

NAVIGATING THE EVOLUTION OF MYANMAR HIGHER EDUCATION: PERSPECTIVES FROM THE INSIDE

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CHINLONE

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EDUCATION: PERSPECTIVES FROM THE INSIDE

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INTRODUCTION

“We need more and more human resources of intellectuals and intelligentsia in building a modern, developed democratic nation.... Therefore, we will promote the nation’s education standard to meet the international level and encourage human resource development... [...] we will work in cooperation with international organizations including the UN, INGOs, and NGOs. We will promulgate necessary laws for private education schools. Moreover, we will provide stipends for higher education abroad and stipends for outstanding students at home.”

President U Thein Sein’s Inaugural Speech, 30 March 2011

With this speech, U Thein Sein inaugurated in 2011 a season of political reforms in Myanmar unseen in the previous decades. This process triggered a profound political metamorphosis that resulted in the suspension of the economic sanctions that had been applied against the country, the normalization of its relations with the international community, and a deep political transition¹. These crucial achievements have gradually paved the way for the formulation of major structural reforms that involved a wide range of issues and sectors. The reform of Myanmar’s National Education System has undoubtedly become of the utmost importance as this vital challenge needs to be effectively addressed to put the country on the path towards a lasting and sustainable development². Firstly, in 2012, the Ministry of Education launched the “Comprehensive Education Sector Review” (CESR), with the aim of analyzing the current education situation, shaping new policies, and drafting a comprehensive education plan by 2014. As a result, in 2014 the Parliament approved a new “National Education Law” (NEL), amended in 2015. The NEL and subsequent Amendment aimed to provide a national framework for the implementation of a range of complementary reforms across the national education system,

1 Egretreau, Renaud. 2016. *Caretaking Democratization: The Military and Political Change in Myanmar*. Hurst & Co.; Egretreau, Renaud, and Robinne, François. 2015. *Metamorphosis: Studies in Social and Political Change in Myanmar*. NUS Press.

2 Lall, Marie. 2021. *Myanmar’s Education Reforms: A Pathway to Social Justice?* UCL Press.

such as: the recognition of the right of all citizens to free, mandatory education at the primary level; establishment of a standards-based education quality assurance system (thanks to the establishment of ad hoc commissions for quality assurance); expansion of the basic education system to 13 years; support for the learning of nationalities' languages and cultures; and greater decentralization within the education system. Finally, these two experiences laid the foundations for the launch, in late 2015, of a brand new five-year "National Education Strategic Plan - 2016/2021" (NESP). This last plan stood out as an overarching reform impacting the Myanmar Educational System as a whole - with a particular emphasis on the primary education sector - encompassing nine goals/transformational shifts. With regard to the higher education system, NESP set three specific strategies: strengthening higher education governance and management capacity; encouraging local teaching staff to undertake quality research and offering effective teaching; improving the access to a high quality education with no discrimination and regardless of the students' social and economic backgrounds. The first goal acknowledged the need of universities for a greater institutional autonomy in setting their own goals, while accepting greater responsibility and accountability. The second goal recognized that Myanmar teaching staff should be better trained to carry out its teaching activities and research in today's global era and therefore included several support actions involving the collaboration of international partners. Finally, the third goal acknowledged that a consistent disparity in the access to the education system was still surviving in Myanmar.

Before these developments, in the period from 1988 until early 2011, the EU's policy towards Myanmar frequently fluctuated between a "carrot" and a "stick" approach³ After 2011 the emphasis more decisively moved towards the provision of aid to support the transition. The EU's re-engagement with Myanmar included even the education sector. In this field, EU's support has been comprehensive and comprised fruitful collaborations with Myanmar institutional partners through the implementation of different projects. Some of these projects targeted the higher education sector and were financed through the EU's Erasmus+ program⁴, an umbrella framework that comprehended also the three-year long project CHINLONE, discussed below. Usually, the Erasmus+ program is associated with the financing of mobility and educational activities within EU borders and not with its extra-European dimension. In reality, the promising role that education can play in international relations has become increasingly evident to European Union policy-makers, especially in the definition of priorities and actions to navigate EU external relations. As the manifesto of this new policy path, the "Global Strategy for Foreign and

3 Dosch, Jörn, and Jatswan S. Sidhu. 2015. "The European Union's Myanmar Policy: Focused or Directionless?" *Journal of Current Southeast Asian Affairs*, 34(2), 85-112.

4 More information available at: www.ec.europa.eu/programmes/erasmus-plus/node_en

Security Policy”⁵ states that “the EU will lead by example on global governance. But it cannot deliver alone. It will act as an agenda-shaper, a connector, coordinator, and facilitator within a networked web of players. It will partner with states and organizations, but also with the private sector and civil society.” Europe is therefore highly determined to become an attractive partner worldwide and, to achieve this goal, the EU already has several arrows in its quiver. According to this strategic plan, both the EU programs Erasmus+ and Horizon 2020 - respectively the EU-funded programs for education, training, youth and sport and the EU framework programme for research and innovation –are defined as key tools of European public diplomacy. To a certain extent, this approach recalls the so-called “soft power” conceptualized by Joseph Nye, as the ability to achieve a specific political aim not through coercion but through the use of attraction⁶. Hence, “soft power” can influence international relations and persuade people of the attractiveness of a specific political offer. In this sense, the transformation of Erasmus+ and Horizon into worldwide brands of excellence in the fields of education and research represents a valuable new source of “soft power” for the EU.

The international dimension of Erasmus+ is reflected in the different programs under its wide umbrella. Among these is the “Capacity Building in the Field of Higher Education” (CBHE) which supports transnational cooperation projects and is based on multilateral partnerships, primarily between higher education institutions from the EU and international eligible partner countries. More specifically, the goal of CBHE is to support projects intervening in the field of modernisation, accessibility and internationalisation of higher education in non-European countries. In the fulfillment of this broader goal, projects can be developed in three main directions: developing new curricula or improving existing ones; improving governance and management systems; and building relationships between higher education institutions and socioeconomic actors. Regardless of its specific focus, any CBHE project has a double aim: “integration” and “collaboration”. In this context, integration should be intended as the fulfillment of the EU’s strategic objective of sharing and making accessible the best practices used at EU higher education institutions in different international contexts. In this light, it is self-evident that any CBHE project is characterized by a top-down approach where most of the decision-making processes are in the hands of EU partners. Not surprisingly, in discussing North-South dynamics in academia, Toby Green considers the case study of one CBHE project and

5 European Union. 2016. “Shared Vision, Common Action: A Stronger Europe: A Global Strategy for the European Union’s Foreign And Security Policy.”

6 Nye, Joseph. 2004. *Soft power: the means to success in world politics*, New York: Public Affairs.

indicates this aspect as problematic⁷. Top-down “integration” can cause a sense of disempowerment in non-EU partners and the mere reproduction of old models and agendas. A top-down project can nonetheless be substantially reconfigured by fostering “collaboration” elements through the disinvestment in unilateral practices and a stronger focus on dialogue and mutual understanding. This was the case with CHINLONE, where “collaboration” informed by bottom-up initiatives mitigated an overall top-down structure.

CHINLONE, “Connecting Higher Education Institutions for a New Leadership on National Education”, has been a three-year long CBHE project (2017-2020) designed after and in response to the launch of the NESP and conceived to support Myanmar universities in their quest to profoundly re-frame the national higher education system. In the heart of every citizen of Myanmar, the word “*chinlone*” holds a very special place, since it is the name of a traditional sport, very popular among local youngsters, based on a non-competitive mechanism whose objective is not winning or losing, but how spectacularly the game is played while passing the ball back and forth to each other using feet, knees, and heads. In other words, while enjoying the game of chinlone, the players’ experience can be considered as a team-building exercise, as demonstrated by the way they support each other to keep the ball in motion. As prescribed by the rules of this traditional sport, the CHINLONE platform⁸ aims to support the reorganization of Myanmar higher education system in a non-competitive environment where different institutions can actually work together for a shared goal. Accordingly, the project encourages local stakeholders to engage in the modernization of the higher education institutions by socializing all actors in the process (university governance representatives, faculty members, staff, and, above all, students) in a harmonious and integrated manner. To do so, the CHINLONE consortium includes three European universities – the University of Bologna, the University of Granada, and Uppsala University; one EU university association, the Coimbra Group; five Myanmar universities - Dagon University, the University of Mandalay, the University of Yangon, Yangon University of Economics, and Yezin Agricultural University; along with the Ministry of Education of Myanmar. As a result, the exchange with EU universities is expected to put local higher education institutions in the position to be trained from different perspectives, ranging from university quality assurance management, the design and implementation of updated degree programs based on a “student-centered” approach, to the drafting of sound internationalization strategies that can lead to the development of fully functional International Relation Offices (IROs).

7 Green, Toby. 2019. “North-South dynamics in academia.” *Journal of African Cultural Studies* 31, 280-283.

8 See: www.site.unibo.it/chinlone/it

This project resulted from the collection and careful examination of the needs and priorities of the three key target groups (academic leaders, teaching, and administrative staff) scrutinized during a series of baseline studies. With regards to the output of this analysis, three specific platforms of actions have been tailored to improve the target groups' skills in: academic governance (management platform), degree courses designing and monitoring (education platform), international relations management (international relations platform). The activities of the management platform have been designed to target Myanmar academic leaders (rectors, deans, and heads of departments) for the creation of an extensive programme of trainings on the main principles regulating academic governance, by bringing on the table the experience of the "Bologna process." This allowed them to draft revised and updated tools for managing curricula and quality assurance, which will be further promoted in the country through spillover activities and cascade trainings. Subsequently, the education platform targeted three specific fields of studies: humanities and cultural heritage, economics of tourism, and agricultural sciences. Professors belonging to these fields of studies have carried out mobility to Europe in order to improve their skills in curriculum designing, innovative teaching methods, and quality assurance processes with a student-centered approach, which led Myanmar partners to update selected curricula running in their universities thanks to the knowledge acquired. Finally, in order to foster a more international outlook in Myanmar universities, the CHINLONE Project invested extensive energies in reorganizing and empowering Myanmar IROs. The activities aimed at fulfilling this task allowed participants to familiarize with different models of international relations management, including the formulation of feasibility plans and mission statements for the establishment of IROs. Moreover, the project provided new equipment for the established IROs in each Myanmar partner University⁹. The lessons learned in each of these platforms have been summarized in four policy papers written by Consortium and available on the project website¹⁰: "Myanmar's Higher Education Reform: Which Way Forward?", "Managing Academic Affairs in Myanmar Between Theory and Practice", "Supporting Curricula Reforms in Myanmar Universities", "Shaping University's International Relations in Myanmar." These policy reports have been presented to the Ministry of Education and the national commissions in charge of drafting educational policy. These authorities have shared them with all Myanmar Universities and used them for national discussion on the ongoing education reform.

Considering the peculiarity of the Myanmar context, CHINLONE made considerable efforts in the creation of a project that could be well structured from a

9 The results achieved by CHINLONE are available at: www.site.unibo.it/chinlone/it/results

10 All CHINLONE reports accessible at: www.site.unibo.it/chinlone/it/report

methodological point of view and innovate Myanmar education field following EU best practices that could be efficiently applied to the Myanmar context. From the methodological point of view, one of the main strengths of the project was the creation of a modality of work that could be replicated across the three platforms of the project. This modality consisted of three steps. The first step was based on training offered by EU partners to selected task forces created by Myanmar partners. These trainings also included mobilities and were always offered in ToT (training of the trainers) modality. Indeed, the trainees, i.e. Myanmar participants, were always asked of their availability to become trainers themselves. The second step consisted of cascade trainings. Those trained by the project assumed the responsibility of providing training to a certain number of people at their home universities. The training always comprised a part of concrete implementation of the skills acquired. The final step was the pursuit of a national spillover effect. Each outcome of the project was summarized in policy reports that have been shared with the Ministry of Education and with the National Education Policy Commission (NEPC). These authorities further shared the reports with all Myanmar universities. In some cases, the CHINLONE directly organized conferences open to all Myanmar academia. This eventually guaranteed a deep spillover effect. This working methodology allowed the transfer of best practices to innovate universities, as demonstrated by a statement of Yangon University of Economics' Head of Department in the External Evaluation Report of the project¹¹: "The things I saw [in Europe], the creative ideas and the outcome-based learning and teaching systems I studied; how they developed their creative and innovative curricula are totally different from what we do in our universities. My old ideas were refreshed, replaced with a new ideology and knowledge...on how to improve our teaching methods and repair our curriculum to upgrade Myanmar's education system." This is an example of how a solid *modus operandi* allowed the creation of bridges for the sharing of valuable best practices. Since dissemination, exploitation, and sustainability strategies are issues of great relevance in the project, CHINLONE includes a wide-ranging campaign designed to maximize the spread of its outcomes and results on a national and international level.

As part of the CHINLONE project and coherently with its mission, this volume aims to bring into focus the viewpoint and knowledge of professionals and academics working *within* Myanmar higher education system. The collection of analyses provided by the volume underlines once more the relevance of bottom-up approaches within CBHE projects and, more broadly, the impact of internalization processes in higher education systems. The following papers tackle the challenges and opportunities characterizing Myanmar higher education from a variety of per-

11 More on CHINLONE Quality Assurance activities at: www.site.unibo.it/chinlone/it/results/wp7-quality-plan

spectives and replace the discussion in the rightful hands of its own professionals. In this sense, this volume represents a further attempt to provide a platform for Myanmar academia to gain international exposure and confidence not within a top-down structure but by “passing the ball” back to Myanmar voices. In particular, the first paper reconstructs the complex history and the key role played by education in Myanmar from the precolonial period to our days. The author provides a balanced perspective on the contribution of the Christian missions and the colonial government to the development of a modern educational system by placing it within the social, educational and religious geographies of a precolonial Myanmar and by assessing the impact and limitations of traditional and modern educational institutions. The second paper explains the reform process undergone by the Yezin Agricultural University, in particular through the investment in capacity-building strategies, a student-centred approach and international and domestic mobility. Most notably, the author underlines the key role played by international partnerships in the upgrading of the quality of the programs provided and the importance of a constant exposure with regional and international realities. The third paper examines the results, challenges and gaps experienced by the University of Mandalay in the development of quality assurance mechanisms with a special focus on the decade 2011-2021. The study provides a lucid and useful review of the strategies adopted by the institution and sheds light on policy-relevant issues concerning the establishment of an efficient system for quality assurance in Myanmar universities. The fourth paper uses quantitative data to measure students' satisfaction towards the Master of Marketing Management Programme of the Yangon University of Economics as part of an approach that considers students' assessment a central pillar for the improvement of the educational quality of higher institutions. In particular, the study shows how the students' feedback provides useful diagnostics to identify shortcomings and best approaches of university programs. The fifth paper provides a complete review of the 36 memoranda of understandings established by the University of Mandalay with foreign universities and therefore examines the internationalization process from the point of view of a Myanmar institution by highlighting the successes of such approach and the fields requiring intervention. Finally, the last paper explores the experience of the University of Cologne with five universities in Myanmar through the project CYM+ and uses it as a case study in the implementation and sustainability of projects aimed at the internationalization of higher education institutions in Myanmar from a European perspective. In particular, the sustainability of the project is examined through the identification of four pillars: internationalization of internal structures, management, mobility and research, highlighting challenges and successes of CYM+ implementation strategies.

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THE INTRODUCTION OF MODERN EDUCATION TO MYANMAR: AN ETHNIC CHRISTIAN PERSPECTIVE

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Abstract

The arrival of Christianity in the 16th century CE was a complex historical phenomenon characterized by both constructive and destructive outcomes. Nevertheless, the contribution of the Christian missionaries to the development of a modern educational system in Myanmar is often overlooked. Education has always been a fundamental part of the history of Myanmar, as testified by the survival of many traditional institutions like the monastic schools, but the arrival of Europeans and Americans played a key role in the transformation of Myanmar under an educational, political, religious and social point of view. As a consequence, this paper aims to analyse the development of education in Myanmar from the pre-colonial period to our days, highlighting the impact of Christianity and the challenges and limitations of modern and traditional approaches to education.

Introduction

As I belong to the Chin ethnicity, I was educated through an oral and folk tradition originated before the arrival of the British and Christian missionaries from the West. The British and Christian missionaries introduced modern education to Myanmar, particularly among hill ethnic regions. As a Chin, during my study in Matupi, Chin State up to matriculation (class 10), there was no chance for me to learn, read, write, and know about my own (Chin) ethnic identity, history, culture and religion in my own language in state school. Everything was Burmese and even history, culture, politics, and religions were Burmese/Bamar and Buddhist. All students were forced to learn and speak Burmese in the government school. Even without understanding Burmese very well, I passed matriculation. I did not clearly understand whatever Burmese teachers taught in the class. I often had to study and memorise all my subjects. This was because of the memorisation method and teaching in Burmese: all subjects were supposed to be memorised without understanding.

It is not wrong to say that the British colonial and Christian missionaries introduced the modern education system to Myanmar. Christianity came to Myanmar in the 16th century CE. Under the colonial administration, various changes happened in Myanmar not only in education but also various social changes, both constructive and destructive. A constructive aspect of the continuous missionary work right from the beginning in Myanmar included areas like education, medicine, literature,

unity, peace and so on. This paper attempts to analyse the introduction of modern education to Myanmar, the contribution of the Christian mission to education, and the Burmese education system within the historical context. It provides a brief historical background of the Burmese, education before the colonial period, during the colonial period, after the colonial period, and under military rule in Myanmar. In the conclusion, I will offer some considerations on the role of education for the Myanmar pluralistic society.

1. Myanmar: A Brief Overview

Myanmar is a pluralistic society. It is situated in Southeast Asia, bordered to the north and northeast by China, to the east and southeast by Laos and Thailand, to the south by the Andaman Sea and the Bay of Bengal, and to the west by Bangladesh and India. The government of Myanmar officially recognises 135 ethnic groups. There are eight major groups such as Kachin, Kayah, Karen, Chin, Mon, Bamar, Rakhine, Shan and other nationalities.¹² The country's official language is Burmese (Bamar), but the ethnic minorities also have their own languages, culture and beliefs. The British occupied Myanmar for many decades. The country gained independence from the British in 1948. Post-independence, Myanmar had the highest rate of literacy in all of South and Southeast Asia. Yangon University was one of the top universities in Asia. The Buddhist monastery served as the centre of education and culture, providing almost universal education for boys, although not for girls in particular among Bamar Buddhist society. Monastic education declined under the British administration. Under the British, a new education system was introduced to the people of Myanmar nationalities, and restricted to the concept of "formal schooling" and monastic education system in the country.¹³ Nowadays, Myanmar has a very diverse education system: the Ministry of Education runs government schools, but there are also monastic schools, other faith-based schools and private schools, as well as a myriad of different ethnic education systems in ethnic majority areas.¹⁴ Myanmar's transition from an authoritarian regime to a democratic form of government is one of the biggest challenges today. The ruling elites and the opposition forces have been engaged in a negotiated transition to democracy.¹⁵

12 Mandy Sadan, *Being and Becoming Kachin Histories Beyond the State in the Borderwolds of Burma* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2013), 5.

13 Helen James, *Governance and Civil Society in Myanmar: Education, Health, and Environment* (London and New York: RoutledgeCurzon, 2005), 78-79.

14 Marie Lall, *Understanding Reform in Myanmar: People and Society in the Wake of Military Rule* (London: Hurst and Company, 2016), 160.

15 Nehginpao Kipgen, *Democratization of Myanmar* (New Delhi: Routledge, 2016), 23.

2. Education in Myanmar

Education has a long history in Myanmar: it did not appear with the British administration. Before the introduction of modern education in Myanmar, “the monastic schools was an institution of fundamental importance in the moulding of Burmese social, cultural, and religious life.”¹⁶ It is said that prior to the Konbaung dynasty, a number of prose writers and poets appeared and there were two interesting developments. The first was that these writers were all laymen and laywomen. The second was that the writers as a general rule abandoned the use of the scriptures as their sources. Their work was described as the first novel in Burmese literature.¹⁷ Under the British colonial period around 1873, there were 801 monastic schools and 112 lay schools under government inspection and receiving government aid. In 1891 the *thathanabaing* in council issued a circular prohibiting the introduction of any secular education in monastic schools, the certificated lay teachers provided by the government were not to be accepted.¹⁸ The monastic schools had important natural advantages over the lay schools: they enjoyed the prestige of religion, charged no fees, and had their classroom building already provided.¹⁹ Monastic schools provide supplementary education for needy children and orphans, filling a significant void in the education system. However, the impact of monastic education is difficult to estimate. Sources differ on the likely number of students attending monastic schools – the figure may be somewhere between 10,000 and 25,000 children, accounting for 2% to 5% of the primary school population.

In 1910, instruction in all religions was permitted in government schools outside of school hours. In 1931, government schools were required to provide daily instruction in Buddhism for Buddhist pupils during the first morning period. From their inception, the missionary schools in Burma included classes in the Bible and Christian doctrine as an integral part of their curriculum, and this instruction was compulsory for all pupils regardless of religion. The position of the missionaries was that no one compelled Buddhist parents to send their children to the Christian schools, but that if they sought admission they must be prepared to accept the entire curriculum of studies. There were few conversions from Buddhism to Christianity as a result of such religious instruction.²⁰ There was no religious ceremony or act of worship which was permitted. The Young Men’s Buddhist Association (YMBA) was formed in 1906 by a group of laymen. The founders of the YMBA were Western-ed-

16 Donald Eugene Smith, *Religion and Politics in Burma* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1965), 57.

17 Htin Aung, *A History of Burma* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1967), 192.

18 Donald Eugene Smith, *Religion and Politics in Burma*, 59.

19 Donald Eugene Smith, *Religion and Politics in Burma*, 60.

20 Donald Eugene Smith, *Religion and Politics in Burma*, 76.

ucated, middle-class Burmans who wished to preserve certain distinctive values of their Burmese Buddhist heritage and found that a western Christian institution, the Young Men's Christian Association (YMCA), provided a useful organisational example. Initially it was only for education, religious, social, cultural art and literature.²¹ But later on it became a political organisation and fought the British colonial administration for decades. After the introduction of modern education in Myanmar, the monastic school and education fell into decline among the Burmese Buddhist society.

Education is highly valued in Myanmar. As a consequence, the field may be more resistant to outside influences, and efforts to change higher education could be taken as "threatening." Thus, many universities were shut down or significantly diminished in size by limiting access only to graduate students (mostly at the MA level) during the military regime and are gradually being rebuilt only now, with very small cohorts of undergraduate "honours" students. The lack of investment in some areas is evident in poorly maintained physical plants, the poor condition of libraries and laboratory facilities, and limited pedagogic innovation. Teaching in most classrooms is dominated by "call and response" styles, with very limited interaction between students and faculty.²²

Introduction of Modern Education in Myanmar

During the period of King Mindon, Christian missionaries were allowed to open their mission hostile to Buddhism; Mindon had no prejudice against the Christians, and granted plots of land to Rev. Dr. Mark, head of the English Society for the Propagation of the Gospel and to Bishop Bigandet, head of the French Roman Catholic mission to enable them to build their churches and schools. He even sent his sons to study English under Dr. Mark.²³ In 1852 the British government, not realising that monastic schools were a main foundation of Burmese society, allowed them to die off and set up lay schools in their place. The Christian missions followed suit by establishing missionary schools. The government schools, in strict conformity with Queen Victoria's proclamation of full religious freedom, refused to give any religious or moral teaching to their pupils, but the mission schools made it compulsory for the pupils to study the Christian Bible. The British government discovered after some ten years that it had made a grave mistake in not preserving the monastic

21 Donald Eugene Smith, *Religion and Politics in Burma*, 86-87.

22 Carola Weil, "The Current Political and Higher Education Context in Myanmar" in *Investing in the Future: Rebuilding Higher Education in Myanmar* (New York: Institute of International Education, 2013), 15-16.

23 Maung Htin Aung, *A History of Burma*.

schools, but in trying to make amends it made the situation worse.²⁴ The Christian missionaries' aim was to convert the natives, and for this reason they introduced modern education and schools to them. Therefore, they first produced books such as Burmese-English dictionary, Burmese Bible and other ethnic literature for the people of Myanmar. They used Roman script and created many ethnic scripts in Myanmar.

Some of the longest-settled inhabitants of Myanmar and large numbers of Chin were converted to Christianity by American Baptists.²⁵ Prior to the 18th century CE, the history of the Chin is obscure, the reason being the lack of written sources.²⁶ The first Protestant missionaries, Mr. and Mrs. Carson, came to the Chin people between 1888 and 1896, Thayetmyo being selected for the first Chin Mission Station²⁷, which later moved into the Chin Hills in 1899, just a few years after the British occupation of the whole Chin Hills as their colony. The favours, and in some cases the support Protestant missionaries received from the colonial officials, are undeniable. As Laura Hardin Carson, who was the first of the Christian missionaries among the Chin Tribes of Myanmar wrote in her book *Pioneer Trails, Trials and Triumphs: Personal Memoirs of Life and Work as a Pioneer Missionary among the Chin Tribes of Burma*, "we rented from the British Government a little two-roomed stone and mud house, without any floor, very similar to the one so kindly placed at our disposal by the Assistant Superintendent upon our arrival."²⁸ N.E Parry stated that a more active instrument of change than Government is the Christian mission.²⁹ It can also be seen that not only the government, but also the Christian contribution to education and social change prevails in Myanmar.

Education before Independence

Since the 16th century CE, education in Myanmar had been provided by multiple actors working in parallel in various ways. Traditionally, monasteries were primarily responsible for teaching literacy, primarily in Pali but also Bamar, Mon, Shan, Rakhine, and possibly other languages. From the 16th century CE, Roman Catholic

24 Maung Htin Aung, *Burmese Monk's Tales* (New York and London: Columbia University Press, 1966), 27.

25 Ashley South, *Ethnic Politics in Burma* (New York: Routledge, 2008), 42.

26 Vanlalchhunawma, *Mission and Tribal Identity* (Delhi: ISPCK, 2010), 6.

27 Robert G. Johnson, *History of the American Baptist Chin Mission*, vol. I (Pennsylvania: Robert G. Johnson, 1988), 170.

28 Laura Hardin Carson, *Pioneer Trails, Trials and Triumphs: Personal Memoirs of Life and Work as a Pioneer Missionary among the Chin Tribes of Burma* (Calcutta: Firma Klm Privated Limited, 1927), 166.

29 N E Parry, *The Lakhers* (Aizawl: Tribal Research Institute, Reprinted 1976), 19.

missionaries began establishing missionary schools in central and southern Myanmar. These schools taught local languages such as Bamar, Mon, in addition to European languages and other subjects, such as geography and mathematics. Following the second Anglo-Burmese War in 1852, the space for Christian missionaries to provide education in what was then called Burma increased significantly, leading to a particularly sharp rise in American Baptist schools. The missions, with centres in Mawlamyine and Yangon, became particularly active in mountainous areas populated by Karen, Kachin, Chin and other, mostly hill-region, non-Bamar groups. These schools taught local languages and English, while missionaries generated original writing systems for a large number of ethnic languages. The British colonial state began directly developing a state education system. Some English language schools were set up to educate an elite. For the rest of the population the colonial administrators initially attempted to graft Western subjects and concepts onto the existing monastic education system. The British supported the development of networks of secular, vernacular schools with some help from missionaries, and later also established universities. Monastic schools continued to provide education in many areas, but they received less support from the colonial administration than secular schools did. Educational development in the colonial era played a key role in the rise of ethnic nationalism, as they produced educated, ethnically identified elites who often rose into key jobs within the colonial system or held traditional leadership roles. Indeed, it was literate, Christian leaders who gave rise to Karen, Chin and Kachin national movements. Meanwhile, there were fewer new education opportunities for Buddhists such as the Bamar and Mon. It was probably these dynamics, too, that inspired Bamar nationalist movements from the 1930s onwards to place Myanmar language and culture at the heart of their campaigns for independence.³⁰

Post-independence Burma's education system was considered advanced compared to the rest of the South/Southeast Asia region, and Rangoon University was known as a beacon of higher education in Asia. However, during the socialist period, school building continued in both the cities and villages, making schools more easily accessible in rural areas, yet teacher education and pay deteriorated markedly. It was also at this time that Burmese was made the medium for teaching in all schools, abolishing the colonial legacy of English-language schools for the elite and disallowing the use of ethnic languages in schools in the ethnic majority areas. This in turn had repercussion in universities, as textbooks and other literature were not available in Burmese, leading to a deterioration of standards in higher education.³¹

30 Kim Jolliffe and Emily Speers Mears, *Strength in Diversity: Towards Universal Education in Myanmar's Ethnic Areas* (Asia Foundation, 2016), 6-7,

31 Marie Lall, *Understanding Reform in Myanmar: People and Society in the Wake of Military Rule*, 160.

Post-independence Myanmar had a well-functioning school system, a high literacy rate and a similarly high level of English. Sadly, after the military took government office, the education system suffered and declined. Before World War II, there were three types of schools in Burma:

1. Vernacular school, in which the medium of instruction was Burmese or one of the recognised indigenous languages.
2. Anglo-Vernacular School, in which English was taught as a second language and the media of instruction were English and Burmese or one of the recognised indigenous languages.
3. English school, in which the medium of instruction was English, with Burmese as the second language.

