THE LEARNER CENTERED APPROACH FOR THE EDUCATIONAL COLLEGES IN MYANMAR
- Development of the instructional system for an effective capacity building of the Trainers-

Takujiro Ito, Graduate School of the Software and Information Science, Iwate Prefectural University, Japan, takuito@mwe.biglobe.ne.jp

Katsuaki Suzuki, Iwate Prefectural University, Japan, ksuzuki@iwate-pu.ac.jp

Abstract: In the context of an international development cooperation project titled "Project for Strengthening the CCA Education in the Union of Myanmar", the authors are trying to develop an instructional system for an effective capacity building of the trainers, by applying a prototype "Composite model of Train the Trainer" proposed by the authors, based on the experiences of other similar projects for the capacity building. This paper summarize some information about the Myanmar education sector, specially on the current Education College system and latest efforts to reform the actual memorization based education to the Learner Centered Approach. The paper also consider some problem regarding actual teaching-learning process of the teacher education program in order to propose some strategy to improve the quality of basic education by support to the Education Colleges.

1. BACKGROUND

The first author is involved in an aid project for improvement of the education in Myanmar, implemented under the framework of technical assistance program of government of Japan though Japan International Cooperation Agency (JICA) to the Ministry of Education, Union of Myanmar. The project titled "Project for Strengthening the CCA Education in the Union of Myanmar" (called SCCA Project) started December 2004, with the duration of 3 years, with the purpose of extension of Child Centered Approach(CCA) in primary schools in the 27 major townships in Myanmar. The expected beneficiaries of the project are the approximately 23,000 primary teachers and 600,000 primary school students of the target area. For the extension of the CCA understanding and skills, by the cluster training so called "Cascade training", are designed that the Basic Education Resource Development Center (BERDC) staff or Master trainer will train the Educational College teachers from 20 colleges, and those teachers will train the primary school teachers of the target area.

In order to support the project purpose, a component of the Education College (EC) curriculum was created. This component aims to improve the actual pre-services curriculum for the future primary school teachers and upgrade the capacity of EC teachers on the understanding and skill of teaching by Learner Centered Approach (LCA). In this context of the project, the authors try to develop the capacity of the EC curriculum working group members composed by full-time and part-time BERDC staff, as trainers and future curriculum developers, in order to be able to conduct sustainable and continuous activities for the improvement of the education in Myanmar.

2. OBJECTIVE OF THIS PAPER

The objectives of this paper are:

2.1 To introduce the context of educational reform and EC system of Myanmar

2.2 To consider the problem regarding the actual teaching-learning process of ECs.

2.3 To present the strategy for effective application and dissemination of the LCA, which are the development of an instructional system and the capacity building of the trainers.

3. EDUCATIONAL REFORM AND INTRODUCTION OF CHILD CENTERED APPROACH (CCA) IN MYANMAR

During long time the traditional monastic education contributed to the extension of education and formation of the actual Myanmar culture. After the independence on 1948, several action for educational reform was taken based on the new education policy, and scientific approach gradually started replacing the traditional education.

The latest educational reform policy is reflected in the National Action Plan of "Education for All" (EFA) published in March 2003, in line with the Dakar Framework for Global Action. Though this Action Plan, government of Myanmar aim to improve the accessibility and quality of education, and as one of the important issue, focus on the improvement of teaching-learning process, by shifting the actual memorization based Teacher Centered Approach (TCA) to the Child Centered Approach (CCA)

As the strategy for the implementation of the Goal Area related to the improvement of the access and quality, EFA stated "the Development and Expanding of Child-Friendly Schools", and breakdown to the 5 mayor activities: 1. To construct or renovate schools, 2. To practice Child-Centered Approach, 3. To ensure and adequate supply and use of effective learning materials, 4. To improve school management, 5. To motivate and organize community participation.

3.1 THE MYANMAR CONCEPT OF CHILD CENTERED APPROACH (CCA)

Now, what is CCA? There is no standard definition of CCA, since the philosophy of the child centered or learner centered approach was developed nurturing from the scientific contribution of various educators, philosophers, psychologists and applied in different social contexts during different times. But here, according the CCA understanding assessment (Tanaka, 2004) developed by "Development Survey for the Improvement of Quality and Access of Basic Education in the Union of Myanmar" implemented by JICA, the concept of the "CCA" in the context of the Myanmar education, can defined as: (1) Encourage

children's initiative for the learning by stimulating the children's interest (2) Give opportunity to the children to learn by doing, through the incorporation of the experiments in and out of the classroom, and (3) Development of the children's problem solving skill. In simple words, what try to do in Myanmar is to change from the traditional teacher centered memorization based teaching to the Child Centered "Educational Technology" based teaching-learning activities.

