions are an economic and financial constraints. Sub-Saharan Africa implies low salaries for teachers leading to absenteeism; many teachers come to schools but don't take classes. Referring to the low-quality education, Lewin (2009) studied such problems in the Sub-Saharan African educational system. Several attempts have been made to lift the level of education which resulted in a gross enrollment rate of 97% but still, more than 32 million children are unable to attend schools (Lewin, 2009). The author further argued that country's development is always not consistent with the educational progression.

For Karen, the lack of educational institutions is not the major issue, but the quality of education is a matter of concern (KECD, 2021). The government views concerning the future trajectory of Karen education are extremely controversial. The recent military coup led to the destruction of several Karen schools. The government might increase the percentage of access to primary education, but the core approach needs to be focused on excellent learning outcomes (Mitschke et al, 2011). Considering this research, the enrollment rates appear as some students repeat classes with poor learning outcomes. Further, the rapid expansion has increased the number of institutions but the quality of education has been undermined (Lewin, 2009).

Civil wars impinge on the sustainability of the education model by giving rise to political tensions and economic burdens. Kipgen (2014) focused on establishing a flexible educational policy for Karen in the conflict-stricken region. Karen's students are experiencing multilingual educational practices. The root cause for this sociolinguistic issue is the inability of the educational department to merge several ethnicities and their culture. Ethnic issues that rose from conflicts seem to end up on conflicts too, the thwacks of which lie beyond the imagination (Kipgen, 2014). Skårås &

Breidlid (2016) related this issue to the educational framework of South Sudan. The region experienced the longest civil war between the northern and southern regions. It is also under the influence of political conflicts between different ethnicities and political groups.

On educational grounds, the curriculum of the regions isn't that rich to convey the history and values to students. The subject of History is based on vague descriptions depriving the students of their chances of connecting to their roots. Multiple languages have also been part of the curriculum creating linguistic ambiguity among the students. The major problem identified across Sudan was also the economic crisis leading to poorly paid jobs for the teachers. Another educational dilemma is based on the reluctance of teachers in sharing historical events with the students due to the impending fear of interethnic conflicts (Skårås & Breidlid, 2016).

Davies (2010) defined the complex nature of education and conflict. In her views, education has both significant involvements in either escalating or curbing the possibilities of conflicts. While determining the impact of violence on educational practices, Davies employed complexity theory. The theory urges on the complex mechanics of the systems where the outcome of one process might influence another process. Thus, systems don't solely function but the final activity of any system depends on the intricate factors. The analysis of these intricate units and a relationship between conflict and education is necessary for the departments like education to overcome the crisis.

Schooling is diversely related to promoting conflicts because education might idealize the concept of separatism and disempowerment. When such separatism perpetuates through the ethnicities, it creates chances of repression. Thus, victimization and repression in educational institutions go side by side. Referring to the Youth Preparedness Programme in Kosovo, the researcher delineates the concept of prevalent violence in schools. She argues that the students are prepared for dealing with violence, but a little effort has been observed in promoting cohesion. Moreover, the educational system also operates on punishment practices where the phenomenon of preventing conflicts gets completely evicted out of the system (Davies, 2004). A broader outlook of this interrelationship is contingent on the ways the impressionable minds of the students are treated. According to this research, separatist views must not be projected through ethnicities (Davies, 2004).

In conflict-stricken regions, the pedagogical approaches must be effective enough in controlling ethnic conflicts (Skårås & Breidlid, 2016). The researcher Paulson (2004) scrutinized the events associated with 25 years of conflicts ranging from 1990 to 2015. The data from 11 countries were collected which represented the ways of teaching History education in different regions. The analysis focuses on how history is taught in conflict-stricken regions. It was observed that students in many regions don't learn the events associated with conflicts via curriculum but through random ways of memorizing. Thus, the curriculum isn't found to be focused on disseminating conflict-related information. However, collective memory is the only means for learning such historical events (Paulson, 2004). Since there is no proper justification for the knowledge retained by the process of collective memory, the students often rely on vague images being inculcated into their minds. Further, it had also been found that history education can promote violent thoughts too by representing prejudicial views.

In many countries, however, history education is provided as a part of the curriculum but is exaggerated in terms of challenging ethnocentrism which hinders the approach of adopting it as an integral part of the curriculum. In this regard, Thawngmung (2013) identified such issues faced by Karen children. Karen children who got victimized during the war didn't even know why were they victimized and what were the reasons behind the conflict. If the educational system is to focus on homogenization only, then the curriculum would fail to impart the actual reasons for their struggle and sacrifices which will eliminate the major portion of their history for the later Karen generations (Thawngmung, 2013). Therefore, the research didn't focus on the question of whether or not history education is provided but on the core approach of how the latter should be provided (Paulson, 2015).

Intersectionality is the process of recognizing everyone's experience of discrimination. It agrees with the fact that everyone goes through different nature of isolationism. It occurs due to the differences in gender, class, and identity. However, it further emphasizes that the requirements for reforms of each group are different from the others. Providing equal resources can't solve the issues of every group. Amthor (2017) argues that in Myanmar, educational intersectionality might help the governments in understanding the specific demands of ethnic groups and finding a

solution for their educational issues. Davies (2017) introduced a concept of justice-sensitive education in this regard. Justice-sensitive education is the type of educational system which aims at alleviating the educational quality of conflict-stricken regions by minimizing the chances of recurrence. The research primarily focused on Sri Lanka and discussed several dimensions of transitional justice.

Education contributes directly towards the maintenance of transitional justice and eliminates intersectionality by providing a broader overview of the diverse culture, languages, and associated discrimination found at educational institutes. The researcher also provided solutions for maintaining transitional justice through a variety of organizational reforms. An alternative view of changing the curriculum was also presented to either evict the controversial events completely out of the curriculum or delivering it in a non-provocative manner (Davies, 2017). The appropriate pedagogical approaches can also be adopted for the ethnicities where their history might not be treated in a problematic way but delivered to them as their heritage while inculcating in them the acceptance of their rich culture and history. Such pedagogical approaches are found to be applicable in terms of preventing ethnocentric conflicts in educational institutions (Amthor, 2017).

Ethnic conflicts discourage high enrollment rates in schools. Education is considered to be a challenge to supremacy in the conflicts-stricken region. Lall & South (2013) argue that Tatmadaw is not in the favor of ethnic education in Myanmar in a fear that it will end up their rule in Myanmar. Before the ceasefire agreement, the cultural identity of ethnicities was at stake. Lewin (2009) pointed out the patterns of education in sub-Saharan African countries. Several ethnicities are found in these regions including Igbo, Hausa, Kanuri. Though economic issues are prominent in these regions, yet conflict resolution is among the major challenges these countries are going through. These ethnic groups are seriously disadvantaged leading to devastating ethnic conflicts in these regions. The research mainly focused on the 44 sub-Saharan countries and evaluated the educational dynamics by considering their percentage of access to education.

The ethnicities in conflicts-stricken regions suffer from unequal access to education. Increasing rates of illiteracy are ignored in such regions. Thus, the poor end up getting expelled from schools due to financial and political factors. The exact definition of access to education isn't only confined

to the high enrollment rates but also touches on the progressive future outcomes. Huge age gaps are observed in schools where both ethnic and other civilians learn. Enrollment rates are higher in the earlier grades but continued declining until only a few students reached college levels. Thus, the research called for amendments in the educational policies to ensure a universal education system that will be more focused on social justice (Lewin, 2009).

To ensure universal access to quality schooling, the educational model needs to be redesigned by the authorities. In line with Gilhooly and Lee's (2016) research, the Karen population reports that the Myanmar government seems to be unwilling in solving their educational issues. Smith (2009) argued on such educational issues being discussed in UNESCO's Global monitoring report of 2011. The research revolved around defining the relationship between conflict and education, side by side, emphasizing the obligation of DAC principles proposed by OECD (Organization of Economic Co-operation and Development). One of the DAC principles talks about evicting xenophobia across the educational system to create an across-the-board policy. A thorough conflict analysis thus provides a framework for assessing the impact of conflict on the quality of education.

The major impediment to educational access identified by Gilhooly and Lee (2016), is the lack of government interest in promoting education. The researchers also mentioned Article 29 of the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child (1989) that advocates gender equality and an acceptance of ethnic identities (OHCHR, 1989). However, the countries suffering from conflicts might have low educational rates primarily due to gender disparity and multiculturalism. The research, therefore, provides relevant solutions regarding conflict resolution. The most important of these is to eliminate controversy in national subjects, publishing textbooks in different ethnic languages, teacher empowerment, and producing skillful youth. Since the research rhetorically elaborates on youth involvement, the development of Myanmar also depends on the empowerment of Karen students (Smith, 2009).

Han (2000) argued on the Myanmar education issues and challenges. Schooling in conflict and post-conflict Myanmar's societies either escalates or prevents the likability of future conflicts. For ethnicities to maintain their cultural identity, schooling issues need to be resolved. King (2014) researched the impact of the Rwandan conflict on schooling. Rwanda experienced the brutal

genocide of history in 1994 where ethnic minorities were killed during the Rwandan civil war. Some political and social factors contributed to this conflict that engulfed about 800,000 lives. However, the significant factor of these is the Rwandan schooling system. A few schools fuel up the process of ethnic discrimination. It, therefore, emphasized identifying those areas of the education system which play their role in conflicts rather than generalizing the overall impact of education on conflict. There is a need to separate those types of educations that either charge conflicts or alleviate them (King, 2014).

Throughout history, minorities had a determining role in conflict resolution. The positive efforts of the governments in utilizing education as a tool towards fostering peaceful development must be acknowledged. (King, 2014). Above all the research focused on the core point of the duties of ethnicities regarding peace maintenance. NCA as a Myanmar conflict resolution policy document acknowledged the socio-cultural development of ethnicities imperative for peace development. By the ceasefire agreement, the EAOs and government determined to facilitate better outreach of education through preserving the culture, language, and literature, collaborating with international organizations for funding and removing resistance in the way of education (NCA, 2015). Though the ethnicities are sabotaged it is also their responsibility to eliminate the concept of discrimination through their classes and strive for positive development.

2.3. Power, equality and diversity

A multilingual education system gives an identity to different ethnicities but gets highly challenging for the authorities to effectively merge. The language issues in Myanmar are one of the challenges for the government in overcoming inequalities in autonomous Karen and government schools. Watkins et al, (2012) researched the language issues in Karen educational system. Being on the borderline of Burma and Thailand, their language is an amalgamation of the different languages spoken in these regions. But on the contrary, the Myanmar national language is solely Burmese, highlighting one of the major issues for the Myanmar government in merging different ethnicities (Watkins et al, 2012).

The Nationwide ceasefire agreement of Myanmar being a major political turn advocates equality ethnic rights to protect their culture and languages. Chapter 1, clause 1(d) of the agreement states, “Guarantee equal rights to all citizens who live within the Republic of the Union of Myanmar; no citizen shall be discriminated against on the basis of ethnicity, religion, culture, or gender” (NCA, 2015). Similarly, for effectively addressing the educational and power issues, chapter 3, item 9(h) explains, “Avoid restrictions on the right to education in accordance with the law; destruction of schools and educational buildings, including educational tools; and the disturbance and hindrance of students and teachers” (NCA, 2015). The agreement acknowledges education as a primary ethnic right. However, language issues in education are still prominent (Shiohata, 2019).

The governments, in this regard, seek to design effective language policies. Alidou (2009) studied the language policies in Francophone Africa. The French African countries are Madagascar, Mali, Senegal, and Cape Verde, etc. Around 80% of the French language in the world is spoken by Francophone Africa (Alidou, 2009). However, the governments of these countries are facing serious difficulties in keeping French as the national curriculum language. For instance, in Mali, the official language is French but only about 10% of the people properly understand French due to the diversity of the ethnicities in Francophone Africa. In this research, the primary focus was on Mali, Niger, and Burkina Faso. Since the region was under the influence of colonialism, the language issues have always remained prominent. Through colonialism, the French language has penetrated these regions.

Due to the lingual issues, the education system of several regions is dwindling and is suffering from huge illiteracy rates. Only in Mali, about 13 different languages while in Myanmar, more than 100 languages are spoken, raising serious concerns for the government to design an all-inclusive educational policy (Alidou, 2009). Language policies are designed while keeping in view the language of the dominant groups and to work for the development of a language for allowing people to identify their true identity and national goals. The term language is somehow also related to power as it represents dominance. The infrastructure of the countries suffers due to lingual issues (Alidou, 2009). Since language touches directly on the social and economic dimensions, the language policies must be focused on the ways the educational policy might get able to be successful on all grounds (Alidou, 2009).

The southern Myanmar minorities are facing both educational and economic segregation due to the segregation of power between southern and northern regions. Olivera and Silva (2009) pointed out such educational discrimination in Mexico. Mexico hosts several ethnicities including Otomo, Totonac, White, and Afro-Mexicans. Mexico has also remained under the influence of Ethnic conflicts. The adverse implications have been observed in Zapatista Movement. The movement was widely regarded as the joint effort of minority Indians to stand for their rights and their share in power and diversity. However, their core objective remained solely to be identified as a separate group with their own culture and values. On educational grounds, the Mexican government has ordered for establishing separate schools for them and recognizing their languages. Further, the government has also introduced the term “Mestizo” for representing ethnicities. The term broadly recognized them as Mexicans but also as the ones who had distinct American backgrounds. But the economic development is not uniform in Mexican regions. The southern region consists mostly of ethnicities. But the southern region is particularly less developed than the northern areas (Olivera and Silva, 2009).

Graves (2015) studies such discrepancies in Myanmar's educational system. Referring to the educational rates, the southern regions have low literacy rates than the northern regions. However, the government efforts in these regions need to be significant in making primary and secondary education compulsory in Myanmar. The influence of the Burmese curriculum on the Karen educational system is particularly high. It is always harder for them to learn in Burmese because Karen people find the Burmese educational system not non-specific for them and other ethnicities. Their struggle is not for power but for individuality. However, their struggle might be recognized in terms of solving their language issues at the institutes and providing financial support to them so that they might not quit on their education (Gravers, 2015).

The contemporary education systems follow two basic approaches of ethnocentrism and patriotism to disseminate ethnic and national practices to their students. For ethnicities in Myanmar, the inculcation of both these practices are favorable in eliminating the power differences in education (Steinberg, 1991). The researcher in this context reinforces the inclusion of famished groups like Karen in the nation-building process via education. The researcher concluded the research by

identifying huge gaps between the world's nation-building approaches and educational practices. It is the prominent segregational aspect of the global educational department. The political stance of ethnic groups is highly consistent with their strategic incentives and is made sure to not impinge on their essential values (Steinberg, 1991). Brown (2007) studied the educational dynamics of Malaysia. The research primarily focuses on the pre-university level and the development of national values through education for the students. The study encompasses the ethnic conflict of May 1969 commonly known as Sino-Malay sectarian violence. Sinos represented Chinese Malaysians marking their dominance as one of the largest ethnic groups of Malaysia. Malays belong to local Malaysian roots. The reciprocation by ethnic groups resulted in favorable economic policies where they got essentially recognized on the national level.

In the Myanmar educational system, the educational practices are highly influenced by political practices which might shape the future preferences of their generations. Lee (2012) identified that the Karen are striving for withholding their interests. It relates to the interrelationship of power and identity, where excessive use of political influence might sabotage their basic right to identity. It calls for solving the issue on national grounds that might not look for individual interest only but aids in protecting the ethnic identities and values of different groups (Lee, 2012). The research reports the concern of each ethnic group about the protection of their values and the selective dissemination. It is an alarming situation where inter-ethnic conflicts go beyond the national Myanmar interest and are reciprocating for the propagation of individual values rather than focusing on the collective gains (Brown, 2007).

Citizen education is required for the ethnicities to stand against unjust use of power and advocate equality. It aids the suffering citizens in working together and getting united for the common cause. Referring to it, South Africa remained under the influence of Apartheid for many years that penetrated segregation in the education system. Hammet & Staeheli (2013) studied the history of long-term racial discrimination in South Africa. The legislation used to practice discriminatory practices against non-white citizens until 1994. The democratic transition thus opened the doors for equal social opportunities for the dark South Africans to embrace better educational opportunities. However, the acceptance of it had never been easy. Teachers across South Africa were advised to adopt non-coercive and non-discriminatory educational practices. However, the

revolutionary shift in policies brought by ethnic groups challenged the societal supremacy of many groups where they had to provide equal opportunities for growth to all citizens. The researchers, however, identified several limiting factors in this context. The major limiting factor is poverty which hinders the smooth processing of compendious policies in segregational regions (Hammett & Staeheli, 2013).

Years of segregation create a natural psychological gap among the students in ethnic conflicts regions. They find it difficult to communicate directly regarding the implications of disparity. It takes several years for authorities to eliminate differences in the educational sector due to the lack of financial support. However, the authors also emphasize the idea that educational transition isn't just fostered by developing a sound infrastructure, but it encompasses several socio-economic, political, and cultural issues which needed to be resolve to ensure collective homogenization. It is thus a development of active citizenship by absorbing social and cultural values and then implementing them on political grounds to identify the collective responses concerning the successful application of the policies (Hammett & Staeheli, 2013).

