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## **The attitudes of British Buddhist teens towards school and Religious Education**

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## **The attitudes of British Buddhist teens towards school and Religious Education**

### **Abstract**

To ascertain the relative contributions towards affinity for education made by being Asian and being Buddhist, a quantitative study explored, for teen Buddhists growing up in Britain, attitudes to their school learning environment with particular reference to Religious Education (RE). A variety of attitude statements concerning school and RE, were rated for levels of agreement using postal and online surveys for 417 self-identifying Buddhists aged between 13 and 20. Asian ethnicity was more important than being Buddhist for happiness in school, liking fellow pupils, feeling school was a preparation for life and thinking teachers did a good job. Being Buddhist was more important than Asian ethnicity for respecting teachers, perceiving the emancipatory role of education and ability to handle study stress. Attitudes towards RE were positively related to being Buddhist generally, and specifically to the practices of bowing to parents, meditating and reading scripture, but inversely related to temple attendance.

## **Introduction**

This article describes an empirical study of the relative contributions made by ‘being Asian’ and ‘being Buddhist’ towards affinity for education. Drawing upon individual difference evidence gathered from teenagers in Britain, I will argue that the qualities of respect for the teacher, seeing education as emancipatory and stress-coping abilities that are part of Buddhist spirituality can help explain particularly positive attitudes to school and Religious Education (RE) in Buddhists. In terms of the public significance of a child’s spirituality, amongst other things, the article shows how the spiritual practice of Buddhist teenagers is positively linked with their attitude to school and RE, while shedding light on the relative importance of the ethnic and religious aspects of identity for attitudes to study.

This article takes the Buddhist pupil’s (rather than the teacher’s or curriculum developer’s) perspective on education – investigating the place of Western education in the hearts of participant Buddhists. Rather than looking objectively at *what* is taught, the study looks subjectively at the attitudes Buddhist pupils bring to the classroom. This is particularly important in subjects such as RE where education *of* pupil attitudes is one of the learning objectives. The study explores the degree to which Buddhist expectations of education are met by the education Buddhists receive in the West. Furthermore, the study examines Buddhist affinity for education in general which is measured in terms of individual attitude questions and attitude towards RE which will be examined by means of the Short scale of attitude towards RE [ScAttRE-s](Thanissaro, 2012).

### ***How Buddhist spirituality might shape education***

For Buddhists, even education that is not particularly religious in nature, is seen as a springboard to spiritual wisdom and is valued in Buddhism as a blessing in its own right (Maṅgala Sutta, Sn. 259-268). Historically, Buddhist monasticism in South Asia has encouraged high literacy rates (Harvey 2013, 315) and the focus on education is known to be particularly strong for Buddhists whether textually as ‘respect for education’ (*sikkhā-gāravatā*, A.iii.330) or in practice – at least in the case of Vietnamese culture as ‘love of learning’ [*tính hiếu học*](Rutledge 1992, 89) which in the US has led to disproportionately high educational attainments in second-generation Vietnamese children (Feliciano 2006, 21). Although Buddhist approaches to education have received scant attention in western scholarship (Mitsuda, 1998), it might be surmised that a Buddhist perspective on education would encourage viewing life as a process of merit creation leading ultimately to wisdom rather than a modern, disciplined subject preoccupied with economic rationality (Tikhonov, 2016, 523). Indeed, some have characterised the whole of Buddhism as ‘an education’ in and of itself (Dong, 2003). The nature of Buddhist education would thus extend outside the classroom to what in the West might be termed ‘formation’ – that is, to instil values and good habits as much as to impute information.

Some believe Buddhist education should be founded on *faith* in the Triple Gem, while others believe a healthier starting point would be the *scepticism* of the Kālāma Sutta (A.i.188). In any case, for deep education of heart and mind, Buddhist education would likely offer, by means of deep reflection, intelligent discussion and keen investigation (Bodhi, 2008), a curriculum featuring five precepts, a spirit of generosity, self-sacrifice and the four Divine Abidings [*brahmavihāra*] of loving-kindness, compassion, sympathetic joy

and equanimity (Miller, 2007). Buddhist outlook on education in south-east Asian countries where Buddhism occupies a confident position in society, might additionally regard education as a means to inculcate ethno-national identity.