Concretely, in this new CCA based lessons each teacher are expected to concern about following points:

(1) Before the lesson
   (a) Children's interest and prior knowledge
   (b) Logical lesson process
   (c) Real experiences as part of learning activity
(2) During the lesson
   (a) To motivate and encourage children to learn
   (b) To observe children's learning process carefully
(3) After the lesson
   (a) To assess children's learning
   (b) To give feedback to children
   (c) To review lesson

(Extracted from the pre-post test for the CCA understanding of Complementary Study Report of the JICA Project (Tanaka, 2004))

3.2 CCA AND LCA

According the LCA Handbook (BERDC 2002) -developed by Myanmar MBESS Component B working group, the concept of LCA is basically same as CCA, but is wider that includes CCA. In Myanmar is used to differentiate the application in Primary Schools (CCA) and Educational Colleges (LCA). Some methodology and techniques used for teaching and assessment may differ because of the characteristics of the target group.

4. TEACHERS EDUCATION SYSTEM IN MYANMAR

The school structure in Myanmar is 5-4-2 and the entry age for formal school system is 5 years old. (See Figure 1) The tertiary education vary from 1 to 7 years depending on the course. As you can observe in the table 1, the primary teacher has to take 1 year of the Educational College course after the high school, and will be awarded with "Certificate in Education", authorized to teach at the primary school by status of

Primary Assistant Teacher (PAT). If continue one more year, will be awarded with "Diploma in Teacher Education" which academically qualify to be secondary teacher, but required to have at least 1 year of experience of teaching at Primary school, then can be promoted to status of Junior Assistant Teacher (JAT). Who already finished Bachelor degree in other university courses, can enter to the Education competency training course for 1 year, and will be qualify to be PAT, or JAT if accomplish the field experience requirement. Out of these, there are correspondence courses for the acting teachers who don't have yet certification or diploma for teaching. Primary and middle school (lower secondary) teachers are trained in one of the 20 Education Colleges (EC), and high school (upper secondary) teachers at one of two Institutes of Education (IOE). IOE also offer higher degree courses such as Bachelor in Education, Master and PhD courses.

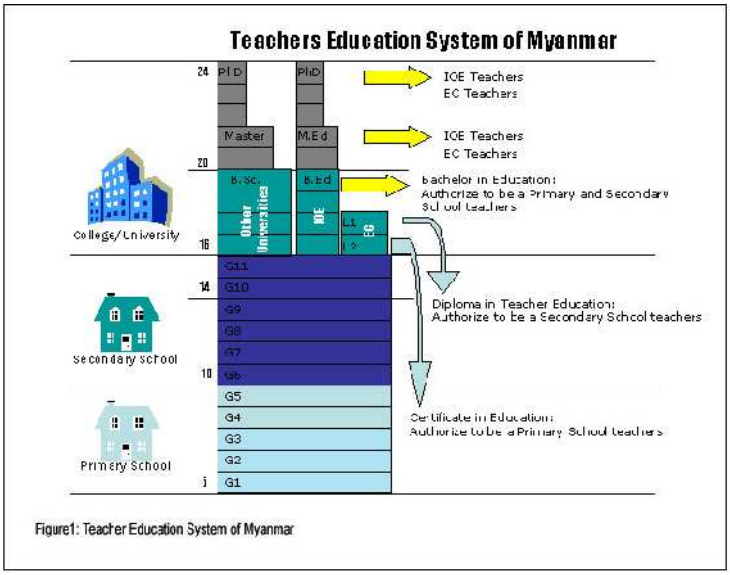

Figure1: Teacher Education System of Myanmar

There is also a University of the Development of the National Races (UDNR) under the Civil Service Selection and Training Board which trains local ethnic teachers from remote and border areas.