Ethnic conflicts destroy the concept of collective goals in regions by promoting educational inequalities. The institutions become weak in this regard. Recent ethnic conflicts in Indonesia are dissolving the core concept of the *Musyawah Mufakat* institution. Kuipers & Yulaleawati (2009) examined the effect of institutions on the educational sector of Indonesia. In Indonesian society, there is a strong influence of institutions in determining Indonesian identity. Among different institutions, *Musyawah Mufakat* is of primary importance which is considered particularly significant in establishing the relation of religion with Indonesian civilization. The Indonesian culture emphasizes resolving conflicts through mutual discussions which always end up in peace. Indonesia is under the influence of several ethnic conflicts since the 1990s. Primarily the ethnic conflicts in Mulloco and Poso changed the political dynamics of Indonesia. Indonesia is the home to more than 300 ethnic minority groups which is the subsequent cause of highly recurrent disputes (Kuipers & Yulaelawati, 2009).

In Karen educational system, the causes for conflicts are not novel. They have become pervasive for decades that had pushed people to finally demand their rights. In this context also the role of

schooling is very important in removing racial differences among the students and creating an environment of mutual harmony to satisfy the goals of collective development (Farrelly, 2014). Many territorial regions in the world focus on taking revenge which damages their reconciliatory identity. Further, there isn't legal enforcement in these regions. At this point in history, the researchers related education to political dynamics. In schools, the negative aspect of education is more prominent. These core causes of conflicts have been transferring from generation to generation. The research thus mentions that schools, in particular, must play their role in eliminating negative and outrageous thoughts through the local population. Moreover, the local population must also contribute towards law enforcement in conflict-stricken societies (Kuipers & Yulaelawati, 2009).

Majority groups enjoy better education opportunities than minority groups. In Myanmar, these minority groups make up one-third of the population but many of these are not recognized in the country and suffer segregationally educational practices. ("Myanmar/Burma | World Directory of Minorities & Indigenous Peoples", 2020). Postiglioni (2009) researched the educational patterns of ethnic minorities in China. In China, there are several ethnic minorities including Uyghurs, Zhuang, and Qiang people. Of these, Han minority groups are found in large numbers. Major ethnicities in the People's Republic of China adhere to Taoism, Buddhism, and Islam religion. Since the origin of these religions is essentially different, ethnicities differ in a large context in China. However, of all the minority groups the quality of the Han educational system is particularly high. There exists a significant level of the gap among the educational quality of these groups. However, since the 1950s the Chinese educational system is based on a dual education system. It not only provides academic values but fosters the Chinese concept of manpower by providing vocational education. Nevertheless, the core concept of the educational system is based on equality which gets compromised in the case of 56 different ethnic minority groups (Postiglioni, 2009).

Communication difficulties introduce gaps in the ethnic educational system that weakens their struggle against educational disparity. The prominent factor is the lack of literature in ethnic languages and the lack of communication between ethnic minorities and teachers. Harper (2017) identified the educational issues of Karen students. A few of them are being taught in the open sky where stationary types of equipment are also being manufactured on a local level. However, the

promising dimension is the availability of Karen teachers who travel long distances to teach their students. Efforts like these are sufficient in eliminating the communication gaps and raising the standard of education (Harper, 2017). Apart from the fact that the system focuses on providing separate teachers for the ethnic minorities, these teachers aren't properly oriented to the demands of the local population. Another dimension is the lack of proper technology for ethnic educational institutes. The research emphasizes the pre-requisite of equal chances for growth which could be met only by promoting ethnicities equal with majority citizens (Postiglione, 2009).

The basic human right to education is ignored by the power dynamics where the quality of education is determined by the amount of money spent on the procedure. Unterhalter (2015) played an important role in assessing the inequalities in education. Education for all is a broader concept. Still, it fails to be served by the compendious policies in eliminating racial and status differences. Since ethnic minorities are among the disadvantaged groups, these concepts of power and identity sabotage their basic right to education. The researcher related education to development. Educational equity isn't associated with higher enrollment rates but is further related to equal educational treatment and equal opportunities for success. Across the globe, the levels of education are higher in Europe and Asia, while Sub-Saharan African countries have the lowest levels of education. Similarly, the levels of education in Karen schools are lower than that of Myanmar schools (Shiohata, 2019). In those regions that suffer from low educational rates, the chances for development are also minimal (Unterhalter, 2015).

Better educational opportunities increase per capita income side by side promoting economic development. The basic factors identified in promoting educational inequalities are natural disasters, gender disparity, cultural norms, poverty, unemployment, political intervention, socio-economic conditions, religions, and ethnic discrimination. Another limitation identified is the stagnant curriculum because the educational demands of the past might not be consistent with future demands which eliminate the chances for both social and economic development (Unterhalter, 2015). The Nationwide ceasefire agreement of Myanmar, however, addressed the solutions to these limitations and included the preservation of ethnic culture, language, literature, and socio-economic development as the prominent future tasks (NCA, 2015). The role of NGOs,

EAOs, and governments is prominent in peace building and lifting the quality of education in conflict-stricken regions (Thawngmung, 2017).

2.4. Education, cultural identity and substantiable development

The term culture in a broader way encompasses all the socially acceptable practices that transfer through generations. The process of culturalization is not stagnant. It is influenced by the public responses to different practices. Whatever gets accepted becomes part of existing values. However, what goes against the acceptable framework of society gets evicted out completely. Culture is the by-product of coordination and cohesion. People from different backgrounds meet, adopt and influence each other's values. Thus, the process of enculturation continues. Since the process of education also depends on the shared experiences of learning, it plays an important role in the transmission of different cultural values (Franke & Nadler, 2008).

Sustainable development corresponds to finding long-term means for development. Education serves as a tool for sustainable development. Myanmar's nationwide ceasefire agreement through its chapter 6, clause 25a (3) elaborates on the responsibility of government and EAOs in the development and peace process as "Efforts to preserve and promote ethnic culture, language, and literature" (NCA, 2015). The recent political resettlement in Myanmar, however, affected the process of sustainable development in both Myanmar and Karen resistance areas. The 2021 coup' led to the students' killings and destruction of schools in Karen areas making it difficult for them to ensure the process of sustainable development. Institutions, thus, play a determining role in satisfying the collective development goals by providing an analysis of the past and designing the future goals of students (Reuters, 2021). Education and culture are both interdependent. Educational institutions provide a chance for people to meet while culture determines what particular educational values be promoted in the institutes.

As the culture of different areas differs to a large extent, the educational practices also differ in different regions. High-quality education fostered by positive cultural values leads to better sustainable development where individuals being receptive to their encouraging environment grow

mentally and physically (Franke & Nadler, 2008). In this context, Andersan and Kumari (2009) studied the process of improvement of schools in bringing together the collective development goals. The research primarily focuses on the school improvement in Pakistan directed towards a secondary school. School improvement directly coincides with improving the quality of education by introducing better pedagogical approaches that effectively address the need for better quality education in Myanmar.

School improvement is a considerable issue for Karen to achieve their sustainable development goals (Watkins et al., 2012). It depends on effective communication between state government and ethnic groups' leaders. Andersan and Kumari (2009) extended the scope of the research by including both government and private secondary schools. They presented an important view that improvement in schools doesn't come immediately. However, it is a long process of professional discourse between teachers seeking to identify the problem issues and then striving for institutional improvement. The basic factors involved during the school improvement are effective leadership practices, increasing awareness among teachers, and succinctly focusing on the improvement of infrastructure to support sustainable development goals (Anderson & Kumari, 2009). The research conducted by Watkins et al, (2012) identified similar socio-political limitation factors in the Karen educational system. The improvement in the Karen schools might also be brought by removing the cultural and communication gaps among the leaders, teachers, and students (Watkins et al., 2012).

Western epistemology limits the chances for sustainable development by inculcating west-oriented values (Breidlid, 2012). Western epistemology in education is a dimension of colonialism as it demands the development of western ideologies only. Due to the stringent effects of colonialism, the students in colonized regions like Burma have to follow their curriculum. Breidlid (2012) focuses on different aspects of Western epistemology. Western epistemology follows two core approaches of rationalism and empiricism. The research further highlights the role of different discourses in educational practices. Rationalism coincides with the reasoning skills of humans while empiricism focuses on the experience (learning through observation). The research is directed towards the effects of these aspects of Western epistemology on global educational patterns. Based on the studies conducted in Cuba, Chile, South Sudan, and South Africa, the

researcher identified western epistemology as the major problem in educational institutes. Due to the stringent effects of colonialism, the students in these regions have to follow their curriculum. Further, language issues are also prominent in such regions (Bredlid, 2012).

Colonialism and western epistemology cause unsustainable development, as they suppress the identities of students. Students can't contribute towards development in such an ambiguous curriculum that goes against their own identities. In such a way, colonialism in Myanmar is preventing the sustainable development of the Karen ethnicity. Fighting colonialism in education is a primary way for them to maintain their cultural identity (Lall & South, 2013). Nevertheless, the educational parameters are affected by the types of different discourses including political, and religious discourses. The primary method of delivering the knowledge thus determines the effects of such knowledge retained by the students. If there would be a significant influence on the Western discourse, the development of the identity of the indigenous population would be under its strong influence. Another research finds these problems to be consistent with the Karen educational system also, where the prevalent influence of Burmese culture affects the identity of Karen students (Lall & South, 2013). In addition to the educational dilemma of Western influence, Bredlid (2012) also related education with sustainable development by focusing on the provision of bits of knowledge like land management techniques, use of solar energy, creating renewable energy sources, and water management for satisfying sustainable development goals (Bredlid, 2012).

According to the global agenda of the World Declaration, better education quality is a prerequisite for the protection of both the culture and environment. Carm (2013) related the concepts of Education for all (EFA) and Education for sustainable development (ESD) by considering the exigent aspects of barriers in the way of education. The Myanmar government also signed EFA agreements but still, educational inequalities remained prominent in the region (Lall, 2020). The research further elaborates on the requirement of innovative educational practices and sustainable educational policies for meeting the learning outcomes of the ethnic populations. Based on the involvement of education in development, it is broadly recognized beyond the basic human right to get educated where it not only promotes the personal development of the individual but also the social advancement. However, this research approach went beyond the context of formal education

and focused on innovative expansive learning to meet the goals of both education and development. Programs like Education for sustainable development (ESD) provide future directions for policy makers to design effective policy for disadvantaged groups like ethnicities (Carm, 2013).

Expansive learning provides both professional skills and knowledge by providing both formal and non-formal education. Mitschke et al, (2011) identified such learning needs of Karen students where professional skills were found to be highly determining in their sustainable socio-economic development. Carm (2013) identified this non-formal education as a potent way of attracting the learners towards socio-cultural development. The research also provides several approaches to achieve expansive learning goals by providing students life skills, by designing integrated school-pupil based income activities like growing a garden, earning a livelihood, and then providing a portion of it to the development of the school, by involving not only the students but also the communities in the development projects, and by providing financial assistance to economically disadvantaged students. These approaches enhanced the active participation of the learners in the test population of the research (Carm, 2013).

Cuba has high literacy rates than any other North American country due to effective educational policies. Carnoy (2007) explained the academic advantage of Cuba by referring to the 1997's UNESCO study. The study focused on taking maths and language tests of third and fourth-grade students in different Latin American countries. However, Cuban students outperformed many well-developed states like Florida. Further, the less developed schools within Cuba showed better results than the elite class schools. The researcher identified many promising factors by researching Cuba, Brazil, and Chile. Of these, the major ones were the dedicated staff, school environment, and high attendance by the students. There is an important role of school management in not only setting high academic expectations but also making students capable of achieving these. Further, the schools primarily focus on the healthy development of the students by fostering sound mental growth and character building. This is the reason ethnic schools need to adopt these practices for achieving high learning outcomes (Carnoy, 2007).

Schools conflict between civilians and ethnicities in Myanmar are prominent that emphasize the establishment of effective school policies. In this regard, the Cuban government, though going through similar issues, is also playing an important role in reinforcing high academic values. The government focuses on strict law enforcement. If a few of the students don't have access to better educational facilities, the government ensures to provide them books and other items on their doorsteps. Strict action is taken against promoting violence among students. The government provides more facilities to economically disadvantaged students rather than upper-middle-class children. The teachers in Cuba not only take Maths tests of their students but also focus on healthy discussions among students leading them to outperform others. The research also proposed an important question for authorities that good teachers promote high levels of learning but how could they overcome such low numbers of good teachers. The research rhetorically focuses on the teachers' training to contribute towards the development of economically suffering Latin American countries (Carnoy, 2007).

Political intervention hinders the smooth process of learning. Coleman and Early (2005) consider the cultural dynamics of education along with the importance of effective leadership during times of ethnic conflict. The core concept of their research revolves around school improvement and the impact of political clout on assessing the progress in education. The research primarily focuses on England, Pakistan, and Macedonia. Concerning the leadership practices, the principles of an educational institute, set by the leaders are highly dependent on cultural norms. However, certain limitations to this exercise of power have also been identified. In line with this research, leadership needs to be consistent with adopting a flexible and effective approach. Over-exercise of power in this regard limits the learning and teaching experience of students and teachers due to the absence of an inclusive organizational network (Coleman & Earley, 2005).

Educational institutes contribute towards cultural diversity. This cultural diversity is the product of different groups of people and students belonging to different cultural backgrounds and playing their role in homogenization. The NCA agreement of Myanmar involved a specific dimension of culture preservation in which the efforts would be made for preserving the cultural identity of ethnic groups (NCA, 2015). However, in terms of cultural diversity, Coleman & Earley (2005) argue the importance of effective leadership. Throughout human history, cultural differences have

led to conflicts due to a difference in opinion. In the school's environment, effective leadership has to curb ethnic differences. The phenomenon varies in different regions which become highly challenging for leadership because in countries like the UK, and USA individualism is supported, however, in Pakistan, Myanmar, and China for instance collectivism is supported. In this regard, the process of merging different ethnicities and groups in schools becomes highly difficult for the governments to tackle (Coleman & Earley, 2005).

Neoliberalism is the agent for change in educational policies. Neo-liberalism sabotages the right to equal education in Karen society and affects the cultural identity of individuals. Loong (2009) identified the interrelationship of education, culture, and sustainable development in the Karen context. The process of transformation is contingent on the Burmese effect on the educational dynamics. The research serves as an extension of the already mentioned effect of neoliberalism on sustainable development. Referring to the 20,000 migrants at the Thai border, the children don't have access to educational opportunities despite the integration of the "border social system". However, the complex political situation has been declining the financial support for them. Neoliberalism allows these migrants to enter as laborers into the community and have access to all the social services including education. However, due to this system, those children who don't enter the labor market can't have access to the educational facilities provided by the border social system (Loong, 2019).

Neo-liberalism focuses on a close association between the community members. Depending on the neo-liberal economic system, the communities and organizations involved in the border social system take integrated action. But due to the increased political tension, the Western countries have been withdrawing their support from the border social system. The situation is posing economic pressure on the parents who already are suffering from stringent economic issues. This economic pressure, in turn, compels the parents to take their children out of school. The research explains these socio-economic dynamics as a leading cause for the sustainable development of the Karen community. In line with this research, those who don't have access to education, can't fight against neoliberal chains to pursue their future towards sustainable development (Loong, 2019).

Connell (2011) researched the effect of neoliberalism on gender and knowledge by analyzing equality in these domains. Since neoliberalism focuses on the integrated interests of the nations, it plays an important role in globalization. Despite several advantages of neoliberalism on political and economic grounds, the ideology hasn't succeeded in promoting justice in society particularly in the educational department. The research focuses on the potential effects of negative influence on gender disparity. Despite an era of neoliberalism, women are not allowed to continue education. The researcher argues that there have been significant efforts in establishing equal educational policies for both men and women, but still these policies haven't remained successful in eliminating gender inequalities in educational institutes. In the Karen context, the female enrollment rates are also lower. Promoting only the male segment of the population can't satisfy the sustainable development goals (Lall & South, 2013).

The neoliberal educational agenda is centered on promoting ruling class ideologies. However, these ideologies are non-universal because they do not apply to students of different social grounds. In this way, it promotes inequalities in knowledge. The researcher in the chapter *Good Teachers on Dangerous Ground*, mentions the negative effect of neoliberalism on teaching practices. Since neoliberalism focuses more on economic dimensions, the teaching practices according to this research in many countries like the United Kingdom have been affected adversely. The neo-liberal theory generally focuses on personal advancement while undermining the role of teachers in eliminating the personal skills gap (Connell, 2011).

Comparative education analyzes the types of different educational systems. Cowen (2009) researched several dimensions of comparative education. The research identifies the effect of the shift in different educational policies. The transfer in educational practices occurs due to the migration of the people, the development of globally influenced educational institutes, the orientation with the basic right of education, and a struggle for aligning the educational practices with the specific values and principles. The shift in educational policies of Myanmar mainly occurs due to global influence and forced movement of people resulting in the transfer of the cultural values which also get inculcated as the educational values. However, the transformation never remained favorable for ethnicities as their diverse cultural values are at stake (Arar et al., 2019). The researcher refers to these processes as transfer, translation, and transformation. The research

further relates these processes to the transformation of Luthianian educational practices. Transformation in Luthiania primarily occurred due to the strong influence of Canada, Belgium, and Australia. People migrated from these areas and eventually the educational system of Luthiania transformed completely. There is a significant role of such transformation in education, culture, and sustainable development of ethnicities forcibly migrating to nearby areas (Cowen, 2009).