### ***Previous research on attitudes to school and RE***

Studies of pupil attitudes towards education have enjoyed a long history, extending back to the work of Harold Loukes (1961) in the UK. More recent research such as that of Barry (2001) found school to be one of seven key themes of importance to young people revealing the perceived lack of vocationally relevant skills taught in school and the adverse effects of bullying. Some young people expressed concern about the quality of education they received (Lewis, 1996). Generally teenagers considered education important and regarded it positively (Halsall, 2004, 412) – with most young people agreeing that parents should be consulted about curriculum content and three-quarters believing pupils too should have a say at school (Hughes and Lloyd, 1996). When looking at Buddhist attitudes towards education in particular, heritage Buddhist teens from Thanissaro's (2013, 11) focus groups viewed education as the *second* most important set of values in their lives. Heritage Buddhist teens explained how important to them school was, particularly in terms of qualifying for a good job, while admitting school to be a cause of anxiety, especially in terms of the pressure of schoolwork and exams (Thanissaro, 2013, 13). Previous research has overlooked convert Buddhist teens in the West meaning that there has been no opportunity to discern Buddhist attitudes to education as separate from their Asian ethnicity.

Turning to attitudes towards RE in particular, previous research has tended to concentrate on the particularly British combination of RE and Collective Worship (CW) in school (Harvey, 1984; Ormerod, 1975; Williams and Finch, 1968). All found RE listed last or second to last in the order of favourite school subjects – girls holding RE in higher regard than boys, and the positive attitude to RE declining with age. Most research was based on asking pupils one simple question, about whether they thought RE should be taught in school (Lewis and Francis, 1996). In the 1990s, a third of pupils agreed with RE being taught in school and 6% agreed with holding daily CW (Kay, 1996, 272). In 2001, over a third (38%) still considered RE worth teaching in school and 8% agreed that CW should be held daily in school (Francis, 2001, 39) – figures still much lower for both RE (60%) and CW (39%) than reported in a more recent small urban sample of adolescents (Thanissaro, 2010, 64).

Attitude to RE and CW was also explored as a function of age and gender (Francis and Kay, 1995, 187) finding that primary school pupils from a religiously undifferentiated population preferred daily CW to RE while secondary pupils preferred RE to *daily* CW – although it has subsequently been commented that the word ‘daily’ might have unduly curbed pupils’ enthusiasm for CW (Kay, 1996, 271). Research on attitudes towards RE and CW was replicated by Smith (2002, 78) in Walsall schools, separating the results according to religious affiliation. The feedback from such research was of fairly limited use to RE stakeholders because a child might favour RE and CW being taught in school for a huge variety of different reasons. More detailed examination of pupil attitude towards RE in a recent small sample of urban adolescents showed two-thirds agreed RE helped them understand different religions, but only two-fifths thought RE helped them learn new things

about their own religion, two-thirds agreed that RE helped them respect others' religious beliefs, 46% agreed RE helped them understand their own religion and 42% agreed RE should be part of a broad and balanced school curriculum. Over a third of adolescents thought the way religion was taught in school differed from religion they had learned at home (Thanissaro, 2010, 54).

Preliminary qualitative research with (mostly heritage) Buddhist children and parents growing up in the UK highlighted the high expectations parents placed on school RE to fill the gaps in Buddhist knowledge left by imperfect induction into their tradition by parents and temples in a country where Buddhism is a tiny minority. Buddhist pupils were quick to point out the shortcomings in the way their religion was portrayed in RE (Thanissaro, 2011). In that research, the general impression was of Buddhist dissatisfaction with RE – especially with reference to dissonance between the portrayal of Buddhism between school and home practice. Previous research revealed that Buddhist pupils thought RE teachers lacked expertise in Buddhism (Thanissaro, 2011, 67). Amongst Buddhist teenagers, positive attitudes towards RE were observed to diminish with age on all questions except for the teaching of RE in school and inclusion of RE as part of a broad and balanced curriculum. In a comparison of Buddhists with non-Buddhists, question by question (Thanissaro, 2014b) it was found that for Buddhists, RE was popular as a subject, but it would seem to be chiefly a means of learning sensitivities concerning *other* peoples' religions. It was also found that CW was the only aspect of RE not especially favoured by Buddhists.

