

European Chairs Assembly July 2014: Collaborative strategic vision and fundraising

These three days of presentations, discussion and collective reflection grew out of the ECA fundraising campaign, initiated in January 2014 which had to be postponed when it became clear that more preparation and consultation was required. In particular it was clear that more discussion and collaboration need to take place between the ECA and PPC. These three days brought together members of the ECA and members of the PPC

Present

Chairs: Jvalamalini, Ratnaghosha, Vajrasakhi, Tejananda, Suryamati, Dassini, Vajrajyoti, Amalamati, Keturaja, Arthavadin, Priyananda, Upekshapriya, Aryapala, Samachitta, Jnanadhara, Candradasa, Sraddhamani, Satyapada, Amalaketu, Sujana, Viriyapushpa, Visuddhimati, Mokshini, Amoghavajra, Dhammavijaya, Paramananda, Arthabandhu, Buddhashanti, Nayaka, Padmasimha, Parini, Ratnavyuha, Saddhanandi, Sinhendra, Suddhaka, Jnanavaca (chair).

Public Preceptors: Dhammarati, Parami, Kamalashila, Sanghadevi, Padmasuri

Order convenors: Lokeshvara and Parami

Development Team: Amalavajra and Nandavajra

The following are notes recorded by Nandavajra. They are partial, may well contain inaccuracies, and undoubtedly fail to capture much of the flavour and nuances of a very rich and wide-ranging discussion. They are intended as an 'aide memoir' for ECA and College members.

Day 1 24 th July AM	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The story so far and issues highlighted - Mokshini • '3 strand' history and question of coherence, interconnectedness and collaboration - Dhammarati • Small group discussion: 'what issues / thoughts /responses are there to what you have heard?
Day 1 PM	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Cards from groups grouped in to 'headline' issues • Small groups discussion – brainstorming 'the future of the movement' and recorded on flip charts
Day 2 25 th July AM	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Feedback on brainstorming • Points collated on cards and grouped in themes • Proposal on process of moving forward with collaborative vision
Day 2 25 th July PM	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 'weighting' of themes with dots • Process proposal discussion • Fundraising proposal and discussion
Day 3 26 th July AM	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Broad discussion around internationality, moving forward and leadership
Day 3 PM	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Further discussion on proposals

The story so far: Mokshini

Overview - What we are aiming to achieve over the three days

1. Update on the so far so we are all on the same page
2. Beginning of strategic vision for movement (in UK and Europe) for next 5 years +
3. Understanding how Triratna works – structure and the ‘3 strands’
4. Reaching agreement on a Fundraising Proposal

Issues highlighted (by Jan 14 ECA fundraising initiative):

1. Collaboration – do we want it? How do we go about creating it?
2. Revisit the relationship between the ‘3 Strands’ – not seeing these as too separate; especially the relationship between the PPC and ECA
3. There is both a need for joined-up fundraising and meeting the financial needs of the College; the latter is under resourced which weakens its capacity to function effectively.
4. This though requires greater ‘visibility’ of College as a body (cf individual Public Preceptors) and a clearer collective voice – how can the PPC communicate its collective vision and purpose more effectively?
5. Also, for a collaborative fundraising process to be effective, the PPC needs to find a way to make decisions between its meetings.
6. It has highlighted the area of decision-making processes and leadership in our community, or perhaps lack of it
7. The ECA has an immediate need to raise funds
8. ECA 2013 fundraising priorities conflated strategic and funding priorities – but they are not necessarily the same. Need to be clear when we are talking about strategy and when about fundraising.

Interdependent nature of Triratna Community and integral role of Preceptor College: Dhammarati

Dhammarati talked about the formation, history and role of the college and the 3 strands model. Points made included the following.