Referring to UNESCO's 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, educational practices play an important role in achieving sustainable development. UNESCO's agenda focuses on adding courses like climate change, and biodiversity to resolve environmental challenges. Since collective development depends on sustainable resources, the exhaustion of these resources impacts significantly the circumstances in which the individual development operates. Depending on the integrated channels of development, the development of one region depends directly or indirectly on the development of another region ("Sustainable Development Goals - Resources for educators", n.d.). However, in the Karen conflict, there is also a conflict of resources, where Tatmadaw wants to occupy resource-rich areas causing inequalities and disturbing sustainable development (Lall & South, 2013). The role of education is prominent in such areas as it enhances the awareness in working constructively and collectively towards the protection of the environment as there are limited resources for sustainability in conflict-stricken regions.

UNESCO's sustainable development goals serve as benchmarks for the governments like Myanmar in determining the sustainable future trajectories of ethnicities like Karen. These goals are contingent on three core principles of economic development, social growth, and environmental protection that can be only achieved by promoting quality education. Depending on the sustainable development goals, educational development allows the active engagement of people with organizations. UNESCO's goals are primarily focused on primary and secondary levels of education. At these levels, the children communicate with each other and effectively play their role in problem-solving. These skills prepare students to solve environmental issues and play their roles in sustainable development. These sustainable goals in a broader way are directed towards the alleviation of poverty, improving the health care sector, creating renewable energy sources, promoting gender equality, and providing quality education equally to all the students

irrespective of the region and ethnicities they belong to ("Sustainable Development Goals - Resources for educators", n.d.).

The development and progress of nations are contingent on education. Concerning the World Bank's Education strategy for 2020, the basic human right for education was proposed by the Universal Declaration of Human rights and the United Nations Convention on the rights of the child. There are three dimensions of this strategy including mental growth, sustainable development, and alleviating poverty. Economic development depends on the level of schooling as it increases the chances for better employment. In line with this research, a one percent improvement in the performance of students in Maths tests is associated with a 2 percent growth of GDP that highlights the role of education in promoting development in suffering regions like Myanmar where the level of education is too low (Shiohata, 2019). The study reinforces the importance of skills development in the economic, socio-cultural growth, and sustainable development of all segments of the countries irrespective of the regional and cultural differences ("World Bank Learning for All", 2011). In this regard, Myanmar's ceasefire agreement involved several dimensions for ensuring the socio-economic development of ethnicities in the health and education sectors. However, the agreement hasn't been properly implemented that mark the ongoing conflicts in the region (Lall & South, 2016)

2.5. Education and transformation: A review of educational reforms and management initiatives

The way a student performs in a society is determined by the type of schooling he is going through. Since the Karen education system is struggling to maintain its identity, the processes of effective policy designing, and leadership are highly imperative. These strategies are essential for Karen in maintaining their cultural identity through education (Arar et al., 2019). Viviane (2010) studied the challenges of instructional leadership. Instructional leadership involves the school management practices followed by school principals in drawing out suitable policies in curriculum development. The research not only emphasizes the importance of instructional leadership but also assesses the impact of politics and the local population on it. While assessing the impact of instructional leadership, the research identified that students are three to four times more likely to

achieve their goals if they have an instructional leader rather than a transformational leader (Robinson, 2010).

Myanmar's Nationwide ceasefire agreement aimed at changing the direction of the Burmese education system and bringing transformation in Myanmar's education system. Chapter 1, clause "d" states, "Guarantee equal rights to all citizens who live within the Republic of the Union of Myanmar; no citizen shall be discriminated against on the basis of ethnicity, religion, culture, or gender" (NCA, 2015). It further establishes that government and EAOs must work in collaboration to ensure equal educational access and provide all opportunities to groups for their development. It is one of the impacts of NCA on the ethnic education system. The principle "a" states, "Provide necessary support in coordination with each other to improve livelihoods, health, education, and regional development for the people". It is closely related to the sustainable development goal of providing equal educational opportunities to all groups. However, before the agreement, equal educational access was not possible for ethnicities including Karen (Lall, 2020)

Robinson (2010) in this regard concludes that instructional leadership is more crucial in schools than transformational leadership. The research validates the phenomenon that schooling is a crucial part of children's lives, in which they need to be guided properly rather than leaving them on their own. It highlights the comparative advantage of instructional leadership. The research provides an analysis of the capabilities of an effective instructional leader that he should be well-informed of his responsibilities, must play his role in creating compatible educational policies with the highest learning outcomes of students, to be an excellent problem solver of both the teachers and students' issues and finally the one on which society can rely for nation-building. The findings of this research are contingent on how knowledge should be achieved and how should it be applied in suffering ethnic communities (Robinson, 2010).

The cross-border transmission allows the transmission of educational values. Steiner- Khamisi (2014) studied the cross-border transfer of educational policies. The core approach of the research follows two basic processes of reception and translation. It lies consistent with the process of acceptance of policies by an area and then interpreting these while applying the same to its educational system. The agents for the transmission of policies identified in this research are the

cultural, political, and economic factors. The process of reception differs from region to region because whatever meets the demands of one region might not be consistent with the problems of the other. However, it continues to adopt all the excellent practices to improve the educational framework (Steiner-Khamsi, 2014). These approaches of reception and translation highlight the ways Burmese education penetrated the Karen resistance area (Arar et al., 2019).

Resistance to change limits the process of cross-border transfer of educational values. As ethnicities are under the influence of colonialism, resistance to change for them is highly difficult. They can't maintain their unique identity in such a case. The research elaborates on the behavioral practices where a resistance to learn prevents the transfer of suitable educational policies. The researcher refers to the examples of Finland, Singapore, and Shanghai where cultural differences hinder the process of transfer. Finland is thought to be focused on a few of the cultural norms only, Singapore is considered to be more focused on privatization, and Shanghai draws more towards globalization. These different factors check the cross-border transfer of educational values among these regions. Such behavioral and institutional practices make this process stagnant where the issues that demand immediate problem solving are put to a halt (Steiner-Khamsi, 2014).

The implications of civil wars demand a policy shift in education. Takala (2009) focused on the educational policies of Mozambique. The country lies in East Africa and is suffering from the severe implications of civil war. The civil war threw the country into the list of poorest countries. The researcher focuses on the policy shift of Mozambique development cooperation and its effect on both the educational and health sector. The Education Sector Development Program (ESDP) of the country is criticized to be more applicable to the developing countries rather than being focused on the local and grave issues of the country's educational department. The process touches on the significance of effective educational policy development for the Myanmar government. The program developed without the proper contribution of stakeholders redresses the implementation of policies no matter how much they are effective (Takala, 2009).

To make policy more relevant on small scales, the development programs have been transformed into a Sector-Wide Approach (SWAp). The approach establishes an integrated system where the stakeholder and governments of different regions sought to solve educational issues. The approach

is highly effective because it aids both the receiver and helper. Developing countries like Myanmar through this method can solve their financial issues by promoting education. Due to its effectiveness, the researcher considers SWAp as the logical and literal solution for increasing the level of education in under-developed countries (Takala, 2009).

Educational policies provide a legal framework for establishing a general set of principles to be consistent with the demands and values of the region. Haddad and Demsky, (1995) analyzed the process of policymaking in different countries. The author collected data from different regions of the globe including Thailand, Peru, Jordan, and Burkina Faso. Referring to the educational policy of Thailand Karen camps also, instructional reform policy is broadly applied at their secondary school levels (Lall & South, 2013). The policy targets nine different areas of establishing principles, to reinforce the responsibility of the state and parents in providing effective education, to establish a universal right to education, to transform the infrastructure of education, and others including innovation and technology in education. Considering Peru, the biggest challenge for the policymakers is providing equal access to education. Further, poverty and low quality of education are differentially exigent for authorities to handle (Haddad & Demsky, 1995).

Educational policies change due to the three basic processes of transfer, translation, and transformation. Cowen (2009) referred to educational transformation as the process of shapeshifting. The research argues that the process of transformation is not straightforward and isn't simply inclined towards sharing a method or technique with others but is highly influenced by series of limitations. While referring to the term "shapeshifting", the researcher argues that there is no proper definition for the term on educational grounds. The research, however, associates the process of translation with shapeshifting because it is the explanation of the educational idea defining its relevance with the current dynamics and inciting others to adopt it finally resulting in policy change or shapeshifting. In this context, the researcher refers to the example of the effect of postcolonialism as a manifestation of the process of transformation and shapeshifting. Colonialism affected the educational practices of the colonized including Egypt, Korea, Myanmar, and Brazil as a result of the impacts of the British, Japanese, Burmese, and Portuguese (Cowin, 2009).

The transformation in Karen educational system is the product of pre-colonialism. Concerning the transformation of education, Lall and South (2013) studied the Burmese influence on the Karen educational system. However, the research acknowledges the role of the Karen National Union (KNU) in establishing an educational system of 1000 schools that solely operates on the Karen language. It analyzes the effective role of educational policies in this context, as Karen educational system is still growing but the graduates of these schools are unable to speak Burmese. Though it plays an important role in reinforcing ethnic identity when students have to continue tertiary levels of education in Burmese institutes, it becomes a problem for them to homogenize in the system. However, the research emphasizes constructively utilizing this transformation and focuses on teaching students Burmese at the Middle school level. In this way, not only Karen students will go through the smooth process of transformation but it will also prepare them for tertiary level education (Lall & South, 2013).

Leadership plays an important role in solving educational issues by designing appropriate educational policies. Arar et al, (2019) analyzed the role of leadership in the education of the suffering communities including the Karen. The research primarily focuses on the Karen refugees and their difficulties. Karen community went through a long history of political and ethnic conflict which left them both socially and economically disadvantaged. During these times, the task of lifting the level of education is highly challenging for the authorities. The leadership of the schools finds it extremely difficult to select an appropriate place, hire trained staff, and financially support those in their education who already belong to a sufferer background. The research mentions the significant role of leaders and teachers in promoting children at their early levels of education. According to this research, It is extremely necessary to promote children as the rates of enrollment in secondary education in these regions are very low (Arar et al., 2019). The nationwide ceasefire agreement in 2015 in its reflection addresses the joint responsibility of government and EAOs in bringing educational reforms through ethnic culture, language, and literature preservation in Myanmar (NCA, 2015). However, the recent political landscape in the form of a potential military role affected the effective implementation of the agreement (South, 2017).

Chapter III - Theoretical Framework and Research Methodology

3.1. Theoretical Framework

This chapter aims at elaborating on the Karen educational issues by using a diverse theoretical analysis. ‘Pedagogy of the oppressed’ adopted from Freire (2018) and “decolonizing the minds” from Thiong’o (1986) in this regard provide a theoretical setting for depicting the struggle of Karen ethnicity in maintaining their cultural identity. The theories address the issues of Karen students in an era of a military coup and post-colonization. The five major aspects of social justice arguably explain the rights of Karen’s students and discrepancies in the Myanmar education system. Autoethnography approach in this regard contributed towards quoting challenges of Karen students in their struggle for education. Finally, “two faces of education” adopted from the UNICEF report has been used for arguing on the national government views about Karen education and its future trajectory.

3.1.1 Pedagogy of oppressed

The process of learning corresponds to the acquisition of new knowledge and skills resulting in the ability to understand the functionality of the external environment and behaviors. Though learning refers to the reception of new knowledge, the learning patterns are extremely diverse. They differ greatly depending on the psychological and social framework of individuals. An individual’s learning skills also get affected by his social environment. Referring to it, the processes of colonialism not only affect the external environment of colonized but also their psychological makeup and behavioral patterns. In this way, the learning processes of the colonized are completely different from the colonizers that in turn demand separate and diverse pedagogical approaches (Rizvi et al., 2006).

The traditional pedagogical approaches were based on the banking model of education in the 1960s and 1970s. Freire (2018) criticized this model because education in the 1960s transformed humans into objects. After all, with every new level of education, the students used to learn the same knowledge but in different ways. The mental growth of students was limited as they were not allowed to think and raise questions beyond what they were taught already. Following this model, the students were considered empty receptacles to be filled with any kind of knowledge they were provided. The same model applies to the present-day mode of education. It corresponds to highly impressionable minds of students that are receptive to any new piece of knowledge as a result of observation and experience. On contrary, the pedagogical approaches must be directed towards including students in the learning process, so that the learning might not be based on cramming only but on the psychological development of students. Freire (2018) criticizes this approach to education. He refers to his own experience where students belonging to the colonized nations are afraid of the changing world and hence, they don't stand against the oppression. However, to fight against colonialism, such radical views in education are extremely essential (Freire, 2018).

Education is necessary for humans to identify with their roots and their true identity (Idris et al., 2012). However, colonialism disrupts this process of identification through its imposed sets of values. Since students are demanded to learn the imposed knowledge, they can't identify their background and history. Colonialism in other terms is the process of dehumanization. It transforms the humans into puppets responding only to the colonized. However, the oppressed can't control dehumanization by becoming the oppressors (Adams et al., 2018). The colonized nations have to learn the curriculum provided by the colonizer, their educational development stops as it is completely deprived of their own historical events and sacrifices. They grow like machines and respond only to the chosen signals where their ability to think is completely masked by the imposed principles (David & Okazaki, 2006). They can only achieve back their core concept of humanization by learning what a human is. The goal is to not create radical and inhumane creatures but those who are aware of their identity which can only be served by the true pedagogical approaches (Freire, 2018).

Freire (2019) recognizes education as a practice of freedom. The key features of his approach are critical dialogue, plan of action, problem posing, and solution posing. Some of the key concepts

outlined by Freire are codification, conscientization, generative themes, banking model, and praxis, etc. His praxis (action/reflection) approach is particularly more relevant in the context of minorities where they should unite and try to understand their social reality. Depending upon that reality they should reflect upon it and try to change their reality (Glass, 2001).

The pedagogical approaches, according to Freire (2018), are not effective as they revolve around two passive agents. These theories focus on teachers narrating details only which students learn and memorize later on. The process of education gets completed but with no considerable individual and collective gains. Such pedagogical practices don't prepare students in their fight for their rights and freedom. They learn whatever is delivered to them only. In the Karen context, students learn only imposed curriculum that is completely different from their own values (Oh et al., 2019). Freire (2018) criticizes such an approach as a form of oppression in which one actor knows everything but the other one is only allowed to earn the selective knowledge. Students are not allowed to ask questions and learn whatever is being taught to them. This pedagogical model needs to be replaced by the problem-posing model.

The problem-posing model is based on the mutual discourse between the teachers and students. In such a pedagogical approach, students discuss knowledge with their teachers. It opens more chances for learning due to the transfer of ideas. This type of model is essential for a real-world analysis in which students are appreciated in discussing their views. Such a pedagogical approach is essential in teaching the oppressed and colonized. It can eliminate their fear of change. While engaging in meaningful discourse, they would be able to assess their future direction. It will impart in them an urge for change and standing firm by their values rather than building up their minds for receiving the imposed knowledge (Freire, 2018).

The use of effective language is extremely essential for rectifying the pedagogical approaches. Freire (2018) emphasizes the importance of words. Words must portray both action and reflection. In this regard, the words must be effective enough to portray the present situation along with the prospects. Dialogue is an impression of someone that how they perceive the world and what are their views regarding its functionality. Since education plays an important role in shaping students' perception of the world and history, effective educational dialogue is of prime importance. Thus, the language used in education must be consistent with the receiving power of students. It must

give rise to thematic investigation in them which is an ability to gather ideas from different periods of history and critically analyze these to become an efficient problem solver. In this regard, the teachers and students must work collectively to identify the problems associated with their past and present and seek to solve these (Freire, 2018).

Human activities depict both theory and practice. According to Freire (2018), Humans need to strive for the transformation of the world that is their practice which must be supported by the theory. Revolution in any field can't be achieved merely by verbalism or activism, but it can be achieved by the human practices of action and reflection. For the transformation against colonialism, there must be effective coordination between the leaders and the oppressed. Leaders must not only order the oppressed but work in close association with them to achieve a common goal. Otherwise, the phenomenon of collaborative revolution would get replaced by domination, through which the transformation can't be achieved (Freire, 2018).

The concept serves as a theoretical basis for the transformation in the Karen education system. Karen community has been through years of oppression and their educational system is still immature (Shee, 2018). To create a more effective pedagogical approach, the curriculum must be renewed and focused on the unique Karen values and history. Such pedagogical approaches lift the impressions of colonialism and students realize their cultural values. It is one of the possibilities for Karen people to maintain their cultural identity by standing against oppression and designing their own educational systems. The nationwide ceasefire agreement of 2015 determined the future direction of ethnicities in Myanmar. Chapter 3, item 9, clause "h" mentions, "Avoid restrictions on the right to education in accordance with the law; destruction of schools and educational buildings, including educational tools; and the disturbance and hindrance of students and teachers" (NCA, 2015). The clause promotes the right to education of ethnicities. The effective implementation could be able to transform the Burmanized education system into an ethnic-inclusive education system (Shee, 2018).