## **Methodology**

### *Sample*

Buddhists are a tiny minority (0.4%) of the UK population and as of 2011 there were 22,715 Buddhist teenagers in Britain (ONS, 2011). In Britain, as with other Western societies, there is evidence to suggest a dichotomy between heritage Buddhists (those who have ethnic roots in the countries of Asia) and convert Buddhists (those who have converted to Buddhism independent of their family's influence and who are non-Asian in ethnicity). A survey was completed by 417 self-identifying teen Buddhists attending Buddhist events in Britain or displaying an interest in Buddhist keywords<sup>1</sup> on their Facebook page. The sample consisted of 225 male (54%) and 192 females (46%) aged between 13 and 20 and had an ethnic composition of Asian (52%), White (34%), Mixed (11%) Chinese (2%) and Black (1%) descent. In terms of the temple institutions, to give some idea of the national Buddhist traditions included, the sample could be said to include Sinhalese (23%), Thai (16%), Tibetan (12%), Burmese (11%), Vietnamese (9%), Japanese (5%), Bangladeshi (3%), Western (2%), Chinese (2%), Nepalese (2%) and Cambodian (1%). In this sample, of those for whom religious style could be ascertained (not possible where ethnicity was 'mixed'), 61% were heritage and 39% were convert. The participants were continuous with the present author's previous focus group cohort – meaning that this quantitative survey complements qualitative aspects already published from that focus group cohort and references to these have direct relevance to the description of school- and RE-related attitudes in the present study. Although at the time of writing, RE in England continues to be threatened by government re-organisation of the National Curriculum, all Buddhist teens in this study would have received first-hand experience of RE taught as a legal requirement.

### ***Instrument***

A composite questionnaire fielded questions on demographics including ethnicity, age, religious affiliation and denomination. This general section was followed by the ScAttRE-s instrument (Thanissaro, 2012) and twelve questions in 5-point Likert scale format (strongly agree, agree, not certain, disagree, disagree strongly) with the purpose of mapping values the ‘school’ domain selected from a consensus of previous Youth Values Surveys (Francis and Penny, 2013). The school attitude questions are summarised in the Appendix.

### ***Procedure***

Surveys were distributed in the period 2013-14. In some participating temples, gatekeeper monks or staff handled survey distribution on the researcher’s behalf. For most temples, however, the author had to visit in person and was given permission by monks or staff to present the research project at Buddhist youth events. Surveys were completed in the participants’ own time and for those unable to complete them immediately, a stamped addressed envelope was provided to facilitate return. For the identical online version, a Qualtrics web-based survey was hosted on the St Mary’s Centre website. Teenagers were directed to this survey by clicking sidebar advertising banners that appeared on their Facebook page if they belonged to a Buddhist interest group. The online sample was limited to those both resident in the UK and falling within the target age-group. Where variables were normally distributed *scale* measures (e.g., ScAttRE-s scores as a measure of attitude towards RE) significant differences were measured by an independent means *t*-test. Where variables were *ordinal* measures of non-normal distribution, (e.g., the 5-point coding of

individual-item Likert style attitude questions that yielded percentage agreement on attitudes) significant differences were measured by a chi-square test with Yates correction.

The results section is divided into two parts. The first part deals with the attitudes of Buddhists towards general experience of school and is divided into attitudes where Buddhist identity was more important than Asian ethnicity and attitudes where Buddhist identity was less important than Asian ethnicity. The second part deals more specifically with the attitudes of Buddhists towards RE.