The vernacular schools were administered by local education authorities and were the only schools for the majority of children throughout the country. In that time, where only those with a good knowledge of English could enter government service and the professions, vernacular schools became second-rate schools. Admission of Burmese children to English schools was also restricted in many ways. After the British government in 1945, the department of education was formed to implement the Simla Scheme of Education Rehabilitation financed out of the British military budget. The report emphasised the reorganised system of schools that consisted of:

1. Primary school (Standards I to V) for children aged 6 to 11 years old;
2. Post primary school (Standards VI to IX) for children aged 11 to 15 years old;
3. Pre-university school (Standards X to XII) for children aged 15 to 18 years old.

Education was free in the primary and post primary grades, and subsidised in the pre-university grade.³²

The basic subjects for primary and post primary considered in the report were:³³

32 Thein Lwin, *Education in Burma* (1945-2000) (First Edition, 1999), 4-5.

https://www.thinkingclassroom.org/uploads/4/3/9/0/43900311/1.lwin_t._2000_education_in_burma_1945-2000_2000_english_.pdf (accessed on 20/1/2021).

33 Thein Lwin, *Education in Burma* (1945-2000), 6.

PRIME SCHOOLS	POST PRIMARY SCHOOLS
1. Religious Instruction	1. Religious Instruction
2. Language- reading and writing	2. Language- Reading and Writing
3. Arithmetic	3. Elementary Mathematics
4. Geography	4. Geography
5. Nature Studies	5. History
6. Hygiene	6. Science
7. Handicrafts	7. Handicrafts and Practical Subjects
8. Physical Education	8. Physical Education

Education after Independence

It is said that during British colonial rule, educational access for women improved tremendously. In the pre-colonial era, male education was emphasised in the traditional Buddhist monastic education system. After 1948, the government sought to create a literate and educated population, and Burma was believed to be on its way to becoming the first Asian Tiger in the region. In 1962, the military took government in a coup, all schools were nationalised and educational standards began to fall. Burmese replaced English as the medium of instruction at Burmese universities in 1965 with the passing of the New University Education Law a year earlier. This led to a rapid decline in English proficiency among the Burmese.

After independence, armed conflicts broke out between *tatmadaw* and separate ethno-nationalist and communist movements. Meanwhile, the new government, led by Prime Minister U Nu, attempted to establish a national education system that would provide at least primary education to all children across the country, with a school in every village. Literacy education of non-Bamar languages was continued by monastic, Christian, and other schools, while ethnic societies in some areas were able to continue teaching their own languages through the government system. The Shan state government's education committee began to develop the Shan writing system in the 1940s. Before 1958, Shan was included as a subject in the school curriculum in Shan areas, with textbooks available up to the fifth grade. Mon government schools also were given permission during this period to recruit Mon teachers and to teach the Mon language.³⁴

The Myanmar state education system has insisted on Bamar saga (Burmese) being used through a national school system, to create a Myanmar national identity

³⁴ Kim Jolliffe and Emily Speers Mears, *Strength in Diversity: Towards Universal Education in Myanmar's Ethnic Areas*, 7.

based on Bamar culture, with Burmese as a 'unifying' language. Given the diversity of ethno-linguistic groups in Myanmar, there is a strong argument for the country having a lingua franca or Union language. However, the promotion of Burmese as a national language under the previous military government did not lead to an inclusive national identity that was promoted and was strongly identified with the Bamar majority ethnic group. The military government's educational practice included the manipulation of history and textbooks, presenting the Burmese as superior to other ethnic groups. The teaching of minority languages was forbidden in state schools, creating an issue for children entering the Myanmar school system in areas where they spoke their mother tongue, one that was usually different from that of their teacher. In essence, the policy remained one of 'Burmanisation': meaning the marginalisation of ethnic identities, segregating ethnic groups and treating them unequally, by which the government made education part of the conflict.³⁵

Education Under Military Rule

The education system has suffered during the past almost half century under military rule. Since 1962 all foreign missionaries were required to leave the country and church schools and hospitals were nationalised. While Christians were found in significant numbers among some of the hill ethnic groups in rebellion against the central government, Christians in the main centres enjoyed considerable freedom and valued if limited contact with the outside world.³⁶ In this nationalistic period, Christianity was viewed as the offensive religion and culture of the Western imperialists. Burmese nationalists considered Christian missionaries and native Christians as allies of the British colonialists.³⁷ After 1962, Myanmar declined not only in terms of education but also in social, political, and development terms, and became the poorest country in the world.

The Burmese government was so determined to remove the history, culture and language of ethnic minorities from the face of the country that it thoroughly enforced various restrictions on non-ethnic culture, literature and language while fostering Burman/Bamar culture, history and language. The strict prohibition on the Chin language in public schools in their native land and restrictions on the publication of non-Bamar literature have effectively deprived future generations of the chance to learn their native language.³⁸ Under the military rule education system,

35 Marie Lall, *Understanding Reform in Myanmar: People and Society in the Wake of Military Rule*, 178-179.

36 Louise Pirouet, *Christianity Worldwide AD 1800 Onwards* (Delhi: ISPCK, 1989), 84.

37 Roger E. Hedlund, ed., *The Oxford Encyclopedia of South Asian Christianity*, vol. I (New Delhi: Oxford University Press, 2012), 118.

38 Pum Za Mang, "The Politics of Religious Conversion among the Ethnic Chin in Burma" in *Studies in World Christianity* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2018), 200.

therefore, the national curriculum became biased, aiming to create a strong sense of Burman/Bamar nationalism and highlighting the success of the government. Teachers were required to follow this curriculum. As Marie Ditlevsen pointed out, after the military took power, education changed in two ways. Firstly, there was a reallocation of money from education to military expenditure with funding of the education system dropping to only 1-2% of the country GDP. This meant that the school buildings deteriorated, the number of teachers dropped dramatically and educational material became outdated. Secondly, the student uprisings in 1988, sparked by political dissatisfaction, resulted in the government closing down a large number of schools and universities, these remained closed for several years following the uprisings. During this period to public education was very often taken care of by monasteries and churches, which offered free education. Based on donations to the temples, the monasteries were able to hire teachers to teach Buddhism as well as the required government curriculum.³⁹

4. The Contribution of the Christian Missionaries to Education

The advent of colonialism and the Christian mission transformed the religious, education, socio-political and cultural life of the people of Myanmar in various ways. Both the British government's and the Christian missionaries' impact on the life of Myanmar's people, both constructive and destructive, resulted in "not only education and physical transformation but also psychological, and intellectual change".⁴⁰ The first Christian missionary to arrive in Myanmar was Pierre Bonfer, the French Franciscan Catholic missionary in 1554. The first Protestant English Baptist missionaries, Richard Mardon and James Chater of the English Baptist missionary society, arrived in 1807 and were later joined by Felix Carey, son of William Carey.⁴¹ Felix Carey, however, failed his mission in Myanmar and went back to India in 1808. Later, the first American Baptist missionaries in Myanmar were Adoniram Judson and his wife, Ann Hasseltine, who arrived in Yangon on Thursday, 13 July 1813.⁴²

Regarding educational development in Myanmar, it is necessary to know the prevailing system of education in Myanmar, particularly among most of the Bamar ethnic group in plain areas. After the British conquest of Myanmar, a number of schools and colleges were opened in Myanmar. Moreover, during colonial rule,

39 Marie Ditlevsen, "Social Issues" in *Burma/Myanmar Where Now?*, edited by Mikael Gravers and Flemming Ytzen (Denmark: NIAS Press, 2014), 131.

40 Lawmsanga, *Theology of Mission: Postcolonial Perspective* (Aizawl: Lalmuanpuui, 2016), 268.

41 Roger E. Hedlund, ed., *The Oxford Encyclopedia of South Asian Christianity*, 116.

42 Courtney Anderson, *To the Golden Shoes: The Life of Adoniram Judson* (Michigan: Zondervan Publishing House, 2nd Printing 1976), 167.

Myanmar was top of the Southeast Asian countries for education. Judson University (Christian Mission School), renamed Yangon University, was even one of the top universities in Southeast Asia. Although many Christians and non-Christians have studied and graduated there, some people do not know the historical background of this university today. Several educational institutions were established after 1906. The Christian missionaries were mostly dedicated to education in Myanmar. The Christian missionaries opened Myanmar Institute of Theology, which is the leading theology school in Myanmar today. Thus, the Christian missionaries such as John Mark and Judson, who are the foundation of education in Myanmar, made literature for the Burmese people, as well as Carson and Ola Hanson, who created ethnic Chin and Kachin literature in Myanmar. The Christian missionaries contributed to works such as the first Burmese Bible, the first English-Burmese dictionary, Chin, Kachin, Karen and other ethnic Bibles, and other literature in various ways.

The Origin of the Burmese Bible

Adoniram Judson made the first complete translation of the Bible from the original languages into Burmese, completed by 31 January 1834. After this, he continued to revise it. He completed a revision of the Old Testament on 26 September 1835, a revision of the New Testament on 22 March 1837, and a revision of the entire Bible, published in quarto format, on 24 October 1840. Post-independence Myanmar had the highest literacy rate in its own language across the former British Empire. This was due not only to the Burmese schools but largely to the monastic schools that had always played, and continue to play, a major role in educating the poorer sections of society. For many years, other Asian countries saw Myanmar as an example in education. Decades of under-investment and civil strife have today resulted in the slow and steady decay of the state education system across the country.

The Chin Bible

At the turn of the 20th century, however, Chin society was quickly transformed by powerful outside forces of change. The British conquered Chinland, and Christian missionaries followed the colonial powers and converted the people.⁴³ The first American Baptist missionary, Arthur E. Carson, arrived in Yangon, the Capital city of Myanmar, on December 13 1886. Arthur Carson's widow, Laura Carson, remained in Hakha to continue the mission work and hold the Bible study she had organised. On December 21, 1908, J.H. Cope and his wife, who were the new missionary couple, arrived in Hakha with the intention of setting up a mission centre in Tedim. However, the premature departure of Arthur Carson held them back in Hakha to assist Laura Carson. Cope quickly became proficient in Hakha dialect to the extent

⁴³ Lian H. Sakhong, *In Search of Chin Identity* (Thailand: NIAS Press, 2003), 85.

of publishing literatures for the schools and churches in Chin Hills. The Copes were transferred to Tedim to establish a new mission centre on 29 September 1910. The first Bible School was established in Hakha on 5 January 1926. Missionaries completed the translation of the New Testament into Hakha dialect, which was published by the Mission Press in Yangon in 1940. Another Bible school was opened in Tedim in 1947. Apart from teaching at the Bible school in Hakha, Johnson was involved in the translation work of the Haka Bible and hymnals in “tonic solfa” notation. Altogether, Cope wrote no less than 35 text books in several dialects for the schools.⁴⁴ From the beginning, the growth of the church in the Chin Hills, especially in the Matupi, was intertwined with the indigenous Chin missionaries. The first indigenous field mission was to Matupi, and the first indigenous missionaries who worked as teacher-cum-preachers were Sakhong of Aibur from the Zophei area and Lian Kar of Khuapi from the Senthang area. Both were sent to Matupi and established a school in 1933.⁴⁵

The late 19th and early 20th centuries CE witnessed various missions into Chinland, with the Chin people converting to Christianity. Christianity brought a new worldview, Western culture, political, science, technology, medicines, schools and literature to the Chin. They also brought writing to the different Chin dialects by introducing the Roman script. With the burden of the important task of literary work, the Bible Training School became one of the main centres for the composition, translation, production and distribution of a great deal of the Christian literature used in the field, but especially things such as pastors’ aids, Sunday school materials, and young people’s and holiday Bible school materials.⁴⁶ After the missionaries came into the Chin Hills, Rev. Cason as well as the Rev. Cope introduced Chin literature in Romanised Chin language. After 1927, the Chin Bible was written and Hymnbooks produced in Chin, and school textbooks were prepared for schools. Today the Chin people are forming up literature societies according to the needs and desires of each dialectical group. Hymnbooks and Bible and other books had been prepared and published and the Bible written in the Chin languages.⁴⁷

The western missionaries and the British authorities “open schools, employ

44 Ngo Thian Puan, “Reasons why Evangelical - Pentecostal Christians broke away in droves from Mainstream Protestant American Baptist Mission Churches in Chin State, Myanmar”, (Unpublished Master of Global Studies, Thesis, Great Commission Bible College, 2013): 19-20.

45 Lian H. Sakhong, *In Search of Chin Identity*, 173.

46 Erille E. Sowards, “Report on Trip to the Chin Hills Mission Field” in *Thinking about Christianity and the Chins in Myanmar*, edited by Cung Lian Hup (Yangon: Chin Evangel Centenary, 1999), 83.

47 *Chin Church History* (Falam: ZTC, 2007), 383.

school teachers were simple matters to the Chins but to get enough school boys and girls were a big problem. Therefore, the British government issued orders to the chiefs that unless they produce a stipulated numbers of school children they would be taken to task and penalised. For quite a long time the children of chiefs, headmen or elders, were still not available, and in their stead, children of poor and destitute people, orphans, children of widows and widowers, slaves or serfs, were sent to schools. After WWII, the war in 1945 when chiefs and headmen had to travel and made contact with other elders, they need the services of young people to act as their secretaries and only the sons and daughters of the formerly marginalised people were enlisted and these people by the rights and privilege of their acquired education, became leaders, men and women in authorities. Time indeed had change, the former elite members of society became followers and vice versa. Prior to the WW II a school could not opened in the absence of a chief or headman. But with the advent of this worldwide conflict the atmosphere had been changed. Observing English soldiers, Indian sepoy and later in the Japanese soldiers, and their activities, their motor vehicles moving about the length and breadth of the Chin Hills was like a dream and radical change occurred in the thinking of the people. The aftermath of war brought about founding of schools everywhere. Not only boys but also girls started to go schools. The British had the conviction that public education was the responsibilities of the missionaries and such learning processes befall upon the shoulders of the missionaries.”⁴⁸

Medical Work

Initially, the missions did not plan to become involved in medical work because they believed that this would interfere with their primary task of evangelism. However, when confronted with the people’s suffering, the missionaries began to treat the diseases as best they could. In the mind of the Chin Christians, the need for the Christian medical work was almost paramount. Indeed, a good proportion would place the need for a Christian hospital as equally urgent with the need for the Bible Training School and some would unequivocally place the need for a good hospital in first position. Medical work has always been a part of the mission program in the Chin Hills, but medical missionaries stationed there saw the mission hospital burned down in the Chin rebellion of 1917.⁴⁹

48 *Chin Church History* (Falam: ZTC, 2007), 38.

49 Sowards, “Report on Trip to the Chin Hills Mission Field” in *Thinking about Christianity and the Chins in Myanmar*, 83.

Education Work

The history of the Chin Baptist Church shows that married American Baptist Missionary couples also introduced Christianity to the Chin land. They brought not only the gospel, but also met physical needs such as education, medical health care and civil development of the Chin people.⁵⁰ Erille E. Sowards once said that practically all Chin Christians agree on this: they need more Christian schools, many more of all grades, and they need better schools. The Christian mission field helps toward maintaining a primary school in their village. A Baptist church is a New Testament democracy founded upon the assumption that each member of the Church can study the New Testament and interpret the teachings of Jesus intelligently for their own life. When the pastor goes to a village only once every three months, there is all the more reason why the members should be able to study the Scripture for themselves.⁵¹

The Bible Training School can be an important centre for the production and distribution of Christian literature, but other agencies should also be involved in this phase of work. The first choice would be for a female missionary with both nursing and seminary training. When the rural community middle or high school is also located on the compound, there will be need for female missionaries qualified to work in at least four fields: healthcare, education, especially domestic economy evangelism and Christian education, all with special emphasis upon work for women and children.⁵² The British administration in general encouraged schooling for all Chin youngsters. They constructed school buildings in the Chin Hills, particularly in Hakha for elementary school, in Falam for middle school and in Tiddim for elementary school. However, the Chins on the whole did not want go to school, as they had not seen the benefit of learning. The British authorities, seeing the general refusal to go to school, even by the sons and their parents, forcefully enrolled the sons of the Chiefs and headmen of the villages. All the conscripted sons of chiefs and headmen went to school. The villages did a marvellous thing in that all the villagers compensated the parents of the schoolboys by cultivating their fields, and contributing grain and eggs while the boys were in school. By the 1930s the British expanded the school buildings, and the number of students slowly increased. Many elementary schools were built in a large number of the villages

50 Khin Swe Oo, *The Role of women in the ministry of Chin Baptist Church in Myanmar: Towards Equality of men and women in ministry* (Yangon: ATEM, 2012), 53.

51 Sowards, "Report on Trip to the Chin Hills Mission Field" in *Thinking about Christianity and the Chins in Myanmar*, 85.

52 Sowards, "Report on Trip to the Chin Hills Mission Field" in *Thinking about Christianity and the Chins in Myanmar*, 89.

in the Chin Hills.⁵³ But the British colonials, seeing the commitment and success of the missionaries in education, requested the missionaries to be the superintendents of the government schools in the Chin Hills. They became “Lord of School.” The reason for the more developed northern Chin Hills, compared to the southern Chin Hills, can be directly attributed to the presence and activities of the missionaries. The missionaries prepared textbooks that included the biblical stories.⁵⁴ It is interesting to know that wherever a church was founded, the early missionaries established a school. Christian missionaries opened many of the educational institutions, schools and churches. They built schools, colleges, and gave incentives to converts to get educated. Therefore, education plays a very important role in Myanmar, particularly in ethnic Christian society.

Education and Women

American Baptist missionaries brought the liberating message of Christ to the hill people in the 19th and 20th centuries CE. They later turned to Christianity from their traditional religion. It is true that the Gospel promotes and uplifts the status of ethnic women’s lives, but not all. Among the Chin, “Christianity cannot change the Chin men’s traditional attitude and conception towards women that women are in subordination to men, inferior to men in both family and society. Till today the Chin people practiced old traditional patriarchal culture and regard women as on a lower level in both family and community.”⁵⁵ The Chin society, like other patriarchal societies, is often considered to be a male dominant society. Initially, it is the parents who plan for the future of the children. Thus, the future career of a child largely depends on the parents. Only those parents who are aware of the value of education will take pains to educate their children. They may be poor, they may be uneducated. Yet, if they are aware of the value of education they will make all the efforts and sacrifices to give at least the basic education to their children. The educated man/woman knows the value of education from his/her own life experience. However today, both in society and church, women are subordinate to men in the Chin society.

Francis Manson, in her book “A Cenotaph to a Women of the Burman Mission; or, Views in the Missionary Path of Helen M. Mason”, shows that at that time the Burmese people were against giving importance to education for girls. The missionaries gave pencils, books, or medicines to the teachers, conversed with visitors on

53 Stephen Hre Kio, *Zahre Lian of Burma* (Thailand: Stephen Hre Kio, 2011), 38-39.

54 Kio, *Zahre Lian of Burma*, 40.

55 Khin Swe Oo, *The Role of women in the ministry of Chin Baptist Church in Myanmar: Towards Equality of men and women in ministry*, 45.

the subject of religion, or perhaps attended female prayer meetings.⁵⁶ In the mission schools precedence was rather given to special pastoral efforts, than to the instructions given in the schools.⁵⁷ In the ethnic Kachin society there were various Christian mission schools. The mission schools in Bhamo, Myityina and Namhkam educated large numbers of people. Most of the pupils in the mission schools become Christians. The Kachin language was put down in writing, leading to the beginning of literature and increasing numbers of people becoming able to read and write.⁵⁸

5. Conflicts and Politics of Education

After 1962, all foreign Christian missionaries were expelled from Myanmar and their properties and mission schools became the property of the government.⁵⁹ The socialist government thought that the Christian churches and their mission would gradually die out without the physical presence of their missionaries. However, during the socialist period, various restrictions were imposed on the activities of churches, including limited freedom of speech, freedom of movement and freedom of publication, although the government made an official statement claiming that everyone could enjoy the right to profess and practice their own religion. It was during this long period that the military government launched its master plan of an aggressive Buddhist mission, named in Burmese “*Buddha Taungtan tathana*”, meaning “Buddhist mission to hill regions,” to evangelise among the Christian ethnic groups.⁶⁰ In the Karen areas of eastern Myanmar there were some 900 community schools in 2007, including ten high schools, teaching some 58,000 pupils. Several schools were linked to both the government and Karen National Union (KNU) education systems. In many IDP areas schools consisted of little more than bamboo benches under the trees, which moved repeatedly, as villagers were displaced by armed conflict. In the face of such difficulties, communities attempted to provide their children with some form of basic education.⁶¹ In Kachin areas of Myanmar,

56 Francis Mason, *A Cenotaph to a Woman of the Burman Mission; or, Views in the Missionary Path of Helen M. Mason*, (published by Lewis Colby, 1851) 83.

57 Francis Mason, *A Cenotaph to a Woman of the Burman Mission; or, Views in the Missionary Path of Helen M. Mason*, 87.

58 Ola Hanson, *The Kachins: Their Customs and Traditions* (Rangoon: American Baptist Mission Press, 1913), 213.

59 Mang Hre, “Religion: A tool of dictators to cleanse ethnic minority in Myanmar?”, *The IAFOR Journal of ethnic religion & philosophy* 1/1 (2013): 21.

60 Samuel Ngun Ling, “Revisiting Ecclesiology in the Baptist Tradition as Confessed and Practical in the Context of Christian Churches in Myanmar” in *Our Theological Journey: III Writings in Honor of Prof. Rev. Dr. Sang Awr*, edited by Practical Department (Insein: MIT, 2009), 104-105.

61 Ashley South, *Ethnic Politics in Burma: States of Conflict* (Routledge, 2008), 99.

the Kachin Independent Organisation (KIO) received some international support for health and education programs. In 1997, the organisation was operating 28 hospitals or health centres, a decade later; it administered 10 hospital and 65 clinics as well as mobile health teams. In 2005-06 the KIO education department administered 150 schools including four high schools and 16 middle schools, teaching over 15,000 students.⁶²

Government authorities oppose the spread of Christianity and often ban public meetings by Christian groups. Since 2001, soldiers have beaten Christian clergy who refuse to sign a document promising not to preach to non-Christians. The government often denies permission for the building or repair of churches and mosques. In the context of fighting rebels, government forces have been known to arrest Christian clergy, destroy places of worship and prohibit religious services. All publications, religious and secular, are subject to censorship. In practice, importing religious literature, including the Bible and the Koran, is difficult, as is gaining permits to print them in Myanmar. Religion is sometimes included on citizens' identity cards. The government severely restricts visas for foreign clergy. Since the 1960s, foreign religious missions have not been permitted in the country. Many of these restrictions can be attributed to the government's authoritarian nature and a high concentration of religious minorities among the ethnic minorities that the government has been fighting for decades. These forms of repression are especially strong against the Chin Christian minority.

Na Ta La School

Under the military regime, government strategy in minority-populated areas has long consisted of a muscular version of national integration. The main "carrot" in this strategy has been the promise of development for areas affected by armed conflict. This has mostly been provided via the Border Areas Development Program, initiated in 1989 and renamed in 1992 as the Ministry for the Progress of Border Areas and National Races or *Na Ta La*.⁶³ The *Na Ta La* school systems function outside the mainstream education system, run by the Ministry of Religious Affairs and the military-dominated Ministry of Border Affairs. All pupils must study Buddhist scriptures, along with regular school subjects. Because fees for mainstream schools are expensive, many struggling ethnic groups such as non-Buddhist families seek out the *Na Ta La* residential schools, which, apart from providing almost free food and education, guarantee government jobs for the students once they graduate. Since the mid-1990s opening of *Na Ta La* schools,

⁶² Ashley South, *Ethnic Politics in Burma: States of Conflict*, 191.

⁶³ Ashley South, *Ethnic Politics in Burma: States of Conflict*, 51.

some of the Chin have been converted to Buddhism.⁶⁴

In order to encourage conversion from animism or Christianity to Buddhism, the methods used by the Burmese Army include threatening, intimidation, exemption from tax, forced labour, and luring with money, clothes and the provision of rations. In the hill regions, those who convert to Buddhism are offered better chances to become government employees than Christians, and they are promoted to higher ranks and given more power to exercise in the regions. *Na-Ta-La*, also the Government Ministry for “Border Area Ethnic People’s Development”, known with the Burmese acronym *နာတလ* (*na-ta-la*), has instituted Boarding schools for non-Bamar ethnic regions, particularly hill regions, for both boys and girls in each and every Township Headquarters. These provide facilities free of charge, including food and lodging. Such boarding schools have also been established in Chin State, Naga region, Kachin and other regions. Therefore, poor ethnic Christian parents are compelled to send their children to such boarding schools in the interests of their children’s education. However, their children have no option but to accept conversion to Buddhism, since these Boarding schools are maintained by the Buddhist government. The students become Buddhist nuns, shaving their heads, even if they are Christians, because Christians are rejected for admission. And when these students pass their matriculation exams or graduate, the government offers favourable government jobs to them, as they have become Buddhists.⁶⁵

Challenges of Higher Education

There are a great many aspects of Myanmar’s education system that require improvement. Martin suggests three areas: first, the education system needs more public funds. (e.g.: the physical infrastructure of schools, colleges and universities in Myanmar is almost uniformly in bad shape, with buildings needing to be repaired, libraries needing to be restocked, and laboratories needing to be re-equipped. The human resource capacity of the system is also in a poor state. The second is that primary school teachers require more support. There is a pressing need to improve the training, professional development and remuneration of these teachers. The third one is that the Technical and vocation education training (TVET) sector needs to be better developed. There is again a pressing need for more well-trained and highly skilled staff in areas of tourism,

64 Shaikh Azizur Rahman, “Burma’s Chin Christians face persecution in Buddhist Na Ta La schools”, Toronto Star, 27 December 2012: https://www.thestar.com/news/world/2012/12/27/burmas_chin_christians_face_persecution_in_buddhist_na_ta_la_schools.html (accessed on 28/1/2020).