- Conflict over fundraising points to deeper structural issues
- How the Order and movement work together and grow collaboratively
- ‘3 strands’ model and the aphoristic ‘the order runs the order, the movement the movement and the college the college’ doesn’t account for the complex interdependent nature of our community
- Intention was at the time to co-ordinate three strands, but the model evolved at a time of conflict and change and structure for co-ordination wasn’t put in place, till formation of area councils in 2010.
- This has led to too much separation of the strands, in how we work together and how we think about the order and movement. Now needs to be much more collaboration and synergy
- The college with its principle role of overseeing Ordination and training in Bhante’s system of practice is integral to all aspects of Triratna Community – it is part of the structure, not a separate function
- Consider fundraising in this light – funding the College should be regarded as aspect of funding strategies and other projects

To listen to Dhammarati’s talk in full please visit the ECA Chair’s page at The Buddhist Centre Online.

Collaboration: discussion and feedback

Bullet points of feedback from small groups following on from presentations on update on major fundraising campaign and the interconnected nature of our community, the '3 Strands' model and the relationship between PPC and ECA. Exploring the question 'what issues / thoughts / responses are there to what you have heard'?

Collaboration

- Collaboration good!
- Happy to collaborate with the college – it's important
- Collaboration a no brainer but way it is communicated important to reach Oms without reaction
- We want collaboration that is light on its feet

Collaboration – concerns

- Do we need all this money centrally as a movement / order? Is there a centre to it all if we are a confederacy?
- Fear of procedure – highlighting the mythic, dharmic and KM
- A minimal structure

Collaboration – our discourse on / model for – '3 strands'

- Is the 3 strands the best image
- Are there any useful alternatives to the three strands
- 3 strands are channel of communication
- Need for parity of structures between 3 strands
- What is the vision of collaboration across 3 strands practically – and who will hold it and express it

College at ECA

- Using ECA as a meeting for college to attend – we are on their doorstep
- Makes good difference having college members here
- There is an open invitation for college to send rep to ECA (ECA members can't go to college meetings)
- Need more mingling between college and chairs
- College members should come to ECA

Collaboration in practice

- Effective organisation able to act promptly
- Invite delegates from other strands to strategic and fundraising discussions
- If the college is not a priority is it then integral to the ECA or how to characterise the relationship
- Use our 'people resources' e.g. Dev Team, order office people in a more joined up way
- Could we have parallel processes for arriving at strategic priorities and then task a few people from ECA and College to co-ordinate

International Council

- Relation of areas to international dimension
- Does the order have strategic priorities and how would we know
- Though not ready yet International Council must become decision making body to include all (renaming it something mythic)
- Involvement of mitra convenors

Strategy

- Commonality and quality of teaching –
 - teacher training course needed
 - it is important that we are clear about the principles that we teach and train people in

- commonality of teaching more important than commonality of practice
- A neglected area is how we respond to what is happening in society

College – role and responsibilities

- Clarify role of college
- need for preceptors college to become a more cohesive body
- What other responsibilities do the college see they have (outside of ordination) – and how do these related to the wider order?
- College needs to be clearer what its responsibilities are

College – profile

- Would like PPs to have higher profile at centres
- College to communicate itself better
- College needs better public relations if even we are still not fully clear what college and PPs do
- Some PPs need to be full time PPs and give attention to succession

College – priorities

- ECA needs to know preceptors college strategic priorities (+ spiritual priorities)
- What's the college's vision for the future development of the movement
- What are the college's strategic priorities
- Would like college to set strategic priorities. Is whole college 'singing from the same song-sheet'

College – structure

- College needs to be funded to have an exec
- Having exec makes big difference
- College needs an exec or some representative body / voice
- Would like to hear from PPs re a college exec – has it been discussed?
- College needs to be funded to organise itself – a secretary? An exec?