In this regard, the problem-posing model allows the minorities to work collectively along with their teachers to solve the complexities of their history and work for the transformation. The Freirean approach directs the educational system towards a more emancipating direction in which the educational system would work for the development of individuals. The educational system

won't treat humans as objects but would transform them into more active agents that would strive for their individual and collective development (Freire, 2018).

3.1.2 Decolonizing the mind

Colonialism corresponds to the process of forcefully occupying individuals, lands, and utilizing the economies of the colonized for the benefit of the colonizer. Colonialism doesn't refer to physical control only, but it arguably cripples the cultural identity, nationality, and interests of the individuals. Among several other factors, language and identity are the most affected segments whose basics get blurred through the process of colonialism (Dei, 2010). Both these segments in turn affect the educational departments of the regions. On the same grounds, Thiong'o (1986) identified the language issues in African literature where he advocated in the favour of linguistic tools for decolonizing the minds. Post-colonial authors find several issues associated with writing books for academic purposes when there are so many indigenous languages and an imperative pressure of using colonizers' language as an academic language (Thiong'o, 1986).

There is a close association between language and culture. Language serves as a means for communication and propagating cultural identities (Dei, 2010). Both these factors affect the individual perceptions of identifying themselves in multicultural dynamics. In addition, language transforms the way people relate to their surroundings and political situations and so can be a factor in ethnic conflicts in the regions (Nelde, 2017). In contrary to the history or cultural background, language remains at the center of combating social forces for the marginalized groups (Thiong'o, 1986). In post-colonized societies, the preservation of language and its use as an academic language remains the major task for relating to cultural and ethnic backgrounds. In Burma, Burmese is the majority language and the official language of the state whereas Karen individuals speak a variety of different languages including Català and Esperanto. In Karen schools, a few of the books in indigenous languages are provided whereas the majority of literature is in the Burmese language signaling the long-term effects of post-colonialism. It is an effect of post-colonialism as Karen students are deprived of the literature in their own language and thus have to study in the Burmese language (Wimuttikosol, 2009).

Colonized minds represent that state of mind in which a person is unable to think about his own identity and values and is under the influence of the imposed values. Decolonizing, on the other hand, aids in fostering a sense of identity among individuals. Education plays a prominent role here because in this way the individuals learn their history and their values where they then strive for decolonization (Stein & de Andreotti, 2016). Both imperialism and colonialism pose negative implications for the oppressed. Imperialism, however, being different from colonialism refers to the expansion of rule rather than conquering, yet it damages the social and cultural identity of people. Imperialism has economic, cultural, psychological, and political effects on people. Imperialism is in close association with capitalism. Imperialism promotes racism in which economic gains are only provided to those who enjoy a high social status and leave others based on their color, ethnicity, and identity. To decolonize the minds, the groups don't only have to fight against social forces but also the economic forces (Thiong'o, 1986).

Language has been recognized as a tool for both imperialism and at the same time as a tool to backlash against it. The imperialists try to impose their language in educational institutes as in the case of African countries where English has been penetrating the roots of African societies. However, the language is wiping out the history and culture of the colonized (Phillipson, 2018). The term "colonial alienation" becomes more valid in such instances when imperialism seeks to linguistically separate the minds and bodies of the colonized (Thiong'o, 1986). In their heads, they are still connected to their indigenous languages but their bodies are forced to learn the imposed languages. It in turn is the alienation of someone from their cultural heritage and the language. Human liberation is only possible when the colonized will strive to break the chains of imperialism from not only their societies but from their minds (Thiong'o, 1986).

When it comes to effectively using indigenous languages as academic languages, the symbolic role of the author becomes extremely indispensable. The writers of the post-colonized nations use language as a tool in decolonizing the minds of the people. Their writings depict the struggle and sacrifices behind fighting colonialism (Thiong'o, 1986). In the disadvantaged groups, writers have to contribute politically to separate the imposed history from the true historical and cultural backgrounds. In this way, the true cultural image gets transferred to the future generations rather

than the false imageries. The process is extremely essential in conflict-stricken regions like Myanmar in which teachers in schools get reluctant in discussing historical events due to the fear of adverse implications. However, for minorities like Karen, the influential role of authors is highly determining in terms of getting a true knowledge of their historical backgrounds (Moe, 2018).

Colonialism achieves hegemony, whereby the oppressed participate in their own oppression through such practices. The colonized, then, accept themselves as the oppressed and weak. In such cases, the process of decolonization can be highly exigent because the psychological impacts of colonialism are always long-lasting. The pain and struggles of fighting against racism are unavoidable and it takes years to psychologically free people from imperialism and colonialism. This is the reason that mental liberation is far more important than physical liberation. It is widely termed psychological colonialism. There has been long research regarding these psychological impacts (Thiong'o, 1986). These psychological impacts are influenced by cultural variations. The ideological centers of colonialism are race and culture. However, people began to fall more into self-rejection, low self-esteem, depression, and negatively view their cultural identity due to years of suppression and oppression. Colonialism gives rise to a colonial mentality where colonized began to accept that the cultural values of the colonizers are better than their own cultural identity. Colonial mentality suppresses their urge to reciprocate and identify with their true selves (Adams et al., 2018).

Education is a tool for limiting the effects of colonialism. However, in broader terms, education gets badly affected by colonialism. In the post-colonial era, it takes a lot of time to replace the existing literature with more effective literature that addresses the individual educational needs rather than projecting the colonizers' values. During these times, societies depend not only on authors but also on teachers. Teachers in schools have to inculcate in their students their cultural, linguistic, and historical basics. Though imperialists' languages harm the linguistic identity of the suppressed, the use of language as a tool for imperialism depends on the relative approach of imperialist mentality. Language isn't a set of a few letters but is an amalgamation of values that need to be preserved (Thiong'o, 1986). Decolonization of minds is thus achieved when the marginalized groups began to recognize their identity and values as separate and diverse from the imposed values (Anievas, 2012). The Nationwide ceasefire agreement of Myanmar through its chapter 6, clause "a" focus on the joint duty of EAOs and the government in arranging a political

dialogue for arranging programs for the development of ethnicities. It is a step towards decolonizing the minds as the clause mentions that efforts should be made to preserve ethnic culture, language, and literature (NCA, 2015). This political development, however, demands effective implementation that has been to a halt as a result of the ongoing conflict and military coup of 2021.

3.1.3 Social Justice

The fairness in the society that expresses itself through the equal distribution of wealth, growth opportunities, and privileges in the society is termed social justice (Gewirtz, 2006). The term social justice isn't new but encompasses several chapters of human history. According to Carlisle et al. (2006), there are five major aspects of social justice: human rights, access, participation, diversity, and equity. These five principles are the foundations of social justice in society which can't be achieved without following these principles. Since the whole world adheres to the principle of the UN, the universal declaration of human rights provides a criterion for assessing the parameters of social justice in different societies ("Universal Declaration of Human Rights | United Nations", 1984).

Human rights are the universal rights of human beings that apply to every human being regardless of ethnicity, social class, nationality, and caste. Every human being is connected to the other and thus it becomes an obligation for everyone to respect others' rights and dignity. The standard for social justice is provided by the universal declaration of human rights. Through its 29 articles, the universal declaration of human rights sets out to protect the rights of every human being. Its 1st and 7th principle emphasizes human equality and indiscriminate that foster social justice in the society ("Universal Declaration of Human Rights | United Nations", 1984). Its first two articles state that every human is born free and is entitled to all the basic human rights without any discrimination. Any attempt at discrimination is considered a crime in article 26 of the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights, 1966 ("OHCHR | International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights", 1966). It reinforces the need for social justice in oppressed societies (Aguilar, 2017).

Out of the several human rights, the right to education is considered of significant value. For ensuring social justice, education is ordered to keep free at elementary levels. However, after seventy years, still many areas are struggling to achieve universal primary education. Article 26 mentions that the sole objective of providing education should be the personality development of the individuals along with fostering friendly relationships with different religious and racial groups (Ploof & Hochtritt, 2017). Chapter 3, clause h of the Nationwide ceasefire agreement of Myanmar states, “Avoid restrictions on the right to education in accordance with the law; destruction of schools and educational buildings, including educational tools; and the disturbance and hindrance of students and teachers” (NCA, 2015). The agreement is a step towards ensuring social justice in Burmese society. Even after the ceasefire agreement has been signed, the education system is under the influence of ongoing conflict. Focusing on the dynamics of the Karen educational system, Karen students don’t have free access to educational opportunities. Their parents remove them from the schools due to the economic burden (Naw, 1989). Further, in conflict-stricken regions, educational practices fail to eliminate racial discrimination in autonomous schools. Racial discrimination arises due to the use of racist language at schools (Flores & Chaparro, 2017). The concept of social justice in the educational system isn’t properly adopted at Karen educational institutes (Kipgen, 2014).

The second major aspect of social justice outlines the concept of access. Every individual should have access to basic life facilities including food, shelter, and education. The declaration prohibits anyone from restricting anyone’s access to better life facilities as a result of xenophobia and unjust bias. In other terms, this principle stands for access to resources. Different areas of the globe have different standards for access, namely socioeconomic status, education, employment opportunities, and health services (Carlisle et al., 2006). However, the essence of social justice remains the same irrespective of secondary standards. In this regard, the Universal Declaration of Human Rights also propagates for access through its articles 23 and 25 which emphasize equal access to employment and maintaining an adequate standard of living. Thus, access to basic life facilities is an extension of the basic human rights where it is the right of every human to access all life facilities (“Universal Declaration of Human Rights | United Nations”, 1984). For the Karen minorities, the educational system is dealing with several social dilemmas. In both separate and autonomous Karen schools, the educational standard lacks in meeting the global standards for

education like developed infrastructure, skilled staff, educational resources, and core curriculum. As they are not provided with quality education, it would become difficult for the Karen society to achieve better employment opportunities that will ultimately sabotage their right to maintain an adequate standard of living (Watkins et al., 2012).

The third aspect of social justice delineates the concept of social participation. Since social justice calls for the inclusion of all social segments, the phenomenon of social justice remains blurred when only a few of the voices are held as decision-makers. However, it happens most of the time when marginalized groups are ignored. The societal issues including ethnic conflicts can never be solved by viewing only one side of the picture. They must be allowed to participate in any program that provides them better life opportunities (Helms, 2003). Article 27 of the universal declaration of human rights advocates in the favor of everyone's right to participate in their community. Another dimension of social justice is designing all-inclusive policies that are acceptable and favorable to all groups very much like the UNICEF inclusive education program. The program focuses on the equal right to education of all children ("Inclusive education", n.d.). Such policies include designing general classrooms and educational curriculum that meets individual needs rather than ethnicities' specific needs. Social justice provides an equal advantage to all groups in which the representation of ethnicities is equally appreciated in the community and nation-building processes ("Universal Declaration of Human Rights | United Nations", 1984).

The basis for social justice lies in the concept of equity. However, the phenomenon separates the terms equity and equality. Social justice corresponds to equity rather than equality. Equality addresses the provision of equal resources to all groups. In contrast, equity recognizes the individual demands and corroborates in the favor of providing everyone according to their requirements. Equity is addressed through overcoming all the systematic barriers (Unterhalter, 2009). In response to the barriers in the Karen educational system, the concept of equity in social justice is more propitious. It refers to the creation of such schools in which the cultural values of the Karen students would be promoted because the educational needs of marginalized groups are different from dominant groups (Gravers, 2015).

Another facet of social justice is supported by diversity and heterogeneity. Diversity is a broader concept that refers to the recognition of different people and groups belonging to different social and ethnic classes. Diversity can be racial, socioeconomic, or gender-based. It involves the acknowledgment of differences that exist between groups. Differences like age, nationality, class, and gender cause inequality in education. Based on these differences, school policies favor a few of the groups than others that lead not only to education but also to socio-economic inequality (Satz, 2007). These educational differences can be minimized by designing one nation one curriculum policies, eliminating racist language at institutes, and designing group projects for different ethnicities to work collectively with each other. Conflicts mainly arise due to differences of power among social groups. However, when these differences are minimized through equality, the chances of future conflicts could be controlled (Gurin et al., 2004).

The social justice perspective demands a thorough understanding of the cultural values and ethnic backgrounds of the people. A thorough analysis of these differences becomes useful in removing the barriers between different segments. In this way, discrimination practices can be discouraged. Such perspective separates the different concepts of discrimination and diversity. Diversity involves the acceptance of differences rather than discrimination that propagates prejudice due to such differences. Article 18 of the universal declaration also proposes respect for diversity in ethnic and social classes. Following social justice, the government must recognize Karen students as a diverse ethnic class while preventing xenophobia in every social segment including the educational institutes. It is one of the possibilities for Karen people to maintain their cultural identity (Heyneman & Stern, 2014).

3.1.4 Two faces of education in Ethnic Conflict

In conflicts-stricken regions, education takes several forms. Primarily there are two faces of education in such regions. One of those sides is negative and the other is positive. It has been widely argued that education can promote socially constructive and socially destructive impacts (Davies, 2010). Education in ethnic conflicts sometimes creates inequalities. The inequalities occur due to unequal access of different ethnic groups to educational resources. Such inequalities give the rise to more conflicts among the groups as access to education has become the prime

priority of groups to excel both economically and socially (Bush & Saltarelli, 2000). In terms of the Myanmar ethnic groups, such inequalities have led to confrontations as groups didn't observe any dialogical approach for education in the ceasefire period (NCA, 2015).

Education in times of political unrest is used for suppressing the cultural values of the oppressed (Evans, 2008). The phenomenon is widely described as hostile attempts of designing those educational policies that not only limit the use of language but also the political and social institutions, their religious beliefs, and traditions (Evans, 2008). In 2013, educational institutes like Karen schools in Karen state were being targeted by the military to destroy the insurgents' forces completely and students were forced to flee (United Nations, 2014). Both formal and informal modes of education are suffering from such events because when societies fight for their survival, education becomes a secondary priority (Davies, 2010). There are several historical events of such unjust practices in African states where the missionary schools in Southern Sudan were undertaken by Arabs and the indigenous population was forced to migrate towards Uganda or Zaire (Bush & Saltarelli, 2000).

Education takes a negative form when the history and curriculum of the ethnic groups are purposefully manipulated to achieve several political gains (Evans, 2008). Such political practices touch on the instances of the Nazi regime where people with time accepted the Nazi rule and educational institutes began to support the conversion of diverse ethnic German states into an Aryan state (Keys, 2009). The problem of decolonizing the minds arises in such cases. The literature in such conditions also portrays the heroes of war but not the heroes of peace that flames up the ethnic confrontations among the groups. Not only the history but also textbooks of the ethnic groups are completely manipulated (Bush & Saltarelli, 2000). Teachers in Myanmar are also guided to teach only imposed curricular values and in national language rather than ethnic languages. This homogenization gets completely destructive in educational institutes because individuals fail to recognize and accept imposed curriculum and language practices. Such homogenization has led to the longest civil war of Myanmar because groups refused to accept Burmese influence in educational institutes (Blue, 2020).

The educational practices in several conflicts-stricken regions promote worthlessness among the marginalized groups. It caused to believe that they were created inferior in society. The Apartheid era in African history projected the same xenophobia where the blacks were made to accept their inferiority in society (Jansen, 2002). Further, teachers from the majority groups in such regions also express negative views for marginalized groups. Another negative aspect of education becomes visible in colonial eras where colonial education creates educational segregation. Students are taught about the political supremacy of the colonizers and the inferiority of the colonized. Impressionable young minds begin to accept their inferiority and fail to reciprocate against injustice (Bush & Saltarelli, 2000).

Despite several negative impacts of education in conflicts-stricken regions, a positive face of education has also been identified in such regions. Positive initiatives are taken by governments in this regard. For instance, when the Irish government sensed the negative impacts of unequal education in the 1980s, the government raised the funding of both the majority and marginalized groups' schools that eliminated the educational discrimination in Ireland (Bush & Saltarelli, 2000). Another positive facet of education can be identified by recognizing the role of education in decolonizing the minds. The minority ethnic groups in this case strive to design their own educational curriculum that promotes ethnic-specific values. These attempts are evident by the Karen National Union's (KNU) decisions of establishing several ethnic schools to foster their own historical values. Thus, educational opportunities are the only source for the Karen to maintain their cultural identity and their political autonomy (Shiohata, 2019).

Education has played a prominent role in creating respect for languages among the groups. Language issues have always caused ethnic conflicts but over the years the governments have been striving to make schools more favorable places for ethnicities. In this regard, school policies are designed in such a way that ethnic children are taught their languages in their early school years. It creates linguistic tolerance among groups and prevents future conflicts (Lall & South, 2013). The Nationwide ceasefire agreement through chapter 3, clause h mentions that EAO and government should, "Provide necessary support in coordination with each other to improve livelihoods, health, education, and regional development for the people" (NCA, 2015). The recent attempts of the NLD government in Myanmar are a reflection of it and are focused on eliminating

this discrimination by promoting ethnic languages at schools. The government has played role in allocating special school hours for ethnic students in learning ethnic languages. Several educational peace programs have also been designed throughout the globe. Such programs have been widely arranged by UNICEF in areas like Sri Lanka, Sudan, Mozambique, Guatemala, and Burundi, etc. These programs ensure effective media participation and play their role in changing the war perceptions of people by promoting peaceful educational practices (Bush & Saltarelli, 2000).

