

**TEACHING BUDDHISM IN
NEW ZEALAND UNIVERSITIES**

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ABSTRACT

This thesis is an investigation into the university-level teaching of Buddhism in New Zealand, which has developed as part of the international spread of education about Buddhism for both Buddhists and non-Buddhists. The study was based on *Interpretivism* and accordingly sought to understand and interpret university teachers' perceptions and experiences about their teaching of Buddhism; as they engage with the students' learning in this field.

Semi-structured in-depth interviews were employed as the primary research method. All seven university teachers who teach Buddhism in New Zealand were invited to be the participants. Six university teachers participated in this research-study. Five of them were academic teachers, respectively teaching at Religious Studies of Massey, Victoria and Otago. Another one was a New Zealand-born Zen teacher who had been teaching a Zen meditation workshop at Auckland University of Technology for several years, and taught two Buddhism-related courses at the University of Auckland. These participants were chosen according to the information provided on official websites of New Zealand universities.

The findings from the study showed that the university-level teaching of Buddhism in New Zealand, though growing, had been limited by the number of teachers and students. As fewer students were primarily interested in Buddhism, outward funding support appeared to be a very important factor for its future development. In terms of teachers' role, *objective-outsider* remained the main position for scholars and scholar-practitioners in teaching Buddhism in university classroom. In addition to the pursuit of knowledge, there were also alternative educational opportunities, such as Zen workshop, for university staffs and students to learn Buddhism, outside university classroom.

This thesis is significant in that it provided a bibliography and a set of data for the university-level teaching of Buddhism in the West, particularly New Zealand. It established a space for future educational research into for the university-level teaching of Buddhism in the West, as part of the field of 'Buddhism and Education.' In future studies, the limited approaches to teaching Buddhism in universities could be investigated on the basis of the literatures and findings of this study.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

| | |
|--|----------|
| ABSTRACT..... | I |
| TABLE OF CONTENTS..... | II |
| ATTESTATION OF AUTHORSHIP..... | VI |
| ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS..... | VII |
| CHAPTER ONE: INTRODUCTION..... | 1 |
| MY RESEARCH JOURNEY..... | 1 |
| CHAPTER OVERVIEWS..... | 5 |
| CHAPTER TWO: LITERATURE REVIEW..... | 6 |
| A BRIEF INTRODUCTION TO WESTERN LITERATURE..... | 6 |
| <i>Earlier Western Literature (1981-1993)</i> | 7 |
| <i>Teaching Buddhism Conference (1999) at MC Gill</i> | 8 |
| <i>Fenn's Survey (2001) on Teaching Buddhism</i> | 9 |
| TEACHING BUDDHISM IN UNIVERSITY..... | 11 |
| <i>Why Study/Teach Buddhism in University?</i> | 11 |
| <i>How to Teach Buddhism in University?</i> | 15 |
| <i>What the Buddhologist Taught?</i> | 28 |
| THE PLACE AND DILEMMA OF BUDDHIST STUDIES IN UNIVERSITY..... | 32 |
| <i>Is Buddhism a Philosophy, Religion, both, or neither?</i> | 32 |
| <i>Two-Fold Marginalized Place in University Curriculum</i> | 34 |
| <i>Etic/ Emic Distinction in Study Approach to Buddhism</i> | 34 |
| <i>Academic/ Sectarian distinction in Teaching Buddhism</i> | 38 |
| BUDDHISM AND MODERN EDUCATION..... | 41 |
| <i>Brief Introduction to Scholarly Publications</i> | 41 |
| <i>The Educational Nature of Buddhism</i> | 44 |

| | |
|--|-----------|
| <i>The Scope of Buddhism and Education</i> | 46 |
| RATIONALE OF THE PRESENT STUDY | 49 |
| CHAPTER THREE: RESEARCH DESIGN | 50 |
| PHILOSOPHICAL BASE | 50 |
| <i>Researcher's Roles & Concerns</i> | 50 |
| <i>Becoming Part of 'Buddhism & Education'</i> | 50 |
| <i>Negotiating With Mahayana Buddhist Worldviews</i> | 51 |
| RESEARCH APPROACH & STRATEGY | 52 |
| <i>Semi-structured in-depth interviews</i> | 52 |
| <i>Interviewing Skills</i> | 53 |
| DATA ANALYSIS | 54 |
| POTENTIAL BIAS OF THE RESEARCHER | 55 |
| CHAPTER FOUR: FINDINGS | 56 |
| PARTICIPANTS' STORIES | 56 |
| <i>Dr. Erica Baffelli (Otago)</i> | 56 |
| <i>Dr. Will Sweetman (Otago)</i> | 59 |
| <i>Dr. Chaisit Suwanvarangkul (Otago)</i> | 65 |
| <i>Dr. Douglas Osto (Massey)</i> | 68 |
| <i>Dr. Michael Radich (Victoria)</i> | 74 |
| <i>Sensei, Amala Wrightson (AUT & UoA)</i> | 82 |
| EMERGING THEMES | 88 |
| <i>Various Roads lead to the study of Buddhism</i> | 88 |
| <i>The Internationalizing Feature of Modern Buddhist Studies in New Zealand</i> .. | 88 |
| <i>New Zealand University Teachers' Conception of Buddhism</i> | 88 |
| <i>What to Teach about Buddhism in University</i> | 89 |

