

Myanmar-as-Method: Dialectically Engaging with the Context to Understand Teacher Activism in Myanmar

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Abstract

How can a social phenomenon be understood profoundly while honouring local worldviews and engaging with established theories? This study examines Myanmar educators' political activism in the post-2021 coup, employing 'Myanmar-as-Method' as its core methodology. Inspired by 'Asia-as-Method,' this approach transcends interpreting Myanmar contexts through Western theoretical frameworks alone. It begins with Grioux's transformative intellectuals but dialectically engages this with local concepts of 'Sayar' and 'Dhamma/Adhamma.' Hence, its methodology positions the context as capable of enriching theoretical development by drawing on cultural particularities. Through semi-structured interviews and observation, findings suggest that educators' reflective labour, praxis and imagination enable the emergence and institutionalisation of parallel schooling. While their reflection is largely motivated by the traditional ideas of 'sayar', 'Dhamma and Adhamma', they can turn this reflection into the action of parallel schooling due to their learning from struggles, coordination among the support groups and the wider political context. Furthermore, they consider parallel schools as their struggle for the future. All these reflections, actions and imaginations collectively explain Myanmar educators' engagement in political activism. Finally, the use of Myanmar-as-Method suggests that dialectical engagement with context can transform the understanding of educational resistance through a theoretically sophisticated yet culturally grounded approach.