Table1: Teacher Certification at Educational Colleges

No	Name of Training	Duration	Criteria for entrance	Diploma/Certificate Awarded	Position on job
1	Pre-service Teacher Training	One year	Matriculation Pass, Not older than 25 yrs.	Certificate in Education	Primary Assistant Teacher (PAT)
2	Pre-service Teacher Training	Two years	Completion of PTT (First Year)	Diploma in Teacher Education	PAT/Junior Assistant Teacher (JAT)
3	Pre-service Teacher Education Competency Training	One year	Bachelor Degree, Not older than 30 yrs.	Teacher Education Competency Certificate	PAT/JAT
4	Primary Assistant Teacher Training Correspondence Course	One year	High School Final Certificate or 9th Standard Pass, PAT	PAT Certificate	-
5	Junior Assistant Teacher Training Correspondence Course	One year	Primary principals (PAT certificate holder), JAT and Primary principals (Bachelor Degree Holder)	JAT Certificate	-

Source: translation of the document prepared by the Ministry of Education, Union of Myanmar, Feb. 2005

4.1 THE PRIMARY TEACHERS PRE-SERVICES CURRICULUM OF EDUCATION COLLEGE

The Syllabus of the EC curriculum for the primary school teacher program consist of 23 subjects which are: Educational Theory (4 credits), Educational Psychology (4), Teaching Methodology of Myanmar (3), T.M. of English (3), T.M. of Mathematics (3), T.M. of Natural Science and Social Study (3), T.M. of Physical Education (1), TM. of Industrial Arts/Domestic Science (1), T.M. of Agriculture (1), T.M. of Fine Arts (1), T.M. of Music (1), Block teaching & Assignment (2), Myanmar (4), English (4), Mathematics (4), Physics/History (4), Chemistry/Geography (4), Biology/ Economics(4), Physical Education (1), Industrial Arts/Dom Sc. (1), Agriculture (1), Fine Arts (1), and Music (1)

The evaluation system consist of: Tutorial (15 points/semester, total of 30 points), Assignment (15 points/semester, total of 30 points) and the Semester end Test (40 points/semester, will be calculated the average of 2 semester with maximum of 40 points) summering total of 100 points. In order to obtain necessary credit, should complete minimum of 90% of the attendance. Usually each subject are provided by 2 to 3 periods/week of 45 minute lesson, in total of approx. 80 periods/year.

5. SOME ISSUES ON QUALITY OF TEACHING AT EDUCATION COLLEGE

Ministry of Education/UNESCO working paper series “Higher Education” (1991) states some issues on quality of teaching in Myanmar higher education as: (1) Lecture-type teaching mode is not supplemented by proper tutorial sessions, (2) Students are not encourage to use library facilities, (3) Students need to be convinced that studying reference books is necessary. (4) Teaching method is teacher-centered, (5) There is little or no allowance for students to take part on active classroom participation. Tanaka (2004) pointed in his Complementary Study Report of the Basic Education Sector Study (MBESS), some weakness of actual EC curriculum in the context of the CCA support, such as; the lack of the behaviorism and cognitive science research information in the EC textbooks as well as lack of information on formative evaluation, needs of adding more information on educational philosophy, curriculum theories, educational approach to support the idea of Child Centered Approach. Also is pointed out the lack of logical and systematic structuring of the Teaching Methodology subjects.

Based on the recent field activities in Myanmar during Feb to March 2005, Ito pointed in his activity report (Ito, 2005) that the actual problem of the EC curriculum can summarize in 3 aspects: (1) The relevance of the content it self, (2) Means of delivery of the instruction, and (3) Consistency and coherence of the content and structure of the subjects. For other side regarding the quality of the EC teachers, are pointed the weakness on the basic understanding of the EC teachers on the subject in-charge, knowledge and skill of Learner Centered Approach for the teaching-learning process, and knowledge and skill of instructional methodology, such as designing of the teaching-learning process, formative

assessment, selection and utilization of the appropriate methodology and available teaching aids.

By the other hand, there are several limitation and external condition that restrict the improvement of the actual situation, such as: (1) there are very limited library resources to support the study of the teachers and students on the subjects, (2) Most of the classroom are small and usually there are 70 to 80 students per classroom, (3) EC teachers have overloaded assignment such as attending around 2000 correspondence student of in-service program every year, out of the 70-80 students/class of pre-service program, (4) EC teachers themselves was received teacher-centered memorizing education, and they didn't have previous opportunity to be trained on LCA skills for EC education, (5) There are several procedures that takes long time for the approval of the revision of the curriculum, among others.

Considering the reality and limiting conditions, our question is; what can be done under the actual situation and available opportunity of the intervention, in order to design an effective and efficient strategy for the improvement on quality of the EC education in line with LCA?