## Results

### *General Experience of School*

#### *Attitudes where Buddhism had more effect than Asian ethnicity*

To examine what is particularly ‘Buddhist’ about school-related values, Table 1 shows a comparison between the values of the Buddhist adolescents compared to the values on the same questions asked by Francis (2001, 32) of 13- to 15-year-old religiously undifferentiated adolescents (RUA) or to a dataset of 13- to 15-year-olds non-Buddhist adolescents from London schools (Thanissaro, 2010, 71).

**Table 1: Comparison of values concerning school between Buddhist and religiously undifferentiated adolescents (% agreement)**

	Budd.	Undiff.	$\chi^2$	<i>p</i> <
School is boring <sup>a</sup>	18	36	23.2	.001
I often worry about my school work <sup>a</sup>	52	63	8.6	.001
Teachers do a good job <sup>a</sup>	70	44	43.5	.001
There is nothing wrong in playing truant from school <sup>a</sup>	5	17	14.3	.001
People who have helped us a lot deserve our special respect <sup>b</sup>	82	32	113.8	.001

Notes: Yates correction applied throughout.

<sup>a</sup>In comparison with religiously undifferentiated adolescents from Francis (2001, 32)

<sup>b</sup>In comparison with non-Buddhist adolescents from Thanissaro (2010, 71)

That these figures are a function of being *Buddhist* rather than Asian ethnicity can be confirmed by reference to Table A in the appendix which shows that the significant differences in attitude identified for Buddhists are also seen between non-Asian (i.e. convert) adolescent Buddhists and RUA. It was found that Buddhist adolescents were half as likely to think school boring with only 18% finding school boring compared with 36% of RUA. The Buddhists were less inclined to worry about exams and schoolwork. Little over half the Buddhists (52%) worried about schoolwork as compared with over three-fifths (63%) of RUA. Buddhists were more appreciative of their teachers with seven in every ten (70%) saying their teachers did a good job as opposed to less than half (44%) for RUA. Only 5% of Buddhists thought nothing was wrong with playing truant, whereas 17% of RUA thought playing truant was acceptable. Finally, 82% of Buddhists respected those who had helped them a lot whereas the same sense of gratitude was expressed by only 32% of RUA. No significant difference was found between Buddhists and RUA in their attitude to bullying at school.

Usually for teenagers in education, there is less enthusiasm for school in males, for those of lower social class and as the teenagers get older. Significant differences in attitude towards education were *not* generally found between male and female Buddhists nor between Buddhists of different social classes. The only differences found between male and female Buddhists were more worries in females concerning schoolwork (46% of male Buddhists often worried about school work as compared to 64% of females,  $\chi^2=11.8$ ,  $p<.01$ ) and less liking of fellow pupils amongst females (72% of male Buddhists liked the people they went to school with, but only, 59% of females,  $\chi^2=6.9$ ,  $p<.01$ ). These sex differences were to be expected, in the first instance because females generally worry more than males,

and in the second instance because Buddhist females tend to be more introverted than Buddhist males. Only in the case of age were Buddhists found to succumb to the general trend of losing enthusiasm for education with age (even where it was checked that the older respondents had not yet left school). The only consolation for attitude towards school with increasing age appeared to be reduced level of worry about being bullied (26% of early teen Buddhists were worried about being bullied at school, but only, 9% of late teen Buddhists,  $\chi^2=18.4$ ,  $p<.001$ ), a trend also seen for teenagers in general.

*Attitudes where Asian ethnicity had more effect than Buddhist identity*

**Table 2: Comparison of values concerning school between heritage & convert Buddhist teens (% agreement)**

	Heritage	Convert	$\chi^2$	$p<$
I am happy in my school	77	40	52.3	.001
I like the people I go to school with	77	47	34.8	.001
My school is helping me prepare for life	74	31	63.9	.001
Teachers do a good job	70	49	15.1	.001

Notes: Yates correction applied throughout.