65 Burmalink, “Forced Conversion to Buddhism in Eastern Nagaland”, 29 May 2014: <https://www.burmalink.org/forced-conversion-buddhism-eastern-nagaland/> (accessed on 28/1/2020).

construction, water management, sanitation, power and agriculture.⁶⁶

Higher education is in desperate need of reform. After the student-led protest in 1988, with all universities being closed initially for two years and after another series of student strikes in 1996 and 1998 for a further three years, the government relocated universities to different regions and the undergraduate programs were moved to campuses far away from urban centres. The world's largest higher education system by correspondence (locally referred to as Distance Education Programme/University) was allegedly set up to allow poorer students to study whilst living at home. Both these measures made sure that students stayed out of the cities and politics. After matriculation, students go on to further studies at state universities or colleges. They do so at a comparatively young age as they finish school at the age of sixteen. Students who get top marks in matriculation examinations are encouraged by their parents and society to take up medicine at university.⁶⁷

The missionaries had done great things for Burmese, particularly literature, translating a Burmese dictionary with both English and Burmese, and also the Bible.⁶⁸ Among the Bamar ethnic group, the earlier custom of using the monasteries as schools was never abandoned in Burma, and though some of the more progressive families and those who wish their sons to study English and science make use of the government schools, a large part of the population still gets its education from the monks. They learn reading, writing, and arithmetic, the fundamentals of Buddhism and good manners. Girls cannot go to the monastic boarding schools, but they get a little religious instruction from the monks at the pagodas.⁶⁹ In 2015, some foreign university students visited Myanmar, particularly from England, and they revealed that international universities were approaching them on a weekly basis. The expectation from the Myanmar institution was that the foreign partners would bring the funding for whatever programmes they proposed. Japan, the US and some European universities have already started linking up with local Myanmar universities, helping reintegrate Myanmar universities into the wider world of higher education.⁷⁰ Myanmar is very open to conducting international exchange programme

66 Martin Hayden and Richard Martin, "Recovery of the Education System in Myanmar", *Journal of International and Comparative Education*, 55.

67 Marie Lall, *Understanding Reform in Myanmar: People and Society in the Wake of Military Rule*, 164.

68 Francis Wayland, *Memoire of the Life and Labors of the Rev. Adoniram Judson* (Boston: Sampson and Company, 1853), 325.

69 James Bissett Pratt, *The Pilgrimage of Buddhism and A Buddhist Pilgrimage* (New York: The Macmillan Company, 1928), 39-140.

70 Marie Lall, *Understanding Reform in Myanmar: People and Society in the Wake of Military Rule*, 175-176.

with local universities and connecting with some world universities to update students, teachers and technicians for higher education.

As per the above study on education in Myanmar, Myanmar clearly needs a higher education system that can produce students capable of critical thinking and innovation, as well as investments in infrastructure - Internet, libraries, teaching and laboratory facilities and the kind of applied research that will benefit students and industry alike. The role of higher education cannot be underestimated. Higher education, NGOs, funding agencies and the private sector all have responsibilities in helping countries in transition with reform and development. Some initial indications regarding areas of need include: English language training for teachers, sharing of best practices, building capacity for university administrators to develop international programs and partnerships, training and curriculum development in the areas of law, international relations and public administration and skills development in areas such as research proposals and collaboration, quality assurance and teaching methodologies.⁷¹

Conclusion

In summary, modern education was introduced to Myanmar by British colonials and Christian missionaries. Christianity came to Myanmar from Americans and Europeans working for the education and social transformation of Myanmar's society. They opened a modern education system through the English language. The Christian missionaries opened our eyes not only through education, but also through various social changes, although before them education was already rooted in Myanmar through monastic schools and other traditional ways. Often the contribution of Christian missionaries to education and social changes has been ignored in Myanmar's history. The government erases the contribution of Christian mission work in the country on education, socio-cultural, medical, political, and religious matters, but also non-Bamar ethnic history, culture, religion and so on. In this, Mandy Sadan rightly points out that for many, Christian conversion is not considered a legacy of colonial brain-washing but rather as a liberating force of mind, body and spirit that invigorates their struggle against the overwhelming claims of Burmese state sponsored Theravada Buddhism and thus of Burmanisation in the post-colonial state.⁷² Christianity has consequently emerged as a pillar of ethnic identity for the Chin and

71 Allan E. Goodman, "Foreword: Making History of Investing the Future" in *Investing in the Future: Rebuilding Higher Education in Myanmar* (New York: Institute of International Education, 2013), 5-6.

72 Mandy Sadan, *Being and Becoming Kachin Histories Beyond the State in the Borderworlds of Burma*, 7.

Kachin.⁷³ Because of Covid-19 all schools were closed, and now the crisis in Myanmar has had an impact on socio-political, educational and other areas of society. Today it is challenging for all ethnic nationalities to make a positive contribution to the fight against unjust society in Myanmar, such as in educational, socio-cultural, political, and religious terms. To have peace and development in Myanmar, there must be a multi-education system with 'inter-cultural education' and 'interreligious education' in order to promote inclusivity, and in all of it 'education for justice and peace' to work effectively.

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73 Pum Za Mang, "Buddhist Nationalism and Burmese Christianity" in *Studies in World Christianity* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2016), 164.

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EDUCATIONAL SYSTEM REFORM AT THE YEZIN AGRICULTURAL UNIVERSITY AND CHALLENGES

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Abstract

Yezin Agricultural University (YAU) has engaged in a great deal of comprehensive work on education reform since 2016 in collaboration with international agencies. Capacity building of teaching staff in inbound and outbound training programs has been carried out. Conceptualisation of higher education, research management and ethics, the importance of international relations, quality assurance and university governance and leadership were studied. Knowledge obtained from various international partnerships has also been used for implementation of the reform process. YAU changed its undergraduate program from a conventional year-based system to a credit-based semester system in collaboration with JICA. This change aims to promote international and domestic credit transfer, student mobility and freedom of course selection based on a student-centred approach, and the curriculum was clearly differentiated between general education and specialised education. Four new postgraduate programs were launched with the aid of the Government of India. Modification of existing post- and undergraduate curricula with a National Climate Smart Agriculture point of view was carried out, with the aid of FAO. The curricula of undergraduate courses in food safety and quality management and technology were also developed with the support of the German Government. The perception of students and teachers on YAU education was also analysed. This paper summarises the education reform process and challenges for YAU, and their impact on academic staff. The information provided in this paper will be useful for international aid agencies that plan to encourage upgrading of agricultural education and research in Myanmar.

Introduction: agriculture and Higher Education in Myanmar

The Republic of the Union of Myanmar (Myanmar) is an agricultural country, and agriculture accounts for more than 30 percent of the gross domestic product (GDP). About 60 percent of the working population is engaged in agriculture and produces 23.5 million tons of rice (2015-2016), the main crop. The democratic government, which was launched in March 2011, has made agriculture and related industries the most important areas for economic development. The Ministry of Agriculture and Irrigation (MoAI, now the Ministry of Agriculture, Livestock and Irrigation (MoALI)) has set “encouraging research and development activities of agricultural products to improve quality and expand production” as one of its main policies. The ministry is responsible for disseminating agricultural technology and improving the quality of agricultural products.⁷⁴

MoALI has changed the principle of increasing production, which is heavily focused on rice, and has promoted the improvement of cultivation technology according to various agricultural environmental conditions in Myanmar. In addition, the development of high-quality agricultural products with high market value has been promoted in order to expand domestic and export markets. This policy has been followed by the administration, which was launched in April 2016 following the results of the general election on November 8, 2015.

A quality education system is key to national development, particularly in developing countries and least developed countries.⁷⁵ Myanmar is now working hard to reform its education system as a whole by collaborating with various international organisations. Myanmar has 171 higher education institutions (HEIs) (colleges, degree colleges and universities), which are public and overseen by eight ministries.

The Ministry of Education (MoE) of the government of Myanmar has described major challenges to the education reform process where the higher education system needs significant improvement, as follows: curriculum, learning environment, research and teaching processes, issues of affordability and accessibility which impact access to higher education, support in helping students to overcome cost barriers for higher education, and improving the system’s research capacity to foster the

74 MoALI (The Government of republic of the union of Myanmar, Ministry of Agriculture, Livestock and Irrigation) (2018) *Myanmar agriculture development and strategy and investment plan (2018-19 to 2022-23)*. <https://www.lift-fund.org/sites/lift-fund.org/files/publication/MOALI_ADS_June2018_compressed_EN.pdf>, accessed 20 October 2020.

75 WCHE (World Conference on Higher Education in the Twenty-First Century: Vision and Action (1998) *World declaration on higher education for the twenty-first century: vision and action and framework for priority action for change and development in higher education adopted by the world conference on higher education*. <<https://unesdoc.unesco.org/ark:/48223/pf0000141952>>, accessed 20 October 2020.

development of new ideas and innovations. In order to overcome these challenges, strategies were laid out to achieve the transformative shift, including improving quality with regard to higher education, in the National Education Strategic plan 2016-2021.⁷⁶

Yezin Agricultural University (YAU) has emphasised various comprehensive work on education reform since 2016 in partnership with international agencies. This paper describes the reality and prospects of higher education transformation of YAU and contributes to the sound development of YAU.

1. Background of YAU

History of YAU

Agricultural education has been an essential factor in the success of agricultural development in Myanmar. YAU is the only university in Myanmar which has specialised in agricultural science. The university was established in 1924 as Burma Agricultural College and Research Institute in Mandalay and will therefore celebrate its 100th anniversary in 2024. Just as Myanmar's 100-year history has fluctuated, YAU's 100-year history is no exception. Changes to its name, location, education period, etc. have occurred frequently (*Table 1*). After the final change of name, site and supervisory authority, the university is now located in Nay Pyi Taw, the new capital of Myanmar, north of the former capital Yangon.

1924	Establishment of Burma Agricultural College and Research Institute in Mandalay which provided three-year diploma courses
1938	College was affiliated with Rangoon university as an agricultural college, so-called university college located in Mandalay
1942-1945	School suspension due to World War II
1945	Interim College in Mahlaing
1947	Faculty of Agriculture in Mandalay under Rangoon University, under the Ministry of Education
1954	Two-year to three-year Degree and B. Sc. (Sericulture)

⁷⁶ MoE (The government of the republic of the union of Myanmar. Ministry of education), *National Education Strategic Plan 2016-2021*. <http://www.moe-st.gov.mm/wp-content/uploads/2018/01/NESP_20Summary_20-20English_20-20Final_20-20Feb_2023.pdf>, accessed 20 October 2020.

1958	Faculty of Agriculture under Mandalay University
1964	Separate university status as the Institute of Agriculture - B. Ag.; five-year course
1966	Bridging program for SAI (State Agriculture Institute)
1967	Department of Horticulture opened
1973-1974	Yezin campus launched with first-year and second-year classes
1977-1978	M. Agr. Sci Degree offered; Semester System launched
1979	Received third year students who completed second year class in Regional Colleges
1983-1984	Hosted Forestry Department of Rangoon University
1988	University Suspension due to Student Uprising
1991	Schools resumed; M. Phil Degree launched
1992	Department of Forestry received Separate University Status and transferred to Ministry of Forestry
1993	Transferred to Ministry of Agriculture from Ministry of Education
1994	Degree changed to B. Agr. Sci., Elective stream system launched
1996	Reorganisation of Departments of Horticulture and Agricultural Economics
1998	Name changed to Yezin Agricultural University
1999-2000	Five-year course to four-year course
2001-2002	Ph. D course launched
2006	Crop specialisation system launched
2011-2012	Four-year course to five-year course
2014	ACARE (Advanced Centre for Agricultural Research and Extension) opened
2017	Credit System launched
2018	Departments for Agricultural Biotechnology, Agricultural Extension, Agricultural Microbiology and Food Science launched

Table 1. History of YAU

A current university rank places YAU 8th in the country according to uniRank 2019⁷⁷ and 3rd in the 2020 Burmese University Ranking⁷⁸, but the university is less recognised outside of Myanmar. To strengthen the reputation of YAU in ASEAN countries, we are enhancing the quality of education and research in collaboration with organisations from Japan, India, Australia, China etc. (Yoshimura et al., unpublished).

Overview of YAU

The primary visions of YAU are to be a prime mover of agricultural and rural development in Myanmar through human resource development and as a national supplier of scientific knowledge and technological innovation. To accomplish these visions, YAU defined its mission to educate and train the national human resources to be professional agriculturists who will provide leadership to institutions in the agricultural sector. In addition, YAU supplies science and technology and contributes to national and regional agricultural growth and development. The YAU curriculum has been prepared by senior academic staff and updated year by year since it was established. The university itself is managed by MoALL, and the curriculum was accredited by MoE. YAU encompasses nine major departments: Agronomy, Plant Breeding, Physiology and Ecology (previously Agricultural Botany), Soil and Water Science (previously Agricultural Chemistry), Plant Pathology, Entomology and Zoology, Horticulture and Biotechnology, Agricultural Economics, Animal Science, and Agricultural Engineering, which offers several specialised subjects, both theoretical and practical. Five supporting departments, Myanmar, English, Mathematics, Physics and Information and Technology, offer core subjects; Myanmar, English, mathematics, physics and information technology are taught to first year and second year students (*Figure 1*). Agricultural subjects are taught in the second year. Students can select their specialised field of study in their third year.

77 Unirank (2020) Top Universities in Myanmar, 2020 *Burmese University Ranking*.

<<https://www.4icu.org/mm/>>, accessed 20 October 2020.4.

78 RWU (Ranking Web of Universities) (2020) <http://www.webometrics.info/en/search/Rankings/Yezin> percent20Agricultural percent20University, accessed 20 October 2020.

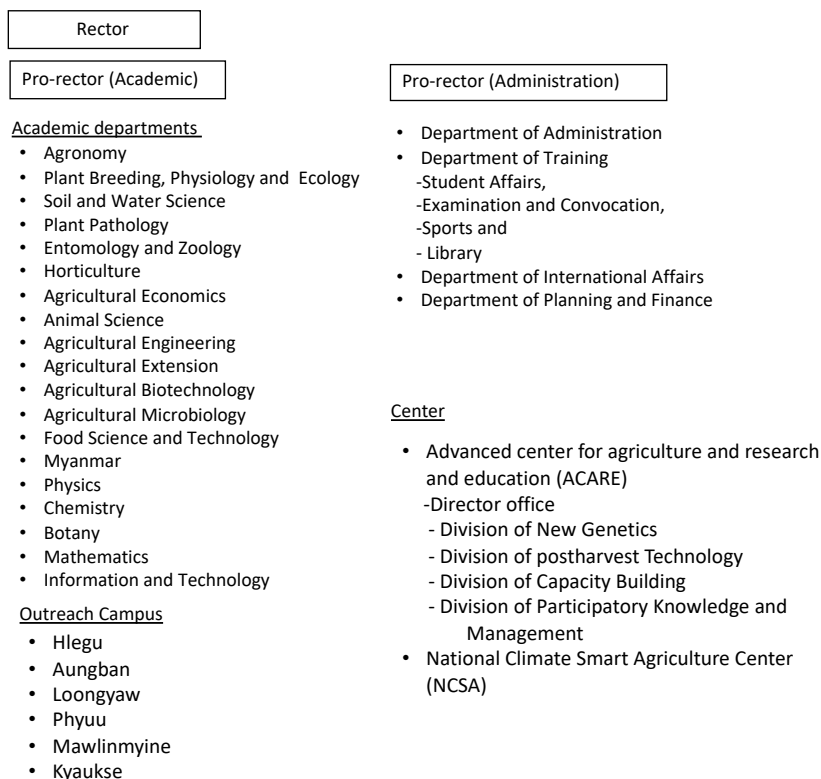


Figure 1. YAU Organisation

The curriculum of YAU was shifted to focus on crop-based specialisation at the time of the establishment of seven outreach campuses across the nation in 2006. The aim is to send students out for better contact with local growers in different agro-ecological zones, and dissemination of technology. In this case, YAU designed the course contents based on crop categorisation using existing, already prepared subjects. In 2011-2016, the education program was again reverted to subject-based specialisation due to increased student intake. Consequently, the time for practical courses and course contents were decreased (e.g. a total of fourteen practical courses in one semester reduced to seven. Under normal conditions, it took one week to teach all students in one practical course, but this changed to two weeks). On the other hand, the education period of YAU has also been changed twice, in 1999 and 2011. The traditional five-year program which had been in place since 1954 was switched to the four-year course in 1999, and reverted back to a five-year course in 2011.

In the late 1990s and early 2000s, YAU gradually started to collaborate with international organisations and was able to send its staff for master's degree and doctor-

al programs, and short-term training programs, particularly to Japan, Germany and some countries with whom Myanmar has diplomatic countries. Since that time, 80 percent of YAU academic staff obtained their master's degrees and doctorates abroad. However, their foreign experience was not put to good use in education reform because of their lesser experience of education management. Most of the subjects prepared by senior staff have their own regulations, with an intention to retain tradition and make less significant changes and improvements. Although some of the subjects seemed to be newly offered, experience in drafting curricula was less widespread among academic staff.

When looking back at the YAU education program, it was reflected by political circumstances that caused changes in terms of study periods, curricula and syllabi. Previously, the education program in YAU used a conventional annual grading system which begins with a first semester from May-September and a second semester from November-April. Lectures of 50 minutes are given two to three times a week. Practical courses were held once a week for two hours. In the annual grading system, students who failed to take the required subjects for the year must redo this stage and cannot pass to the next year.

YAU offered undergraduate courses covering basic science subjects and various agricultural subjects. At the end of the semester, students' knowledge and understanding was examined by testing or written examination. In recent years, internship programs were launched for the fifth-year students. The admissions policy was based either on entrance examinations or direct application based on matriculation marks. Currently, admission is based on matriculation marks. The gender ratio was 1:1.

Annually more than 400 students graduate from YAU and about 10,000 bachelor's degree holders have been produced to date. Alumni of YAU have been engaged in agricultural sectors, non-government organisations, international non-governmental organisations, private sector companies and so on. According to the survey of job opportunities and job destinations for YAU graduates conducted in academic year 2017-2018, about 50 percent of graduates were able to find work immediately after finishing their bachelor's degree, and their job prospects are likely to be fair.

2. New wave of improvement of higher education and the capacity building

Since 2016, there have been more opportunities to learn new concepts of university education in the midst of democratisation, both inside and outside the country. The main projects for YAU are described below.

British Council training

In 2018, YAU joined capacity building of higher education (HE) training provided by the British Council and University of College of London (UCL) in Yangon. The Rector, pro-rector (academic) and two professors attended series of residential

training programs and studied the concepts of HE and managing research together with nine selected universities in Myanmar. We were able to share opinions, ideas and challenges in the improvement of HE among the universities.

During the workshops, YAU was assigned to conduct one institutional project. YAU working group conducted institutional analysis with the title of “Strengthening the leadership and management capacity of senior and mid-level staff of YAU.” At first, a set of self-audit questions on types of leadership behaviour was asked to professors and heads of the departments. We also asked the followers their views of leaders’ management. We analysed strengths and weakness of leadership behaviour of senior leaders, and what aspects make the differences between leaders and followers.

The results showed that most of the professors and heads of the departments seemed to possess abilities of clarification, consulting, confronting and congratulating on management of various degrees, but the level of those skills was somewhat varied. Most of them manage their department with complete provision of morality and vision, encouraging and fully taking accountability and responsibility. However, we also noticed the gap of views in specific areas between leaders and followers and suggested making these gaps smaller. YAU was able to identify an overview of the strengths and weaknesses of leadership and management. We also indicated that the outcome from this survey should be distributed to all academic staff. The leadership and management we learned in this training would contribute to improving the learning environment for the students.

CHINLONE project

In 2017, YAU became a member, one of five universities of Myanmar, of the Chinlone project (Connecting HEIs for a new leadership on National Education). This is a three-year international project in the field of education which is funded by the European Union in the framework of the Erasmus+ Capacity Building Key Action 2, and coordinated by the University of Bologna (Italy) from 2017 to 2020. The Department of Higher Education of Myanmar’s Ministry of Education is a Project Partner from Myanmar.

The primary aim of the CHINLONE project is to contribute to the modernisation and internationalisation of Myanmar’s Higher Education System, in order to facilitate the country’s transition toward a knowledge economy. YAU attended an outbound training program and was able to provide the way to improve skills in academic governance, designing of degree courses and monitoring and management of international relations. Afterwards, YAU conducted a survey with the title of “Quality Assurance of Teaching Staff in Yezin Agricultural University” to examine the teaching capacity of the lecturers of third-year classes of YAU, Myanmar. The set of questionnaires encompassing four teaching dimensions, guided by Granada University, Spain, was distributed to the third-year students in August of the 2019

academic year to assess the teaching effectiveness of different lecturers from seven departments. YAU found out that most of the lecturers (85 percent) performed above average in the four teaching dimensions. The majority of the lecturers needed only to maintain their good teaching capacity, while some still need to improve their capacity, according to the students. This survey helped YAU to improve quality assurance for the teaching staff in accordance with the scheme of HEIs in Myanmar. Moreover, YAU also improved its university homepage.

NEXAS Project

YAU was involved in the Nodes of Excellence in SEA (Southeast Asia) Universities through Spatial Data (NEXAS) project cofounded by European Union's Erasmus+ Programme. The project ran from October 2017 to October 2020. It aimed to boost the research capacities of HEIs in the southeast Asian region by strengthening relationships between Education, Research and Innovation in GIS (Geographic Information System) and remote sensing, for applications relating to the environment, agriculture and emergency situations. YAU received GIS technical training and some hardware (computers, software etc.).

Network of universities and enterprises for food training in Southeast Asia – NutriSEA

The aim of NutriSEA is to build human resource capacity to ensure a sustainable food value chain model based on entrepreneurship and creating added value to the natural resources supporting food production in Southeast Asia (Vietnam, Cambodia and Myanmar). Furthermore, the project aims to enhance university-business cooperation as well as regional and (inter)national cooperation and networking, and to reform curricula related to food production at BA/MA level at the six partner universities, in line with the new regional developments and the locally developed evidence-based market demands by 2018. There is also a strong focus on teaching methodologies, including the use of ICT (Information and Communication Technology), and businesses are actively involved in defining learning outcomes and offering internships. It was launched in 2017, and YAU attended the higher education capacity building training.

TOOLKIT

This project is entitled “Designing and managing international relations, educational projects and mobility schemes in Asian Universities (TOOLKIT)” and co-funded by the European Union within the framework of Erasmus + Capacity Building Key Action 2. In partnership with European and Asian universities, this project is aimed at: (i) the drafting and realisation of IR (International Relation) strategies; (ii) the design and management of educational projects; (iii) the design and management

of mobility schemes. YAU was one of the member universities from Myanmar, together with University of Yangon and Yangon University of Economics. The project was funded by the EU. The academic staff (pro-rector, professor, associate professor and lecturer) of YAU attended Capacity Building training and received knowledge about higher education in managing international relations.

Lancang Mekong project

This project aims to develop an agricultural library network among Maejo University in Thailand, Yunnan University from China and YAU from Myanmar which are within the Lancang-Mekong area. The YAU library system has been upgraded, but is closed at the moment due to COVID-19 in particular.

Climate Smart Agriculture (CSA)

With the purpose of improving the capacity of farming and forestry stakeholders to mitigate climate change and improve the condition of the land by adopting climate smart agriculture and sustainable forest management policies and practices, National Climate Smart Agriculture (NCSA) Centre of YAU was established in August 2018 by the coordination efforts of Food and Agriculture Organisation of United Nations (FAO), Ministry of Natural Resources and Environmental Conservation (MoNREC) and the MoALI (Project duration is 2017-2021). NCSA Centre is responsible for overall coordination of CSA initiatives, providing and disseminating information related to climate-smart agriculture, vetting training programs, increasing access to national and international expertise, and generating links and alignment among concerned institutions and with national strategies related to climate-smart agriculture and climate change.

The NCSA Centre has three goals: (i) coordinating development and packaging of best practices for CSA systems, information and technologies; (ii) demonstrating and disseminating knowledge on CSA and sustainable land management (SLM) technologies and practices; (iii) conducting advocacy activities related to CSA/SLM and climate change in coordination with appropriate organisations (Department of Agriculture, Department of Agricultural Research, YAU and other relevant organisations), and takes the following responsibilities in the Myanmar Agriculture Sector.

- Technical Advisory, Monitoring and Evaluation of CSA works of the departments/organisations concerned
- Training and Education Programs (Farm level to Postgraduate level)
- Coordination and Implementation of CSA Research and Projects with appropriate organisations
- Knowledge Sharing and CSA Database Management

Currently, its research programs are mainly focused on agricultural adaptation strategies and practices including adaptation options, climate vulnerability, adaptive capacity and perception of farming households and community, mitigation strategies such as crop physiology and GHG (Green House Gas) emissions, crop breeding programs on stress resistant and tolerant varieties for harsh environments etc. Based on its research programs, as well as networking and collaborating with inline institutions within the country and/or international organisations, NCSA Centre aims to be a knowledge hub and a database centre for climate change, agriculture and the environment, especially climate-smart agriculture, sustainable forest management, and sustainable land management. Moreover, modification of the existing syllabi and curricula for undergraduate and post-graduate programs has been carried out from a CSA point of view. For example, the existing undergraduate and postgraduate courses offered by the Agronomy, Plant Breeding, Soil and Water Science, Plant Pathology and Entomology departments have been modified.

New departments

To widen the specialised fields of study in YAU, YAU established new departments in 2017: Agricultural Extension, Agricultural Biotechnology, Food Science and Technology, and Agricultural Microbiology. Undergraduate courses were launched in AY 2018, and some postgraduate courses were also offered in collaboration with ACARE. The Laboratory of Agricultural extension and Agricultural Biotechnology was also established with the aid of Mekong-Lancang (China), and food science and technology curricula were developed in collaboration with GIZ (Germany). Capacity building of academic staff was also carried out.

3. Two major international collaborations for reform

JICA (Japan international Cooperation Agency) project

Myanmar has had a new democratic government since 2011, and it has opened up the country for receiving official development assistance. Since then, Myanmar has received several grants and aids from international development agencies including Japan International Cooperation Agency (JICA). With regard to YAU, JICA provided the Project entitled “Grant Aid Project for Strengthening Human Development Institutions in Agriculture” from May 2013 to October 2015. JICA also dispatched Detailed Planning Survey Teams in 2013-2015 consisting of Japanese experts in agricultural sciences to support the YAU’s endeavour in order to implement a new technical cooperation project. The new technical cooperation project, namely “the Project for Capacity Development of Yezin Agricultural University (hereinafter referred to as “YAU JICA TCP”)”, began in November 2015 as a five-year project. The main purpose of this project is to enhance the education and research foundation of YAU’s departments for conducting practice-oriented research. As shown in *Fi-*

Figure 2, this project aims to improve the quality of university management, education, and research, and is a large project that covers most parts of the university's operations. The committees and three types of task forces (planning and management task force, educational task force, and research task force) were established to carry out project activities. Meetings of these committees and task forces were held regularly. In the initial stages of the project, various surveys for education and research were made, such as time allocation surveys for research, and it was used to formulate the detailed plan. The achievements of each activity corresponding to the outputs are described in Figure 2.

1. PROJECT OVERVIEW	
(1) Overall Goal	Qualified human resources in agricultural sector are produced by YAU
(2) Project Purpose	Education and research foundation for practice-oriented research enhanced in 13 departments of YAU
(3) Outputs	<p>1) Management system to promote research and education improved in YAU.</p> <p>2) The curriculum and teaching capacity of academic staff improved in YAU.</p> <p>3) The research capability of academic staff enhanced in YAU.</p>
(4) Inputs	<p>Japanese side JICA Expert: seven long-term experts and eighteen short-term experts in total, Trainees received: four persons for doctoral program and 33 persons for short-term training in Japan, and seven persons in Vietnam and Israel, Provision of equipment: US\$428,820, Local cost expenditure: approx. US\$1.09 million.</p> <p>Myanmar side Counterpart 32 persons (at the terminal evaluation), Local Cost: utility costs and security personnel expenses, Provision of office space for JICA experts, laboratories with equipment, and various facilities for research activities.</p>

2. PROJECT PERFORMANCE

Output 1:

Management system to promote research and education improved in YAU.

A draft Five-Year Plan was formulated by August 2019. Modification of the Five-Year Plan might be necessary in accordance with the progress of education reform in Myanmar. Therefore, finalisation of the Five-Year Plan has not been performed. The annual action plan based on the Five-Year plan was prepared by each department in March 2019, and that annual action plan has been practiced and its results reported in the annual report 2019. Although the operational guidelines for the Five-Year Plan and the annual action plan were not developed, the framework for Plan-Do-Check-Action (PDCA) cycle analysis of the Five-Year Plan and the annual action plan is almost completed.

Output 2:

The curriculum and teaching capacity of academic staff improved in YAU.