6. PROPOSING STRATEGY FOR THE IMPROVEMENT

Considering the problem and limitation identified in the previous section and incorporating the needs, requests and commitment of the EC Curriculum Working Group (WG) members, following four approaches are proposed to be taken: (1) Courseware design improvement, (2) Textbook improvement, (3) Capacity building on ID skill, and (4) Promotion of the LCA concepts for the ECs.

Brief explanation of the approaches:

(1) Courseware design improvement: In fact, entire courseware design revision is necessary, by systematic analysis of the objectives, consistency and coherence between each contents, relevance of the topics, among others. During the project duration, some session with the attendance of Subject Matter Expert (SME) in Japan are planned, but will be limited to present just a recommendation of improvement of the courseware design, because the actual revision will require more time for the validation – revision process and official approval procedures.

(2) Textbook improvement: There is a need to improve the content to be supportive of CCA concept. For the other hand, actual textbook shows mainly definition of the concepts, should be utilized more effective format to help understanding of the students such as incorporate practical examples and application exercises. Because of the limitation of time, expertise intervention and other resources, during the project will be limited to following two points: Create one new CCA supportive chapter to each of the 4 target textbooks (Ed. Theory, Ed. Psychology, Teaching Methodology of Natural Science/Basic Science and T. M. of Social Study/General Study), and second is the selection of a model chapter to work on the improvement of the Instructional Design (ID).

(3) Capacity building on ID skill: By the combination of the several workshops and On the Job

Training (OJT) on the development of the above mentioned activities, gradually develop the capacity on ID skill of the EC Curriculum WG members as trainers, and though them will be train the EC teachers.

(4) Promotion of the LCA concepts and skill: Because, the understanding of the new concept and process for the change of attitude and behavior usually take time, we should start the promotion activities gradually. The first stage are planned to do through the LCA promotion caravan, visiting every year 8 EC's participated in previous CCA workshop done by other component of the project.

6.1 Applying the prototype of the Train the Trainer (T3)

In order to conduct an effective and sustainable activities to enhance the extension of LCA in Myanmar ECs, a prototype of Train the Trainer called "Composite Model of T3" proposed by the authors, based on similar experiences of JICA project in Dominican Republic during year 2004 are planned to apply. Some characteristics of this prototype are:

(1) Combine training of trainer with development of the training package to be utilized in regular task. This is very convenient as cost performance, because save separate investment and manpower for the development of the new training package, and also increase the motivation and commitment of the trainers.

(2) Develop gradually the skill of trainers on ID such as course design, material preparation, implementation of the training course, evaluation and revision. This will facilitate the better understand of the structure and entire process of the instructional system.

(3) Because the T3 will use as exercise the actual and real case of training, applicability and retention of the obtained knowledge and skill is very high.

In the Figure2, shows the basic flow of this model in 3 stages. Here, already filled in the topic to be utilized on this case. Upper box includes training and a exercise using the developed training kit, and lower box are the product applied after the training by the trainee.

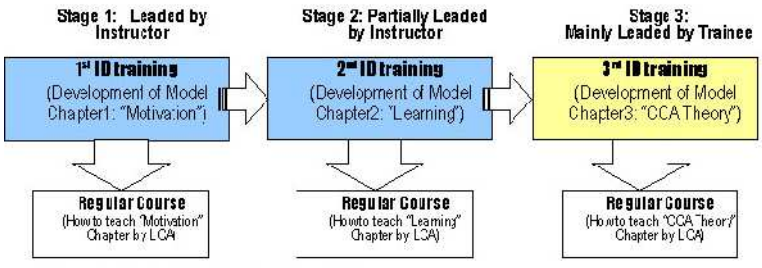

Figure2: Composite Model of Train the Trainer

Figure 3 shows more detail of the process. In this flow-chart, Stage 1 and 3 will be leaded by instructor as training and model, 2 and 4 will be the On-the-Job application, and 5 will be starting of the new routine of

course development leaded by the trainee.