A comparison of the Buddhist teen attitudes regarding school, according to their religious style as shown in Table 2, found that over three-quarters (77%) of heritage Buddhists claimed to be happy in school compared with only two-fifths (40%) of convert Buddhists. Over three-quarters of heritage Buddhists (77%) liked their fellow pupils compared with less than half (47%) of convert Buddhists. Twice as many heritage Buddhists (74%) as convert Buddhists (31%) thought school was helping preparing them for life. Seven-tenths (70%) of heritage Buddhists thought teachers to be doing a good job compared to less than half (49%) of convert Buddhists.

### ***Buddhists and attitude towards RE***

Buddhist adolescents were found to be more positive in their attitude to RE than non-Buddhists. In this section, statistics have been summarised in Table B of the Appendix. It was found that Buddhist attitude towards RE was more positive still in those that bowed to parents, meditated daily or read the Buddhist scriptures. Attitude to RE was more positive in heritage Buddhists than convert Buddhists but diminished between early teenage and late teenage and was lower amongst those that attended a temple weekly than those who attended less frequently. The only aspects measured where attitude towards RE was not linked were sex difference, socio-economic class and whether or not the Buddhist had a shrine in their home.

### **Relevance of the results to broader issues in religious and spiritual education**

The relevance of these results to broader issues in religious and spiritual education include the relative weighting of Buddhist-ness and Asian-ness for attitudes to education in general and the Buddhist attitudes to RE.

### ***Relative roles of 'Buddhist-ness' and 'Asian-ness' for education***

#### *Attitudes where being Asian may have been a bigger factor than being Buddhist*

In this study, significantly more Asian Buddhists than non-Asian Buddhists claimed to be happy in school, liked their fellow pupils, felt that school was preparing them for life and thought teachers to be doing a good job. These findings portray a more positive school experience for Buddhist teenagers than came across in focus groups with a heritage Buddhist sample (Thanissaro, 2013, 13) where many of the teens felt hampered by their struggle with

English as a second language and related negative anecdotes about their schools. Any unhappiness at school, where expressed by Buddhist teens has generally concerned having no friends, problems with English as a second language and monotonous teaching. Schools gave the impression to some (convert) Buddhist teens of being more worried about their place in the league tables than addressing their pupils' worries about their future career (Thanissaro, 2014c, 321).

*Attitudes where being Buddhist may have been a bigger factor than being Asian*

Clarity added by this article to our understanding of particularly Buddhist attitudes to education are attitudes which are not merely a function of being Asian. Both 'being Asian' and 'being Buddhist' contribute affinity towards education, but being Buddhist seems to go beyond Asian-ness by contributing three particular areas of affinity, namely: encouraging respect for teachers, perceiving emancipatory role for education and reduction of study stress.

*On respect for teachers:* Findings in this study add weight and clarity to the conclusions of previous research (e.g. Thanissaro, 2016c that associated respect for those 'worthy of respect' and who have 'helped us a lot' with Buddhist identity) that being Buddhist, more than being Asian, corresponds with a respect for teachers – however, this was not the case of merely cowing to authority as Buddhist teens also were more inclined than teenagers in general to perceive that they were respected in return by adults.<sup>2</sup> Heritage Buddhists were also found to receive more respect *from* adults than convert Buddhists (Thanissaro, 2016a, 253, 255)<sup>3</sup> and were also more positive about education. Authority also had a role to play however, as affinity for school seemed to diminish in both late teens and

convert Buddhists along with respect for authority (Thanissaro, 2016a, 300).<sup>4</sup> Buddhism thus seems to facilitate love of learning through respect for (authoritative) teachers in an atmosphere of mutual respect. Teachers had previously been cited as being one of the best things about living in Britain (Thanissaro, 2013, 13). The origin of particularly positive attitudes of Buddhist pupils to their teachers may be the Buddhist teaching on the four virtues conducive to growth [*vuḍḍhi-dhamma*](A.ii.245), specifically seeking out a good teacher and listening attentively to their teaching.