The curriculum for the first-year students of YAU was developed in accordance with YAU's credit system and applied in academic year (AY) 2017/18; subsequently, the curriculum, which covers all of the five-year course, has been applied since 2018/19 AY. Revision of syllabi has not yet been conducted. YAU's academic staff prepares guidebooks on each subject as teaching material. Several guidebooks have been revised by academic staff. Training for improving teaching capacity has been conducted several times, however, a system of in-service training for improving teaching capacity is not built.

Output 3:

The research capability of academic staff is enhanced in YAU.

In total, 30 pilot research projects were formulated, and have been conducted effectively. The meeting for reporting the progress of the pilot research has been held twice a year. 73.3 percent of pilot research groups submitted research papers (international and/or domestic). This is higher than expected.

Figure 2. Overview and outputs of “the Project for Capacity Development of Yezin Agricultural University”

In terms of higher education, the project supported the switching of the undergraduate education program curriculum from a conventional year-based system to a credit-based semester system. The reasons for the change were to promote international and domestic credit transfer, student mobility and freedom of course selection, based on a student-centred approach. However, it was somewhat difficult for YAU to understand and design the whole curriculum scheme for the undergraduate program under the credit system. Therefore, a curriculum framework

was first designed to show the faculty the whole teaching/learning process scheme and what outcomes the students can receive. The curriculum framework was a supportive structure to help the university to plan and develop its own curricula. It consisted of a set of interlocking components including essential learning experiences, generic skills, and key learning areas in agricultural science (Yoshimura et al, unpublished). In the newly developed curriculum (*Table 2*), GE (General Education) and SE (Specialised Education) are clearly differentiated. GE is regarded as learning of fundamental and basic knowledge mostly before specialisation. Students must acquire knowledge and skills taught under GE in order to smoothly and efficiently understand the specialised subjects. GE includes fundamental and basic subjects, language, natural science (mathematics, physics, chemistry and biology), social science, etc. In SE, students learn and acquire the knowledge and skills of the agriculture related science, to be expected human resources in future for the development of Myanmar and international agriculture. The subjects offered by the departments involving agriculture-related science cover the wide views and higher expertise of the relevant science. Looking at this curriculum, there are many SE subjects, and the curriculum does not seem to be diverse. It is understandable that it is difficult to cover many academic fields due to the small size of the university. However, at this stage, instead of teaching what can be taught, it is necessary to consider a course structure that provides the knowledge and information required by students living in modern society.

	Subject category	Offered credits for		Minimum credits required
		Compulsory	Selective	
General Education (GE)	Language including English and Myanmar	8	-	8
	Basic Science including Mathematics, Physics, Chemistry, Biology (Botany and Zoology) and Social Science	20	8	4
	Fields	2	-	2
	Sports	2	-	2
	Academic skills	4	-	4
	Total	36	4 / 8*	40
Specialised Education (SE)	Introductory**	32 / 40*		32
	Core subjects**	18 / 39*		18
	Specialised subjects**	36 / 234*		36
	Special research and seminar	10	-	10
	Internship	7	-	7
	Outreach campus edu.	13	-	13
	Total	30	86	116
	Grand total			156
* The denominator is the number of credits offered and the numerator is that of minimum credits.				
** The subjects offered by the students' specialisation are compulsory.				

Table 2. YAU undergraduate education curriculum summary.

ACARE

YAU has offered regular postgraduate programs such as Master’s degree and Doctoral programs in the specialised fields of Agronomy, Plant Breeding, Crop Physiology and Ecology, Soil and Water Science, Plant Pathology, Entomology, Horticulture and Agricultural Economics since it was established. In addition to the regular postgraduate programs, following the visit of Indian experts in July 2011, ACARE (Advanced Centre for Agricultural Research and Education) in YAU was opened in 2014 in cooperation with the Government of India in consideration of agricultural research and human resource development corresponding to the diverse ecosystem centred on rice cultivation in Myanmar. The ACARE is an institution which uses cutting-edge science along with the traditional knowledge and ecological prudence of farming families. It is an autonomous institution located on land provided by YAU. The Director of ACARE is appointed by the Hon’ble Minister of Agriculture. The Director is supported by the Administration and Finance office. The ACARE consists of four divisions: i) Division of New Genetics, ii) Division of Post-Harvest Technology, iii) Division of Participatory Knowledge Management and iv) Division of Education and Capacity Building (Figure 3). Indian scientists are engaged in research and graduate education with YAU faculty members on long-term or short-term stays. ACARE has so far enrolled 62 graduate students (from 2017 to 2020), and 18 have obtained master’s degrees from this system. While JICA’s cooperation has been involved in the education system for undergraduate students, the Indian government’s cooperation aims at graduate school education.

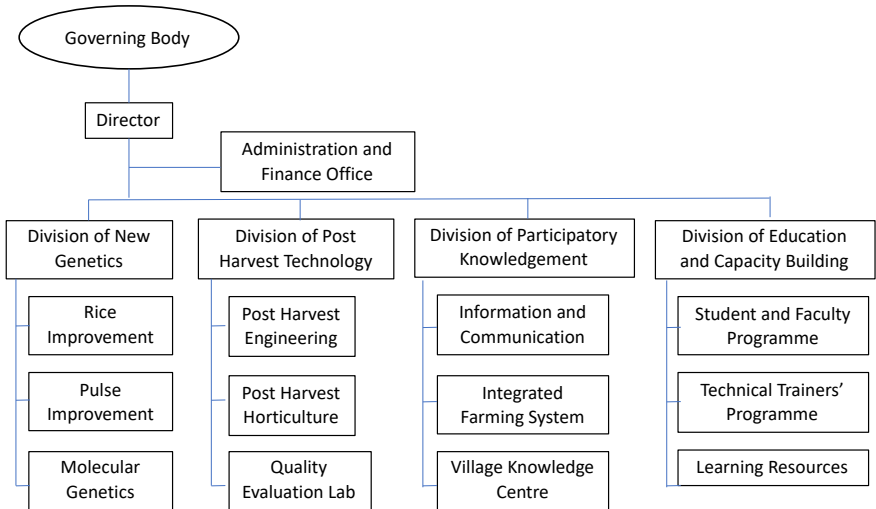


Figure 3. Organisation of ACARE

5. Future Endeavours and Challenges

In the midst of rapid socio-economic changes, YAU needs to take many actions as a higher education institution. Its curricula and syllabi have also been recently revised and improved in accordance with the needs and requirements of the country's agricultural policies. However, continuous efforts for reviewing and revising the existing curricula, syllabi and teaching systems are indispensable in creating an internationally standardised education system and to provide an effective learning education system at YAU. Taking advantage of the many examples of overseas support and cooperation mentioned above, it is hoped that YAU will earnestly learn the new higher education system and utilise it in its own system design and in education and research.

Education system reform is now underway in Myanmar. This reform targets infant education, primary education, and secondary education. Students who have studied in the reformed education system will be enrolled in YAU from 2023/2024. The university grade system may change from five years to four years. Due to this situation, the YAU curriculum has not yet been finalised. In finalising the curriculum, it is necessary to take into consideration the progress of reform of the education system and the contents of the new curriculum of high schools.

YAU is the only agricultural university in Myanmar that develops agricultural human resources. YAU has the role of developing high-quality human resources who work in agriculture-related government agencies and private sectors. As a very important HEI, YAU needs a harmonious relationship in terms of qualified faculty and learners, and an effective environment. In order to create a better academic environment, it is necessary to practice good management, especially research activities to solve problems, and provide the results to good education. Therefore, both faculty and non-lecturer capacity needs to be strengthened in order to lay the foundations for a sustainable management system.

In addition, YAU is now aiming to change to a research-oriented university, and has requested international organisation to develop its research capacity for the sustainable and stable agricultural production of a variety of crops grown in the diverse agricultural ecosystems. At present, JICA, ACIAR (Australian Centre for International Agricultural Research), IARI (Indian Agricultural Research Institute) are helping YAU to increase its research capacity and providing financial support. However, the allocated time for conducting research still needs to be increased if YAU wants to be a research-oriented institution, or considering its workload on education and research ratio.

In summary, YAU needs to keep track of HE policy to improve its education system in order for students to have a keen interest in blending indigenous knowledge and modern technology. Planning and implementation of YAU activities is essential in attaining the quality and quantity of education and research. Continuous improvement of the university homepage (information opening in time) is necessary to upgrade YAU's university ranking, e.g. uniRank. YAU needs to prepare for educational changes in 2023, and also to improve its digital learning platform.

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ADDRESSING PROBLEMS, BRAVING CHALLENGES, AND CLOSING GAPS: ONE DECADE'S ATTEMPTS FOR SETTING UP THE QUALITY ASSURANCE MECHANISMS AT THE AUTONOMOUS UNIVERSITY OF MANDALAY

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Abstract

As a higher education institution, the University of Mandalay has been engaging in education reform process together with other Myanmar leading universities. In line with the National Education Law (2014) and Amendment of NEL (2015), the UM has recently been granted autonomy to fully implement all education development goals and priority reforms mentioned in the National Education Strategic Plan (2016-2021) and newly announced NESP (2021-30) draft. Since 2012, when the Comprehensive Education Sector Review was executed, the UM has started to participate in quality assurance system implementation that is a crucial sector of university governance and management in collaboration with local, regional and global education organizations and institutions, especially with AQAN, AUN, DAAD, ENQA, and programmes like SHARE and Chinlone. Within a decade of transitioning period, the UM had been able to move forward a little, yet the progress was slow. Accompanied by many positive experiences, it had encountered a number of problems, challenges, and missing gaps in developing quality culture and QA mechanisms, which is one of nine transformational shifts. This study shows how the UM exerted efforts to surmount all negative disturbing factors with its own resources, strategies, and innovations by solving many research questions such as: does the UM have its own IQA system under implementation and which types of IQA/EQA systems will be applied for accreditation?; how should it put up its feasible and practicable QA policy, procedures and action plans?; how did it address problems, brave challenges, and close gaps?; what are the successes and outcomes of the UM pertaining to the implementation of QAM?

Introduction

Historical records of the first period of parliamentary democracy, especially of the 1950s and 1960s, prove that Myanmar had an advanced education system and that the two leading universities, i.e. Yangon University and the University of Mandalay (UM) enjoyed a reputation for being among the best in the East Asian region.⁷⁹ However, this situation abruptly changed after the establishment of the Socialist regime. The education systems for both basic and higher education collapsed because of many reasons, including the lack of public funds, strong state intervention in education, a small budget for education, political instability, economic inconsistency, decrease of qualified teachers, insufficient infrastructure, deficient teaching and learning aids, low salary, and so on. Again, these fundamental negative factors and realities caused further worsening in the successive periods. The University Education Law of 1973 was also a source of degeneration as it had provided Universities Central Council (UCC) and Council of University Academic Boards (CUAB) with a centralized framework of governance and management, and since this centralization was not able to realize the all-round development of the education sector. It is criticized that governance authority tends to be highly centralized and management processes are bureaucratic.⁸⁰ In these circumstances, the Myanmar Education Committee (MEC) organized by the military government in 1991 pledged to open a number of new higher institutions in almost every state and division. By 2012, there were 164 higher education institutions that belonged to 13 different ministries including the Ministry of Education, the Ministry of Sciences and Technology (MoST), the Ministry of Health, etc. Although all these institutions tried to fulfill 36 action programmes covering six priority areas mentioned in the 30-Year Long-Term Education Development Plan (2001-2030) and 13 specific priorities for the higher education sub-sector specified in the National Development Plan (2012),⁸¹ the education in Myanmar did not achieve remarkable success and most of the areas remained unchanged. All these factors paved the way to a well rounded reformation. Yet, the actual cause of change did not come from these regular and customary efforts but from right democratic principles and the strong request of different stakeholders. With the internal pressures and changing international situations, Myanmar had no way other than executing a holistic education reform. Therefore, the National Education Committee (NEC) was formed under the democratic government in April 2011 in place of the MEC, and starting from 2012, after

79 Myanmar Comprehensive Education Sector Review (CESR) Phase 1: Rapid Assessment, Technical Annex on the Higher Education Subsector, Final version (revised 26 March 2013), p. 3.

80 Myanmar Comprehensive Education Sector Review (CESR) Phase 1: Rapid Assessment, p.16.

81 *Ibid.*, p.9.

spending over two decades of ‘go-with-the-flow’ pattern, the government launched the Comprehensive Education Sector Review (CESR) to reshape the entire education system from its roots. The CESR, which is the first systematic education sector’s development project in Myanmar since the early 1990s, has three phases: Rapid Assessment, In-depth Analysis, and Development of an Education Sector Plan.⁸² All these phases were to be completed in the mid of 2014.⁸³

As the CESR recommended reviewing educational legislation and promulgating a new education law, the National Education Law (2014) and the National Education Law Amendment (2015) had appeared, which assure and ensure university autonomy and decentralization. However, even though the Article 66 of Chapter (13), Provisions for Transitional Period, of the NEL, mentions that “All education institutions that are existed before the prescription of this Law must have (all provisions) accomplished in line with this Law within five years from its starting date”⁸⁴, almost all of the HEIs have not implemented most of the provisions, including university charters’ writing and approving processes, setting up appropriate quality assurance mechanisms, faculty system’s reorganizing, etc. until the present time. On the other hand, the two successive democratic governments (2010-2020) did not have much time to confirm and ratify a new Higher Education Law and other applicable laws such as Private Higher Education Law and Basic Education Law. This situation causes the autonomous university’s reformation process to be slower, more inactive and higgledy-piggledy. Nonetheless, just before the end of the administrative term of the government of the National League for Democracy (NLD) in August 2020, the government granted some measures of administrative and academic autonomy to 16 universities controlled by the MoE,⁸⁵ even though their writing processes of university charters have been in the drafting stage and are to be submitted to the National Education Policy Commission (NEPC) for approval in line with the NEL. The NEPC, the successor of NEC, was organized on 28 September 2016 under NLD government corresponding to the Article 5(A) of the National Education Law.⁸⁶ Its vision is “to be an institution providing effective policies on education for the sustainable development of Myanmar”, which is to be implemented by three committees: National Curriculum Committee (NCC), National Accreditation and Quality Assurance Committee (NAQAC), and Rectors’ Committee (RC).

The significant results of the CESR are the publication of the Rapid Assessment Report for CESR Phase 1 and Sub-sector Reports for CESR Phase 2, both of which

82 Term of Reference for Myanmar Comprehensive Education Sector Review (CESR), 4 July 2012, pdf, pp.9-30.

83 Ibid, p.6.

84 The National Education Law(2014), Typescript, p.20.

85 Myanmar Time, 4 September 2020, www.mmtimes.com/news/myanmar-govt-grants-autonomy-16-universities.html, retrieved on 22 May 2021.

86 NEL, p. 7.

could provide much for the National Education Strategic Plan (NESP 2016-2021). In July 2015, CESR officers presented the draft NESP Sub-sector Action Plans to about 13,000 education stakeholders during one-day consultation meetings in 43 districts across the country. There was overwhelming support from these stakeholders for the proposed NESP's goal and nine Transformational Shifts, as well as for the strategies and programmes outlined in the NESP.⁸⁷ It should be noted that usually, being an essential core sector of every educational law, policy, plan,⁸⁸ aim, and institution of the successive periods just discussed, quality-based approach and quality assurance become 'idols' for all kinds of education and turn out to be more settled and matured.

It is true that shaping higher education without quality-based approach and quality assurance would be nonsense. Quality assurance itself is a kind of review covering all areas of teaching, learning, research, and services. Every HEI needs to review itself and/or be reviewed by others for accreditation of these areas. Therefore, Myanmar has been taking part as a member in the Asia-Pacific Quality Network (APQN), the ASEAN Quality Assurance Network (AQAN), the University Mobility in Asia and the Pacific Organisation, the ASEAN University Network (AUN), the Association of Southeast Asian Institutions of Higher Learning, and the Association of Pacific Rim Universities, and has been engaging in quality assurance related activities in national, regional and global settings. As one of the preliminary steps for quality assurance related activities, the Government established a National Skills Standard Authority under the Ministry of Labour in 2007 to develop occupational competency standards and to set up a qualifications framework that had potentially significant implications for the higher education sub-sector. In 2012, Myanmar was firstly introduced to quality assurance systems of the AUN in collaboration with ASEAN countries and the Greater Mekong Sub-region with the support of the Asian Development Bank and later of the German Academic Exchange Service (DAAD). Then, a series of AUN-QA trainings was held in Myanmar's leading universities and in some Southeast Asian countries with the support of international development partners like ASEAN Quality Assurance Network (AQAN), AUN, DAAD, European Association for Quality Assurance in Higher Education (ENQA) and so on, and trained selected academic staff from 2012 onwards. Alternatively, attempts had been made to implement Myanmar National Qualification Framework (MNQF) between 2015 and 2017 as a reference for Myanmar's own national quality assurance systems under development. To handle all quality related activities, NAQAC was organized on 16 January 2017 with 20 members. Its formation is in line with the Article 54 and Article 55 of Chapter 10 of the NEL and its three main functions are to develop and imple-

87 National Education Strategic Plan 2016-21, The Government of the Republic of the Union of Myanmar, Ministry of Education, 2016, p. 42.

88 Myanmar Sustainable Development Plan (2018-2020), The Government of the Republic of the Union of Myanmar, Ministry of Planning and Finance, August 2018, pp.42-43.

ment a comprehensive QA system(s) for all levels of education, and to assess the quality of academic programmes, systems, and institutions, and to provide accreditation to them. Currently, NAQAC has drafted its two modes of quality assessment and accreditation for higher education: one for programme level named Standards and Guideline for Programme Level Assessment and another for institutional level called Standards and Guidelines for Institutional Assessment. Both are regarded as External Quality Assurance systems. It is stated that MoE is responsible for internal quality assurance whereas the NAQAC, an external quality assurance agency, holds accountable for EQA.⁸⁹ A sketching out of the NAQAC's role and function can be seen as follows.

EQAA	NAQAC
Compulsory/ Voluntary	C
Types of Award	Accredited/ Not Accredited
Outcome	Reputation & Publicity
No. of Criteria	15 Criteria 101 Indicators
Reference Framework	MNQF
Cycle of Assessment	3-5 Years

Table 1. A Sketch of the Role and Function of the NAQAC

However, the NAQAC itself needs to improve in many elements including institutional, professional, documentary, technical, systematical, procedural, mechanical, and financial aspects as well as to develop policies, resources, networks, trainings, capacity building, data archiving, monitoring, and benchmarking. Indeed, it is at a very elementary stage, though it was created four years ago.

Within this national context, the UM has been engaging in QA implementation process since 2012 along with other ASEAN countries. Therefore, this study aims to explore QA activities of the UM during the transitioning period of the decade from 2012 to 2021, in which the UM had been able to move forward a little but the progress was slow. Accompanied by many positive experiences, it encountered a number of problems, challenges, and missing gaps in developing quality culture and QA mechanisms, which is one of the Nine Transformational Shifts of the NESP.⁹⁰ Thus, attempts has been made to address the following research questions or thematic problems.

- What kinds of attempts had the UM been making in regard to QA?

⁸⁹ NESP, 2016-21, Chapter 12, p.192.

⁹⁰ Ibid., p. 12.

- Does the UM have its own IQA system under implementation and which types of IQA/EQA systems will be applied for accreditation?
- What kinds of QA Mechanism will be set up under the higher education reform?
- Why do we need to set up QAM in the transitional period?
- Is the UM being granted autonomy by law and situations under the reform process? If yes, how should it put up its feasible and practicable QA policy, procedures and action plans?
- How many problems, challenges, and gaps are there in UM in regard to QAM?
- When did we start our attempts to surmount all these negative disturbing factors?
- How did we address problems, brave challenges, and close gaps?
- What are the successes and outcomes of the UM pertaining to the implementation of QAM?

Although this study is a sort of case study for the UM, most of the findings, discussions, and situations could resonate to other HEIs, and results and outcomes could be beneficial for those institutions that want to follow the UM model.

1. Historical and Legal Context

The University of Mandalay is the second oldest university in Myanmar and was founded as Mandalay College on 4 July 1925 when Myanmar was under the British colonial rule. It then stood as an affiliated institution of Yangon University. In 1930 a Teachers Training College and a Medical College were added and in 1938 an Agriculture College was also added to Mandalay College. After the independence, the government turned all these affiliated autonomous colleges into faculties of the Yangon University. In 1947, the Mandalay College was upgraded to Mandalay Degree College and opened on 25 October 1947 for higher education services in upper Myanmar. With the ratification of the Mandalay University Act (Act No. 50 of 1957), it became the University of Mandalay in 1958. Under the Socialist Regime, both Yangon and Mandalay Universities became state-controlled higher education institutions and the latter was renamed Mandalay Arts and Science University (MASU) in 1978. It was named again University of Mandalay after the establishment of the military government in 1988. Under the democratic government it became a member university of the ASEAN University Network (AUN) in 2013 to improve regional collaborations in higher education. Currently, in accordance with Article 4 (G), Article 7, Article 26, and Article 57(C) of the National Education Law (2014)⁹¹ and democratic principles, the University of Mandalay has been trying to move forward to a status of fully autonomous national university. In the last week of August 2020, it was

⁹¹ NEL, pp. 6, 8, 11, 18.

officially granted semi-autonomy which allows some administrative and academic freedoms, including staffing management and curriculum development. Therefore, the UM has gained a lot of diverse experience as it passed through different eras: the colonial era, the era of parliamentary democracy, the socialist era, the era of military dictatorship, and again a democratic era. From 2016 to mid-2019, it was able to stand out as the number one university in Myanmar and to be occasionally ranked as such by the Ministry of Education (MoE). Also in international university ranking, its status has been gradually moving up year after year. According to the Webometrics of world universities' ranking conducted by the Spain Council of Research (CSIC), the rank of the UM in 2016 was 1090th in Southeast Asia and 20701st in the world; it raised significantly to 481st and 9722th in 2020 having over a two-fold increment.

2. Institutional Context

The UM is located in the central part of Mandalay, the last capital of Myanmar's monarchy and the dynamic hub of Myanmar's culture, as well as in the core region of the country. Therefore, for many years, it could serve tertiary level students from upper Myanmar with advanced learning opportunities. As the UM has been a liberal arts and science university all along since 1964, it currently has 12 art departments and eight science departments which are as follows:

	ART DEPARTMENT	SCIENCE DEPARTMENT
1	Myanmar	Chemistry
2	English	Physics
3	History	Mathematics
4	Geography	Zoology
5	Philosophy	Botany
6	Law	Geology
7	Psychology	Industrial Chemistry
8	International Relations	Computer Science
9	Oriental Studies	
10	Anthropology	
11	Archaeology	
12	Economics	

Table 2. List of Arts and Science Departments at UM (2021)

Currently, there is no faculty system yet, though its implementation has been planned for when the UM receives full autonomy after the approval of its universi-

ty charter by the National Education Policy Commission. Therefore, accomplishing the writing of university charter as early as possible is one of the most crucial things that the UM has been engaging in. However, because of certain unsatisfactory reasons, the charter's writing process that has started in 2016 has been delayed. The academic departments offer bachelor's, master's, and doctoral degree programmes plus diploma and certificate levels of non-degree programmes in the 0.40 square miles wide university campus. The UM, along with the University of Yangon, was allowed to reopen its undergraduate programmes for outstanding students in 2013, and started to stand as a Centre of Excellence (CoE). As of 2019-2020 academic year, there were 478 members of the teaching staff and 305 of the administrative and supporting staff, a total of 783 members of the personnel at the UM, where altogether 4956 undergraduate and graduate students had been pursuing their studies. This figure does not include HRD students and means that the teacher-student ratio is 1:10, an acceptable proportion.

3. One Decade's Attempts

One of the driving forces for the implementation of QA systems and mechanisms comes from the Foreword of Daw Aung San Suu Kyi, the State Counselor: "To sustain and expand our national education system all educational institutions must have a Quality Assurance System that will help them achieve national quality standards and improve both teaching and learning."⁹² This could foster the development of QA systems and mechanisms at the UM, and change the negative outlooks of some internal and external stakeholders who did not recognize the QA system.

The UM has carried out quality assurance activities in collaboration with regional and global QA organizations and experts since 2012. The very first QA training was a project that enhanced AUN-QA system's implementation in ASEAN countries. By the end of 2012, the opening year of the decade 2012-2021, the UM could participate and conduct four AUN-QA training workshops, and could produce six trainees-trainers and 57 trainees. In the next year, in 2013, it became a member of ASEAN University Network, which has been a driving force for the sustainable QA implementation of the institution. As shown in *Appendix 1*, the UM has been able to conduct at least five key QA activities per year.⁹³ It is also found that the UM could learn different but associated QA systems of AUN-QA, AQAF, ENQA, NAQAC and Myanmar Quality Assurance Framework (MQAF)⁹⁴, as well as QA related systems

⁹² The NESP (2016-21), Forward by Daw Aung San Suu Kyi, p. 5.

⁹³ See Appendix 1.

⁹⁴ Since the beginning of 2021, the NAQAC has been randomly holding awareness workshops on Myanmar Quality Assurance Framework (QAF) for Higher Education and TVET/Skills sectors at some universities with the support of Australian Aids. This system has 13 Provider Standards Dimensions.

like ASEAN Qualification Reference Framework (AQRF) and Myanmar National Qualification Framework (MNQF). Actually, the Ministry of Education had had its own QA system since around 2000; all HEIs had to practice it and had to send implementation reports regularly to the Department of Higher Education (DHE). Then it was not known and identified as QA system but as ‘academic capacity indicators’, which have 12 criteria such as capacity of the professor (head), percentages of students’ attendance, learning accomplishment, research performance, etc.⁹⁵ However, although there were actual quality assessments or audits based on these indicators at a few universities, it was not as successful as hoped for many reasons, including unsystematic approaches, lack of human resources with auditing skills, lack of awareness trainings, lack of improvement to be a certain QA system from mere indicators checking, and so on. Actually, it should have developed into Myanmar’s own internal or external quality assurance system since then.

Indeed, QA systems are sorts of quality measuring rulers and therefore, there are six quality measurable IQA/EQA systems that are readily available for the UM, which are:

1. AUN-QA Programme Level Criteria
2. AUN-QA Institutional Level Criteria
3. AQAN’s Principles (AQAF)
4. European Standards and Guidelines (ESGs) of the ENQA
5. NAQAC’s Standards and Guidelines for Institutional Assessment
6. NAQAC’s Standards and Guidelines for Programme Level Assessment

Among them, as AUN-QA is firstly introduced to the UM and as the latter has been a member of AUN since 2013, the QA systems of the AUN became the primary appliance for IQA practices at the institution, and happened to be more familiar to the staff, especially academic personnel, as most of the QA training workshops were applicable with AUN-QA assessment modes as mentioned in *Appendix 1*. There are 16 internal and international training workshops and quality self-assessments that are directly relevant to the AUN-QA participated or conducted by the UM.⁹⁶ The “First Training Workshop for Implementation of IQA System at the University of Mandalay” held on 27 April 2017 has been the largest AUN-QA training workshop ever conducted at the UM, attended by a total of 125 trainees, including administrative and academic staff. Another new QA system introduced to the UM staff in the same year was the 10 quality principles of AQAF. This training was the replica of a course of the Preparatory Training for ASEAN Universities for the SHARE Pilot

⁹⁵ See Dr. Tin Naing Win, “Programme Level Assessment Criteria of the ASEAN University Network Quality Assurance (1)”, the *Mandalay Daily Newspaper*, 8 February 2014, p. 4 (See References for other parts).

⁹⁶ See Appendix 1.

Institutional Assessment held in Jakarta on 20-21 March 2017. The results were very fruitful as the UM got its first and foremost experience of external QA audit conducted by four international QA experts from Germany, Philippines, and Lao PDR in February 2018, and as the UM received a valuable report from them that recommended improvements based on all 10 principles in June 2018.⁹⁷ This is a significant and important landmark and an outstanding achievement for the UM in the decade under investigation.