Leadership

- Clarifying leadership
- Do we assent to leadership?
- How do we engender leadership?
- Leadership: role of college / role of chairs / in Europe / in other areas
- Would like clear leadership from college

ECA – remit / role / structure

- What is the ECA's remit? How much can we fundraise before wider discussion?
- Let the ECA return to the remit of the European movement strand
- Role of ECA going forward – not losing strength / not acting unilaterally (habit)/ what is its remit?
- ECA need to be clearer we have specific responsibilities for centres etc
- ECA needs to take more account of the needs for cohesion and consolidation as well as expanding the movement
- International perspective / organisation for the movement
- Dynamics of ECA: has exec been too efficient and assembly too passive
- ECA 'rubber stamping' its exec
- Revise ECA priorities in light of collaboration

College funding

- Funding Public Preceptors – seen as part of ECA core costs
- Financial challenges of college has skewed discussion
- College needs fulltime fundraiser for a time – could ECA help?

- 2 ways to help fund college: 1. Include college in priorities, 2. Second fundraiser to college
- Issues: 1. ECA responsible for college, 2. Could college lose independence

Strategy leads fundraising

- Effective fundraising procedures can dictate what we raise, rather than what is needed
- Strategy and fundraising are distinct
- Separating funding and strategic priorities
- Fundraising- not having a poverty mentality

A show of hands at the meeting indicated a unanimous agreement with a collaborative approach to setting a strategic vision and priorities for the movement in Europe.

'Future of movement' brainstorming

Brainstorming the 'future of the movement' in small groups. Responding to the question 'Given that collaboration is important, what would you like to see happen?'. Headlines or responses written on cards and collated:

Cohesion and leadership

- Flow of Adhithana: Buddha > Bhante > Community. Radical edge
- Bhante: keeping communality behind vision alive. Discipleship. Adhithana / college as hub
- Cohesion – practice and teachings
- Clarity, coherence, leadership + vision – need structures
- Cohesion already exists
- Cohesion – not prescriptive – more spirit in common – relational
- System not formulaic and stuck in boundaries
- Leadership and succession

Autonomy and trust

- Trust and harmony in the order
- Individual autonomy and freedom + interdependence
- Being on the same wave length – atmosphere of trust
- Don't neglect Oms

Structures and resources

- College with funding + secretariat for all three strands
- Fund college
- Movement communicating well – ext + int – good and effective
- 'Joined up' structures and secretariats
- International council as joining up strands – resource and support
- Basic infrastructure properly funded
- Internationality

Kalyana mitrata

- KM: interconnectedness in atomised world. Training in KM
- KM – making connections
- Mentoring and how to resource
- Exemplification leads to confidence
- Apprenticeship + mentoring leads to depth

- Looking after elders – valuing + resourcing (financial)

Depth

- Depth fundamental priority
- Depth: dharmic perspective based on Bodhi – GFR and spiritual maturity
- Viharas – open to friends and mitras
- Contexts in depth – living / working / collective
- Orientated to going deeper from the start
- Depth of practice leads to quality of teaching
- Living and working together leads to depth
- Going more deeper into ‘papers’
- Depth leads to harmony
- Order + mvt: chain of communication involving depth + finesse

Training

- Practice not synonymous with meditation
- Confidence in Triratna approach
- Teacher training
- Clear training – ‘out and proud’ (about our approach)
- Effective training at all levels + post ordination training leads to depth
- Retreats leads to experience and inspiration in community

Teaching and Centres

- Fund skilled teachers to pass on best practice
- Infectious Sanghas
- Help centres that are struggling
- Breadth not exceeding depth
- Making Centres great: (i) encouraging spiritual weight (ii) quality over quantity
- Media new points of contact fund media
- Expansion: new groups / centres / initiatives / pioneers
- Expansion built on consolidation and infrastructure
- Teaching in teams vs ‘individual’ teachers
- Growth: centres in major European (and world) cities
- Ordination doesn’t qualify as a teacher
- Art as distinct emphasis and way of teaching

New Society and radical edge

- Ecology: environmental agenda and sustainability
- Resisting consumer values
- India: i. massive needs, ii. Europe to support india, iii. Fundraising leads to depth
- Radical edge
- Ethical guidelines and boundaries (who is Triratna?)
- Creating sustainable ‘community’ – harmonious relations and participation
- Revitalising New Society fresh vision for current concerns / 21st century living
- Bedding down in culture
- Caring for sick and elderly