*Buddhist perception of the emancipatory role of education:* That education has a particularly emancipatory role for Buddhists is shown by equalities across sex and socio-economic group (SEC) where for other groups of teenagers or adolescents there are significant differences. The school experience showed no difference in attitude according to SEC which is at odds with previous general findings such as those of Archer and Yamashita (2003) or Reay et al. (2001) whose research would lead us to expect those of higher SECs would have a more positive attitude towards school. The lack of such a difference between SECs in Buddhists indicates a special ability to harness education in an emancipatory role. The lack of such a difference between SECs in Buddhists commends schools for ‘levelling the playing field’ for Buddhists across the socio-economic groups. Indeed, there is an extent to which education is seen in Buddhism as one of the main forces enabling social mobility – in the words (Dhammakaya Foundation, 2003, 33) of a celebrated Thai master of meditation:

Education can change a student’s life for the better – knowledge is the king’s heritage available to the common man. It brings us benefits for life...

In terms of sexual equality, previous research (e.g., Darom and Rich, 1988; Fitt, 1956; Francis, 1992; Halsall, 2004, 302; Richmond, 1985) would lead us to expect females to be more positive about school than their male peers. Contrary to this trend, the Buddhist females suffered only from a greater tendency to worry about schoolwork – an observation that corresponds with previous findings for teenagers in general (Halsall, 2002; 2005).

*Buddhist ability to handle stress:* This study has shown Buddhists to be less stressed by schoolwork than religiously undifferentiated adolescents. It is interesting to speculate whether the Buddhists were calmer about school because they had done their homework dutifully or whether they were just more relaxed about life in general through more potential opportunity to practise meditation regularly and hence being able to cope effectively with study stress. By practising meditation regularly they may have benefitted in the way described by Maung Kyaw, an eighteen-year-old Burmese Buddhist (Thanissaro, 2014a, 742) who said meditation was:

. . . something that can help you in tough times when you have lot of stress.

Like, I had exams a few months ago and, like, I was just really stressed with it.

If I just meditated, I would be better, like straight away.

In this respect, an increasing body of research about mindfulness in education (e.g. Zenner et al., 2014) indicates benefits for pupils in the areas of ‘empathy and perspective-taking’, ‘emotional regulation’ and ‘social skills’ brought to pupils (not just Buddhists) who meditate

regularly. Mindfulness practice also encourages an atmosphere of ‘respect’ in schools although the terms used for this in the cited research are slightly different.

### ***Buddhist attitudes to RE: inter- and intra-religious differences***

Disappointment of heritage Buddhist parents with RE reported in previous research was often related to RE teachers not being able to go far enough in instilling ethno-nationalistic identity as might be expected from Buddhist educators in Asian countries of origin (Tikhonov, 2016, 523). Nevertheless, previous research (Thanissaro, 2014b) has already indicated that Buddhists have a more positive attitude to RE than non-Buddhists of the same age-group. Adding weight to previous findings and in contrast to the seemingly negative impression of RE in research with heritage Buddhist families, this article shows that Buddhist attitudes towards RE *across* ethnicities were still more positive than for the general population of the same age. The inclusion of Buddhism in RE appears to have provided Buddhist pupils with an English vocabulary by which they can express their worldview to peers (Thanissaro, 2011, 70-71).

The expectation that the benefits of RE would be more noticeable for Buddhists in their early teens (than for those in their late teens) and for heritage Buddhists (more than for convert Buddhists) has been borne out by significant differences in ScAttRE-s scores in this study. Usually it is to be expected that females would have a more positive attitude to RE than males [e.g. Lewis and Francis (1996); Tamminen (1996); Thanissaro (2012)] but RE attitude measures in this study show that for Buddhists, attitudes towards RE are *unrelated* to sex differences or SEC echoing the emancipatory perceptions of education in general. With reference to the difference in attitude towards RE between heritage and convert

Buddhists, it might be conjectured that the stronger heritage Buddhist link with practices such as bowing to parents, meditation, reading scriptures and *reduced* temple visit frequency (Thanissaro, 2016a, 313) might also facilitate positive attitude towards RE. Shrines, although more numerous amongst heritage Buddhists were not related to RE attitudes perhaps indicating an ambivalent perspective in RE towards *affective* aspects of religiosity.