In the national context, the NAQAC, that will act as national quality accreditation agency, has been developing its QA standards and guidelines for institutional and programme levels, which are compulsory external quality assurance systems for Myanmar universities. Therefore, the NAQAC started to hold awareness workshops in the mid of 2018⁹⁸ even if its systems are in the developing process, and it still needs to fulfill many requirements such as writing quality policies, specifying assessment procedures, compiling auditing manuals, training assessors, etc. Nevertheless, QA trainers of the UM could successfully train academic, administrative and supporting staff on institutional standards and guidelines of the NAQAC in late 2019 and at the beginning of 2020 to be ready for actual institutional quality assessments.

One of driving forces for the development of quality assurance implementation process at the UM is the opportunity to take part in international programmes and projects like SHARE, CHINLONE, Erasmus+, Central European University (CEU) Collaboration, and Australian Aids, and having contacts with international development partners like ADB, DAAD, EU, AQAN, ASEAN-QA, AUN, ENQA, APQN, HRK German Rectors' Conference, SEAMEO RTHED, EUA, Nuffic, British Council, Campus France, Potsdam University, UNIBO, Uppasala University, University of Granada, The Coimbra Group, CEU, and other HEIs from Southeast Asia. Consequently, the UM could learn diverse QA systems and qualification frameworks and could develop human resources for quality assurance implementation. The following charts show the percentages of different QA systems and qualification frameworks that the UM engaged in during the decade under study, and the percentages of QA trainers, trainees, and untrained in the UM in 2019.

97 Report on the SHARE Institutional Assessment, SHARE Project Management Office, ASEAN Secretariat, June 2018, pp. 9-18.

98 See Appendix 1.

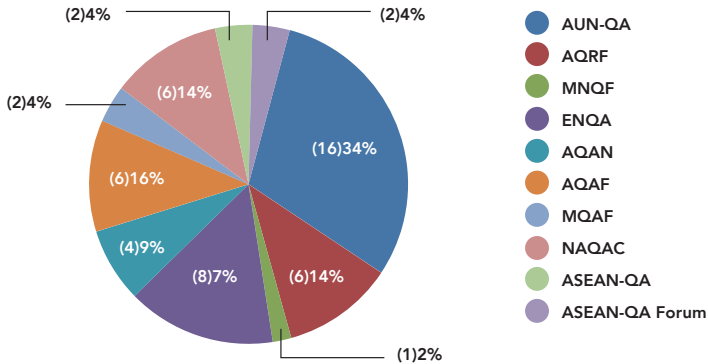


Figure 1. Different QA Systems and Qualification Frameworks Engaged by the UM (2012-2021)

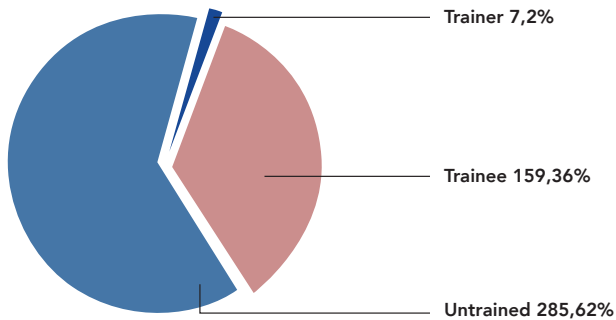


Figure 2. Percentages of QA Trainers, Trainees, and Untrained at the UM (2019)

The year 2019 saw a significant development in QA activities as the UM could invite well-known foreign QA experts to train both trainers and new trainees as well as send some QA trainers to important QA workshops, for instance to the very first ASEAN QA Forum held at the Foreign Trade University, Hanoi, Vietnam in November 2019.⁹⁹ Therefore, the IQA Team of the UM that has seven to nine trainers was able to introduce QA systems of AUN, AQAN, and NAQAC to the academic staff in particular and administrative and support staff in general. The academic departments and its staff are responsible to learn these QA systems, especially the department head and management leaders and its departmental IQA team. According to the statistical analysis conducted in 2019, the numbers of QA trained, untrained,

⁹⁹ See Appendix 3. Poster presented at the 1st ASEAN-QA Forum held at the Foreign Trade University, Hanoi, Vietnam, on 6-9 November 2019.

and total number of staff of each department can be seen in *Figure 3*. The comparison of QA trained and untrained staff by their position can be seen in *Figure 4* below.

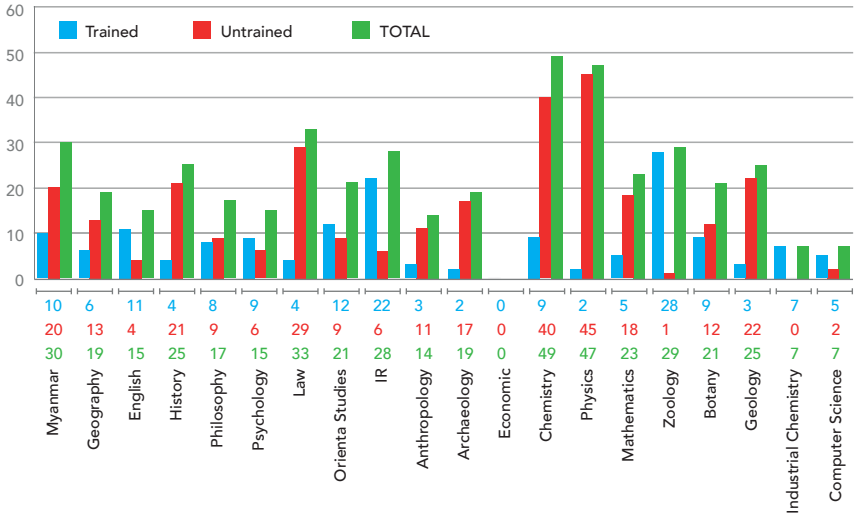


Figure 3. Comparisons of QA Trained, QA Untrained, and Total Numbers of Teaching Staff at the Respective Departments of the UM (2019)

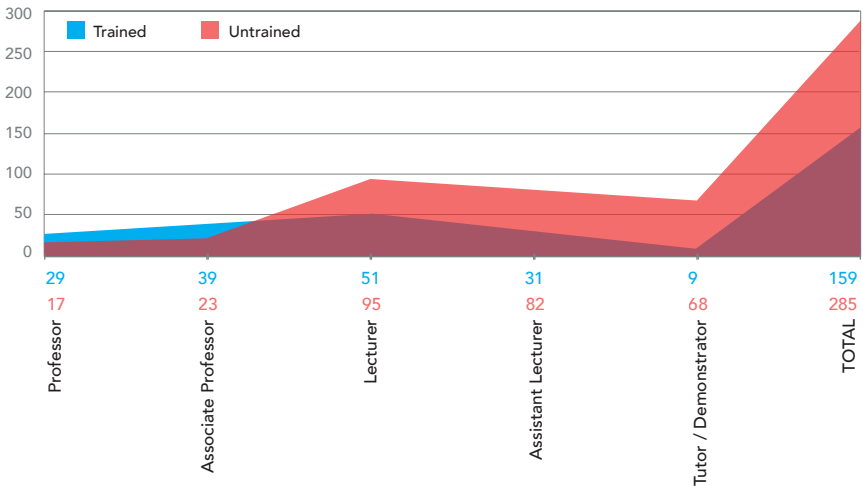


Figure 4. Comparisons of a QA Trained and QA Untrained Staff by Their Position (2019)

One of the development partners that incessantly exerted efforts for all round development of the UM is in particular the CEU, Hungary; its higher education experts, who frequently came to the UM themselves, have been closely implementing development programmes with the university's management and academic staff. The core project is Mandalay University Strategic Transformation (MUST 2025) facilitated by the CEU experts, which covers advancement of university autonomy, transition to student-centered learning, building capacities for world-class research, improving services to the community, developing friendly, functional and vibrant campus, internationalization, governance and management, quality assurance framework, strengthening and empowerment of the leadership, etc.¹⁰⁰ It aims at accomplishing its goals, short term and long term action plans as well as turning into an excellent 21st century university, with excellent staff and programmes, serving excellent students by 2025, when the institution will reach its Centennial. Accordingly, setting up a sustainable quality assurance mechanism is a crucial part of the MUST 2025 and by the end of 2021 the University hopes to get the QA system fully operational, effectively, so that it will be accredited institutionally or programme-specifically by a quality assurance agency by 2025.

Therefore, there is a need to essentially and principally create effective and efficient IQA mechanisms for the UM. This prerequisite came to light on 3 August 2019, when the Rectors' Committee held a dissemination seminar at the UM convocation hall for all HEIs in and around the Mandalay municipal area. As usual, the QA was also among the main concerns of higher education's transformation; a member of QA unit of the UM, after organizing a group discussion, presented an innovative 7-Processes QA Mechanism to the Union Minister for Education, the Chairman of the Rector's Committee, national, ministerial, and institutional level leaderships and all internal stakeholders, including teachers' and students' unions. This was a notable achievement for the UM and has been the UM's functional IQA mechanism since then. Detailed components of this mechanism have been shared at the SHARE Workshop on IQA (Train IQA) held in Bangkok on 19-23 August 2019 with some ASEAN counterparts in a group discussion called "Think, Pair, Share". The following figure shows how the seven processes drive the mechanism, how they are interconnected, and how all of them have been embedded in three unavoidable factors: time frame, financial plan, and communication.

¹⁰⁰ See University of Mandalay Master Plan 2025, Type-script, the Central European University, Budapest, Hungary, August 2018, pp. 4-8.



Figure 5. 7-Processes QA Mechanism applied at the UM

Under each component of the process, there are several relevant constituents, which are wide-ranging as a whole but specific if considered individually. For instance, Process 1, System Setting up and Strategic Planning, will have IQA/EQA strategic plan, action plans, and procedures, quality policy and quality handbook, quality management system and QA unit, time framing and schedules, etc. Whereas Process 3, Document and Data Collection, will encompass documents and data related to administration, documents and data related to teaching and learning, documents and data related to key performance indicators (KPIs), stakeholders' feedbacks, meeting minutes, etc. Therefore, there may be many problems, challenges, and gaps as well as insufficient, incorrect, unsystematic, unreasonable, unsatisfactory, and unacceptable elements and conditions in any processes. However, knowing in advance what the constituents are, what to do or collect, how to handle things, where and when to intervene, and who will lead is much better than knowing nothing. Thus, this 7-Processes QA Mechanism provides a path to quality assurance and quality assessments that is to be carried out not merely for reputation but for accreditation. Therefore, this internal quality assurance mechanism can also be used for external quality assurance procedures because the ideas behind quality assurance are the same in most aspects. Indeed, QA mechanisms are key drivers of change without which any QA systems can not run systematically and coherently. Since all education reforms are because of quality failure in certain aspects and are associated in some way or another with quality improvement, assurance or improvement of quality becomes crucial to achieve any education reform. In other

words, educational reform itself is another term of quality improvement or quality assurance. Thus, QA mechanism is the 'must' that every education institution must have.

By the end of the first half of 2020, the UM had recognized that the next step was to assign the departments comprehensive internal quality assurance tasks. Therefore, each department was tasked with assessing its undergraduate programme itself by using AUN-QA 11 criteria, and to write and submit a Self-Assessment Report (SAR) to the IQA Board of Assessors, which is made up of members of university management and leading trainers of the IQA Unit. The benefits of this activity were far-reaching as all academic departments, except the Department of Economics that does not have undergraduate programmes, could collect all scattered documents and data, create a QA Archive at their respective departments, reorganize their departmental QA management committees, identify their strengths and weaknesses, set down and perform improvement plans, successfully write and submit their undergraduate programme level SARs, present their findings and discussions, and experience site assessments conducted by the Board of Assessors. The site assessments of the 19 departments were scheduled from 4 to 17 August 2020; the assessors themselves acquired new experience as a reverse effect of the assessments, i.e. learning by practice and from the environment. Then, a collective analytical audit report¹⁰¹ composed by the 12 assessors of the Board was submitted to the NAQAC through the DHE on 28 October 2020 for follow up actions. The Board recommended all departments to implement feasible improvement plans within the prescribed time-frames in order to address problems, brave challenges, and close the gaps, and promised to fulfill as much as possible the required tasks that are unsolvable by the departments alone. The whole process of this activity was systematically and safely carried out during a critical period of the Covid-19 pandemic by following the instructions and restrictions of the Ministry of Health and respective committees.

Since the beginning of 2021, the UM could not act upon any large-scale projects related to quality assurance; instead, independent efforts exerted individually or departmentally such as doing research on QA, developing and improving strategic plans for IQA, implementing improvement plans, collecting documents and data, closing gaps for QA progress, etc., have been performed.

4. Addressing the Problems

The things or questions that are solvable or answerable by a conductor him/herself or a group of conductors itself can be defined as 'problems', which may appear from every corner because of false governance and mismanagement, top-down processes, bureaucracy, inefficiencies, incompetence, unawareness, hindrances,

¹⁰¹ Collective Analytical Audit Report for Undergraduate Programme Self-Assessments, IQA Unit, University of Mandalay, October, 2020.

negative mindsets, heavy duties, time deficiency, off beam policies, unsystematic procedures, unreasonable systems, disincentives, biases, egoism, preconceptions, and many other reasons. Also in the QA sphere, one can find all these undesirable detrimental factors. Most of the problems that the UM and its IQA Unit encounter are system- and mechanism-related, policy-relevant, organizational and functional, professional and technical, financial and resource-related, and concern strategic planning and documentation, training and awareness' dissemination, self-assessment and quality improvement, reward and recognition, monitoring, information and communication, internal and external networking, stakeholder engagement and student involvement, stakeholder survey, and so on.

The UM's IQA Unit tried to deal with every problem that could solve, individually or collectively in accordance with the definition of the word problem mentioned above. Addressing these problems by the small IQA Unit with limited human, technical and financial resources, and insufficient documents and data is a heavy burden and thus requires collective efforts. However, there have been some problems solved by an individual in order to avoid time delaying, to achieve results as early as possible, and to be workable. Actually, all the members of the IQA Unit belong to the academic staff and they also had their primary duties of teaching, learning, researching, and other numerous tasks, which have been performed in time deficiency. Moreover, they currently have not been appointed as permanent QA officers with fixed salaries yet. There are no QA policies and legal and formal documents that describe their formal recruitment and organization.

The UM also does not have QA policies and procedures as the university management has not planned them yet. Similarly, there are no QA strategic plans based on specific time-frames. The writing of policies, procedures, and strategic plans, awareness trainings, capacity building, performing self-assessments and quality auditing, executing quality improvement plans, continuous monitoring, information and communication processes, setting up internal and external networks, stakeholder engagement and feedback mechanism, all need qualified human resources and financial resources. The lack of real QA experts and the shortage of QA trainers are a significant problem; without their efforts all these tasks would not be accomplished. Here, reward and recognition system is essential to stimulate their workforce but there is no such incentive system at the institution. The UM and its administrative and academic departments still need to improve their documentation processes and data analysis practices. Moreover, annual, bi-annual or follow-up report writing practice is very scarce, though it is crucial for most operating systems. One of the vital problems is the engagement of stakeholders in the QA process. Until now, the UM has not tried to offer QA awareness trainings to students and other external stakeholders yet, especially, to alumni associations. Student involvement in the QA process is inevitable for further improvement. To hear the voice of internal and external stakeholders is a requirement for the QA mechanism for which stakeholder feedback mechanism is needed to be set up. Therefore, a lack of systematic stakeholders' feedback mechanism in all areas is a big problem that the UM

still encounters. Anyway, the administrative body, the IQA unit, the departmental QA committees, and other relevant parties have been addressing every problem as best they could within each possible context.

5. Braving the Challenges

The things or questions that are not easily solvable or answerable by a conductor him/herself or a group of conductors itself can be defined as 'challenges'. In other words, the challenge is caused not by a conductor or a group of conductors but by external parties or systems. Whenever the IQA Unit tries to conduct either a QA awareness training or QA assessment, they always face certain challenges among which bureaucracy management, top-down procedures, adverse mentalities, uncooperative behaviour, egoism or self-interest, the presence of many tasks and a heavy workload, time deficiency, the staff transfer system, the existence of many organizations, prejudice, and information blockage are the biggest obstacles for the development.

The QA trainers had to brave all these challenges in one way or another. Sometimes, there have been breakings of bureaucracy management by a QA trainer or by a group of IQA unit to grab timely opportunities for the development of the institution. Occasionally, they had to overturn the top-down procedures by taking decisions without the approval of the management body, such as scheduling programmes, setting dates, writing strategic plans, etc. One of the uncontrollable challenges is the mentality of some trainees and some staff who do not participate in the processes; their negative criticism on QA activities influences some junior staff and may cause disunity among the personnel of the respective departments. Additionally, it may also increase the number of self-interested persons who seek only their own progress and not departmental and institutional development. They used to argue that QA is unnecessary and it is enough focusing on their own personal progress, not knowing that it is a sort of personal QA. On the other hand, the academic staff in general and certain individuals in particular have many personal, departmental, and institutional tasks and heavy workloads comprising of teaching, learning and researching while they are short of time. This is why the QA trainers were not able to train all academic staff on quality assurance awareness and practice. The most accepted challenge is, of course, the staff-transfer system; all the academic staff is subject to transfer from one university to another every one, two, or three years by higher education procedures. This seriously beats up the development of QA processes; the QA trainers themselves and the trained ones do not escape from this undesirable and unreasonable rule, which can be denoted in the same way as a Myanmar proverb, "Thamin mway-yin Kyar sar-yin" lit. "Whenever a deer is born, the tiger dines on a deer."

Another challenge is, as mentioned above, having many organizations such as the teachers' union, students' union, and the likes. Here, the question is whether having many organizations is a challenge. Although it is true that having many or-

ganizations is not exactly a challenge but even a good prospect at foreign HEIs, it is factual at most Myanmar universities that having many organizations means having many things to overcome, many people to discuss with, explain, and consult, many opinions to harmonize, and many problems to settle; all of which may more likely lead to negative outlooks and to certain arguments that may even put off and hold back the existing QA processes if a positive mindset and a constructive attitude are lacking. Anyway, the IQA unit and its QA trainers will continue collaborating with anyone and any legal organization, and braving with any challenge.

The next but not new challenge is prejudice or favoritism, which can be indeed found everywhere. Thus, there may also be biases at any aspect or stage of the QA processes, which may lead to disunity, distrust, distress, disarray, dismay, and doubt. If the institution and its management can not take out bias there may be disunity between university management and IQA Unit, distrust among the QA trainers, distress on the assessment, disarray in QA strategic planning, dismay in QA implementation, and doubt over the entire QA process. Therefore, biases, favoritism, or prejudice becomes a certain challenge for quality assurance implementation, and an obstacle for its development. To resist this challenge it is crucial to disallow “making one’s master/making one’s disciple” policy and to practice “right person at right post” policy in every condition, at every time and everywhere.

Regardless of these challenges, the UM and the IQA Unit have been trying their best to brave them individually or collectively at all aspects of the QA process to close whatever gaps appeared in collaboration with internal and international development partners.

6. Closing the Gaps

The gaps may be defined as requirements or responsibilities caused by the problems and/or challenges discussed above. They can be found far and wide since problems and challenges are everywhere. There are gaps associated with management and logistics, systems and mechanisms, policies and procedures, planning and staffing, documentation and data, training and knowledge, skills and assessments, reporting and feedbacks, improvement and monitoring, and networking and information. Within the decade under study, the UM management and the members of the IQA Units and departmental QA teams could close or fulfill a number of components under these gap-categories, such as organizing a quality management board, an IQA board of assessors, an IQA working committee or an IQA Unit, Departmental IQA committees, a QA office, putting up the IQA’s organizational structure¹⁰² and the 7-Processes IQA Mechanism, formulating a QA strategic plan¹⁰³, collecting

¹⁰² See Appendix 2. The IQA Organizational Structure the UM.

¹⁰³ Dr Tin Naing Win, Short Term and Long Term Strategic Plans for Quality Assurance at the University of Mandalay, The IQA Unit, UM, 8 July 2019.

and analyzing institutional and departmental documents and data, translating required parts of QA manuals, writing QA awareness articles¹⁰⁴, writing programme specifications or programme matrixes, formulating programme and course learning outcomes, aligning them with the university's vision and missions, collecting QA references and manuals, establishing QA archives, holding awareness training's workshops to fulfill the knowledge gaps, holding capacity building and development programmes for the improvement of skills and competencies, carrying out staff and student evaluations, performing self-assessments, writing SARs, formulating and fulfilling improvement plans, and setting up preliminary feedback mechanism¹⁰⁵ by using Google Form.

There still remains many important gaps to be closed or filled, which are, for instances, writing the institution's own quality policies and procedures, identifying roles and responsibilities of all members of IQA Unit and departmental QA committees, specifying benchmarks for all aspects, setting up regular monitoring system, forming more internal and external QA networks like Myanmar University Network Quality Assurance (MUN-QA), structuring stakeholder feedback and relations mechanisms, creating QA media to close information gap, and so on.

Therefore, it is needed to carry out gap-analyses for everything; at least every internal stakeholder, i.e. administrative staff, academic staff, support staff and students of all levels are responsible for the successful implementation of quality assurance mechanisms. By closing the gaps, achievements will be nearer and faster not only for the institution and its departments but also for every single person associated.

Conclusion and Recommendations

Under the two democratic governments, the UM was able to seize opportunities for the internationalization of the institution between 2011 and 2020 by collaborating with many international development partners and projects. It could craft certain advancements in terms of quality assurance, and identify the problems, challenges and gaps that have hindered all-round developments. Accordingly, the UM had to address a number of problems, brave most challenges, and close many gaps. Within a decade of transitioning period, there were 58 major activities associated with quality assurance and the UM had been able to move forward a little, even though the progress was slow. It can be said that the UM could execute nearly six QA or QA-related activities per year or one every two months. Nevertheless, it still

¹⁰⁴ There were a series of QA articles published in the *Mandalay Daily Newspaper* during the one decade to fulfill QA awareness gap, which have been disseminated to some HEIs for references. See References Section.

¹⁰⁵ Collective Analytical Audit Report for Undergraduate Programme Self-Assessments, pp. 11, 53, 84.

needs to speed up its attempts to fit the purposes and to meet its objectives and core values. The UM will have to move forward, from sitting to standing, walking and running on the way to quality assurance. It is advisable that the UM identifies priority areas first and continue to address problems, brave challenges, and close gaps such as solving difficulties in writing quality policies and in laying down strategic planning, changing negative mindsets, fulfilling the constituents of the 7-Processes QA Mechanism, accomplishing improvement plans, collecting and analyzing documents and data, practicing report writing, rising motivations, choosing the right things and persons, collaborating more and more with internal and external partners, practicing self-accreditation, etc. Then, it must strive to become a fully autonomous university. While keeping the existing achievements and performance results, shaping future development's strategic plans for all aspects with inclusiveness and individual and collective leaderships will allow the UM to fulfill its vision before or after its Centennial. In short, "the focus is not about accredited or not accredited but how the UM implements the quality assurance successfully."

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Appendix 1 One Decade’s Key QA Activities of the UM (2012-2021)

NO.	YEAR	DATE	FOCUSED THEME	CATEGORY	TRAINER/ TRAINEE/ PLACE
1	2012	28-31 Aug	The Enhancement of AUN-QA System Implementation in Universities in ASEAN Countries Project	AUN-QA	/2 Chatrium Hotel, Yangon
4		12-14 Sep	Cascade Training on the 3 Enhancement of AUN-QA System Implementation in Universities (for selected representatives)	Do	/4(total 88) UY, Yangon
		25-26 Sep	Cascade Training on the 3 Enhancement of AUN-QA System Implementation in Universities (for academic staff)	Do	6/57 UM/ Mandalay
		20-23 Nov	The Second Workshop of the Enhancement of AUN-QA System Implementation in Universities in ASEAN Countries Project	Do	/2 UY, Yangon
2	2013		AUN Member University	AUN	UM, Mandalay
2		Sep	Programme Level Self Assessment and Self-Assessment Report Writing conducted by 18 Academic Departments	AUN-QA	UM, Mandalay

NO.	YEAR	DATE	FOCUSED THEME	CATEGORY	TRAINER/ TRAINEE/ PLACE
3	2014	3-6 Sep	The 3-Year Project on Strengthening Capacity of University QA System towards uplifting Higher Education Quality in GMS countries	AUN-QA	?/2 UY, Yangon
1					
4	2015	23-24 Feb	Workshop on Mutual Recognition of Skills-MRS (in collaboration with ILO)	Quality Framework	?/1 Summit Parkview Hotel, Yangon
5		10-12 Mar	1st AQRF Workshop (Interpret the AQRF)	AQRF	?/1 Ministry of Labour, Naypyitaw
		13-18 Mar	2nd AQRF Workshop (Interpret the AQRF)	Do	?/1 Ministry of Labour, Naypyitaw
		11-22 May	3rd AQRF Workshop (Interpret the AQRF)	Do	?/1 Institute of Skills Training,
		27-30 Oct	The AUN-ADB Project on Strengthening Capacity of University Quality Assurance System towards Uplifting Higher Education Quality in GMS (2014-2016)	AUN-QA	7/4 Sule Shangraila Hotel, Yangon
5	2016	26-29 Jan	Second Cascade Training on MNQF	MNQF	1/8 UM, Mandalay
3		6-11 Nov	IQA Training for High Level Visit	ENQA (ESGs)	?/1 Potsdam University, Germany
		13-16 Dec	The 3-year Project on Strengthening Capacity of University Quality Assurance System towards Uplifting Higher Education Quality in GMS (2014-2016)	AUN-QA	4/3 Myanmar Maritime University, Yangon

NO.	YEAR	DATE	FOCUSED THEME	CATEGORY	TRAINER/ TRAINEE/ PLACE
6	2017	13-14 Jan	Quality and Quality Assurance in Higher Education in Myanmar: Learning from International Experience	AUN-QA/ AQAN/ ENQA	?/5 Diamond Jubilee Hall, Yangon
15		27 Jan	Action Plans for the Implementation of AUN-QA System at the University of Mandalay	AUN-QA	Submitted by Dr. Tin Naing Win
		20-24 Feb	ASEAN-QA Train IQA Workshop 1	ASEAN-QA	?/1 Hilton Hotel, Malaysia
		20-21 Mar	Preparatory Training for ASEAN Universities for the SHARE Pilot Institutional Assessment	AQAF	8/2 Century Park View Hotel, Jakarta, Indonesia
		27 Apr	First Training Workshop for Implementation of IQA System at the University of Mandalay	AUN-QA	1/125 URC, UM, Mandalay
		3-4 May	Arts and Science Universities Cluster (Mandalay), IQA System Meeting	Upper Myanmar IQA	4/63 From 27 HEIs UM, Mandalay
		15 May	Report of Arts and Science Universities Cluster (Mandalay) IQA Meeting	Report	to NAQAC
		15-18 May	Presentation on the current status of IQA system by groups of HEIs	Seminar	?/1 NAQAC, Yangon
		15-16 July	Training on Quality Assurance System: In-depth Explanation on Principles of AQAF for SHARE Pilot Institutional Assessment	AQAF/ AQAN	2/80 Ava-9 Hal UM, Mandalay

NO.	YEAR	DATE	FOCUSED THEME	CATEGORY	TRAINER/ TRAINEE/ PLACE
		15-16 July	Cascade Training on AUN-QA Programme Level Criteria	AUN-QA	4/80 Ava-9 Hal UM, Mandalay
15		4-6 Sep	SHARE National Workshop on the Impact of Qualifications Frameworks and Regional Quality Assurance Standards on Higher Education in Myanmar	AQRF/ AQAF	??/ NEPC/ NAQAC/ Rectors/ Foreign QA Experts/ Diamond Jubilee Hall, Yangon
		16 Oct	Workshop on ASEAN Qualifications Reference Framework/ ASEAN Quality Assurance Frame-work/ Internal Quality Assurance / Outcome-Based Education	AQRF/ AQAF	??/ DHE, Mandalay
		18- 23(26) Nov	Visit of the Myanmar National Accreditation and Quality Assurance Committee to Central European University (Budapest, Hungary) and the European Quality Assurance Forum (Riga, Latvia)	ENQA	11/2 (7+1) CEU, Budapest, Hungary
		23-26 Nov	European Quality Assurance Forum (Riga, Latvia)	ENQA	??/1(7)
		27 Dec	Consultation Meeting for Institutional Standards and Guidelines for HEIs	NAQAC/ MQAF	??/ UM, Mandalay
7	2018	22-23 Feb	Site visit for SHARE Pilot Institutional Assessment (External Assessment),	EQA/ AQAF	4 QA Experts' Site Visit to UM