Another positive influence of education is promoting acceptance among the groups regarding historical education. People are recognizing that it is everyone's basic right to know about his roots and history. It plays its role in eliminating violent thoughts among the young when they realize that they have been treated equally. On the same grounds, teachers are encouraged in institutes to discuss the negative impacts of ethnic conflicts and xenophobia. Governments like the United Kingdom are also striving for redesigning the curriculum in which textbooks would promote educational equality (Bush & Saltarelli, 2000).

Further human rights courses and peace education have been made an integral part of the curriculum in regions like South Africa, Canada, the United Kingdom, and several others (Bush & Saltarelli, 2000). It raises critical awareness of rights along with fostering peace-loving views among students. Thus, there are both positive and negative faces of education. However, in the Karen context, the development of a few of the autonomous schools by the Myanmar government also depicts the positive aspect of education in the conflict-stricken region. Though educational segregation is still prominent, the ethnicities are striving to use education as a peace tool to maintain their cultural identity (Shiohata, 2019).

Throughout the world, sustainable development goals in education are receiving primary focus. Referring to the 2030 agenda for sustainable development, 17 SDGs aim at protecting individual rights and providing them better social facilities. The 4th SDG states as, "ensure inclusive and equitable quality education and promote lifelong learning opportunities for all." (UN, n.d.). The term "inclusive" refers to providing equal educational opportunities to all groups including ethnicities. The SDG 4 has 10 basic targets of ensuring free primary and secondary education,

equal access to quality pre-primary and higher education, increasing the vocational educational opportunities for overcoming financial stress, eradicating educational discrimination, universal literacy and numeracy, promoting education for sustainable development, construct safe schools, increasing the number of educational scholarships in higher education and staff (UN, n.d.). The SDGs apply equally to all individuals including the ethnicities and the IDPs. However, the educational institutes in Myanmar are under the influence of discriminatory practices, lack of financial support and staff, destruction of institutes, and difficulties in higher education for ethnicities (Lall, 2020).

In summation, this chapter identified the major educational issues of Karen students along with providing a theoretical basis to these. In the post-Burmanization era, the Karen need to maintain their cultural identity. They are maintaining their cultural identity by designing their own educational institutes. Other possibilities for them to maintain their cultural identities are to decolonize their minds by fostering their language and curriculum, by addressing the inequalities in Myanmar's homogenous education institutes, by standing against the social, political, and economic challenges, and by generating funds on the local level. However, the imposed Burmese curriculum and a requirement for learning the Burmese language at higher educational levels are declining the level of education at Karen-specific institutes. The current and the past military coups have destroyed educational institutes in the Karen resistance area. The government isn't also supporting Karen students on the national level making it difficult for them to reach higher education levels.

3.2 Research questions and statement of research

Education research belongs to the area of research in which different parameters of data related to the field of education are analyzed. Some of the major parameters being part of the educational research include work on pedagogical practices, teacher-learner relationship, teachers' training, curricular contents, and specific dynamics of different levels of education. Education research has different approaches, namely the basic approach and the applied approach. The basic approach for education can be characterized in terms of the development of theory by focusing on empirically verifiable research questions to produce generalizable truths about education. The applied

educational approach marks the application of theories to practical grounds. It encompasses such parameters of education that have both direct and indirect impacts on practice (Spaulding et al., 2013).

This chapter focuses on a critical study and an interpretation of the phenomenon of Karen education within Myanmar while using autoethnography, critical ethnography, and evaluation research as suitable research approaches. To serve the purpose of education research, the data in this research was collected from different online sources including research literature, policy documents, academic papers, and reports. Sequentially, the data was analyzed for its suitability and was then documented properly. The approach aided in carefully identifying the educational problems. The chapter locates the impact of ethnic conflicts on the Karen educational system. Critical theory has been chosen as the basis for the research to identify the approaches through which the Karen students rise against social injustice. The autoethnographic research in this method has been used to mark the struggle of Karen students in maintaining their cultural identity in the Burmanized educational system. Policy documents like the National Education Law of 2014, in this regard, provided a basis for assessing the views of the Myanmar government regarding the future trajectory of the Karen education system. News articles and reports of international organizations like Human Rights Watch, UNHCR, UNICEF UNFPA, UNESCO, further depicted the impact of recent political settlement in Myanmar on Karen education system.

The research questions are,

- 1:** What has been the impact of the 2015 Ceasefire Agreement between the state and insurgent groups in Myanmar, on the education of Karen Students?
- 2:** In What ways has the national government and educational authorities facilitated better outreach of education through incentive and structural reforms in education, for Karen students?
- 3:** How has the cultural identity of Karen people been affected through education, and since the in response to the 2015 Ceasefire agreement?

3.3 Elements of research design

3.3.1 Triangulation and multi-method research

The research approach adopted in this research is autoethnography research. The framework of the research planning follows a sequence of events from solving the preparatory issues, designing a research methodology, and focusing on time frames to complete the research within the desired time (Spaulding et al., 2013). In this research, evaluation research is adopted as a major research methodology. Referring to the research triangulation, innumerable data sources, researchers, and theories have been consulted for assessing the educational difficulties of the Karen individuals along with determining the impact of the National ceasefire agreement on the educational practices of Karen's students. As a part of this triangulation, autoethnography, and evaluation research have been particularly selected for validating the research questions.

The primary constraints in planning research are the ethical dilemmas, political issues associated with choosing a sensitive topic and designing a proper set of research questions. In this research after solving the preliminary issues, the research strategy of critical ethnography was proposed. However, since the research covered several topics, it followed a long-time scale to effectively answer all the research questions and to touch on all the issues including political influence, multiculturalism, and multilingualism in Myanmar.

Choosing a research project is the primary part of the research. While choosing a research project, I focused on the issues in my surroundings that were relevant to the educational sector. Belonging to the Karen resistance area, I am familiar with the years of ethnic conflicts and associated problems. Despite several other ethnic issues, the educational sector for Karen has always remained in an alarming situation. Stationery and space issues are the minors of all where homogenization in the education sector is making it difficult for the Karen students to identify with their roots. As I adopted autoethnography as my research methodology, I could relate to a significant extent with my own people. While choosing the research project, I remained extremely

specific about the factors I was going to research. Then I presented my topic as a question and focused on the types of data available to support my project.

3.3.2 Relevance of critical theory for the research

In this research, a critical educational research method had been used for signaling the effect of stringent educational policies on the Karen minorities. Critical theory evaluates the relationships between particular educational policies and practices for particular groups in particular historical contexts. It further analyses the power dynamics involved in a study. However, in contrast to earlier approaches, the critical educational approaches explicitly elaborate on the behavioral patterns of individuals in a just and democratic society. In other words, the theory operates on the phenomenon of liberation in terms of equal rights. Critical educational research was thus adopted to identify the impacts of society on Karen schools, the driving injustice, and the ways to redress it, to examine the type of knowledge provided at schools followed by the long-term effect of it on the local Karen population. Further, the research primarily focused on identifying the power dynamics in education serving the interests of only a few while sabotaging others. Belonging to the Karen resistance area, I placed myself as a respondent and a representative of the Karen people under study.

Different researchers worked differently concerning similar ethnic issues in Myanmar. However, the data addressing the Karen educational issues is particularly very scarce. Lall & South (2016), in this regard, identified the relationship between language, education, and the ceasefire agreement in Myanmar. In their study, the researchers focused on a critical theory and evaluated the educational dynamics of three major EAOs groups namely, the Karen National Union (KNU), Kachin Independent Army (KIA), and the New Mon State Party (NMSP). The researchers utilized previous research and survey methods in which they interviewed 55 students, teachers, parents, and leaders of EAOs. They concluded that education and peace processes are treated very differently in Myanmar in which several stakeholders are involved whose issues need to be addressed properly.

Thawngmung (2017) further evaluated the effectiveness of the Nationwide ceasefire agreement. In this research, an evaluative research method was used. The researcher particularly identified

that the inclusion of the Karen National Union (KNU) is significantly essential in the peace process. The government can't implement the agreement without the essential support of EAOs. Bigagli (2019) also focused on the issue of ethnic identity or cultural identity and education in Myanmar. The research critically analyses the political history of Myanmar and the role of NCA in bringing educational reforms. This research also drew on the evaluative research method. Lall (2020) worked on a similar perspective by utilizing the field research method. The research reviews all of Myanmar's education reforms and addresses the challenges of both the government and EAOs in implementing the educational reforms of NCA.

Since the data addressing the issue is scarce, the project aims at addressing several research gaps. Firstly, there are very little research addressing the impact of NCA on Karen ethnicity. Sequentially, the researcher mainly used research evaluation and survey methods in the research with little or no focus on autoethnography to retrieve highly specific data. One of the salient issues that haven't also been addressed previously is the joint role of EAOs and the government in bringing educational reforms. A wide variety of literature though addresses the educational reforms in Myanmar, a particular focus in addressing the impact of NCA principles along with the recent military coup in 2021 on the Karen education system hasn't been observed in the literature that is one of the explicit aims of this research project.

3.3.3 The scope of autoethnographic approach to validate research questions

Ethnography provides an account of populations based on their culture, habits, civilizations, and ethnicities. Critical ethnography being an extension of critical theory relates qualitative, quantitative, anthropological, and theoretical dimensions for the critical analysis in ethnography (Madison, 2012). It not only studies the patterns of injustice but evaluates the ways the societies rose against discrepancies. While doing this research, five different stages of critical ethnography were followed. In the first step, I collected primary objective and monological data to create a broader image of the major portion I was going to include in this research. In the next step, I performed reconstructive analysis to identify the key relations between the events and the influence of power on education. Sequentially, I collected dialogical data by reflecting on my experience as a Karen individual. In the final two steps, I identified the causal mechanisms between Karen

educational issues and Myanmar's political condition and then used these to elaborate findings (Cohen et al., 2007).

In this research, I adopted autoethnography as my research methodology. Autoethnographic research places the researcher at the central point of the research trying to reflect on his own experiences to understand cultural features. Autoethnography is an amalgamation of autobiography and ethnography. The approach has been regarded as relationally responsible. In this approach, as the researcher narrates his own experiences, he has to remain committed to the task of presenting the true image of his experiences. As auto ethnographies are more related to political issues, the researcher has to adopt a more logical and unbiased approach. Depending upon the environment the experiences might be variable, however, autoethnography places a clearer picture for the researcher for studying the impact of changes on mass populations (Rambo & Ellis, 2020).

Maréchal (2010) explains autoethnography as a form or method of research that involves self-observation and reflexive investigation in the context of ethnographic field work and writing. Autoethnography covers a diverse range of subjects including anthropology, sociology, religious history, educational administration, and several others. According to Ellis (2004), it is a combination of research, observation, and stories that associate the autobiographical dimensions to the cultural, political, and social areas. Over the years, the scope of autoethnography increased from personal experiences to socio-cultural dimensions. Attard et al., (2014) define this area as an approach of the researcher aimed at representing people in their struggle for life, their ways of life, and associated issues.

3.3.4 Using data in educational research: Data analysis and reporting

Methods of data collection in qualitative and historical methods of research differ from those of the quantitative approaches. In this research, both primary and secondary data sources have been used. The data sources have been classified into primary and secondary sources of data. Primary data sources are those sources that are directly linked with the case to be identified including biographies, newspapers, etc. In contrast, secondary data sources don't have a direct relationship

with the case including scholarly articles and pictures, etc. For this project, the official ceasefire agreement and UNHCR's refugee rights documents, UNFPA, UNICEF, UNESCO, and UN's SDGs as primary data sources have been used. As secondary data sources, books, scholarly articles, academic videos, surveys of the Kawthoolei region, and interviews of Karen respondents were used.

Secondary data sources in education research are based on such pieces of information in which the researcher himself didn't participate in certain events. Using secondary data in education research is of prime importance in carrying out lengthy researches. In this research, I have used journal articles and books addressing Myanmar's National ceasefire agreement, UN data sources about civilians' rights and SDGs in the context of IDPs, minorities, and policy documents of the Karen National Union (KNU) educational system. In addition, for assessing the impacts of Myanmar's political situation on educational and social dynamics, I reviewed news articles, related videos, and reports of national and international organizations like the United Nations, Amnesty International, and Human rights watch. Further, I also focused on the autobiography of the Karen teachers in determining the learning difficulties in mobile schools and jungle classrooms. In the end, for providing a theoretical basis to the project, I analyzed a vast majority of journal articles and books. The language issues in Karen educational system were analyzed through surveys and interviews of Karen respondents.

Data analysis justifies the relevance between different events quoted in the research. Following qualitative research, data analysis is of foremost significance while using secondary sources because the information follows secondary routes and doesn't reach directly from the primary sources. A few of the documents from the sources might be following the biased approach and they might be targeting another audience which increases the significance of data analysis. While doing this historical research, I analyzed the data on the criterion of validity and reliability. Validity in this case corresponds to the authenticity of the chosen items. In this regard, I ensured that all the data was retrieved from the authentic authors of the documents (Cohen et al., 2007). For analyzing data in this critical ethnographic research, I opted narrative analysis method. In this method, first of all, collected the data regarding Karen ethnicity and their educational issues, then shortlisted topics, and organized those. I then tried to explore the data for the core and sub-headings. In this

narrative analysis method, I primarily relied on surveys, interviews of respondents, and official reports. After exploring data, I tried to create connections between different data sources using concept maps. Then I focused on the major issues like language and infrastructure issues that I would like to analyze in this project and then arranged those accordingly.

After gathering and analyzing data, the data is reported or synthesized. Data reporting poses several problems including a vague description of events, focusing too much on the secondary data sources, choosing non-authentic sources, oversimplification, and overgeneralization. While reporting data, I focused on relating the data to my research questions and objectives, tried to add sufficient data, analyzed data based on corroboration from multiple sources, remained unbiased, and included multiple dimensions of a single topic to overcome overgeneralization.

Thus, by following the research approach of autoethnography, I tried to analyze the problems of Karen students in continuing their education in Myanmar. To determine the impact of recent political settlement in Myanmar, the research mainly draws data from relevant news articles. The data retrieved from policy documents including NCA, UNFPA, UNHCR, and UNICEF has been used for answering the research problem of Karen individuals in maintaining their cultural identity via education. Finally, journal articles, reports, and books have been used for determining the views of the Myanmar government concerning the future direction of the Karen education system.

3.4. Research Ethics

While doing research, the primary ethical code was followed to ensure the relevance of the research. The primary ethical code in this regard highlights the ethical principles of protecting the social, psychological, and cultural integrity of the Karen individuals involved in this research. To obtain transparency and authenticity, the research method, principles, and analysis were well supported by ethical principles. By following the respect for anonymity, the names of the primary sources for reviewing ethical conflicts were kept confidential. The research doesn't include any misleading facts. While following the data analysis approach, unbiased news articles and literature pieces were collected to ensure the credibility of the research. The biases of the literature were interpreted by selecting neutral articles that don't signify personal opinions in support or against a particular group. The authors of the sample research were properly credited (Östman & Turtiainen,

2016). Thus, in this research, the identity of Karen individuals was protected, the individuals were respectfully presented, tried not to misuse the authorial power, read reviews of both sides before drawing a particular conclusion, and kept under consideration the intellectual property rights.

Since the data had been collected through the research literature, academic journal, news articles, reports, and academic papers, the ethics in internet research were kept under view in conducting the research. I followed the norms of ethical research including informed consent, data privacy, security, intellectual property issues, data integration, anonymity, confidentiality, professional standard, and community guidelines. However, I followed all the ethical norms and respected data privacy while collecting secondary data sources (Cohen et al., 2007).

The online library, also known as the digital library is the vast repository of online sources derived from authors throughout the globe. In this research, I have used a variety of scholarly and non-scholarly online sources to collect data. However, for conducting the research, the websites have been effectively evaluated. While evaluating the website, I focused on the parameters of authority and authenticity, logical content, accuracy and fairness, and legitimacy of the source to derive it from a reputable source.

Sensitive research is the one that might be threatening for those who are involved in the research. Depending on the sensitivity, research can pose threats for the participants involved, their family members, and the social groups (Rambo & Ellis, 2020). While researching sensitive topics like ethnic conflicts, the research might put the researcher in an emotionally disturbing position. Further, such pieces of research pose ethical dilemmas for the researcher in considering the power, ownership, and voice (Fenge et al., 2019). Moreover, such sensitive topics also affect marginalized groups including children, women, and other abused groups. They pose political, psychological, and life-threatening impacts on such groups. In this research, I considered the research sensitivity to prevent its impacts on the Karen population involved in the research. Since the research primarily revolved around the Karen children and students, every possible attempt of protecting their vulnerability was made. In this regard, I tried to keep the identity of individuals hidden and presented them respectfully who were involved in this research. I further focused on a generalized

description rather than pointing specifically to a major group or area of the ethnicity (Cohen et al., 2007)

Chapter IV- Findings and Discussion

The chapter seeks to connect the theoretical framework and literature review with the statistical data and theoretical findings of the research project and discuss some important issues that the researcher has discovered from this research.