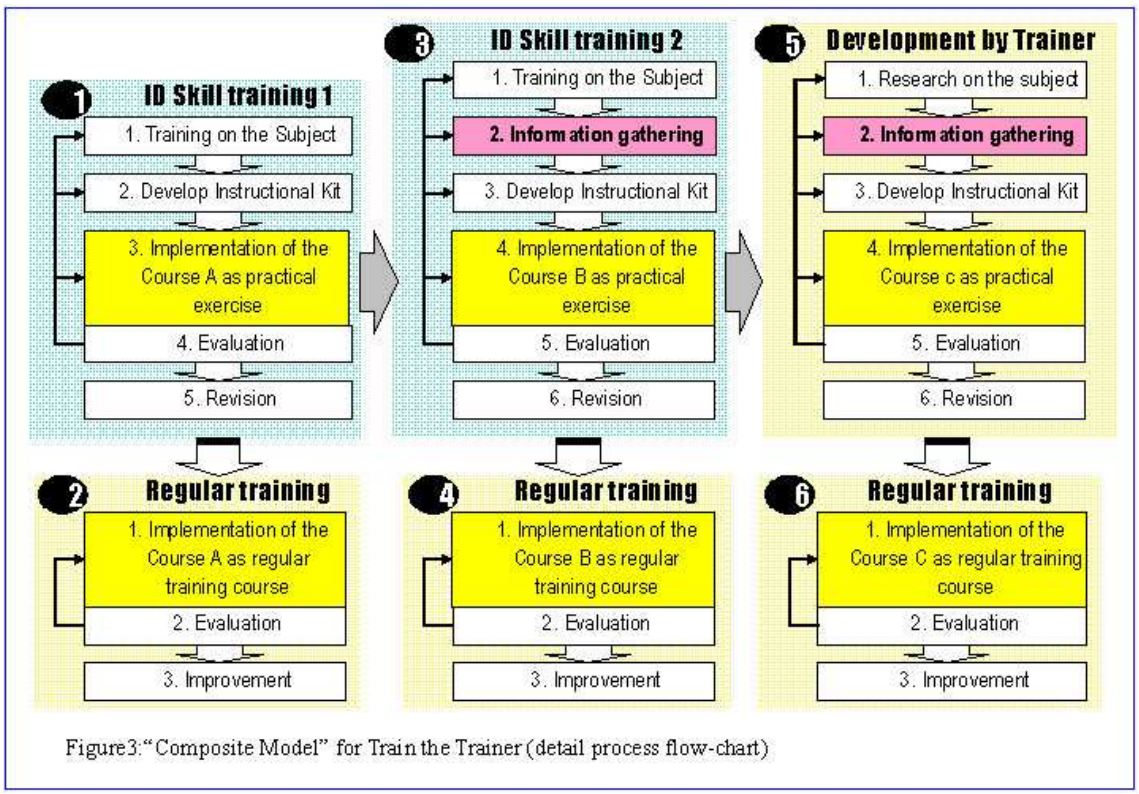

Figure3:"Composite Model" for Train the Trainer (detail process flow-chart)

Some important points of each stage are:

Stage 1: This is the first step of the training. In this step, the instructor will develop the basic ID skill of the trainers. Should apply the level 1 assessment (reaction), level 2 (learning) by pre and post-test.

The design of the training kit will be done using Training Forms developed originally by Ito & Suzuki (2001) for the third country training program in Turkey and improved later by other countries training program.

Stage 2: This is the first On-the-Job application stage of the learning. This should be implemented by the trainer, trained in the Stage 1. If available the chance, instructor can monitor the implementation and give suggestion for the evaluation and improvement. In this stage, will be applied the Level 3 (behavior) assessment.

Stage 3: This is the second ID training of the Trainers. The difference than the first ID training is the addition of the 3-2, information gathering on the new content. While during the first ID training, the subject and content of the exercise used the already existing content, in this stage, instructor will provide the subject, and some information, but the some first hand information should be collected, analyzed and organized as new content.

Stage 4: Implementation of the course developed in the Stage 3 will be applied by the trainers.

should follow the same process of Stage 2, including the level 3 assessment.

Stage 5: While Stage 2 and 4 was just the implementation exercise, this step we can said that is a practical

test to prove if really Trainers learn necessary knowledge, skill and experiences to be able to develop by himself a training program.

Stage 6: Again, this is the Stage for the application of the developed course as a routine activity.

7. CONCLUSION

This paper consider the issue and strategy for the effective implementation of a real case of on going project for the institutional building and capacity development. Still there are many details to be considered and improve by doing, but the application of the Prototype "Composite model of the T3 training" will validate the applicability and effectiveness of the a practical training system that can be applied to many other similar projects. Already more concrete process chart is designed, and are expected that for May – June of 2006 we can present some conclusion based on the results of the assessment data and analysis.

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