NO.	YEAR	DATE	FOCUSED THEME	CATEGORY	TRAINER/ TRAINEE/ PLACE
10		Jun	SHARE Assessment Report (Report of the SHARE Institutional Assessment)	EQA Report	4 QA Experts
		4-7 Jun	SHARE Peer Multiplier Training		?/1 Jakarta, Indonesia
		29-30 June	1st National Conference on Leading Higher Education Transformation in Myanmar	NAQAC	?/? Diamond Jubilee Hall, Yangon
10		9 Aug	Cascade Training Workshop on Governance of Universities and Faculties: Quality Assurance: The Journey of Myanmar Universities to International Accreditation	NAQAC	?/? UM, Mandalay
		11-13 Sep	Peer Multiplier Training Workshop on Quality Assurance (Training Workshop for Implementation of IQA System) "Harmonizing Mindsets: From Sitting through Standing to Walking and Running on the Way to QA"	AUN-QA, Capacity Building	5/50 URC, UM, Mandalay
		29-31 Oct	"Preparing for the Future: The Role of ASEAN (Higher) Education Frameworks in a Disruptive World" SHARE Regional Conference on Result Area 2: Qualification Frameworks and Quality Assurance	AQRF/ AQAF	?/ 2 Pullman King Power Hotel, Bangkok, Thailand
		14-15 Nov	Quality Assurance Forum	ENQA	/4? Austria
		16-25 Nov	IQA Workshop at CEU	ENQA	/ 4? CEU, Hungary

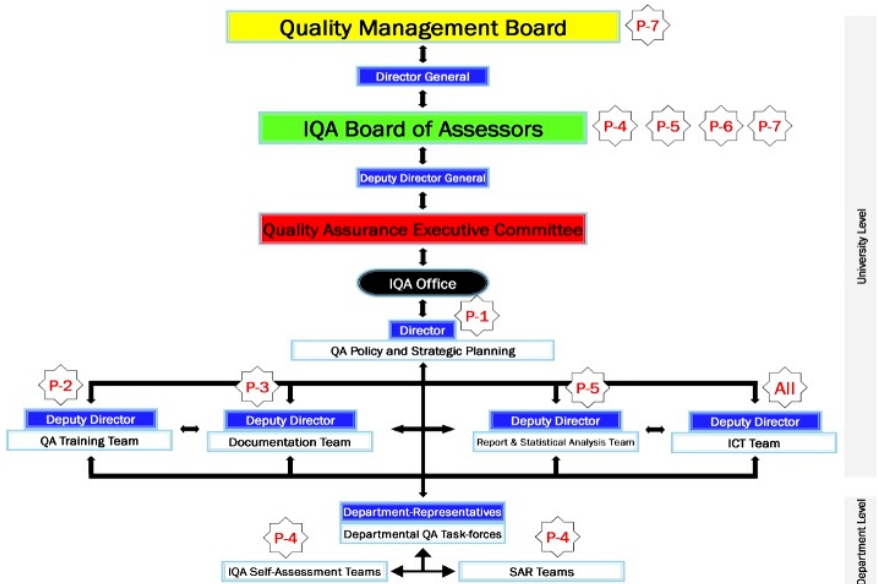
NO.	YEAR	DATE	FOCUSED THEME	CATEGORY	TRAINER/ TRAINEE/ PLACE
		26-27 Nov	CHINLONE Second Project's Conference "Towards Academic Autonomy: Tools for Curriculum Design and Quality Assurance"	CHINLONE Project Curriculum /QA	/3 University of Granada Spain
8	2019	17-22 Jun	Quality Assurance in Higher Education: The Institutional Level (A Visit of the NAQAC and University Partners from Myanmar to CEU)	ENQA	?/4? CEU, Budapest, Hungary
11		25 June 2019	Quality Policy Strategic Planning Workshop	ENQA (ESGs)	Mr. Jose Claudio Gil Reyes and Elisa Maria Recio Malagon 2 / 40 URC, UM, Mandalay
		8 Jul 2019	Short Term and Long Term Strategic Plans for Quality Assurance at the University of Mandalay	Strategic Plan	Submitted by Dr. Tin Naing Win
		17-19 Jul	AUN-QA Framework at Programme Level Hosted by Mandalay University	AUN-QA	Mr. Johnson Ong Chee Bin 1/ 53
		29 July	Workshop on Standards and Criteria for Institutional Quality Assurance (Draft)	NAQAC	2/170? Sagaing University, Sagaing
		3 Aug	Dissemination Seminar	QA and other Development Fields	NAQAC / Rectors' Committee Convocation Hall, UM, Mandalay

NO.	YEAR	DATE	FOCUSED THEME	CATEGORY	TRAINER/ TRAINEE/ PLACE
		3 Aug	Innovative Conception and Presentation of 7- Processes QA Mechanism or Seven IQA Processes Diagram of the UM	IQA Mechanism	Dr. Tin Naing Win & QA Group, Convocation Hall, UM, Mandalay
		13 Aug	Peer Multiplier Training on NAQAC's QA Standards and Criteria	NAQAC/MQAF	1/55 URC, UM, Mandalay
		19-23 Aug	SHARE Training on IQA/ SHARE Workshop on IQA (IQA Training)/ Train IQA	ASEAN-QA AQAN	9/1 Pullman Hotel G, Bangkok, Thailand
11		6-9 Nov	ASEAN - QA FORUM "Networking for Building and Sustaining Quality Culture in Higher Education Institutions", ASEAN QA Forum within Framework of DIES ASEAN-QA TrainIQA Program.	ASEAN-Q Forum AQAN	?/1 Foreign Trade University, Hanoi, Vietnam
		7-8 Nov	Poster Presentation of the Implementation of Sustainable QA System at the UM	ASEAN-QA Forum	12/120? Foreign Trade University, Hanoi, Vietnam
9	2020	14-15 Jan	Peer Multiplier Training on NAQAC's QA Standards and Criteria	NAQAC/MQAF	2/All teaching Staff and Support Staff
5		1-31 July	IQA Undergraduate Programme Level Self Assessment and Writing Self-Assessment Reports (SARs) by the 19 Departments	AUN-QA	UM, Mandalay

NO.	YEAR	DATE	FOCUSED THEME	CATEGORY	TRAINER/ TRAINEE/ PLACE
		1-31 July	QA Archive Foundation at each Department	QA Repository	All Departments UM
		4-17 Aug	Undergraduate Programme Level Desktop Assessment and Site Assessment	AUN- QA/ IQA Auditing	12 IQA Assessors, UM, Mandalay
		28 Oct	Report on Undergraduate Programme Level Self- Assessments of 19 Departments at the UM	Report of IQA Auditing	12 IQA Assessors, UM, Mandalay
10	2021	Jan	Executing Quality Improvement Plans for Priority Areas as specified in the SARs	QA Culturing	All Departments, UM
2		31 May	Submission of a research paper on QA Implementation History and Machinery of UM entitled "Addressing Problems, Braving Challenges, and Closing Gaps: One Decade's Attempts for Setting up the Quality Assurance Mechanisms at the Autonomous University of Mandalay" to the CHINLONE Conference entitled Shaping Higher Education in a Transitioning Myanmar organized by the University of Bologna and co-funded by the Erasmus+ Programme of the European Union	First QA Research Paper for the UM	Dr. Tin Naing Win

Appendix 2

IQA Organizational Structure of the University of Mandalay



Addressing Problems, Braving Challenges, and Closing Gaps: Implementation of Sustainable Quality Assurance System at the University of Mandalay

Dr. Tin Naing Win, Professor, Department of History
 Joint Secretary General (1, Quality Assurance Executive Committee (Central Level),
 Chairman, Departmental QA Team, (De-central Level, University of Mandalay, Mandalay, Myanmar
 Poster Presented at the ASEAN-QA Forum held in Hanoi on 7-9 November 2019

Abstract

Being an ASEAN country, Myanmar has been engaging in regional and global higher education activities collaborating with educational organizations like AQAA, AAU, DAAD, ENQA, UKAS, EFMD EQUIS, University of Frankfurt, and other partners. As a good result of these efforts, the UoM together with other Myanmar leading universities could have involved in an attempt to set up sustainable quality culture through a series of workshops on quality assurance system implementation and other QA related educational and academic capacity building, trainings since 2012. Therefore, it has presented some QA-experiences practicing AQAA QA programme level assessment, UQA principles of AQAA and national level QA standards and guidelines of the National Education and Quality Assurance Committee under the National Education Policy Commission. Also, it has had its own global, regional and local based QA-human resources including a few assessors, some trainers and trainees. Yet, it still has a number of certain problems and challenges that hinder in effective implementation of quality culture and QA mechanism.

The main challenges we have encountered with are: 1) how we can put into operation a systematic QA system with all stakeholders, 2) how we can develop QA and QA related policies and procedures with effective strategy, and action plans, 3) how we can define certain QA processes that would assure sustainable effects, 4) how we can allocate roles and functions for each individual of external assessment to avoid dependence on professional individuals, 5) how we can train and produce more quality assessors, trainers, and trained staff for sustainable quality culture while having staff transfer system, 6) how we can collect/relevant documents, data and resources for internal and external QA assessments, and 7) how we can collaborate with internet and other social peers through institutional networking inside and outside the country.

In solving these problems, first, it is needed to take about QA and QAA, internal and external levels, programme and institutional levels, criteria based and principle-based QA setting, etc. that we intend to perform. After selecting one system, orderly and efficient QA processes must be follow step by step which are: 1) system setting up and strategic planning, 2) training and human resource recruitment, 3) document and data collection, 4) implementation and self assessment, 5) analysis and report back, 6) networking and accreditation, and 7) monitoring and quality improvement. Again, all these processes must be covered with sufficient budget plans, practicable timetables, and wide communication. While institution of every faculty department is compulsory to run these processes by short term and long term schedules. Concurrently, incentives might be surely attractive for the assessed students/programmes and staff/students in order to set up sustainable quality culture.

I believe that this presentation would be a solution for all these challenges and also a benefit for other HEIs in my country and in the region as they have also faced with common problems and challenges. Through this discussion, we will be able to join forces and tackle the common challenges, learn each other and initiate common ideas, practices and projects, and build concrete regional/global networks.

Keywords: University of Mandalay, automatic QA system, QA policy, QA processes, sustainable quality culture

Problems & Challenges

- Uniquely
- Acuity
- Unchanged mindset
- Negative point of view
- Institutionism vs. conservatism
- Many crises
- National level transfer system
- Lack of sufficient awareness and participation
- Lack of all stakeholders
- Lack of transparency
- Lack of incentives
- Lack of systematic record and data collection
- Inefficiency and unavailability of successive records and data
- No effective idea
- No strategic plan with timeframe
- No QA policy and QA related policies
- No well defined budget plan to regular financial support
- No systematic benchmarking
- Inexperience in benchmarking at central/de-central levels
- Not given full authority though have given duties and responsibility
- Not being ready for autonomy
- Need to improve unification
- Need to fulfil certain criteria of selected QA/QAA system (JPS, FLOs, EQUIS, EFMD, etc.)
- Unawareness of the value and concepts of QA
- Unable to manage human resources

Historical Background

The University of Mandalay was the first national higher education university that was founded in 1925 when Myanmar was under the British colonial rule. Until the mid 20th, it had stood its number one university ranked in Myanmar starting from 2010. It has become quality assurance systems in collaboration with regional and global QA organizations since 2010, and has become a member of AQAA in 2013. Under a SHAPE program of EU and ASEAN, it has finally had got a chance to be accredited by getting into international benchmarks using protocols of the AQAA in 2019. Now, the University of Mandalay has been entering Myanmar University Strategic Transformation (MUST) process in collaboration with German Education University. Having aiming at outperforming its goals, short term and long term action plans for 2020 when the institution reaches its hundred-year anniversary. Setting up a sustainable quality assurance mechanism is a crucial part of the MUST 2020 and by the end of 2020 the University hopes to start full accreditation of the system activities.

Results & Findings

ASEAN Member 2013
 Organizational chart & QA Unit
 Functional chart & UQA Teams
 Self-Assessment Report (2018)
 Statistical results
 7 QA Processes
 Self and Regular Reports
 Strategic and Action Plans

Methods / Solutions

QA Implementation Flow of the University of Mandalay

Taking trainings on AQAA/AQAA principles, UQA/QAA involving QA experts from regional and global networks
 Holding cascade trainings
 Holding cluster meetings of HEIs
 Holding capacity building workshops such as JPS, FLOs, EQUIS, EFMD
 Organizing central and de-central levels IQAA teams
 Doing self-assessments and writing Self-Assessment Reports
 Writing QA related articles and dissemination
 Writing Strategic Plan, Action Plans, and Policies
 Setting up QA Mini Forum

Conclusion

Still under the transitioning
 Need to proceed quality assurance and
 Need to lead to open access status
 Need to set up quality policy system
 Need to transform for each departmental in education
 Need to collect records and add systematic data management
 Need to align international design plan
 Need to build the capacity centers and one
 Need to build the quality assurance center
 Need to do self-assessment design plan
 Need to set up self-assessment design plan
 Need to do self-assessment design plan
 Need to do self-assessment design plan
 Need to do self-assessment design plan
 Need to do self-assessment design plan
 Need to do self-assessment design plan

ASEAN-QA

DAAD

AQAN

ENQA

EFMD EQUIS

AAU

UQA

EFMD EQUIS

Poster presented at the 1st ASEAN-QA Forum held at the Foreign Trade University, Hanoi, Vietnam, on 6-9 November 2019

STUDENTS' SATISFACTION IN HIGHER EDUCATION INSTITUTIONS OF MYANMAR: THE CASE STUDY OF THE MASTER OF MARKETING MANAGEMENT PROGRAMME AT THE YANGON UNIVERSITY OF ECONOMICS

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Dr. Soe Thu

Pro-rector, Monywa University of Economics

Abstract

Students' satisfaction is considered as an essential factor in determining the success of an effective curriculum that leads to academic achievements meeting market requirement. The study aimed to determine the students' satisfaction on their learning process at the Master of Marketing Management (MMM) programme offered by the Yangon University of Economics. The authors have developed a quantitative survey addressed to the students who attend at MMM first batch. The data were elaborated thanks to descriptive statistics. Students had more positive perceptions regarding their learning on expected learning outcomes, courses contents, teaching styles, evaluation systems, textbooks and course materials, teaching aids and infrastructure of MMM programme. This study offers policy suggestions to the academic board on how the curriculum and quality of MMM programme can be improved on the basis of the satisfaction scores. The board should update the library system with digitalization and information system as the lowest perception is on the teaching aids and infrastructure.

Introduction

Quality education is the essential requirement for developing and sustaining careers for developing countries. Higher education plays an indispensable role in developing and supporting societies. Moreover, higher education is one of the significant sectors needed to reform to cope with the challenges of the future. Obtaining a quality education is the foundation for creating sustainable development. To enhance the graduates' employability, the graduates must have the necessary competencies to enter the labour market and the capacity to meet specific labour market's demands. Outcomes of quality education are the probability of employment, qualification-job match, job quality and earnings. Quality education allows students to secure and sustain work in a competitive era. The education system must be continuously upgraded and improve graduates' knowledge toward meeting the market requirements.

In Myanmar, Yangon University of Economics was established as one of the rec-

ognized professional and state-owned universities to educate people to be economists, statisticians, accountants and managers, and to research economic, business and statistical challenges related to Myanmar economy. The Yangon University of Economics is offering two-year professional master's degrees in Business Administration, Banking & Finance, Marketing Management, Public Administration, Development Studies and Applied Statistics. In addition, there are many different private colleges and business schools affiliated with domestic and international universities which offer similar types of management programs. The Yangon University of Economics' outcomes compete with these private colleges and institutions to align their results with market needs. Employers are acquiring and demanding talented and intelligent employees in their recruitment and hiring process to gain a unique and competitive advantage. Their high expectation of the graduates' soft skills and in-depth hard skills needed for employment has significantly influenced the curriculum design of programs offered to the students by HEIs. Due to the demand and need of the labour market, students must meet the necessary employability skills to attain a position in today's competitive and swiftly changing staffing.

In all learning contexts, student assessment on programme or specific modules is an important input for quality assurance and improvement of the programme. In the quality assurance process, students' awareness of practical/good teaching characteristics is to be treated as a tool for quality evaluation and continual development. The students have the opportunity to review their learning goals and reflect on their learning results by evaluating the specifications of a particular program. Students' perceptions of excellence in their learning in higher education can influence their engagement and satisfaction towards continuous learning. The academic board can acquire diagnostic information that leads to actionable changes by understanding students' perceptions on their learning in respective programmes because students' perceptions for courses and curriculum design can provide vital information to drive courses and curriculum development. The students' perceptions of their knowledge are appropriate indicators to evaluate the quality of programmes offered by higher education institutions. The universities must understand the weaknesses of the offered programmes, an understanding that can be obtained from students' feedbacks in the form of a course or module evaluation at the end of the quarter, because HEIs are responsible for transferring information to society. In this study, the aim is to determine the students' perception of their learning. Therefore, this study provides information on continuous curriculum development and quality education.

1. Background of the Study

The CHINLONE project was a structural capacity-building initiative aimed at supporting the modernization and internationalization of Higher Education Institutions by training three main target groups, including local academic leaders, pro-

fessors and educators, as well as administrative staffs, in the most salient characteristics of European competence in terms of academic governance, degree courses designing and IR management. CHINLONE is planned to provide a lasting impact in Myanmar by establishing a new and updated curriculum in the crucial subjects of humanities and cultural heritage studies, economics and geography of tourism, and agricultural sciences, to provide local prospective students with the tools and abilities recently required in the labour market and economy. This strategy may contribute positively to Myanmar's transition to a "knowledge economy," opening the way for the implementation of new national policies in higher education and lead to the progression of local HEIs in regional education rankings as well as steady growth in the overall number of students enrolling in Myanmar HEIs and simultaneous increase in international mobility flows to and from the country.

As a result of CHINLONE's support in quality teaching and internationalization of Myanmar's Higher Education System (HES) reform, Yangon University of Economics extended a new graduate programme starting from February 2020, titled Master of Marketing Management (MMM). This programme is designed to equip participants with a more profound understanding of current global perspectives in marketing. The MMM is a post-graduate programme where the business practices go hand in hand with the academia to train the marketing professionals and entrepreneurs to solve problems and challenges of the global economy.

MMM Programme takes two years in which every student has to take one year and six months for coursework in six quarters and the remaining six months for preparing and submitting the individual master thesis. The MMM programme is a full time (day) programme. The fundamental courses offer entry-level knowledge in economics, business accounting and management, laying a foundation for students to pursue MMM studies. And then, the students will learn Managing People, Business Accounting and Finance, Strategic Marketing, Sales Management, Advertising and Promotion Management, Retail Management, Marketing Communication, Service Marketing and Consumer Behaviour. This category includes 36 credits as core courses in the first year.

After completing core courses, the students will have three elective courses in the first and second quarter of the second year, and they will get 18 credits and master thesis preparation in the last six months as 18 credits. A total of 72 credits, including 12 core and six elective modules, are structured, characterized by the acquisition of in-depth knowledge or skills of the study area and of the future work after graduation. Interactive lectures are used in all courses. Lecturers provide reading materials at the start of the quarter so that students can read them in advance. The lecturers send the PowerPoint and assignments questions to the student representative two days in advance. The lecturer uses teaching styles that encourage students to collaborate in groups in class to analyze business situations, discuss alter-

native solutions to real-life problems of companies and visit enterprises. Lecturers must follow the teaching method described in the course guide, such as performing group activities based on programme learning outcomes, student instruction and assessment. Lecturers guide and evaluate group assignments, visiting industries, and presentation. Small group discussion and collaborative learning are used either in classroom sessions or in student assignments. Students must study and work together to succeed in the learning outcomes. The method trains students to be active team members as teambuilding and brainstorming practices promote their communication and problem-solving skill. Case study and problem-based learning expose students to actual life situation and cases.

All three credit modules are covered over 12 weeks and will include 48 hours per module made up of four hours of lecture each week. Student progress assessment is evaluated regularly from the first to the final year. The evaluation is carried out in many different ways, such as assignments, presentation, teamwork, understanding of the lecture, and final examination. Each module will have a final examination test at the end of the quarter. The structure of the final analysis is mainly designed based on the course learning outcomes. Therefore, the curriculum of MMM has been designed to fulfil the needs of modern trends in line with the marketing system.

The Yangon University of Economics is a member of the ASEAN Universities Network (AUN). The submission of this Self-Assessment Report (SAR) to ASEAN University Network-Quality Assurance (AUN-QA) is part of the Department of Commerce attempt to enhance quality in education as an essential role in the national development of the education sector. The AUN-QA framework for programme level was created in alignment with the ASEAN Quality Assurance Framework, Standards and Guidelines for Quality Assurance based on OBE. The AUN-QA Model focuses on the quality of the educational programme at the programme level. Stakeholder demands are at the heart of the third edition of the AUN-QA model at the programme level. These requirements are included in the programme's intended learning outcomes (1st Column). The centre of the model has four rows, the first of which tackles how the desired learning outcomes are translated into the programme and how they might be attained through teaching and learning approaches and student evaluation. The "input" into the process is considered in the second row, including academic and support personnel, student quality and support, and facilities and infrastructure. The third row focuses on programme quality improvement, including curriculum design and development, teaching and learning, student evaluation, the quality of support services and facilities, and input from stakeholders. The fourth row focuses on the programme's output, such as pass and dropout rates, the average time to graduation, graduate employability, research activities, and stakeholder satisfaction. The last column discusses the programs and the intended learning outcomes' accomplishments. The model ends with fulfilling

stakeholders' needs and the continuous improvement of the quality assurance system and benchmarking to seek best practices. Therefore, if the curriculum and teaching methods of MMM align with the AUN QA framework, the programme can try to obtain AUN QA certification. The academic board needs to understand the students' perceptions of their MMM programme learning to improve the quality of higher education systems.

2. Objectives of the Study

This study aimed to examine students' perceptions of their learning in the MMM programme. The research discussed students' perceptions on expected learning outcomes, courses contents, teaching styles, evaluation systems, textbooks and course materials, teaching aids and infrastructure.

3. Research Methods and Scope

The study used quantitative and descriptive research to examine students' perceptions. As the MMM programme was started in February 2020, only the first batch is called, and (129) students are enrolled. As the primary data, students' perceptions are collected from all students (129) who attended the first batch of the MMM Programme. The first batch of MMM had been taught only in the first quarter of the first year as the first COVID-19 case was confirmed in Myanmar on 23 March, which led to the closure of schools, colleges and universities. The students' perception was concluded on the learning outcomes of the first quarter.

4. Analysis and Discussion

Table 1 shows the order of preferences on the MMM course curriculum according to their average scores. In the determination of students' average preference scores on 18 subjects, the highest preference score was 4.29 for Pricing Policy and Strategy (MMM-213). The second highest average score obtained was 4.25 for Brand Management (MMM-211). The lowest preference subject is Principles and Practices of Management (MMM-111), with an average score of 3.84. However, average scores in all subjects are above three, so students are averagely satisfied with the MMM curriculum. They agree that the MMM curriculum is supported by job and course content to fulfil their job requirement. They were satisfied with courses characterised by relevant topics and updated. *Table 1* shows the perception of overall MMM courses by students.

MMMCURRICULUM		MEAN
MMM-111	Principles and Practices of Management	3.84
MMM-112	Principles of Marketing	4.07

MMM-113	Managerial Economics	4.12
MMM- 121	Managing People	4.13
MMM- 122	Business Accounting and Finance	4.19
MMM- 123	Strategic Marketing	4.15
MMM- 131	Sales Management	4.24
MMM- 132	Advertising and Promotion Management	4.09
MMM- 133	Retail Management	4.16
MMM- 141	Marketing Communication	4.24
MMM- 142	Service Marketing	4.21
MMM- 143	Consumer Behaviour	4.18
MMM- 211	Brand Management	4.25
MMM- 212	Customer Relationship Management	4.22
MMM- 213	Pricing Policy and Strategy	4.29
MMM-214	New Product Development	4.12
MMM-215	Industrial Marketing	4.15
MMM-221	Marketing Research	4.22
MMM-222	Logistics and Distribution Management	4.19
MMM-223	International Marketing	4.23
MMM-224	Innovation and Entrepreneurship	4.13
MMM-225	Digital and Social Media Marketing	4.22
Overall Satisfaction		4.16

Table 1. Preferences on MMM Course Curriculum

Table 2 shows the students' perception of expected learning outcomes of MMM courses. For the first batch of MMM, the students showed how they responded about desired learning outcomes. Referring to the table, the learning outcome is perceived by students as high as 4.14. The statement "The contents of the course are appropriate to the needs of today labour market" had the highest mean of 4.21, indicating that most respondents are highly satisfied with that statement. However, the assertion "The materials and course design can arouse my desire to know more about the subject" has the lowest mean with 4.02 but reaches a satisfying level.

I. EXPECTED LEARNING OUTCOMES	MEAN
1. The course contents meet my expectations on the course.	4.2
2. The materials and course design can arouse my desire to know more about the subject.	4.02
3. The course enhanced my abilities and skills for the subject.	4.17
4. The contents of the course are appropriate to the needs of the today labour market.	4.21
5. The contents of the course support my further study for the more advanced course.	4.18
6. The contents of the exam are relevant to the learning outcomes of the course.	4.05
7. Projects/ assignments are related to the learning outcomes of the course.	4.14
Overall Perception	4.14

Table 2. Perception on expected learning outcomes

In the information of course content, the students perceived the course as high-level satisfaction. The statement of “The aims of the course are sufficiently clear” had the highest mean of 4.10, indicating that most respondents are highly satisfied with that statement. However, the assertion “Time allocation to the course topics is appropriate” had the lowest mean, which was 3.66. The overall mean on the course content is 3.95, so students are satisfied with the course content of the MMM programme, as shown in *Table 3*.

II. COURSE CONTENTS	MEAN
8. The aims of the course are sufficiently clear.	4.10
9. The course objectives are congruent with the curricula.	4.03
10. The course outlines and topics are sequenced logically.	4.05
11. The course contents are coherent and cover the objective of the course.	4.08
12. The intellectual level of the course is appropriate for the enrolled students.	3.98
13. Time allocation to the course topics is appropriate.	3.63
14. The contexts of the course and course materials are up to date.	3.91

II. COURSE CONTENTS	MEAN
15. The course assignments and lectures usefully complemented each other.	3.99
16. The amount of projects and assignments is appropriate to the course level and the number of credit hours for the course.	3.79
17. The course assignments are intellectually challenging to the students.	3.90
Overall Perception	3.95

Table 3. Perception on Course Contents

The lecturer's teaching style, "Teachers, explained the subjects with appropriate examples and supporting materials to make more understandable for students", has the highest mean as they liked the teaching approach of MMM lecturers. The statement "Teachers make the students motivated to extend their knowledge to outside the class" has the lowest mean, 4.07 but has a high perception level. The students give average scores with a satisfactory level on the teaching style. The students are satisfied with the lecturers of the courses.