4.1 Compare and contrast Karen and Burmese education approach

The chapter focuses on comparing the Karen and Burmese educational systems by applying the autoethnography research approach. The recent political settlement in Myanmar has led to the destruction of several higher education institutes exacerbating the Karen struggle for higher education. Both Karen students and parents are well aware of the importance of the Burmese language for ensuring their future security but for maintaining their cultural identity, the Karen local community is endorsing community schools and institutes. However, the number of IDPs has significantly increased in the country with little or no educational assistance by the Burmese government. The ethnicities, however, are not satisfied with the Nationwide ceasefire agreement (NCA) as it involves no dialogical approach for education and is challenging for both the ethnicities and government to implement effectively.

4.1.1. Incidence of higher education for majority and minority ethnic groups

Among the several other issues of the Karen ethnic minority, qualification issues are very prominent. Over the years, there remained a significant influence of the Burmese government on the educational system that not only Burmanized the curriculum but also created homogenization issues for the minorities. The struggle for higher education became more prominent for the ethnicities in 2014 when the New Education Law prohibited the use of ethnic languages in Myanmar universities (Lwin & Zaw, 2014). The influence of the government is also stronger in the Karen state because many of the educational institutes under KECD are getting disaffiliated. The military in the fear of uprisings has either been closing or relocating universities out of cities.

The disaffiliated institutes are then teaching in the Burmese language rather than the Karen language (Shiohata, 2019).

The Karen community in terms of higher education is going through a serious crisis. They want to maintain Karen identity by fostering their language but on the other hand, they are also very well aware of the importance of the Burmese language in securing their higher education opportunities. In line with the research conducted by the Nyein Foundation, “Ethnic nationality children, especially in remote and conflict-affected areas, cannot read and write Burmese at the same speed as their Bamar peers, and subsequently often drop-out of school” (Lall, 2020). According to the 2014 census in Myanmar, 29% of the population lies in the age bracket of 0 to 14 years. While 18% of the population (9 million) individuals belong to a university-going age range of 15 to 24 years (UNFPA, 2014). The Karen minority belongs to the 7% of the overall Burmese population with significant education and social security demands.

In Myanmar, there are 163 universities and colleges (Department of Higher Education Lower Myanmar, 2012) and less than 50% of institutions are in ethnic states. In Karen State under Myanmar government control is only 9 higher education institutions (Win, 2015). The level of Myanmar’s education system is declining and ranked 92 out of 93 countries in 2020 (Reuters, 2020). In such a system, the ethnicities are suffering more than other citizens and are struggling to maintain their cultural identity through education. The access to tertiary education for ethnicities is limited by educational expenses. Considering the Yangon University in Myanmar, the educational expenses reach \$600-1,078 USD/Month (the University of Yangon, n.d.). The expenses are difficult for ethnicities to afford. The young population enters into the labor force to support their families. The situation leads to high ratios of dropouts from institutes.

To get admission into the government higher education institutions, Karen students have to pass entrance exam in Burmese language. However, the Karen students who complete their higher education at KECD schools, they are not accepted at Myanmar University. Due to KECD education system doesn’t recognized by the Myanmar government. However, exceptions to this case also exist. The Karen educational institutes face severe underfunding by the government. To provide quality education, the Karen population belongs to local’s funding. However, the lack of proper educational staff and underdeveloped infrastructure leads to a compromised quality of

education (Shiohata, 2019). The Karen educational institutes are primarily controlled by the Karen State Education Assistance Group (KSEAG) (Jolliffe & Mears, 2016) Local educational committees try to raise funds and develop infrastructure. However, local funding causes lower teaching salaries for the MoE teachers. These circumstances, arguably, decrease the level of education in primary and secondary schools. Thus, when students go through educational tests in Myanmar, they find it very difficult to meet Burmese higher education standards. Thus, KED emphasizes that ethnicities must be admitted into institutes without formal testing mechanisms (Shiohata, 2019).

Higher education opportunities are scarce for the Karen living in Myanmar and also for those who completed their primary and secondary education at Thai camps. The issue arises due to language differences as the Thai language is completely different from both the Karen and Burmese languages. It becomes difficult for the students to comprehend literature in the Burmese language. Due to these issues, the Myanmar higher education institutes are found to be reluctant in admitting such students. Such students then also enter into the labor force and their educational journeys end before even getting started completely (Shiohata, 2019). However, the Karen Refugee Committee – Education Entity (KRCEE) tries to maintain the KED curriculum in about 64 camp schools. But in this regard, Karen students again have to travel long distances and they mostly rely on Thai government camp schools with the same language and curriculum issues. Further due to the unpredictable political situations, the Karen institutes have to change their positions on account of varying military positions. Over the years, the Karen insurgent groups took control of the majority of the area, the Karen schools are expanding. However, the schools still haven't reached higher education levels that increase the higher education issues for the Karen students (Lall, 2020).

The political situation of the country is the major hurdle in the way of ethnicities to access higher education. The struggle for higher education started at the beginning of the ethnic conflict and is still ongoing, even by 2021. The military coup of 2021 led to serious higher education problems for ethnicities. Chapter 9, clause h of the ceasefire agreement mentions, “Avoid restrictions on the right to education in accordance with the law; destruction of schools and educational buildings, including educational tools; and the disturbance and hindrance of students and teachers” (NCA, 2015). However, in the recent military coup, students and teachers have been arrested, and

institutes are being used as military bases (Reuters, 2021). The education system is struggling to develop in a period of political tensions.

The civilians along with ethnicities supported the democratic NLD government in this regard. The reason for it was the NLD government's attempts in alleviating higher education problems and adhering to the ceasefire agreement. The NLD government had ordered to arrange one period per day for learning ethnic languages (San, 2021). The periods were primarily arranged to deliver difficult concepts to students in their ethnic languages. It is one of the impacts ceasefire agreement on the ethnic education system. Therefore, Myanmar citizens along with ethnicities took part in protests against the military coup of 2021. About 300,000 teachers and students have remained a part of these conflicts (San, 2021). However, the military started taking action against both the teachers and the institutes. Thousands of students got suspended from the universities and are among the 780 casualties of 10th May 2021 (Reuters, 2021).

The ethnic students are particularly getting more targeted by the military. Several colleges and universities have been getting destroyed. The universities including the University of Htawei in the Tanintharyi Region have been reopened, however, only 18 students joined the university. Further many of the universities have been transformed into base camps by the military. Quoting instances from the Yangon and Mandalay universities, 339 and 249 teachers respectively have been arrested and dismissed (San, 2021). The military has been regularly monitoring the movement of students. As a result, many of the students have been shot dead by the military. Thus, the ethnic minorities are experiencing difficulties in higher education in terms of curriculum, language issues, short academic years, and the political situation of the country.

4.1.2. Educational disparities and the class conflict

While comparing the Karen and Burmese education systems, the inequality treatments are extremely prominent. In the initial stages, the Karen students go through a serious economic burden to secure admission into the educational institutes, but then after entering into these institutes, they experience inequality treatments in terms of educational policies. Educational inequality is broadly defined as the uneven dispensation of educational resources, funds, stationery

items, experienced staff, and educational technology among different social groups. Karen students study in both KED institutes and Burmese government institutes. The Nationwide ceasefire agreement through its chapter 1 clause d states, “Guarantee equal rights to all citizens who live within the Republic of the Union of Myanmar; no citizen shall be discriminated against on the basis of ethnicity, religion, culture, or gender” (NCA, 2015). However, the economic burden, ongoing ethnic conflicts are still creating educational inequality in Myanmar. The government though played a certain role after the ceasefire agreement in the Karen education system by providing Karen access to government schools but still, only the Burmese language is taught at such institutes (Shiohata, 2019).

Education is free in most of the institutes but Karen individuals, have to go through the rigorous testing process to get admitted into the institutes. The government support is negligible in terms of the Karen education system (Shiohata, 2019). In Myanmar, there are three types of schools for Karen students. These are government schools, KED schools, and faith-based schools. The government schools are controlled by the Burmese curriculum and they follow the Burmese curriculum. These schools demand no fee from students but ethnicities are treated unequally in these institutes as they are not allowed to study in their ethnic languages. However, the Burmese citizens learn in their language and Burmese-specific curriculum. The students, however, still have to take admissions in these institutes as the Burmese language is essential for them to seek higher education. Further, better employment opportunities are also provided to those who have studied at Burmese universities. In this way, this inequality treatment makes it difficult for Karen students to maintain their cultural identity (Shiohata, 2019).

While discussing the KED schools, these schools are run primarily by the communities and the Karen education department. These schools require a registration fee of 100-300 Bhats for primary, middle, and high school education. Thus, the villagers pay 100 to 500 Bhat every year for continuing the education of their children. These schools follow the Karen curriculum and students are taught in the Karen language (Shiohata, 2019). However, a few of the KED schools are also affiliated with the government to provide education in the Burmese language also. But the government assistance to these institutes in contrast to Burmese government schools is very limited. On the same grounds, the faith-based schools are controlled by both the Burmese

government and KED. But in government-controlled faith-based schools, the Karen individuals not only have to pay the registration but a monthly fee of 1-2 USD along with stipends for teachers. It becomes extremely challenging for the Karen individuals to afford high educational costs (Shiohata, 2019).

The use of ethnic language in Myanmar's educational institutes has been prohibited since 1962. Many of the students have also been punished for learning their ethnic languages. Even in 2013, the use of the Burmese language at government schools was mandatory (Bigagli, 2019). In addition, the literature has also been published in the Burmese language only. However, a new law was passed by Burma's Minister for Education in 2012 to incorporate ethnic languages at the primary level of education (Bigagli, 2019). The students were allowed to learn these languages separately from the school hours. Further, article 19 of the Convention on the Rights of the Child emphasizes on governments to take every possible action for preventing corporal punishment ("OHCHR | Convention on the Rights of the Child", 1989). By 2015, there wasn't any law in Myanmar to end corporal punishment at schools despite several concerns on global levels (Owen, 2015). According to article 66 of Myanmar's Child law, 1993, "the type of admonition by a parent, teacher or a person having the right to control the child, which is for the benefit of the child" (UNICEF, 2012). With time, the law was amended in 2019 to finally end all corporal punishments of children. However, the level of these punishments for other civilians always remained less severe than ethnic children. For instance, at the government schools of the Kayin state, frequent cases of punishments have been recorded. The students thus refuse to go to schools leading to low attendance rates (Gershoff, 2017).

Poor infrastructure also causes discrimination in Myanmar educational institutes. In Myanmar, there are Burmese universities but there is no higher Karen-specific educational institute. Karen students mostly study in jungle classrooms and mobile schools where they have to depend on old Burmese books only. The primary reason for it is the absence of a publication house in Karen-controlled regions. The teachers also have to travel long distances (Naw, 1989). One example of such a jungle school is an elementary school in the Thaton District. They have no sources of continuous education. In 2014, the Burmese government closed 30 schools in southeastern Mon state as a result of conflicts between Tatmadaw and Karen groups. Similarly, in November 2013,

the army took control of a boys' school in a Kachin state and forced 300 students to leave the school immediately (United Nations, 2014). In addition in a Southeastern Karen state in 2015, conflicts between Tatmadaw and Democratic Karen Benevolent Army (DKBA) led to the destruction of schools in five villages (Karen Human Rights Group, 2015). The destruction of ethnic schools is creating further infrastructure issues for the ethnicities.

Not only these, but the educational process of Karen students is also under severe threat by the Tatmadaw's attempt of using schools as military bases. However, in Burmese government schools, the process of education is favorable for other Myanmar's citizens. In 2013, the military transformed a boys' school into a military base in Bhamo, Kachin State ("Refworld | Education Under Attack 2018 - Myanmar", 2018). In addition, ethnic gender discrimination is also one of the major issues in Myanmar's education system. According to World Bank, the female literacy rate of Burma was 84% in 2016 (World Bank, 2020). However, in Kayin or Karen state, the rate is only 70.9% (UNFPA, 2015). Crisp and Clement (2020) argue that women in Myanmar are greater in number than men but they face severe educational discrimination. They surveyed Shan state and assessed that the prominent causes of this ethnic gender discrimination in schools are the poor infrastructure. It leads to a lower female literacy rate in Karen states as compared to the Burmese education system (Crisp & Clementi, 2020). Thus, Karen students face educational inequalities by poor infrastructure, no location for permanent education, Burmese curriculum, and economic pressure.

4.2. Internal displacement crisis and educational outcomes

The term "internally displaced person" refers to one who is forcibly demanded to leave his/her (or use their) home/place of living but remains within the borders of the country in which they live. The Karen minority experienced the longest ongoing civil war in human history (Blue, 2020). The armed conflict began in Kayin State, Myanmar. The conflict began in 1949 resulting in the displacement of the Karen people. In Kachin state, 104,000 Karen IDPs are residing while 93,000 of them are internally displaced in Southeast Myanmar by 2020 (UNHCR, 2021).

UNICEF reports that in 2020, 6385 Karen IDPs have returned to their homes but still 97,000 of residing in 136 IDP camps. Out of which, only 40% of these camps are controlled by Karen while others witnessed severe human rights violations (UNICEF, 2019). Though the replacement programs have started, the Karen in different areas has been going through several issues, such as wars, displacement, and no education guarantee.

4.2.1. Fleeing from conflict zone

The internal displacement problem in Eastern Burma is devastating. The number of internally displaced persons (IDPs) increased substantially in the past. The statistical data by UNHCR showed that by the end of 2020, 370,320 people have been displaced out of which thousands of those got killed (UNHCR, 2020). Though a significant percentage of IDPs are living in the areas of the State Peace and Development Council (SPDC), about eighty-four percent of them still lodge in the conflict zone and are suffering from severe human rights violations (Human Rights Watch, 2005). They got internally displaced either due to the forced eviction or poor access to basic life facilities, and human rights violation (Oh et al., 2019).

Karen internal displacement belongs to the type of forced movement of people due to armed conflict. These IDPs refused to be used by different political groups in armed conflict. A series of interviews were conducted by Human Rights Watch in 2005 to understand the dynamics of the Karen internal displacement, which reveals that a lot of the Karen refugees in the Northern Karen state have been forcibly migrated about 1000 different times. Since 1940, many of these have gone through forcible eviction about 100 times (Human Rights Watch, 2005). The basic reason for the migration of Karen refugees is closely associated with the basic human rights violations associated with the conflict zone, along with the poor agricultural and socio-economic conditions of the conflict zone (South & Lall, 2016).

Chapter 3 of the Nationwide ceasefire agreement particularly focused on the rehabilitation of IDPs. The clause “a” mentions, “Relevant Government ministries, the Ethnic Armed Organizations, and local organizations shall coordinate with each other when implementing the delivery of humanitarian assistance by the NGOs and INGOs to Internally Displaced Persons (IDPs) and

conflict victims with the approval of the Government of the Republic of the Union of Myanmar” (NCA, 2015). The clause focuses on the joint role of government and EAOs in helping the IDPs. However, the political situations are not favorable. Before the agreement, the Burmese army or Tatmadaw carried out oppression against the Karen minorities (BPHWT, 2006). There are several examples of rapes, sexual violence, forced displacement and labor, arbitrary arrests, and immoral capital punishments, as documented by Relief Web (2020). They entered their villages, destroyed their agricultural lands, killed their animals, and themselves. Those who wanted to flee were also killed near Ler Kaw village in November 1979. A few of them temporarily fled to nearby jungles and stayed there to escape violence and death threats. However, on their return, they wanted to rebuild their homes and regrow their lands that in the very next year also got destroyed by Tatmadaw (Oh et al., 2017). However, after the agreement, the government focused on aiding the IDPs but the ongoing conflict in the region and airstrikes are posing a major hurdle in the effective implementation of the agreement.

Many Karen left their homes due to the “Four Cuts” or *pya ley pya* strategy of Tatmadaw. The strategy was applied in 1968. The Tatmadaw divided the country into different zones known as the black, brown, or white zones. These zones were under complete insurgent, partial insurgent, and government control respectively. In black or free-fire zones, the Tatmadaw used their power and forcibly evicted the Karen rebellions. As the name “four-cuts” depicts, the Burmese army decided to lock the access of the Karen population towards four major parameters including food, intelligence, funds, and recruits. When Karen couldn’t access basic life facilities, it led to the deaths of several thousand civilians (BPHWT, 2006). The primary cause of the forced migration has been the lack of food, no access to basic life facilities including education, and health services, human rights violations, and no employment opportunities (Green et al., 2008). The people only want social security, using agricultural lands properly, and basic access to better education and health opportunities. Despite the current cease-fire agreement, the Burmese army has been attacking the ethnic minorities, focusing on the forced labor in state development projects like road construction, removing them out of their homes, and demanding excessive taxes from them (Lenkova, 2015).

In line with the report published by Human Rights Watch (2005), the forcible evictions haven't ended despite the end of armed conflict. However, only the primary reasons for eviction have changed with time. The report also highlights that the Tatmadaw has been achieving more control of the Karen areas. In the Southern Shan State, and the Tenasserim Division of the Karen state, people are still getting affected by a few of the instances of the civil war (Human Rights Watch, 2005). Those who lived on hills began to move upwards but due to the conflicting events of 1990, many lost lands to Tatmadaw which limited their movement in the Karen liberated zones. Many of their safe evacuations have been arranged by KNLA troops, however, the people still get subjected to executions by SPDC troops. Thus, displacement further became torture for them with time (Human Rights Watch, 2005).