There was no significant difference in attitude towards RE across SECs, but in terms of religious style, there was a significantly more positive attitude to RE among heritage Buddhists than amongst convert Buddhists. RE may offer Buddhists little more than an English-language vocabulary for their religion, but the gesture of having a school subject that celebrates religious diversity in a way that boosts self-esteem, means the current undermining of RE by the UK government (NATRE, 2017), would disenfranchise this minority group with repercussions for the upcoming generation of Buddhists and undermine their spirituality.

### **Concluding remarks**

Defying the limitations of polarising categories, spirituality is often found to straddle notional borderlines between sacred and profane, religious and secular, private and public. Similarly, Buddhism has been shown to include many practices, such as bowing to parents (Thanissaro, 2016b), which occupy this grey area. This study has shown that classroom education, at first sight seemingly a secular concern, would seem to have spiritual currency for Buddhist teenagers. In this respect, the qualities of respect for the teacher, seeing education as emancipatory and stress-coping abilities that are part of Buddhist spirituality can help explain particularly positive attitudes to school and Religious Education (RE) in Buddhists.

In terms of the public significance of a child's spirituality, amongst other things, the study has shown how the spiritual practice of Buddhist teenagers is positively linked with their attitude to school and RE, while shedding light on the relative importance of the ethnic and religious aspects of identity for these attitudes. Although technical skills or technical knowledge alone might not constitute a rounded education – not directly fostering cultural knowledge, social skills, ethical awareness or a sense of meaning – nonetheless, there is something compelling about the process of mastering a practical skill or a body of vocational knowledge. To learn something and become good at it seems to be linked with a sense of spiritual emancipation. Rather than setting study skills at odds with ethical and spiritual matters that are the preserves of religion, Buddhism seems to use the experience of developing a skill as a way to cultivate subtlety and nuance of mind that manifest in the attitudes of pupils. In turn, spirituality in the form of meditation practice is linked with decreased stress and positive attitudes to classroom study. It would seem that for Buddhists, to approach education with the dedication of proverbial artisans such as irrigators, fletchers and carpenters (Dhp.80) is put on a par with spiritual mastery.

Meanwhile the ability to harness this spirituality in education has ironically been passed over in RE. The lack of correspondence between affective aspects of religiosity and attitudes to RE (which might be equated with spirituality – the now rather *passé* 'awe and wonder' of phenomenological approaches to RE) might indicate that in the early decades of the 21<sup>st</sup> century this subject no longer equates with development of spirituality at least for Buddhists – but that RE has taken on the alternative role of learning to define and express identity in a more comparative context.

## Notes

1. The keywords included the words: arhat (Buddhism), Buddhism, Buddhism Theravada, Buddhist, Buddhist meditation, Burmese Buddhist temple, Dhammakaya meditation, Dhammakaya movement, Foundation for the Preservation of the Mahayana Tradition, FWBO, Gautama Buddha, interbeing, Karma Kagyu, Mahayana, merit (Buddhism), New Kadampa Tradition, Order of Interbeing, Samatha, Soka Gakkai International SGI, Theravada, Theravada Buddhism, Theravada Buddhist, Tibetan Buddhism, Triratna Buddhist Community, Vietnamese Family of Buddhism, Vipassana, Vipassana meditation, Zen, Thich Nhat Hanh, Buddhism in Bangladesh, Buddhahood, Diamond Way Buddhism, Buddha's Dharma, Pure Land Buddhism, Buddha's Light International Association.
2. Buddhist teens were significantly less likely ( $\chi^2=14.9$ ,  $p<.001$ ;  $\chi^2=44.5$ ,  $p<.001$ ) to agree that 'adults do not respect young people' (31%) and 'adults do not listen to young people' (40%) than religiously undifferentiated teens (47%, 65%).
3. Heritage Buddhists were significantly less likely ( $\chi^2=11.1$ ,  $p<.001$ ) to agree that 'adults do not respect young people' (23%) than convert Buddhists (40%).
4. Heritage Buddhists were significantly more likely ( $\chi^2=43.7$ ,  $p<.001$ ) to agree that they 'have respect for those in authority' (69%) than convert Buddhists (34%). Early teen Buddhists were significantly more likely ( $\chi^2=10.6$ ,  $p<.01$ ) to agree that they 'have respect for those in authority' (62%) than Buddhists in their late teens (46%).