III. TEACHING STYLE	MEAN
18. Teachers explained the concept and objectives of each course very well.	4.30
19. Teachers were organized and prepared for every class.	4.14
20. Teachers know well about the subject and provided adequate and real-life information.	4.32
21. Teaching styles stimulated student's interest in the subject.	4.15
22. Teachers explained the subjects with appropriate examples and supporting materials to make them more understandable.	4.43
23. Teachers encouraged students to ask questions and participate in teaching and learning.	4.11
24. Teachers gave a proper response to the questions, presentation and assignments of the students.	4.15
25. Teachers used effective teaching methods to reach the course objectives (e.g. case study, group discussions, student presentations, etc.)	4.18

III. TEACHING STYLE	MEAN
26. Teachers make the students motivated to extend their knowledge outside the class.	4.07
Overall Perception	4.21

Table 4. Perception on Teaching Style

Table 5 shows the order of preferences on the evaluation system of MMM according to their average scores. The statements “Evaluation system is fair and transparent” and “Evaluation system on student performance is related to the course objectives” have the highest mean level of 4.02. “Feedback of student assessment (on assignment, presentation, tutorial & mid-term test) is timely and helps to improve learning” has the lowest mean. The overall mean is 3.97 so students are satisfied with the assessment measure systems. They want the feedback of student assessment results to be timely.

IV. EVALUATION SYSTEM	MEAN
27. Assessment measures cover not only cognitive skill but also all aspects of learning (knowledge-skill-emotional).	3.95
28. Evaluation system applies a variety of assessment methods. (examination, presentation, assignment)	3.98
29. Assessment methods cover all aspects of the courses studied.	3.98
30 Evaluation system is fair and transparent.	4.02
31. Evaluation system on student performance is related to the course objectives.	4.02
32. Feedback of student assessment (on assignment, presentation, tutorial & mid-term test) is timely and helps to improve learning.	3.89
33. There is a mechanism for ensuring the fairness of student assessment.	3.95
Overall Perception	3.97

Table 5. Perception on the Evaluation System

Table 6 explains the students' perception of textbooks and course materials of the MMM program. The students like the textbooks and course materials of the MMM program. The textbooks and reference books used in each subject are appropriate for their learning objective as that question have the highest mean level. Price of textbooks should be reasonable because the relevant question has the lowest mean level of 3.69. Overall satisfaction with the texts and course material of the MMM program is a trim level of satisfaction with 3.88.

V. TEXTBOOKS & COURSE MATERIALS	MEAN
34. The textbooks and reference books used in each subject are appropriate.	4.17
35. The textbooks & course materials are up-to-date.	3.82
36. The textbooks and reference books are adequately available in the library.	3.72
37. Contents of textbooks cover course requirement.	3.98
38. There is appropriate guidance to find out the required course materials.	3.75
39. The cases in the textbooks can reflect real-world work environment & applicable in the workplace.	4.05
40. Prices of textbooks are reasonable.	3.69
Overall Perception	3.88

Table 6. Perception on Textbooks and Course materials

According to *Table 7*, relevant to teaching aids and infrastructure, the students are satisfied with the desk and chair of the classroom as the statement of “The number of desks and chairs in the classrooms are adequate” has the highest level mean. People are neutral on the information “Opening hours of library is convenient for students.” MMM class hour is 9:00 a.m. to 4:00 p.m. on Saturday and 1:00 p.m. to 4:00 p.m. On the other hand, the library is closed during that period. Therefore, library hours should be modified or improved with an e-library system of 24/7 access.

VI. TEACHING AIDS & INFRASTRUCTURE	
41. The number of desks and chairs in the classrooms are adequate.	4.42
42. The capacity & resources of the library are enough for the number of students in the school.	3.87
43. E-books and online resources are sufficiently available to fulfil the course objectives.	3.50
44. The numbers of lecture halls, seminar rooms, and computer rooms are adequate and meet the relevant requirements.	3.80
45. The audio-visual aids (computer, projector, audio system, & lighting system) are available sufficiently.	3.85
46. Computers are sufficiently available for teaching and learning purpose.	3.55
47. Books and equipment storage facilities in the school are adequate.	3.68
48. Opening hours of the library is convenient for students.	3.25
Overall Perception	3.74

Table 7. Perception on Teaching Aids and Infrastructure

Generally, most students reported high levels of satisfaction with various attributes of the MMM programme learning experience. The students' perceptions are considered an input variable in curriculum improvement to enhance market demand on MMM graduates. The academic board needs to manage the library systems and online learning management system so that students can access learning reference anytime and anywhere.

Conclusion

Higher Education Institutions require continuous measurement of student perceptions of learning during a course term. Measures of student perception of knowledge can provide valuable information in meeting the programme outcomes and the learning goals. In this study, student perceptions of learning highlighted that students were satisfied with teaching styles as they required the academic knowledge and theory to be constituted of practical issues. These insights suggest that more emphasis needs to be placed for teaching aids and infrastructure to be improved. The educational board and quality team must review results and en-

hance the quality dimensions of the programme. Student perceptions of learning can judge the impact of teaching innovations or assessment changes on student learning between course offerings. It can assist the marketing of YUE graduates in considering whether changes to a course are likely to improve student learning, thus providing an additional measure to support the market' requirement. The findings will assist the Yangon University of Economics academic board in developing a series of guidelines and recommendations to promote awareness of the needs for academic success in the MMM graduate programme.

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SHAPING INTERNATIONAL PARTNERSHIP WITH MYANMAR UNIVERSITIES: A REVIEW OF THE MoUs IMPLEMENTED BY THE UNIVERSITY OF MANDALAY

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Abstract

A memorandum of understanding (MoU) is an agreement between two or more parties outlined in a formal document. It is not legally binding, but signals the willingness of the parties to move forward with a contract (<http://www.investopedia.com/terms/m/mou.asp>). MoUs communicate the mutually accepted expectations of all of the parties involved in a negotiation. A MoU clearly outlines specific points of understanding. It names the parties, describes the project on which they are agreeing, defines its scope, and details each party's roles and responsibilities. This paper will emphasise the various activities of the different teaching departments under the MoUs in question at the University of Mandalay. The paper will explore whether the inclusion of a memorandum of understanding on higher education values should be made standard practice in international partnerships, and what sorts of values will be added for the University of Mandalay. A simple analytical review method is applied to indicate which MoUs and how they take responsibility for the agreements throughout the time. Moreover, the results will be outlined based on the values of the partnership to the methods of teaching/learning, curriculum development, research outcomes etc. The suggestion goes beyond current statements of values by calling for a built-in process for reviewing adherence to values pledges – such as an exchange of letters between the partners – and transparency in sharing such reviews with the partners' stakeholders. Finally, each MoU will be checked with four processes for transparency, reporting, and review. The findings will be discussed with the partner universities for amending or upgrading the MoUs of the University of Mandalay.

Introduction

International partnerships in higher education are more important than ever. They will enable us to build on the existing complementary activities and develop joint initiatives to engage members and the higher education sector at large. The strength of the relationship between the global academic associations lies essentially in the complementarity between positions and different offerings on several levels – in terms of geographical presence, cultural background, institutional or-

ganisation, and priority themes. A memorandum of understanding (MoU) signed between institutions emphasises this diversity, which is necessary for a more active and more recognised role for higher education in the world.

Strong international and multicultural higher education cooperation will lead to the development of a more sustainable world. Such partnerships contribute to this dynamic and will foster the importance of the entirety of institutional and interdisciplinary approaches to issues analysed, debated and taught at universities around the world. This will enhance the overall quality of higher education and will involve the creation of a work plan, coordinating advocacy and monitoring the progress of activities developed under the MoU.

The University of Mandalay was first established in June 1925 as Mandalay College, an affiliate of Yangon University. In 1958, it became an independent university and the only university in Upper Myanmar with four major faculties, namely the Arts Department, Science Department, Agricultural Studies Department and Medical Department. In 1964, it became one of the Arts and Science Universities in Myanmar and could be regarded as the second hub of the Higher Education Centre for teaching and learning. In 1978, it was renamed as Mandalay Arts and Science University (MASU). Since 1988, it has become the University of Mandalay (UM), although its educational focus remains liberal arts, sciences and law. In the earlier days of UM, it was a public university and had an exchange program with foreign universities under the Colombo Plan. However, under the Socialist Regime and successive military administrations from 1976 to 2010, the academic institutions in Myanmar, including UM, had very limited collaboration with foreign partners and very few state scholars from the higher education sector were selected to study abroad. In 2011, government policy changed under the democratic reforms, and academic institutions were encouraged to promote collaboration with foreign institutions. Accordingly, a number of universities throughout the world tried to connect with Myanmar's Universities, especially the University of Yangon and the University of Mandalay. A range of academic collaborations were introduced with academic staff and students at the University of Mandalay after reform of both the economic and political systems. Not only international institutions from the ASEAN Region, but also those from Europe, America, Australia etc., wished to sign MoUs with the University of Mandalay for different academic purposes.

1. Common Agreements and Processes of the MoUs

In 2019, the Ministry of Education drafted the MoU guidelines for the universities of Myanmar, covering all areas for collaboration. According to these guidelines, the MoU signing process should take a certain amount of time. The fields for the collaboration and the financial matters should first be discussed and the draft checked by the legal association of the partner universities. Then, it was to be reviewed by

the Department of Higher Education, Ministry of Education, National Education Policy Commission, the Rectors' Committee, and the Office of Attorney General, Myanmar to approve the draft MoU for both universities. If there were any amendments required, the draft would be discussed again to agree on any amendments. After the signing of the MoU, the University of Mandalay has the responsibility for submitting the finalised MoU to the offices concerned. Most processes are operated by the International Relations Office (IRO). Only translation into Burmese is the responsibility of the departments of Burmese and English. There are 22 members in the IRO at the UM. Every department has one representative to cooperate on the internationalisation works. Therefore, reviewing the MoU is also a responsibility of the IRO members for each department. In some departments, they have engaged more than one MoU for academic joint works. For instance, two MoUs out of 45 are specially appointed for the department of Geography. Therefore, the IRO member from that department has to handle both the MoUs and the related activities. The most important MoU review task is to check the expiry date. Many MoUs are valid for five years from the date of signing. Some do not need extension, as the agreement states that "the MoU shall be valid until both institutions are operational." Significantly, one MoU with Kew Gardens, UK for the Department of Botany require yearly signing to extend the partnership. However, there has been no extension for MoUs and no activities to date.

At the University of Mandalay, the MoU is signed at the university/institution level according to the instructions of the Ministry of Education. To date, a total of 45 universities/institutions have signed MoUs with the University of Mandalay. Generally, the academic partnership governed by the MoU is intended for one specific teaching department of UM, but it does not necessarily mean that all MoUs are just for a single department.

In 2013, the very first MoUs for the University of Mandalay were signed with the University of Cologne, Germany, for collaboration with the Department of Geography under the agreements for conducting joint geographical research, upgrading PhD and Master's degree candidates from UM and promoting staff and student exchanges as well as the sharing of research results such as giving special lectures, holding joint workshops, seminars, and paper reading sessions and publication in international journals.

In addition, MU has signed MoUs with 16 European Universities, the most active ones being those with Oxford University, Zurich University, Cologne University, Central European University, Florence University, and Copenhagen University. Among these, Oxford University has partnered with the Geology Department to create mutual benefits in the fields of geology, mineralogy and tectonics, including the academic staff and student exchange programme.

Zurich University is cooperating with the Anthropology Department of the University of Mandalay, their activities being field visits, training, summer school, student exchange and workshops for research writing. Their agreements are to encourage faculty visits for the purpose of engaging in research and educational activities; to support the exchange of undergraduate, graduate and doctoral students; to foster the exchange of academic publications and scholarly information; and to develop joint research activities. Except for the academic publications, the remaining activities are carried out as stated in the MoUs. The activities were able to involve teaching staff from other departments. Central European University agreed to exchanges for scholars and teaching staff, student exchanges, the exchange of best practises of institutional governance and administration and of academic information and materials, and to organise joint research programs and events and other forms of academic exchange. The partnership activities between the two universities are confirmed with the statements in the MoU except joint research program. This MoU involves the social science departments.

The MoU with Florence University includes exchanges of teaching and research staff, circulation of publications and information, exchange visits for post-graduate students, organisation of educational activities, and exchange visits for technical or administrative staff. Only the commitment to exchanging technical or administrative staff differs from the statements of the MoU. This MoU covers four departments.

Copenhagen University collaborates with the Anthropology and Archaeology departments, for the purposes of staff and student exchanges, capacity building and collaboration on research activities, as well as other forms of co-operation. Seminars, workshops and field trips were the main activities carried out.

The MoUs with other European universities are with Humboldt University, The Royal Botanic Gardens, Kew, University of Natural Resources and Life Sciences (BOKU), Lund University, Technical University of Munich, the International Institute for Asian Studies (IIAS), Dortmund University, Lausanne University and Embassy of Denmark.

The Anthropology Department has taken responsibility for the MoU with IIAS. Under their agreements, conferences and workshops were held, and further areas of collaboration developed: student and faculty exchanges and publication of research papers should extend for the remaining term of the contract.

The activities with Lausanne University of Switzerland include teacher exchange and joint organisation for the sustainable academy in April 2021, though the areas mentioned are to conduct joint geographical research, to publish the results of the research, to promote PhD and Master candidates from UM, to promote staff and student exchanges, to give special lectures, and to extend joint workshops, seminars and paper reading sessions. The contract term runs to 2023, so further tasks can be expected in future.

The MoU with the Hungarian Natural History Museum was meant for the De-

partment of Zoology. To date, no activity has commenced. The term runs to 2024 for academic collaboration. Since the signing of the MoUs, no activity has been completed for the MoUs with Humboldt, Kew, Lund University, Dortmund University and Technical University of Munich. The MoU with the Embassy of Denmark was signed very recently. Therefore, there has been no evidence regarding the agreements. With BOKU, the student exchange took place and there is no more cooperation.

From Australia, New South Wales University partnered with the Law Department of the University of Mandalay. They have agreements concerning faculty/staff exchange, joint research activities, joint academic and scientific activities, and the exchange of academic materials and other information. It seems that the agreement on the joint research activities has not yet been completed.

A total of nine universities from Thailand have signed MoUs with the University of Mandalay. Among them, the active ones are Chiang Mai University, King Mongkut University of Technology, Thailand (KMUTT), Suranaree University of Technology (SUT), Suratthani Rajabhat University, National Astronomical Research Institute, Thailand (NARIT), Mae Fah Luang University, Thammasat University, Bridges Across Borders Southeast Asia Committee, Legal Education (BABSAL), and Prince of Songkla University. Of these, the activities with Chiang Mai University involve the entire university with an international conference. Moreover, the other statements have also been completed during last five years. The Anthropology Department from the University of Mandalay takes responsibility for dealing with Chiang Mai University for various workshops, training, official meetings, field trips, special lectures, research paper publication etc. Non-teaching staff member exchange was carried out with library staff from both universities. The validity of the MoU expired on 6 April 2020. Collaboration with such an efficient partner should be extended/renewed. Almost all statements in the MoUs were accomplished with Chiang Mai University, and the University of Mandalay also benefitted in development of various academic areas.

King Mongkut University has partnered with the Physics Department. Therefore, the activities involve cooperation with this department for the areas of student exchange, internship programs, conferences, research visits, workshops and academic staff exchange. The MoU was targeted at the exchange of professors, research scholars and students, as well as exchange of scientific materials, publications, scientific information and collaboration on research projects, academic activities, conferences, symposia, and technology transfer. Apart from the publication agreement, the remaining areas of partnership were completed between the two universities. It also expired on 22 May 2019. Renewal or extension should be discussed again for further collaboration.

The MoU with Suranaree University of Technology (SUT) is also intended for the department of Physics according to the nature of specialisation. It describes the agreements for joint research and training activities, exchange invitations to scholars for lectures, seminars and participation in conferences, colloquia, symposia,

exchange of faculty and students for study and research, exchange of information in fields of mutual interest, and cooperation in other areas. However, the tasks of information exchange and cooperation in other areas have apparently not yet been fulfilled by both sides. If the MoU can be extended or renewed from 17 December 2019, the activities could be completed in the future.

Suratthani Rajabhat University signed an MoU with the UM Botany Department. However, information from reviewing the MoU is needed to update the activities of the MoU for this department. It meant that no activity has taken place in terms of reviewing the MoU to date.

National Astronomical Research Institute, Thailand (NARIT) is partnered with the UM Physics Department for academic activities. Although they have targeted the areas of collaboration of academic partnership, joint research projects, promoting opportunities for postgraduate study at UM, exchanges for academic and administrative staff, scholars and students, there was only one meeting in 2017. As the contract term is still valid up to 2022, the departments concerned and the IRO member of that department should renew contact for further collaboration.

The MoU with Mae Fah Luang University was signed on 2017 and was intended for specialisation in tourism management. The specification is managed by the department of Oriental Studies. However, there has been no evidence of activity in accordance with the statements in the MoU.

One more agreement between the University of Mandalay Physics Department and Thammasat University was signed with statements on joint research activities, exchange of faculty members, graduate and undergraduate students, exchange of information, curriculum development and other areas of cooperation. Since the time of signing the MoU, no activity has been evidenced in the MoU review.

The agreement between University of Mandalay and Prince of Songkla University was signed for the term of 2015 to 2020. The aims are to promote individual contacts among scholars, students and personnel, to promote links in teaching, research and cultural activities, to provide opportunities for both staff and student exchange, to develop and encourage joint research, seminars, conferences, workshops, to assist in obtaining external funding, to develop joint study programs, exchange academic materials, and encourage other activities. Only the teacher and student exchanges, study tour and academic meeting activities were carried out. If the MoU can be extended, further areas of cooperation could be expected.

The MoU with Bridges Across Borders Southeast Asia Committee, Legal Education (BABSAL) and MU Law Department involved a jointly association for workshop and conference activities. If the partner is efficient, renewal or extension of the MoU should be considered by the department concerned as the MoU expired on 10 July 2019.

In the region, there has been one MoU with National University, Singapore (NUS), signed in 2015. The objectives of this MoU are to work together for faculty exchange, curriculum development, teacher training, enhanced research, mutual study visits, faculty or post-doctoral fellowships, collaboration on research projects, national

and international conferences, seminars, and symposia with the Law Department, University of Mandalay. Both teams could cover student exchange, special lectures, study tours, seminars and conferences. If the collaboration with this partner is fruitful and effective, the department concerned should make inquiries for further extension of the MoU.

Five Japanese universities have proposed signing MoUs since 2013. The first one was with Meijo University, and the agreement already expired in 2018. Therefore, the department involved with this MoU should make contact for further extension or termination. The MoU aimed at exchange of faculty/staff/students, exchange of materials and publications, and joint academic and scientific activities especially for the chemistry department. Special lectures and research visits by the teachers are the main functions under this MoU. Regarding exchange of materials and publications, updates have not yet been made by the department concerned.

The second Japanese university signing MoU with the University of Mandalay was Yokohama University, with the MoU active from 2014 and 2019, and therefore has already run out. The main problem was that nobody could determine who the person responsible was and for which department this MoU was intended, because the authorities/person responsible for signing the MoU might have been retired or transferred to another institution and they never handed over/explained information on the MoU to their successors. Although the MoU was planned for the statements regarding exchange of academic administrative staff, researchers, undergraduate and post graduate students, research cooperation and exchange of academic information, material, and publication, there has been no evidence of activity between two universities.

The Department of Physics was the focus for cooperation with Gifu University under the MoU. The term is still open until 2024 following an extension. The schemes were for seminars, joint projects, workshops, special lectures, student and teacher exchanges, and curriculum development. The department concerned should update statements on three students to exchange annually with periods less than one year, and exchange of information.

The MoU with Kyoto University was signed recently, and the term runs to 2023. To date, the seminar and the language training were conducted jointly with the Anthropology Department of the University of Mandalay. The objectives are: exchange of scientific materials, exchange of faculty members and researchers, exchange of students, and carrying out joint research and research meetings. Therefore, the information and the activities should be updated by the department concerned as regards the statements about student and teacher exchange, and joint research.

The MoU with Mayazaki University was signed in 2019, and there is still a sufficient part of the term to run. However, there has been no evidence of MoU review, and no focal department was mentioned in the MoU. The IRO team has to take the responsibility for this MoU.

Osaka University has also signed an MoU with the University of Mandalay. To date, no information could be updated for this MoU. Therefore, this is also the re-

sponsibility of the IRO team. The contract term is 2019 to 2024.

The University of Mandalay has four MoUs with Chinese institutions.

The most operative MoU is with Yunnan University. Official visits from both universities were initiated before signing of the MoU, and the work plans were drawn up on an ad-hoc basis. The early stages went well until the outbreak of the pandemic. An internship program, field trips, student and teacher exchanges, and conferences have been performed by two universities. According to the agreements of the MoU, the task of information exchange still remains. The MoU involves the departments of Botany, Zoology, Geology, Geography, Environmental Studies and Chemistry from the University of Mandalay.

The MoU with National China University is aimed at the Chemistry Department. An official visit by the president was conducted before the initiation of other academic tasks. An education fair was held in Mandalay City in 2015 with another 34 universities. Further collaboration was not allowed by the central government at that time.

For language exchange, Baoshan University has signed an MoU with the University of Mandalay, and the focal department is the Burmese language department. The term runs to 2023, and so further collaboration works can be expected after the pandemic. The aim is for the association of the following areas: student exchanges for language learning, training on class management and talent, short-term learning and internships, teacher exchanges, scientific research cooperation, and cultural and art communication.

Beijing University of Chemical Technology (BUCT) is also a partner for the Department of Chemistry, University of Mandalay. The contract term runs to 2024. The statements of the MoUs were drafted by the two universities in 2019. However, the information on the activities has not yet been updated by the department concerned and the member of the IRO.

Only two Korean Universities have signed MoUs with the University of Mandalay. Dongguk University responded that they are not able to cooperate for the academic areas under the MoU. Therefore, there has been no evidence of MoU agreements with that university, and the term of the MoU has already finished.

In 2017, Busan University proposed signing of an MoU with the University of Mandalay for the Burmese language department. A Korean Language Lab was set up for the undergraduate students of the host university. Unfortunately, the task was not accomplished due to the outbreak of the pandemic. The term still has time to run for further collaborations.

Two Indonesian Universities suggested signing MoUs for academic cooperation with the University of Mandalay. To date, there has been no start of such activities between the universities. Fortunately, the term still has time remaining for further collaboration between both universities. The same situation was also noticed for the MoU with Melbourne University, Australia.

2. Activities as Values of Collaboration in Academic Development

As already mentioned in the common agreements in the MoUs, not all MoUs are able to be completed in accordance with their agreements. Almost all MoUs have been completed as regards student exchange, teacher and staff exchange, seminars, workshops, conferences and special lectures. The MoUs which were signed in late 2019 or in early 2020 were not able to commence due to the outbreak of the pandemic. Even during this critical situation, Chiang Mai University, Thailand organised the 3rd International Conference in Burma/Myanmar Studies on a virtual platform.

3. Discussion of the Values of the Academic Collaboration

This discussion will focus on department-level collaboration. As a member of IRO, it is understood that at least one partnership can achieve promotion of intellectual knowledge and insights on the partner university's education system, syllabus/curriculum, teaching/learning method, language etc.

There are 20 teaching departments specialised in the subjects of natural science, the social sciences, humanities, and computational science at UM. Each department has at least one agreement with a foreign university. The departments of Law, Anthropology, English, Physics, and Chemistry have more than two partnerships, while the others like Oriental Studies, History and Archaeology departments have one agreement each for academic cooperation. At the same time, the MoUs with the universities of Chiang Mai, Cologne, Central European University, Florence, Bard College, Zurich, Yunnan, PSU, KMUTT cover more than three departments or at least one faculty. The MoUs with KMUTT, Meijo, Oxford, California, Gifu, BOKU and Thammasat aimed at a specific specialisation, and were able to include organisation of summer school, winter school etc. Undoubtedly, some institutions have aspired for exchanges rather than collaboration, especially in language. For this purpose, the departments of Burmese, English, Oriental Studies and Japanese language from Anthropology play key roles in such partnerships. Good examples are the MoUs with the universities of Mae Fah Luang, Kyoto, Busan and Baoshan. The development for field training, field trips, field excursion, field works, etc. are essential for certain teaching departments such as geology, botany, zoology and geography at the University of Mandalay. The agreements which were started with the official visit by the Rector, president, Provost, and Pro-rectors of both sides are the MoUs with Cologne, CEU, National Chinan University, Gifu, NUS, Chiang Mai, KMUTT, Yunnan, New South Wales, SUT, PSU and Florence. Only four MoUs with Chiang Mai, Oxford, Florence and Cologne universities have resulted in publications. The research papers which were presented at the Regional Knowledge Conferences jointly organised with Cologne University is in progress.

4. Findings

In this paper, only 36 MoUs have been reviewed, one was withdrawn, one was completed and the remaining seven were not returned back from the departments concerned. Out of the 36, sixteen have already expired, and to date there is still time for collaboration with fifteen MoUs. One agreement for outbound student exchange with Florence University is in progress for the academic year 2021-2022. The members of the IRO have an urgent responsibility to check the expiry date of the department concerned, and they should start contact with the respective partners for further extension of the MoU period, where applicable/possible. Only Chiang Mai University has cooperated in the promotion of the library of the University of Mandalay. Moreover, the supporting staff from the Finance Department and Training Department at the University of Mandalay have not been to one of the partner universities for short-term workshops or meetings. The MoUs with CEU, Zurich, Chiang Mai, Florence, and Yunnan universities have also mainly focused on building capacity of the University of Mandalay's teachers. The CEU has extended further collaboration for upgrading the Master Plan (2020-2025) and autonomy system of the University of Mandalay. There are partnerships with the universities of Granada (Spain), Bologna (Italy), Uppsala (Sweden) involving acquiring financial support from ERAMUS+ Programs for the outbound student exchange. Generally, activities like exchange programs, seminars, workshops, conferences, internships, and special lectures have come to fruition at the University of Mandalay since 2013 under MoUs. However, agreements on research publication are still lacking for almost all MoUs. Weak points are also found in commitment towards student/teacher exchanges and visiting professors/special lectures in some MoUs.

Conclusion

This paper has attempted to review the international partnership activities of the University of Mandalay under various MoUs. Due to the cooperation activities with universities around the world under MoU processes, UM has achieved considerable progress in its research activities, as well as in academic staff and student exchange activities. However, few MoUs have been launched for collaboration activities because they have been signed only very recently, and also due to the outbreak of the pandemic. On the other hand, some UM infrastructure such as technical support for network connection is still weak. Furthermore, human resources still require nurturing for the internalisation processes of UM. Thus, recruitment for supporting staff for the international relations office is also critical for developing cooperation with foreign universities. In addition, the availability of up-to-date information from each department of UM on the MoU and related activities is important for the success of the internationalisation processes.

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IMPLEMENTATION OF A RELIABLE INTERNATIONALIZATION STRUCTURE AND SUSTAINABLE INTERNATIONALIZATION: A JOINT PROJECT WITH FIVE UNIVERSITIES IN MYANMAR

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Abstract

Opportunities for internationalization in Myanmar have undergone a dramatic increase after the opening up process triggered by the democratic transition. The University of Cologne used this opportunity to deepen its relations with five Myanmar universities: Yangon, Mandalay, Taunggyi, Mawlamyine and Myitkyina with the aim of implementing internationalization strategies in cooperation with Myanmar's higher education institutions. The paper analyzes the implementation of the joint project CYM+ as a case study of internationalization efforts that aspire to be reliable and sustainable. The analysis is conducted through the assessment of four pillars: internationalization of internal structures, management, mobility and research, and comprises a detailed examination of the developments and challenges characterizing each year of project implementation within a 2018-2021 time frame. The study also provides an overview of the lessons learned and the difficulties and successes encountered by the University of Cologne and its partners.

Introduction

Over the course of a remarkable political process of opening up from a military dictatorship (1962-2010) through a period of transition under the former General Thein Sein to the election victory of the National League for Democracy (NLD), the political opposition won more than 80% of the votes in November 2015. At that time, Nobel Peace Prize laureate Aung San Suu Kyi was effectively put in charge of government as State Counsellor, Head of the President's Office and Foreign Minister on April 6, 2016.

This political opening up process offered opportunities for expansion and development of existing collaborations and partnerships, including in the university sector. The fact that the former Ministers of Education Prof. Dr. Khin San Yee (February 2014 - March 2016) and Prof. Dr. Myo Thein Gyi (2016-2021) were DAAD (German Academic Exchange Service) alumni, was a beneficial starting condition for a Myanmar-German cooperation in the university sector. The DAAD works with all

German federal ministries and is the main distributor for project funds and individual scholarships in all areas.