4.2.2. No permanent locations for long term education

Providing quality education to internally displaced persons (IDPs) has remained the major goal of several organizations including UNICEF. For example, UNICEF in its 2020 IDPs' report states that "Access to quality inclusive education brings significant economic, social and health benefits to displaced and host communities alike" (UNICEF, 2020). Data from the UNHCR shows that 40% of the children in the world don't have access to primary education. The figures are more alarming in the case of refugees and IDPs. Their educational sector deals with several issues including effective curriculum, language, and appointing staff. As IDPs and refugees belong to those segments of the population who don't even have proper housing facilities, a permanent location for long-term education becomes even more challenging in such situations ("Education| UNHCR", n.d.).

Using international educational categories, the educational experience of IDP and refugee children can be seen to fall into three major categories. The first category involved education that follows the curriculum of the host country. The second category follows their own 'home' curriculum, and those who fall in the third category don't follow either of these two curriculums completely. The Karen IDPs fall primarily in the second category. They live in camps where a few of them learn through the curriculum developed by the Karen community in Burma. Their education is arranged by KED. However, they don't enjoy an uninterrupted educational environment as living in camps

poses a compromised educational quality. When they graduate, they find it difficult to speak the Burmese language or to integrate into the Burmese educational system as they had been learning in Karen-specific languages (Shiohata, 2018).

Before the ceasefire agreement in Myanmar, the Ministry of Education in 1958 made Burmese the national curriculum language, and English a secondary language while totally ignoring the ethnic language. The educational system before the agreement focused on Burmanisation only alternatively excluding the culture and linguistic identity of more than 100 ethnic groups. In this regard, the agreement proved to be a benchmark in changing Burmese history. It emphasized the protection of the cultural and linguistic identity of ethnicities. However, the impact of NCA on reinforcing Karen cultural identity hasn't been observed to a significant extent as ethnicity is still fighting with the Tatmadaw and is suffering from weak infrastructure (Lall, 2020).

Quality education has always remained a major concern for the Karen community. That's why the local Karen community has always strived for the better education of IDPs. In the 1950s, the Karen had access to the basic education provided by the mission schools but when military tensions rose, the educational sector suffered substantially. In 2011, the Karen National Union (KNU) and the Myanmar government talked about either the convergence or integration of the two educational systems. However, the discussion didn't seem to bring advantages for the Karen community due to the significant percentage of internal displacement and series of ongoing conflicts in a few of the areas (Naw, 1989).

Karen refugees in Thailand have focused on opening their schools in camps. They rely on support from NGOs to develop their educational system. After the ceasefire agreement, the Burmese influence on the education system in Burma has also increased. According to the 2014 Myanmar census, there were 540,000 children under the age of 14 in the Karen population. All of these were in the age of accessing educational facilities. Research by UNESCO (2016) has compared the completion rates of Karen and non-Karen people in Myanmar. It shows that about 66% of the Karen individuals complete education, compared to the national completion rate of 79% (UNESCO, 2016). The statistical data is highly consistent with their lack of access to the proper educational facilities, as documented by Lall & South (2013). The fear of Tatmadaw is prevalent

in various areas where the Karen educational institutes get destroyed due to the forced evictions and destruction (Lall & South, 2013).

As the Burmese influence over the institutes is increasing, many schools have been shifting from the control of the Karen Education Department (KED) to the Burmese government control. The schools under KED provide educational access to Karen IDPs in Myanmar. The primary reason for it is the lack of proper economic assistance to them. Students for a part of their life learn under the Karen curriculum and then they have to shift towards the Burmese curriculum. The educational department suffers inconsistency and there is no permanent school system and classes for the Karen individuals to learn. The shift is also associated with the changing language of instruction within the schools. The children have then to learn the Burmese language and values. As argued by Shiohata (2018), this process gets extremely alarming for the preservation of the Karen identity. Further, those who manage to learn in KNU schools are not accepted by Myanmar universities, posing another problem for the sustainability of the Karen educational department (Lopes Cardozo & Shah, 2016).

Such scenarios create problems for those living in temporary Thai camps at the South-Eastern Border of Myanmar. KNU has been supporting these camps. Those who manage to study in these camps fail to integrate into the Myanmar Education system. The problem creates due to the difference of language as the Thai language is significantly different from both Burmese and Karen languages. In this way, they can't grasp the educational instructions properly. Thus secondary schools in Burma don't admit such students. It leads them to quit their education and enter into the labor force. Thus, there exist several gaps in the Karen education system where they can't continue their education in one place (Yamahata et al., 2021).

Chapter 6 item 25(1) (a) of the ceasefire agreement mentions EAOs and the government should collaborate as "Efforts to preserve and promote ethnic culture, language, and literature" (NCA, 2015). After the agreement in 2015, the NLD government focused on arranging special classes for ethnic students to learn their own languages at educational institutes in 2021. This attempt outlines the impact of the agreement on the ethnic struggle to maintain their cultural identity.

However, the lack of properly developed infrastructure and the military coup of 2021 slowed down the process of educational progress.

4.2.3. Mobile schools and jungle classrooms

The Karen have been experiencing conflict, as part of a long-armed struggle for self-determination and independence, for many years. Despite being the largest ethnic group in South East Asia, they don't have proper access to all the social facilities. A few of the schools like KED and community schools have been opened for them to provide them Karen-specific education, yet the schools have been going through a socio-economic crisis. Due to the shortage of space and facilities, and the movement and displacement of the Karen people, their mode of education has shifted from traditional buildings to what can be described as mobile schools and jungle classrooms (Naw, 1989). Though such models have been serving the Karen educational department, the quality of education gets compromised there resulting in low learning outcomes (Lwin, 2019).

According to the statistics provided by the Karen Education Department (2019), there are 1738 schools in the Karen state which are governed by the Myanmar government. These schools serve primary, middle, and secondary levels of education ("Karen Education and Culture Department", 2019). All of these schools follow the Burmese curriculum and use Burmese as the language of instruction. The schools that are governed by the KED are 300 out of 1000, out of which 30 are middle schools, and 20 provide higher secondary education. However, these numbers include mobile and jungle schools that lack the basic educational facilities of regular schools (Shiohata, 2018).

One example is the Karen high school of the Thai Burmese border, in which the students are taught in the jungle near the Tenasserim River (Naw, 1989). The Mergui-Tavoy district hosts 36 jungle schools with a strength of several thousand students (Naw, 1989)). However, such schools fail to provide education in the dry season due to the impending attacks of the Burmese army. As these schools are located in remote areas, communication gaps further limit the quality of education. Teachers have to travel long distances to reach schools and teach the villagers children. Further,

the children studying in these schools are extremely poor, which poses additional economic pressure on the schools (Odochao et al., 2006).

Teaching in these schools is extremely challenging as many of the teachers find it difficult to communicate in indigenous languages. Chapter 1, clause “d” of the ceasefire agreement, however, mentions, “Guarantee equal rights to all citizens who live within the Republic of the Union of Myanmar; no citizen shall be discriminated against on the basis of ethnicity, religion, culture, or gender” (NCA, 2015). But the educational situation of Karen ethnicity both before and after the agreement isn’t promising. The schools mainly depend on senior Karen students to serve as teachers in the primary schools. To overcome the shortage of teachers, military groups have been appointed in such schools to provide education (Naw,1989). Nonetheless, curriculum issues are prominent in such schools. The economic situation of these schools can’t support stationary expenses. Students have old and used textbooks of the Burmese curriculum. These schools bear the economic burden of copying educational text as these areas lack the facility of a printing press. For painting blackboards, diluted carbon powder is used which is obtained from the used dry cell batteries. There are several instances where ineffective sanitation measures at jungle schools are giving rise to several diseases among children hampering a continuous process of education. Thus the imposed economic and social pressure makes it difficult for the Karen teachers and stakeholders to promote Karen values at such schools (Naw, 1989).

The villagers in a few areas play their role in establishing jungle schools. A good example of it is the Jungle School of Medicine in Kawthoolei. The villagers have provided blankets and other schools for training students in the jungle. Local Karen teachers have also been appointed in such schools. Villagers bring educational supplies through their animals to keep the school running (Oh et al., 2017). Due to poverty, many Karen students quit their education. In such areas, mobile schools help them in completing their education. The schools strive at maintaining higher levels of education by providing free uniforms and stationery items (Bigagli, 2019).

Despite their effectiveness, mobile schools unlike formal schools are ignored in emergency educational situations. Mobile schools are not provided with enough capital to support educational expenses. The ceasefire agreement acknowledged the ethnic rights to education, but lack of proper

government support and ongoing ethnic conflict affected the implementation and role of the agreement on the Karen education system. For the Karen IDPs and refugees lacking permanent residence, mobile schools are the problem solvers unless fully equipped with all the facilities. However, a rigid educational curriculum in terms of Burmese-only education and lack of support from the government sector hampers the usefulness of such schools in the Karen resistance area. Even after the agreement, they are still creating pressure on parents and schools to afford salaries and stationery items. The problems are persistent and depend on effective policymaking for their solutions (Lwin, 2019).

4.3. The challenges of ceasefire agreement

Though the ceasefire agreement was signed for the maintenance of peace, the outcomes of it are devastating. It has increased political tension among the groups, government, and the military. Irrespective of the fact that many groups have signed the ceasefire agreement, there are a few who still are against the agreement and are active at Burmese borders. The situation led to such an extent that Myanmar's leader Aung San Suu Kyi was overthrown due to the continued clashes at the borders. The military was accused of focusing on its interest-only in maintaining its rule over the country that gave rise to a series of political ups and downs (McCarthy & Farrelly, 2020).

Among those groups that didn't sign the ceasefire agreement, the Arakan Army has particularly remained very prominent. The group kept on fighting in Rakhine state despite a temporary ceasefire agreement. The Arakan Army claimed at closely analyzing the overall situation which they don't find favorable enough to sign the ceasefire agreement. However, the situation created an immense economic and domestic burden for the military government. It was further suspected by the military that the country would get under the sole control of ethnicities that led to a whole new struggle for power between the groups and the government and became one of the several reasons for the ongoing clashes (Core, 2009). The ethnicities adhere to their past struggle as in their views the agreement failed to address their issues and acknowledge their sacrifices. The Kachin army is striving for their rights in Northern Myanmar while the Karen army has been fighting in Eastern Myanmar (Egreteau, 2012).

The Kachin independent army has also been training their army in the Kachin-controlled areas. The fighting is continued and the most recent depiction of it is the claim made by the Kachin army that they have shot down the army's helicopter during successive events of fighting. It has been regarded as the first-ever incidence of such immense retaliation by the ethnic armies. The Kachin army representative mentioned that they retaliated only when the government used airstrikes on Momauk Township. These fights have also led to enormous displacements. The Myanmar government didn't make any comment in the beginning. However, there are several examples where the government also uses arms to weaken the protestors (Lee et al., 2018).

Another recent example of it is the Myanmar Spring Revolution 2021. Since the military has control in Myanmar, it overthrew the democratic government. The situation was alarming for all the civilians including the ethnicities, as it could open another chapter of Tatmadaw's control over the ethnicities. Responding to it, the ethnicities protested against the political shift. However, it increased the death toll according to the Assistance Association for Political prisoners in Myanmar. The fighting resulted in 765 deaths and countless injuries (AlJazeera, 2021). While reviewing the statistics, the situation becomes highly conflicting that the government provides only one-third of the actual death toll. Not only the ethnicities but several journalists have also been arrested. The rough estimation leads to 3500 instances of forceful apprehensions (Hlaing, 2012).

Amongst these ongoing scenarios of actual and potential conflict, a few of the government officials have enhanced their efforts to work constructively with the ethnicities. The Committee Representing Pyidaungsu Hluttaw (CRPH) has been for years indulging in a peace maintenance dialogue with the ethnic protestors. CRPH also excluded ethnic armed organizations (EAOs) from the list of unlawful organizations and mentioned Tatmadaw as the terrorist group (Ring, 2021). The CRPH reinforced the Federal Democracy Charter and denounced the 2008 Constitution which violated ethnicities' rights in several ways. In 2008, the military government announced a "discipline-flourishing genuine multiparty democracy" referendum. That referendum sought at extending the military rule and no choice was provided to the civilians except to accept it that led to serious human rights violations in Myanmar ("Vote to Nowhere", 2008).

The ethnicities are found to be satisfied with the vision of CRPH and are engaging in meaningful discourse with the authorities (Ring, 2021). The CRPH focuses on providing political representation to these groups. Through these agreements, ethnic groups would be included in the state governments and the Union governments. However, ethnicities still have several concerns regarding such peace agreements as no proper framework has been created for changing the state law. The federalism through Federal Democracy charter would be suitable for most of the minorities but Bama ethnic groups are not in the favour of it. Thus, there are still lesser chances for the fulfillment of the agreement. Such situations create another confusion among the ethnic groups because many of the ethnic groups don't want to be part of such agreements and rely on the claims of the government. It leads to years of ongoing conflict and fighting still breaks out (Ring, 2021). Thus, the future trajectory of Karen ethnic education in Myanmar is still unpredictable in such a situation. The Karen individuals can develop their own educational system with local support. However, for its future development, government support is imperative.

Thus, the increasing number of IDPs, recent political confrontations, weak infrastructure, Burmacized higher education, and the economic burden are a few of the major issues for the Karen ethnicity to maintain their cultural identity. Political tensions have decreased the government support, which is putting more pressure on the local education department. The NCA is another challenge for them as it didn't address the ethnic educational issue properly. The Karen individuals are striving to maintain their cultural identity by standing against biased educational laws and policy documents like the National Educational law of 2014 and NCA. As far as national government views about Karen education are concerned, the NLD government is making significant efforts to overcome educational discrepancies. However, the political tensions are still ongoing affecting the education department completely.

4.3.1. The impact of the 2015 ceasefire agreement upon Karen struggle for freedom

The conflicts in Myanmar have been ongoing since their independence from the British in 1948. The agreement was signed between the Myanmar government and ethnic armed organizations (EAOs) primarily to bring an end to the ongoing tensions in the country. The tensions in the region are extremely high as it is a diverse ethnic land and resources are unevenly distributed in the region.

Most of the natural resources are found in the bordering regions of Myanmar which in the past were inhabited by different ethnicities. Years of violence and injustice gave rise to ethnonationalism and a struggle for power in Myanmar among different armed groups. The drastic consequences of the civil war led to the ceasefire agreement. However, the agreement encompasses a political dimension in which the agreement has been used for achieving vague political gains (NCA, 2015).

During the process, only selective EAOs were invited to sign the agreement. Insurgent groups like Arakan Army, Kachin independence army, Karen National Defence Organization, etc in Myanmar are collectively called Ethnic armed organizations (EAOs) by the Myanmar government. In Myanmar, there are approximately 51 EAOs but Tatmadaw selectively chose the groups for participation in the major political activity of history. However, the ethnic conflicts affect about one-third of the country and the selective representation depicts the hegemony in the overall procedure. The hegemony was depicted in such a way that a few of the ethnic groups were given preference over others rather than giving representation to all the insurgent and suffering groups (Emma, 2020). The agreement aimed at eliminating the discrimination practices but many EAOs refused to sign the agreement by considering the agreement another act of discrimination (Ganesan, 2015). The agreement also didn't address the issues of a few of the rural ethnic communities. The step raised a lot of concerns in the international community concerning the alleged attempt of Tatmadaw to still not lose control and remain active in the ethnic issues (Ganesan, 2015).

The agreement gave rise to political tensions among the ethnic groups. One of the major groups that signed the agreement was the Karen National Union and Restoration Council of Shan State. The groups had led several rebellious movements in the country in the past. They signed the agreement to play their role in the long-term peace-building process. Nonetheless, other militant groups including United Wa State Army and the Karen Independence Army refused to sign. They demanded that all ethnic groups should have stood by each other's side. Further, they argued that the agreement is no more than a political stunt as it offered a very short deadline for signing it, and only one month was left before the general elections (Core, 2009).

The ceasefire agreement was particularly signed under US pressure. In 2010, Hillary Clinton made her first official visit to Myanmar that led to the first general elections in the country. Even after the ceasefire agreement has been signed in 2015, the education system in Myanmar is struggling in the effective reinforcement of the peace process and development of social justice. Not only in Myanmar but the ceasefire agreements have also been signed in several other countries where the international community has particularly played a significant role in reaching the consensus agreement. Considering the ethnic conflict of the Balkans, a ceasefire agreement namely the Dayton peace agreement, was signed between Bosnia and Herzegovina in 1995 (Andreas, 2004). The conflict particularly rose between three ethnic groups of Muslim Bosniaks, Croatians, and Serbians. In the Bosnian war, the United States intervened in 1995 and played a role not only in consensus but also in the implementation. The president sent National Security Adviser Anthony Lake and Undersecretary of State Peter Tarnoff for drawing the peace agreement (U.S. Department of State, 2021).