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## Appendix

### *Comparison of convert Buddhist and religiously undifferentiated adolescent attitudes to school*

**Table A: Comparison of school-related attitudes between convert Buddhist and religiously undifferentiated schoolchildren (% agreement)**

	Convert	Undiff.	$\chi^2$	p<
School is boring <sup>a</sup>	18	36	15.5	.001
I often worry about my school work <sup>a</sup>	51	63	7.0	.01
Teachers do a good job <sup>a</sup>	74	44	38.9	.001
There is nothing wrong in playing truant from school <sup>a</sup>	6	16	7.9	.01
People who have helped us a lot deserve our special respect <sup>b</sup>	89	27	114.5	.001

Notes: Yates correction applied throughout.

<sup>a</sup>In comparison with religiously undifferentiated adolescents from Francis (2001, 32)

<sup>b</sup>In comparison with non-Buddhist adolescents from Thanissaro (2010, 71)

## ScAttRE-s score comparisons

**Table B: Summary of ScAttRE-s score comparisons**

Comparison	ScAttRE-s score	S.D.	df	t
Buddhists versus non-Buddhist adolescents	$M_{budd}=25.50$ $M_{non-budd}=22.62$	5.06 5.83	514	5.46***
Buddhists bowing to parents versus Buddhists not bowing to parents	$M_{bowing}=24.75$ $M_{no-bowing}=23.45$	5.07 4.71	415	-2.68**
Buddhists meditating daily versus Buddhists meditating less frequently	$M_{daily}=25.28$ $M_{non-daily}=23.95$	4.66 4.99	414	-1.33*
Buddhists reading scripture versus Buddhists not reading scripture	$M_{reader}=24.86$ $M_{non-reader}=23.34$	4.91 4.88	414	-3.14**
Heritage Buddhists versus convert Buddhists	$M_{heritage}=25.04$ $M_{convert}=22.82$	4.95 4.77	373	4.34***
Buddhists in their early teens versus Buddhists in their late teens	$M_{early}=25.08$ $M_{late}=23.13$	5.00 4.69	415	4.09***
Buddhists attending a temple weekly versus Buddhists attending a temple less frequently	$M_{weekly}=23.65$ $M_{non-weekly}=24.74$	5.02 4.84	414	2.27*
Male Buddhists versus female Buddhists	$M_{male}=23.80$ $M_{female}=24.64$	5.43 4.29	413	-1.77 <sup>NS</sup>
Non-managerial class Buddhists versus managerial class Buddhists	$M_{lower}=25.21$ $M_{higher}=23.86$	4.74 5.07	199	1.69 <sup>NS</sup>
Buddhists with a shrine in their home versus Buddhists with no shrine in their home	$M_{with\ shrine}=24.37$ $M_{no\ shrine}=23.80$	4.80 5.32	413	-1.07 <sup>NS</sup>

Notes: NS=non-significant.

\*= $p < .05$ ; \*\*= $p < .01$ ; \*\*\*= $p < .001$ .

## General school attitude questions

Principal questions:

1. School is boring
2. I often worry about my school work
3. Teachers do a good job
4. There is nothing wrong in playing truant from school
5. People who have helped us a lot deserve our special respect
6. I like the people I go to school with
7. I am happy in my school
8. My school is helping me prepare for life
9. I am worried about being bullied at school

Other questions referenced:

10. Adults do not respect young people
11. Adults do not listen to young people
12. I have respect for those in authority

## Abbreviations of Buddhist primary sources

- A. Aṅguttara Nikāya (translated as Woodward and Hare, 1932-6)  
 Dh. Dhammapada (reference by verse numbers)  
 Sn. Sutta Nipāta (translated as Norman, 1984-1992)