| | |
|---|-----------|
| <i>Buddhist Studies was Limited within Religious Studies</i> | 90 |
| <i>Objective Approach to Teaching Buddhism</i> | 91 |
| <i>Using Similar Teaching Methods with Other Disciplines</i> | 91 |
| <i>Smaller Impacts of Cultural Difference on Teaching Methods</i> | 91 |
| <i>Students' Lack of Prior Knowledge Base on Basic Buddhism</i> | 92 |
| <i>Using Buddhist Line of Reasoning in Explaining Buddhist Ideas</i> | 92 |
| <i>The Use of Technology in Teaching or Research</i> | 92 |
| <i>Interactions and Cooperation with Buddhist Communities</i> | 92 |
| <i>Separated Spaces Offered for Studying and Practicing Buddhism</i> | 92 |
| <i>Limits and Opportunities in the Case of New Zealand</i> | 93 |
| CHAPTER FIVE: DISCUSSION OF THE FINDINGS | 94 |
| THE PLACE AND DILEMMA OF BUDDHIST STUDIES IN NZ UNIVERSITIES | 94 |
| <i>Five New Zealand Universities Teaching about Buddhism</i> | 94 |
| <i>Teaching Buddhism as Part of Internationalizing Buddhist Education</i> | 95 |
| PURPOSE, METHODS, CONTENTS AND PEOPLE | 96 |
| <i>'What Buddhism Is' as the Central Question of Exploration</i> | 96 |
| <i>Knowledge as the purpose, Academics as the tools</i> | 96 |
| <i>Objective Outsider Remains the Main Teaching Position</i> | 97 |
| <i>Taking a Historical Approach to Teaching Buddhism</i> | 98 |
| <i>Examining the Findings with Reynolds's Four Problematic Tendencies</i> | 98 |
| <i>Less Variation of Teaching Methods</i> | 98 |
| <i>Weaker Connections with Study Disciplines Other than Religious Studies</i> | 99 |
| <i>Fewer Concerns on Cultural Differences</i> | 99 |
| <i>More Opportunities for Far Distance Learning about Buddhism</i> | 99 |
| <i>Buddhist Studies Curriculum in Progress</i> | 100 |

| | |
|---|------------|
| <i>Funding from Buddhist Communities</i> | 100 |
| CHAPTER SIX: CONCLUSIONS | 101 |
| CONTRIBUTIONS TO THE RESEARCHER AND BUDDHIST COMMUNITIES HERE | 101 |
| CONTRIBUTIONS TO THE FIELD OF ‘BUDDHISM AND EDUCATION’ | 102 |
| LIMITATIONS OF THIS STUDY | 102 |
| SUGGESTIONS FOR FUTURE RESEARCH | 103 |
| REFERENCES | 104 |
| APPENDICES | 113 |
| APPENDIX A: BIBLIOGRAPHY | 113 |
| APPENDIX B: NZ DISSERTATIONS AND THESES WITH BUDDHISM-RELATED TOPIC | 121 |
| APPENDIX C: PARTICIPANT INFORMATION SHEET | 124 |
| APPENDIX D: CONSENT FORM | 127 |

FIGURES AND TABLES

| | |
|---|----|
| TABLE 2.1 UNIVERSITY OF SYDNEY BUDDHIST STUDIES CURRICULUM STRUCTURE | 30 |
| FIGURE 2.1 UNIVERSITY OF SYDNEY BUDDHIST STUDIES CURRICULUM STRUCTURE | 31 |
| TABLE 2.2 THREE ANSWERS FOR THE QUESTION ‘WAS THE BUDDHA A BUDDHA?’ | 35 |
| TABLE 2.3 COMPARISONS BETWEEN THE THEORETICAL BASE OF PIKE AND HARRIS..... | 36 |
| TABLE 2.4 MATRIX OF RELIGIOUS IDENTITY AND THE POSITION OF INTERPRETATION ... | 37 |
| FIGURE 2.2 A DIAGRAM FOR THE MATRIX | 38 |
| TABLE 2.5 THREE KINDS OF SUB-AREA OF ‘BUDDHISM AND EDUCATION’ | 48 |
| TABLE 5.1 BUDDHIST STUDIES COURSES IN NEW ZEALAND UNIVERSITIES | 89 |
| TABLE 5.2 AIMS AND METHODS FOR DIFFERENT SPACES | 92 |

ATTESTATION OF AUTHORSHIP

I hereby declare that this submission is my own work and that, to the best of my knowledge and belief, it contains no material previously published or written by another person nor material which to a substantial extent has been accepted for the qualification of any other degree or diploma of a university or other institution of higher learning, except where due acknowledgement is made in the acknowledgements.

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