The US further aimed at launching airstrikes against Serbia for breaching the agreement. Not only this, but president Clinton also won the trust of the local American community by mentioning that western peace was imperative for the development of America. Following it, several nations like the United Kingdom, France, Germany, Italy, and the European Union played their role in the agreement. For its effective implementation, the US has provided financial support of \$2 billion for the reconstruction projects, strengthening the economy and defense system of the region (U.S. Department of State, 2021). Other significant efforts outlined the development of multiethnic democratic institutions, strengthening the judiciary, free journalism, and promoting civic education (U.S. Department of State, 2021). The Myanmar ceasefire agreement was though signed under US pressure, its effective implementation demands similar international support.

Following Hillary's visit to Myanmar in 2011, Thein Sein, a former military general became the president of Myanmar. The Myanmar state has for about 60 years remained under the control of the military. The Burmese way to socialism has for many years violated the rights of Burmese farmers while closing the doors for democracy (Frankel, 2000). However, the government elected in 2011 removed many restrictions. Still, the military dominance in parliament is reinforced in multiple articles of the 2008 constitution remained active (Vote to Nowhere, 2008). Myanmar went

through a long period of international isolation after which the United States lifted some of the Burmese sanctions. It provided new options for Burma to strengthen its political position through economic giants rather than relying on China and Southeast Asia only (Burke, 2011).

The principles of the National Ceasefire Agreement are more focused on achieving political goals. The principle “b” acknowledges the agreement as political dialogue and a process of creating a political culture in which the ethnic conflicts would be resolved on political grounds. It states, “Reach a negotiated settlement to end protracted armed conflict in the Republic of the Union of Myanmar, secure a nationwide ceasefire as a first step to end armed conflict and establish a new political culture of resolving political conflicts through political dialogue instead of force of arms” (NCA, 2015). The agreement mentions the objectivity of political grounds but somehow undermines the political issues of the ethnicities. Its principle “d” recognizes the political intentions of different armed groups in the ceasefire agreement but authorities couldn’t bring all ethnicities on one page that reduced the effectiveness of the agreement despite being a bilateral agreement (NCA, 2015).

Thus the recent NCA in Myanmar focuses on providing equal educational opportunities to all individuals. The agreement was signed in 2015, but as of 2021 very few of the steps have been taken for its effective reinforcement. There is no end to the interethnic tensions in the country. Despite the agreement, military bases are still getting built in the ethnic regions. The agreement solely focused on the political objectives and dialogue but these political dialogues have been put to a halt by both sides. In such cases, the role of the national ceasefire agreement in promoting integrated national identity has become vague when many of the civilians don’t even trust the credibility and inclusiveness of the agreement (McCarthy & Farrelly, 2020).

4.3.2. The impact of 2015 ceasefire agreement upon education for internally displaced persons

Relocation is broadly defined as the movement intended for achieving better facilities and better outcomes for those affected. Relocation in the past was challenging for ethnicities only but it became challenging for the authorities also under the ceasefire agreement. Under global pressure,

the agreement emphasized the relocation of suffering individuals along with addressing the problem of displacement. Since years of conflict had increased the number of IDPs in Myanmar, their relocation was one of the major challenges. As the ceasefire agreement marked a new start in Myanmar's history, several state development projects in coordination with ethnicities were to be pursued. The IDPs and other refugees have faced serious human rights violations and a lack of access to basic life facilities throughout this period. New initiatives had to be taken to ensure their relocation and bring them back to their lives (Thawngmung, 2017).

Despite ceasefire agreements, eighty-four thousand civilians still live in the ongoing conflict zones. Not only these, but two million of the sufferers also moved to Thailand and about 1 lac lived temporarily in the camps. The relocation of such a large number of civilians was extremely exigent. However, there was substantial global pressure also by several human rights organizations and governments that led to relocations. Principle 10 of the agreement states, "Relevant Government ministries, the Ethnic Armed Organizations, and local organizations shall coordinate with each other when implementing the delivery of humanitarian assistance by the NGOs and INGOs to Internally Displaced Persons (IDPs) and conflict victims with the approval of the Government of the Republic of the Union of Myanmar" (NCA,2015). It was challenging for the government in terms of the provision of basic life facilities. The agreement emphasized the protection and safer movement of IDPs to nearby villages and offer them opportunities to maintain a basic standard of life. It was also agreed that all the basic help will be provided to the IDPs and refugees in the registration processes. However, the economic and social pressure and political tensions in the ongoing conflicts raised several issues in the relocation process that needed to be addressed (NCA, 2015).

Before the ceasefire agreement, state development projects often had what can be described as brutal impacts for minority ethnic groups. The Karen nationals for the first time in 1984 crossed the Burmese border and entered the Tak province where Tatmadaw forcibly used them in infrastructure development projects. They were 10,000 in number then and the number of those residing in Tak province has reached 1 lac until now (ReliefWeb, 2002). It was anticipated that the number of refugees will decline but it kept on increasing as their houses in the villages were destroyed. They were forcibly relocated and were used by the Tatmadaw in the state development

projects like building roads and army units and other purposes. It led to the creation of the labor force and human rights violations. The general relocation sites identified were of three types; large relocation centers, small relocation villages, and non-state-controlled relocation sites. In the large relocation centers, ethnicities forcibly had to move. Tatmadaw controlled areas where they could have access to the agricultural lands but had to pay enormous rice taxes. Concerning small, relocated villages and the Wa State Army-controlled relocation centers, the villagers couldn't access the basic life facilities. Because such relocation sites were not suitable for ethnicities, many left them and migrated to villages (ReliefWeb, 2002).

Since the country went through decades of conflict, the economic condition of Myanmar is in serious crisis. After the agreement, it could be very cost-intensive in terms of bearing transportation costs, building new houses, and creating employment opportunities. The country had also remained isolated for years from the world that made the process further complicated. The relocation process brought several challenges for the ethnicities also. The refugees faced serious issues in conforming to the new environment with its specific demands and obstacles. They had to lose their cultural values, specific sets of languages, and their community where they had been living for decades and had flourished their civilizations. As most of the IDPs used to depend on the land, new climatic and soil conditions pose several challenges for them to adapt to the new environment (Grundy-Warr & Wong Siew Yin, 2002).

Though the relocation programs have been started, the educational system has still to improve. Not only the IDPs but refugees according to the agreement have to be relocated and merged into the educational system. Despite human rights concerns, the situation is still not promising for the ethnicities in the relocation sites. They have to face a lack of basic life facilities of which educational inequalities are severe, and due to the ongoing conflict, the rehabilitation projects still are insufficient for the ethnicities. They are still being forcibly used by the military for state development projects and the situation can't be resolved without a mutual agreement (Haacke, 2009).

4.3.3. Linguistic freedom and cultural identity before and after the ceasefire agreement

The Karen ethnicity strived for their basic human rights for several decades. The ceasefire agreement was expected to be not only an end to the conflict but an assurance of basic human rights to the ethnicities. Its principle “d” aims at providing equal rights to all ethnicities where there would be no discrimination based on color, race, or religion in the Republic of the Union of Myanmar. The right to seek education is the most prominent of all. The ethnicities despite staying at camps or jungles continued their education. However, the ceasefire agreement failed to address the educational demands of the ethnicities which became one of the several reasons, a few of the ethnicities didn’t agree to sign the ceasefire agreement (Lwin, 2019).

The ceasefire agreement included a whole chapter of future tasks in which the government will work in association with the ethnic armed organizations for community building. Its chapter 9, clause “a” states that “Provide necessary support in coordination with each other to improve livelihoods, health, education, and regional development for the people”. The agreement covered all the basic dimensions including health, education, socio-economic development, environmental protection and protection of ethnic languages and culture, and working on the rehabilitation projects. However, despite these principles, the agreement didn’t include any specific recommendation or details of educational reform. After the agreement, educational opportunities are provided to the ethnicities in Myanmar, but they don’t coincide with their unique cultural values and ethnicities. The educational system has arguably been focusing on the assimilation of all ethnicities into the dominant Burmese language and culture only (Jolliffe & Mears, 2016). There are separate institutes for the ethnicities, but they fail to keep up with the required educational standard due to the lack of proper economic support. Multiculturalism and multilingualism along with homogenization are prominent issues in Myanmar’s educational system in educational institutes. Further, those studying at camp can’t grasp the Burmese language and fail to continue their higher education. Apart from these, there are several other educational issues. The agreement didn’t emphasize individual solutions to all these issues (South & Lall, 2016).

The educational dynamics of Myanmar transformed before and after the ceasefire agreement. Before the agreement, mother tongue-based teaching (MTB) has remained a major concern for the minorities. The ethnicities demand that at an earlier level, their children must be taught in their mother languages and then introducing to the Burmese language later on at higher levels. The

political direction of the country always remained focused on Burmanisation in Myanmar's education system. Since 2011, the Karen National Union had established its education system with a more focus on Karen and English languages and a less focus on the Burmese language. The minority struggled for federalism in education with their control over the education system. However, over the years, the Karen education system also adopted both autonomous and joint government schools (Lall & South, 2013).

Chapter 6 of the ceasefire agreement gives autonomy to EAGs in the education, health, and security sectors. The peace process has remained significantly very challenging as the Karen conflict has started again even after the ceasefire agreement. The concept of Karen inclusion in Myanmar's higher education system has still not be reached. Militaries are still using Karen educational institutes for their activities and Karen institutes are mainly running with the support of the local Karen community and NGOs. In terms of government support, the NLD government in 2021 decided to allocate separate school hours for students of ethnic communities to learn in their own languages. However, the recent political coup has again become challenging for both the Myanmar and Karen education system. Despite the peace process, many of the ethnic and Burmese students and teachers have been killed and universities are getting destroyed. In the fear of Tatmadaw, the students are refusing to go to educational institutes and the educational process of the overall country has been crippling (Reuters, 2020).

There is a direct relationship between peace and education (Komatsu, 2017). If long-term peace was to be achieved, a context would be created that could better support the realization of educational reforms. Focusing on the Kachin state, the conflict again started in 2011. This led to the creation of parallel education systems as minority ethnic groups realized that political tension was not about to end. As the conflict resumed, the schools under Kachin Independence Organization (KIO) removed the Burmese language from academics and begin to incorporate the Kachin and English languages. In addition to these, the Karen National Union also developed several schools that were based on their mother tongue. The ethnicities are striving towards creating a federal Myanmar in which they would be separately recognized. In this way, they created their schools with the aid of NGOs as the ceasefire agreement didn't address educational reforms (Naw, 1989).

The educational reforms are a prominent issue for the minority ethnicities as these are related to the future sustainability of their social and cultural identities within Myanmar. In this regard, a dialogical approach is arguably required to include ethnicities in the communication process. However, the inclusion of only a few of the ethnicities limited the process of effective communication where every other ethnicity could put forward their issues and look for constructive solutions. The major issue for the ethnicities is their status in the community-building processes like education. There are several concerns including if they would have to include their educational values or mother tongue or they would have still to subjugate to the national curriculum. Thus, the peace-making process leads to a new political dialogue concerning the distribution of power and resources (Shepard Wong, 2017).

In this situation, there are two key stakeholders including the government and the ethnicities. The NCA demanded the joint responsibilities of both the stakeholders in alleviating the condition of ethnicities. The NCA affected the cultural identity of Karen as according to the agreement ethnic culture and language would be preserved (NCA, 2015). Thus by following the agreement, the ethnicities including Karen would be given due representation in state projects and political dimensions. When they would be given enough share of capital, they would be able to foster their culture and linguistic identity. However, the differences are still prominent.

One side wants to keep the Burmese as the national language while the other side wants to flourish their own linguistic identity. The situation is more complex than that as the fight is for political representation and resources. Since in this regard, if a group wants to keep Burmese as the governance language, it would automatically be allotted more resources for strengthening the infrastructure. Thus, it would also strengthen the political situation of that group for overcoming the others. There are a few political dialogues concerning to use of both ethnic and Burmese languages side by side. However, still, no conclusion for it has been proposed. It creates a contesting situation for the minorities also that which ethnic language of all would have a status of being national ethnic language. There are dominant linguistic groups including the Kachin and the Karen but still, other minorities also want to get their linguistic assets to be recognized. Thus,

despite a ceasefire agreement, the country is moving towards the creation of parallel societies (South & Lall, 2016).

Chapter V – Relevant initiatives and further suggestions

Myanmar is an ethnically diverse and having a complex mixture of different cultures and civilizations. Like any diverse country, cultural and ethnic groups in Myanmar aspire to having their identity recognized and acknowledged. The diversity of Myanmar's population continues to be a real challenge. The solution for Myanmar's social problems doesn't lie in homogenization, but arguably in policies that create authentic space for diverse groups to develop and maintain their cultural identity. The struggle for identity could be solved by federalism. Though Myanmar is on the road towards a political system of liberal democratic federalism, ethnic representation is very much limited and still struggle for freedom. Many of the ethnic groups in Myanmar are still formally unrecognized. Giving them the required representation won't only overcome the identity struggle but could create a sense of responsibility among the ethnicities to work constructively for their future.

The problem of Karen people's struggle for freedom can also be solved by solving the educational issues. In Myanmar's case, it is highly revealing that minorities should pay more attention on educational reforms. The reason that they didn't participate in the ceasefire agreement was also the same. As explained in this work, the Karen people have a long history of struggling to maintain their identity, including through the creation and practice of separate, ethnic schools. In this regard, the government must introduce specific educational policies. If the issue can't be resolved by the combined institutes, economic support must be provided to them to flourish their institutes. A proper educational environment should be provided to them that would cultivate better educational outcomes rather than mobile schools and jungle classrooms. Rather to encourage KNU district education officers and state township education officers to share information about teaching curriculum on the ground level.

The identity struggle can also be minimized by reshaping the school policies. Schools play an important role in determining the future direction of individuals. Through collective support, the schools' environment must be changed. Racist language at schools may fuel the identity struggle among students. Owing to the younger age, they may in turn adopt violent paths for achieving their rights. An approach of 'one-nation, one-language' may be appropriate for some countries, but in Myanmar's case, with at least 130 languages in use by 45 million of the population, there is clearly a need for a reformed language policy for minority ethnic and linguistic groups within the country's education systems.

An additional, prominent factor in this regard is the need for a more comprehensive school curriculum. In the schools, the students are taught colonial history but do not learn about the history and struggles of the ethnic minorities within the territorial state of Myanmar. The textbooks cover the Burmese history, but the struggle of the Karen people is absent. The national curriculum is totally against ethnic values. Furthermore, education reforms should address the multilingualism and historical inclusion from both Karen and Burmese populated areas. State universities should also change their policies in accepting more minority students with minimized level of Burmese language due to the current situation and help build a better growth opportunity equally to them.

The solution can solve the ethnic issues in not only Myanmar but throughout the world. The study above demonstrated how neoliberal policies, including in education, work against the interests of the Karen people and their education. In particular, neoliberalism tends to put responsibility for well-being, including success in education, onto individuals, without regards for the differential social and economic status in an unequal society. Hence, the inequities that much educational policy tries to resolve. Focusing on this ideology, minority ethnic groups like the Karen are disadvantaged and not adequately represented within education system, and historically may contribute to the resort to armed struggle. The educational institutes should also be freed from these neoliberal chains. The privatization of education is in a race towards achieving a better economic advantage and it makes the ethnic minority students can't afford the high educational expenses. It reduced the number of ethnic minority students to continue their educational process and enter into the labor force which again perpetuates cycles of disadvantage and discrimination

group. Hence, access to equal education system to all and ensuring social justice in Myanmar society is highly recommended.

Ethnicities struggle to get recognized in the country. Concerning their demands, the role of education could be highly influential. The national curriculum should not focus on Burmese values only but also include ethnicities in them to minimize the discrimination and oppression in the country. Specific programs that value and preserve all ethnic minority groups' languages, cultures, histories and traditions should be introduced in state schools. The strategy would create a sense of inclusion among the ethnicities. They would appreciate the process of getting recognized in terms of their unique identity. On the same grounds, the state schools should also include ethnic languages to such an extent that they began to relate themselves with the foundation of their country.

The political dialogue should be ensured in ceasefire agreement. However, the dialogue should be inclusive and would involve all ethnic minority groups. Apart from that, there have been several democratic struggles in merging the ethnicities under the Burmese flag. The dialogue should be focused on analyzing the future goals of the ethnicities and their current position. An approach should be directed towards creating trust among the masses as ethnicities don't appear to be relying on government suggestions. A sound political framework should be created in which they should be allowed to be participated in the strategic decision making. They must also be incorporated in the community-building processes to offer them an opportunity of working with other civilians. They must be allowed to live freely in the areas where they have fostered their culture for decades. Ethnonationalism could only be reduced by communicating effectively with ethnicities.

During the interim period, both Myanmar government and KNU have to take on trust from international community and they need financial support and knowledge from international experiences for education reforms. Providing economic support to ethnic minority groups education systems and developing joint trainings for state teachers and Karen's teachers from different education providers in cooperation with national NGOs it is a special request to international community. The international community better reconsider to provide economic

support to border-based ethnic minority schools and in Karen State while Myanmar is under the military coup d'état.

Thus, the ethnic issues could be resolved by focusing on socio-economic, cultural, and political dimensions. Basic civilian rights should apply to every other person in the country. In this regard, the ethnic leaders must also emphasize the awareness among the ethnicities concerning the fact that ethnic issues can also be resolved by reconciliation and proper political channels rather than years of conflict. Conflicts damage not only the infrastructure but also take numerous lives while damaging the cultural and ethnic identities.

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