Young people

- Success = young people – rejuvenating
- Young people taking initiative and training contexts

Helpful model from Keturaja

1. Vision
2. Strategy
3. Projects
4. Resources

Moving forward with process

Dhammarati on international council and internationality: on involving int. council in collaborative process at this stage. Value of having an international perspective but also the ECA and PPC having autonomy of decision for mvt in Europe and not getting stuck from moving forward. Proposed: informing Int. Council and asking them if they can see a way that they can be involved without impeding the way forward. If they want to be involved task the working group to find a way of involving int. council if that is appropriate.

Notes:

- Important to remember that this is start of a process
- Concerns around lack of leadership / a leadership 'vacuum' / who makes decisions and at what level
- Provenance of decisions and responsibility
- ECA not always able to know implications of decisions and
- Opportunity for college to step up in terms of leadership – become clearer about what they think should happen and communicate clearer
- Evolving from European chairs assembly to movement wide assembly – possible way forward
- To parallel international council could have UK chairs meeting, Europe chairs meeting, international chairs meeting
- Leadership by commission rather than omission – leadership issue vital in moving forward – fundamental
- Need for a movement wide perspective for the movement
- Different capacities for leadership and decision making at different levels in different spheres
- Have stumbled upon real visionary issues
- How we explore and evolve leadership, coherence and vision and at same time pragmatically how do we move forward and address funding

Moving forward with strategic vision and fundraising

Proposal: Taking process forward through formation of working group (Dhammarati)

'Working group'

- Made up of reps from ECA, PPC, and Order Convenors with support DT. Probably around 8 or 9 people
- Processes material on strategic vision and coherence from July ECA meeting and Nov PPC, working through issues and themes raised and beginning shape to Vision and Strategic Priorities for movement in principally Europe. Beginning to propose possible projects and fundraising.
- Progress report fed back to ECA in January for comment, revision and, where necessary, agreement and to PPC (in PPC case through their reps).
- Further refinement and development takes place and brought back to summer ECA meeting.

- Working group needs to meet regularly and to have consistent membership and to be 'light on its feet'.
- International Council to be informed of working group, consulted and invited to be involved if they believe that they can do so meaningfully and effectively.
- PPC and order reps on working group come to ECA meetings and are mandated by their bodies to take decisions on their behalf, so decisions can take place at ECA.
- Working group can work and evolve in parallel with international council as council develops and works out structure and vision and role.
- Working group will need to work out how it works and what it needs to do – terms of reference and remit etc

Will of the meeting: agree to proposal of forming the working group. Meeting willing the trust this step.

Provisional proposal: Mokshini + Jnanavaca to serve as ECA reps on working group

Collaborative Fundraising proposal

Short term Nov 14 – July 15	ECA	COLLEGE
	£50,000 'shopping list'	'Grant' from short term fundraising Regular giving campaign
'Culture of Giving'		
Medium term July 15 – 2017/18	'Future of the movement' campaign <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Major gifts • Legacies • Regular giving (if have team) 	

Notes on culture of giving:

- Amalavajra giving talks and workshops on money, more conscious on how we are using our (personal) money and culture of giving
- 'live simply and give more' – 'the 10% giving club' (giving 10% of your income to causes). On facebook.
- Promoting it within the movement

Will of the meeting: for Amalavajra to embark of fundraising as proposed.

Concluding remarks (Jnanavaca)

Very significant occasion working collaboratively on vision and strategy. Hopefully setting a new direction in the PPC and ECA working together.

Transference of merits and self-surrender.

Notes

College basic funding needs 2014 + 2015 per annum:

Full support Chair Full support dept Chair ½ support admin assistant	£42 K
Travel for Public Preceptors, including Non-UK	£12 K
Total	£54 K
Current income	£26 K
Shortfall	£28 K