Additionally, many years of familiarity with the standards and forms of communication within the ministries and universities of Myanmar, as well as a culturally sensitive and professional approach, were essential in order to successfully initiate and expand joint, compatible, and sustainable projects in the Myanmar higher education sector.

Since the University of Cologne jointly had this expertise and had established long-term contacts through professional work and partnership involvement on equal terms in Myanmar, it was agreed with the Universities of Yangon, Mandalay, Taunggyi, Mawlamyine, and Myitkyina to embark on a DAAD funded "DIES Partnerships" project. "DIES Partnerships are intended to support highly qualified university leaders in the efficient use of limited resources and to create incentives for improving quality. The long-term objective of DIES Partnerships with universities in developing countries is to contribute to the sustainable development and creation of high-quality, cosmopolitan universities in Germany and the partner countries"¹⁰⁶.

The partnership between the University of Cologne and the Universities of Yangon and Mandalay has been in place for 25 years. The increased importance of internationalization in the field of higher education gave rise to the main theme of the joint project: developing and improving the institutionalization of sustainable internationalization in all partner universities. Internationalization plays a role at all levels of a university structure, which is why the idea to improve and further develop this aspect has had the potential to play into all departments and be of benefit for all stakeholders involved.

This paper presents the cooperation between the UoC and five universities in Myanmar as a case study and highlights important characteristics of the project implementation, which are important for building reliable and sustainable internationalization structures, despite difficult circumstances.

1. CYM + Cologne, Yangon, Mandalay Plus

Firstly, we will provide a brief presentation of the DAAD CYM+ project outline and project partners and explain how we decided on partners and project imple-

106 DAAD (2021): DIES Partnerships [Online]. Available at: <https://www.daad.de/en/information-services-for-higher-education-institutions/further-information-on-daad-programmes/dies-partnerships/> (Accessed: 15 March 2021)

mentation, and the impact this has on the success of the projects.

1.1 The University of Cologne

The University of Cologne, founded in 1388, is a research university of the highest level and one of the oldest and largest universities in Europe. Its core mission is to create, preserve and disseminate knowledge, to provide a high level of education, and to encourage and support top-level research. The University of Cologne — as stated in the internationalization strategy — sees internationalization as a central component of its strategic development, and an undertaking that requires the collaboration and participation of all involved in the university, from the executive board to the academic staff and students, as well as the administrative staff in all their various roles. This view is based on our conviction that cosmopolitanism and interculturalism are prerequisites for success in nearly all areas of modern life, and that institutions involved in education and science in particular must take on more social responsibility in the global context. The motivation for the numerous internationalization activities is, of course, academic in nature: the international dimension of research and teaching, raising its quality, and the international reputation and profile of the institution as a whole. The motivation for internationalization is also due to the ambition to contribute to solving the ever-changing challenges facing global society. The cooperation with Asia, Africa, Latin America and the MENA region combines these objectives in developing research collaborations in its two-fold function — as a contribution to knowledge generation and exchange, and as a capacity-building measure to support institutional development.

Cooperation with Myanmar

In 2013, the “Global Responsibility” unit (then named “Cooperation with the Global South”) was established in the International Office of the UoC. This unit focuses on relationships with institutions and projects in Asia, Latin America, the MENA region and Africa. Asia, in particular, has been a key focus at the University of Cologne for many years: all six faculties have strong, active ties with numerous partners in almost all Asian countries. At the university level, the UoC has made great strides in Asia, which is regarded as a region of strategic importance for extended international engagement, especially India, China and Southeast Asia (Indonesia, Malaysia, Nepal, Thailand, Singapore, Vietnam and Myanmar). The creation of a “Global Responsibility Unit” at the International Office allows different research networks of the UoC in the region to be combined, and cooperation to be implemented on an administrative level regarding capacity building. This approach proved to be a key factor in successful cooperation. Key disciplines with long-standing engagement are Geography, Anthropology, German Language, Environmental Sciences, Law, Economics, Theater and Media Sciences. At the moment, the university maintains two offices in Asia: Beijing, China (since 2007) and Delhi, India (since 2009). The

Global South Studies Center (GSSC) was founded as a Center of Excellence at the UoC in 2013. The GSSC leads international research in topics related to social, economic, cultural and political transformations in Asia, Africa, Latin America and the Middle East at the University of Cologne. The center funds and supports various researchers in these areas in the hopes of establishing them as key focus areas in the University to ensure sustainable research and interest. The year 2013 also marked the beginning of the Federal Ministry for Economic Cooperation and Development (BMZ), and the DAAD funded DIES ProGRANT project at the International Office of the UoC. The aim of DIES ProGRANT - Proposal Writing for Research Grants - is to enable researchers and younger PhD holders from countries in Asia, Africa, Latin America and the MENA region to develop proposal writing skills meeting international standards and to design, write and budget a promising proposal for national and international research funding. This project enables the UoC to create contacts with over 120 promising researchers a year to build a successful alumni base and foster projects for posterity. In 2020, the DIES ProGRANT Academy was officially launched to create expert multipliers who will provide their own proposal writing training in their regions. It has been important to continuously train and engage the pool of highly professional and talented participants in order to create a new generation of culturally sensitive and well-trained alumni.

DIES ProGRANT 2017 in Myanmar

The Courses of the DIES ProGRANT project in Asia were continuously and successfully organized by the International Office of the UoC in Thailand (2x), Vietnam (2x), Indonesia Myanmar, and Malaysia. In 2017, the DIES ProGRANT Course took place in Myanmar, where one seminar was organized at the University of Yangon and the second seminar took place at the University of Mandalay. This collaboration created the foundations to further discuss a future cooperation through the “DIES Partnerships” funding line. We were therefore able to use the DIES ProGRANT project as a tool to facilitate the creation of research networks in the region by enabling researchers to compose research proposals to an international standard and collaborate together. DIES ProGRANT, therefore, allows the field to be prepared for cooperation between Myanmar and neighboring countries, allowing initiation of a sustainable internationalization strategy.

Training course for the Head of the International Relations Office

In 2016, the UoC International Office held a one-week training course on “Higher Education Management and Internationalization” for Dr. Thwe Thwe Win, the Head of the International Relations Office of Mandalay Technological University (MTU). Dr. Thwe Thwe Win is a former participant of the DIES ProGRANT Course held in Thailand in 2014. This course was an important opportunity that provided further insight into the challenges of the newly established International Office at the Uni-

versity of Mandalay.

The main partners of the University of Cologne were the University of Yangon and the University of Mandalay.

The UoC International Office, in cooperation with Prof. Frauke Kraas and her research team at the Institute for Geography, have coordinated the DIES Partnership project since 2018. Both the International Office and Prof. Kraas's research team have had extensive experience in collaborating with universities in Southeast Asia.

The International Office Team

The team at the International Office has had experience working with partners in Asia since 1993. Dr. Susanne Preuschhoff is the Director of International Affairs, Head of Department "International Students", is an expert in intercultural communication and international office planning, and her regional focus is Africa, Asia, Latin America and the MENA region. Sarah-Marleen Dannenberg is the Head of the Capacity Building Team of the Global Responsibility Unit. She coordinates and manages the DIES ProGRANT project, the DIES Partnerships project and the Summer Schools in Asia.

The Research Team

The academic supervisor of the project, Prof. Dr. Frauke Kraas, has been working in Myanmar since 1996, with several years spent at the University of Yangon as long-term visiting professor. Since then has been an international advisor of Yangon University. She has conducted fourteen interdisciplinary research projects in different regions in Myanmar, in close collaboration with all five partner universities. In 2012, she co-founded the "Centre of Excellence (CoE)" (for Urban and Regional Development, University of Yangon) and in 2013, the "Myanmar-German Research Cooperation (MGRC) on Urban and Regional Development". Her numerous international and national leadership activities comprise, among others, being appointed member of the UN Habitat Policy Unit 1 (2014-2016), chair of the International Geographical Union's MegaCity Commission (2000-2016), and speaker of the German Research Foundation's evaluation committee for Geography (2004-2016). She is a member of the scientific advisory board of the German Federal Ministry for the Environment, Nature Conservation, Building and Nuclear Safety (BMUB) (since 2015), member of the selection committee of the "Elitenetzwerk Bayern" (since 2015), member of the Academia Europaea (since 2004), and the German Academy of Sciences Leopoldina (since 2009). She leads the international expert network "ForUm for Urban Future in Southeast Asia", and was previously engaged in a number of administrative tasks, including being a member of the appointed Scientific Advisory Board of the University of Cologne (2008-2016) and the Executive Board of the Faculty of Sciences and

Head of Department. She has 378 publications to her name, including 24 books and 110 reviewed articles, many on Myanmar.

1.2 The University of Yangon

The University of Yangon/Myanmar (YU): The University of Yangon has been the country's leading university since its foundation in 1920. It is a full university with a broad range of 21 departments and is, together with the University of Mandalay, the Maritime University and the Technological Universities, one of the few universities in Myanmar with the right to award PhDs. The partnership between the UoC and the YU has existed for more than 25 years; a life-long Memorandum of Understanding was signed on 23 August 2003. Multiple activities comprise seven short-term visits and one long-term stay (2012-2014), some DAAD-sponsored visiting professor stays, supervision of more than 40 joint PhD and Master's candidates, twelve joint research projects, intensive teaching and fieldwork activities, joint seminars, publications and internships. In 2012, the first ever "Center of Excellence" in Myanmar was jointly founded between the YU and the UoC; it specializes in "Urban and Regional Development". All activities have been funded through either the BMZ, the DAAD, the German Research Foundation or the University of Cologne.

1.3 The University of Mandalay

The University of Mandalay/Myanmar (MU): The University of Mandalay was founded in 1925 and is located in Upper Myanmar. It thus constitutes the core of higher education in the central and northern part of the country. The University of Mandalay is a full university with a broad range of departments. Together with the YU, Maritime University, YU and MTU, it is the only university with the right to educate and confer PhDs. The University of Cologne has been cooperating with the University of Mandalay for 17 years through close personal connections between researchers. MU staff have participated in joint teaching and research activities, supervision of PhD candidates, enrolled at YU, and taken part in joint publications, seminars and workshops. A Memorandum of Understanding with the UoC was signed in August 2013 with the authorization of the Ministry of Education. It was the University of Mandalay's first international partnership.

1.4 The Universities of Taunggyi, Mawlamyine and Myitkyina

The core partnership of YU, MU and the UoC was extended by incorporating a network of three smaller, but regionally important, Myanmar universities: the Universities of Taunggyi (Shan State), Mawlamyine (Mon State) and Myitkyina (Kachin State). By including these universities, the project has not only enabled north-south networks to be further established, but also presented the opportunity for south-south relationships to be developed and consolidated. Additionally, in the national

context of Myanmar, it has become important for smaller universities to further develop internationalization efforts. Additionally, all five Myanmar universities who have partnered in this project had already successfully worked together in joint projects with the UoC (e.g. within the alumni network “ForUm for Urban Future in Southeast Asia”).

1.5 The University of Taunggyi/Myanmar (TU)

The University of Taunggyi is the leading university in Shan State. It was founded as Taunggyi Degree College in 1961 and upgraded to a University in 1992. The University of Taunggyi offers almost the full range of departments. Academically, the university focuses on Bachelor’s and a few Master’s student programs. The partnership between UoC and TU has existed for eighteen years through teaching of staff members and PhD candidates. It intensified in 2011 with the start of a joint multi-university research project on the urban system of Myanmar. On various occasions staff members and PhD candidates have held joint courses in YU. Moreover, between 2013 and 2017 five practical field trainings with more than 50 Myanmar members (and 28 German Master’s students) took place under joint supervision of Taunggyi and UoC colleagues. Four research projects and two conferences (in Taunggyi) have been jointly conducted.

1.6 The University of Mawlamyine/Myanmar (MwU)

The University of Mawlamyine is the third oldest and third most important university in Myanmar, and the leading university in the southeast of the country. It was founded in 1953 by Yangon University, and became an independent university in 1986. The University of Mawlamyine offers the full range of departments, with a focus on Marine Science. The collaboration between the UoC and MwU started in 2012, with two research projects, the Rector’s conference and intensive teaching activities. Staff members and PhD candidates regularly hold joint courses in YU, co-supervision of candidates taking place since 2013. Two workshops and one Regional Knowledge Conference have jointly been conducted in 2014 and 2015; joint research has been undertaken since 2013.

1.7 The University of Myitkyina/Myanmar (MyU)

The University of Myitkyina is the largest and most important university in Kachin State. The University offers the full range of science and arts departments at undergraduate and graduate (Master’s) level. Good contacts between UoC and MyU have existed since 2003, a direct partnership starting in 2009 with one research project, followed by an intensified collaboration since 2012, with four research projects on Kachin State. Staff members and PhD candidates have regularly held joint courses in YU, and participated in six longer research fieldwork sessions in Kachin

and Chin State between 2013 and 2017. One professor has been a visiting scholar at the UoC and has participated in two joint book publications.

2. CYM + Sustainable Internationalization

This project has supported the Myanmar colleagues to shift to international standards of pedagogy, which were referred to in the public and political discussion in Myanmar as an urgent “change of mindset” in education (a comprehensive analysis of the Myanmar education system was published in 2017: Kraas/Aung Kyaw/ Nay Win Oo 2017¹⁰⁷). The applied methods have combined skill training with peer learning and individual learning in different formats, from short teacher-centered impulses over intensive group work and panel group discussions to metaplan work and fish bowl methods. In this way, participants have acquired theoretical knowledge, and most of all their own practical experience on the subject matter being discussed. Thus, one of the key problems in the Myanmar education system has been targeted: many scholars theoretically know about the problem but are not experienced in practical transfer and implementation in the social interaction within their peers. Individual sessions have provided a space for the individuals to create personalized learning and innovation experiences.

Participants in this partnership have two main profiles:

Administrators: able to influence and further develop internationalization efforts at their universities (for example: international office staff, deans, vice rectors, etc.)

Professors and researchers: who seek to further internationalize their research according to international standards.

Four essential pillars of internationalization have been identified and have been the guiding principles for the activities of this project (Sustainable Institutionalized Internationalization):

- Internationalization at Home
- Internationalization of Management
- Internationalization of Mobility
- Internationalization of Research

107 Frauke Kraas, Aung Kyaw, Nay Win Oo (2017): Education and Education System. In: Frauke Kraas, Regine Spohner, Aye Aye Myint: Socio-Economic Atlas of Myanmar. Stuttgart (Franz Steiner Verlag): 140-153.

With three outcomes and three outputs:

Outcome 1: Institutional higher education management in the area of internationalization will be improved.

Outcome 2: The University of Cologne will gain and further professionalize expertise in development cooperation, specifically with partners in Southeast Asia.

Outcome 3: The University of Cologne will establish networks, relevant for development cooperation and research work, with the universities of Yangon, Mandalay, Taunggyi, Mawlamyine and Myitkyina.

This project has enabled, and will continue to enable, an exchange of ideas concerning issues surrounding management of university structures and resources, through workshops specifically tailored for this cooperation. The objectives have been achieved through the outputs resulting from the workshops:

Output 1: Staff and researchers at the partner universities in Myanmar are trained in principles for sustainable internationalization.

Output 2: Processes and structures for internationalization at the partner universities in Myanmar are improved.

Output 3: Individual contacts between the various participating institutions are further developed and consolidated.

The project allows for the participating universities to engage in a continuing process of learning from each other in order to discuss and develop appropriate ways of managing internationalization in the field of higher education, to improve the institutional management and the state of research.

Internationalization at Home

The first pillar of the project aims to strengthen internal university structures that foster internationalization within the university. Examples of such structures and processes are the creation of an internationalization strategy, the establishment of double degree programs, lectures and courses taught in English, student- and scholar-oriented websites and brochures in English, international summer schools and guest scholar exchanges, among others. Starting with internationalization within the university allows, firstly, for an awareness of the needs and opportunities of internationalization to be developed, and facilitates the implementation of internationalization strategies with external partners.

Internationalization of Management

The second pillar of the project aims to promote well-trained and confident staff who are prepared to deal with international encounters and situations to a professional and international standard. Personnel who deal with internationalization should be well trained and equipped for international encounters in all areas of their work. Skill-sets to be focused on are intercultural skills, knowledge on diversity, soft skills, and evaluating international encounters in different realms (face-to-face, remote seminars, through correspondence, in chats and via mail, in documents, internet platforms, etc.), stock-taking of international activities, leadership styles, communication structures, organization of international workshops/seminars, and evaluation measures, among others.

Additionally, this pillar focuses on identifying institutional structures that allow for the sustainable internationalization of management staff and the implementation of said structures. The DIES Partnership is able to equip the staff members with the necessary know-how to strengthen their position in the universities and change management structures when implementing new internationalization strategies.

Internationalization of Mobility

The third pillar of the project aims to strengthen the university structures and processes that enable and promote student and scholar mobility. An analysis of these structures includes looking at steps for establishing partnerships, improving marketing, incorporating international options into curricula, strengthening research networks, and using alumni with international experience as multipliers. Under this pillar, strategic plans regarding partners and networks have been developed. This pillar also has a long-term multiplier effect. International students and researchers enrich the campus and raise awareness of the need for internationalization. Students and researchers who have been abroad can become change managers at their home institutions in the future.

Internationalization of Research

This pillar focuses on research as a strategic and essential tool for the country's transformation process. The objective is that participants learn, improve and are able to widely disseminate knowledge and experience on the principles of international research standards. The four workshops have targeted the following to date:

- (1) Principles of research ethics and good scientific practice (2018)
- (2) Development from a research idea to a coherent research design (2019)

(3) Improvement of supervision of Bachelor's, Master's and PhD dissertations/theses (2020)

And the last workshop, which will be held this year:

(4) International publishing: principles of review and the establishment of an international research journal in order to create platforms for the publication of competitive scientific reviewed articles (2021)

Each of these topics has been addressed by dedicated workshops, which subsequently build upon each other.

3. Implementation 2018-2021

3.1 The Year 2018 – Foundation for Internationalization

The first year of the partnership laid the foundation for internationalization both at the administrative and the research level. The two pillars that were addressed in 2018 were Internationalization at Home and Internationalization of Research.

Development of Cooperation

The Universities of Taunggyi, Mawlamyine, and Myitkyina represent Myanmar universities on the sidelines of national and international attention. While the international interest in cooperation is particularly focused on the university landscape in Yangon and Mandalay, peripheral Myanmar universities are mostly not taken into account. Especially against the background of efforts to defuse ethnic tensions through a federal system, the support and involvement of such universities made sense and was relevant as well.

This integration also meant that the Myanmar partner universities were connected with one another, something that had not previously been the case. The exchange of the individual participant expertise profiles subsequently structured the cooperation in a sustainable manner. At the same time, the networking of the Myanmar partner universities promised greater synergies both for the DIES CYM + project and for follow-up projects.

In 2018, the cooperation between all partner universities intensified. The Universities of Yangon and Mandalay had been important partners for many decades, and this project served as a door to open up the possibilities of development cooperation projects. It is worth mentioning that the cooperation and communication with the important Universities of Yangon and Mandalay was deepened and expanded. Before the first workshop, communication always had to take the official route via

Embassies and the Ministry of Education, although communication paths were establishing themselves on a bilateral and direct level between the universities. This was not out of a desire to replace the ministerial communication channel, which was indispensable for the implementation of further projects in the extremely hierarchical higher education sector. Meanwhile, the direct communication channels established between the UoC and the Myanmar universities involved have, to date, allowed for faster and more effective planning of the project itself.

Project Goal Achievement

Although the beginning of the project was more difficult than originally expected (see lessons learned), 2018 proved to be a good year in which the essential first steps for the achievement of the expected outcomes and outputs were established. In 2018, two workshops were held, one in the “Educational Manager” Track and the second in the “Researcher” Track. Both workshops were fully attended, and the UoC project team encountered highly engaged and open participants. The University of Yangon was an excellent host, and all five participating universities demonstrated a marked interest in the subject matter at hand. Universities in Myanmar were then undergoing a transformation process. A regulation was passed making the creation of International Relations Offices (IROs) a requirement for all universities. This means that in theory several universities had officially established an IRO, but in practice they did not really exist. Among the participants, the project team encountered multiple individuals who had been nominated to administrate such offices. They were eager to learn more and to be in contact with international partners.

Workshops

The workshops were an outstanding opportunity for members of all six universities to meet, not only at a research level but at an educational management level for the first time as well. The universities of Yangon and Mandalay are very large renowned universities, and having them share their experiences and strategies with the other three partners was a networking opportunity that was greatly appreciated on all sides.

Added Value of New Contacts

The new contacts which were made were firstly between the UoC and the partner universities. Before the project, the main contact the UoC had had with Myanmar was through research projects. This project enabled the UoC to begin a dialogue with Myanmar partners on a higher education management level, a structural level, which superseded specific research interests. It also expanded the specific contact persons in relation to Myanmar at the UoC and greatly increased the Myanmar-specific expertise of a larger team. This project has also helped make the UoC's contacts

with - and expertise on Myanmar more visible at a European level, and has encouraged partners from the Universities of Uppsala, Granada, and Bologna to reach out to the UoC seeking collaboration. In Myanmar, contacts were established between the five partner universities. During the workshops, we were constantly told that the mixing of the five universities was contributing to the formation of an internal Myanmar Network on internationalization.

Through the two face-to-face workshops, participants in Myanmar were able to meet and learn about the established topics. Through their nomination, high-stakes players were present at the workshops, providing the opportunity to create real structural change at the partner universities. Through the exchange that took place, a mentoring system between universities was also organically generated, due to the fact that the universities of Yangon and Mandalay have received more support in the past to create appropriate internationalization structures. However, delays in the timeline due to the Ministry approval phase meant the E-Learning Module which corresponded to the face-to-face sessions from December was postponed. The reason behind developing an E-Learning course was to create contact sessions spread throughout the year in order to allot time for structural change to happen at the institutions and for participants to be able to report on initial experiences and implementation phases.

Lessons Learned

When we began the project, we underestimated how long it would take to get all of the necessary approvals from the ministries. Even though our project team was well connected in Myanmar both in political structures as well as in the partner universities, obtaining final approval for our project and a list of the nominated participants took several months. At that time, we hoped that through the groundwork established in 2018, the remaining years of the project would be more manageable. We had also hoped to be able to implement an “application and selection” process, however due to the difficulties faced during the approval process, participants were nominated by the universities. This left us as a project team with no choice over who was participating and left us very little time to learn more about our target groups.

Sustainability

Sustainability is one of the main issues this project is concerned with. We have established various sustainability strategies for knowledge and concepts. All material generated was made available through an E-Learning platform which was created later. Additionally, a mobile learning app available to all was created. The risks with this strategy are of course connectivity and access limitations, in addition to possible waning interest in the subject matter.

3.2 The Year 2019 – Sustainable Internationalization at UoC

During the second year of the project, participants from Myanmar were invited to participate in workshops at the University of Cologne. This exchange provided the opportunity to host the Myanmar colleagues and allowed them to experience the institutional structures for internationalization in Germany. The two pillars that were addressed were Internationalization of Management and Internationalization of Research.

Development of the Cooperation

As the three junior partners in Myanmar had kept a lower profile compared with the Universities of Yangon and Mandalay, a trip in 2019 led to the Universities of Taunggyi and Mawlamyine. The invitation and the exchange that followed was made possible through the previous good and trusting cooperation with Myanmar researchers / administrators within the framework of the DIES Partnership. During both meetings, both the appreciation for the cooperation so far and the Rectorate's interest in being informed and involved about further developments was stressed. Visits to various departments and discussions with the respective department heads highlighted the intrinsic motivation of those involved and made clear the urgent request to not be disconnected from the internationalization process.

The first joint workshop at the University of Yangon held in 2018 led to a deepening of the cooperation with the University of Yangon in particular. It should be emphasized that in the preparatory stages for the Cologne workshop in June / July 2019, the Rector of the University of Mandalay expressed her interest in participating in the workshop and accompanying the Myanmar researchers and administrators to Cologne. The fact that of all people in the higher education political landscape of Myanmar, the prominent and active Rector of the University of Mandalay, Professor Thida Win, made the decision to commit her time to the one-week workshop in Cologne can be an indication of the success of the CYM + project. This can be ascribed, specifically, to:

- The relevance of the topics dealt with
- The accuracy of the challenges addressed
- The appropriate consideration and understanding of the specific framework conditions in Myanmar
- The level of trust underlying the partnership
- The intrinsic will on the Myanmar side for further cooperation.

Project Goal Achievement

After the first workshops were held successfully in Myanmar in 2018, the next workshops took place at the University of Cologne in 2019. One workshop was held at the International Office on the topic of “Intercultural Exchange of Management”, and the second workshop was organized by Prof. Dr. Kraas and her team on the topic “From Research Idea to Research Design”. The eighteen participants were allocated to the two workshops and the concepts were very well received. The participants also included staff assigned to run the newly established International Relations Office (IRO). It was interesting for these participants to see how the International Office at the University of Cologne is structured. With the help of various colleagues, a presentation was given of the four departments and the associated sub-units to give the guests a good insight into the daily work of a busy International Office.

Added Value of New Contacts

Relevant new contacts were made in particular during two conferences: first, during a European-Myanmar university conference as part of the Erasmus + project - CHINLONE - in Brussels in February 2019. The conference was organized by the Universities of Bologna, Granada and Uppsala, and the International Office of the University of Cologne was invited to make a guest contribution on the topic of “International Relation Strategies”. There was an intensive discussion during the course of the workshop, with representatives of the Department of Higher Education of the Myanmar Ministry of Education and with representatives from the following Myanmar Universities (in addition to the University of Yangon and the University of Mandalay): Yezin Agricultural University, Yangon University of Economics and Dagon University.

Secondly, there was an important exchange with potential new Myanmar partners in September / October 2019 during a DAAD conference, which was opened personally by the Myanmar Minister of Education and Mr. Hase-Bergen, the Head of the DAAD Regional Office Hanoi. Among the approximately 70 participants were rectors and pro-rectors of the most important Myanmar universities, who exchanged views on the topic of “University Autonomy”. Since the Rector of the University of Mandalay, one of the two main partners of the CYM + project, held one of the keynote presentations and our rectors and pro-rectors of the other partner institutions were present, we quickly got into intensive discussions with representatives of other Myanmar universities, who showed a keen interest in our CYM + project. In a prominent setting, it became clear to see how far the Myanmar-German cooperation has progressed, with the incorporation of more marginal universities. This fact made the cooperation interesting for other Myanmar universities and it was an important first step for advanced networking, especially for the Myanmar partners.

Workshops

In 2019, the face-to-face workshops made a significant contribution to achieving the previously mentioned outcomes. The structures and processes related to university management were improved through the learning experiences that participants gained in the workshops. These were used for reflection and restructuring of the IROs at the partner universities. The following concrete measures that were either implemented or kicked-off at the partner universities can be named:

- Against the background of the Myanmar transfer policy in the higher education sector, which means that university members have to change to a different institution at annual intervals (see also lessons learned): discussion on the resulting challenges and the development of suitable measures to implement a system for information transparency & knowledge transfer to successors e.g. in the International Office / International Relations Office.
- Design and introduction of university websites on which those responsible for the international cooperation are listed with contact details in order to facilitate approaches by international partners.
- A written competence profile of the Myanmar participants for mutual networking and support for specific issues within the framework of international university management.
- In order to gain experience in organizing international events, the Myanmar partners were eager to jointly plan a summer school for Myanmar and German students for 2020. However, the partners could not move forward with this endeavor due to the Covid-19 pandemic.

Lessons Learned

As in 2018, we had to deal with administrative hurdles. It was a challenge to set the date for the workshop in Cologne because the date also had to be coordinated with the different ministries in Myanmar. Any official decision (such as sending professors to Germany) must first be approved by various ministries. Participants could only apply for a visa with permission from the Ministry of Education. Unfortunately, as in 2018, it was not possible to implement an application or selection process for the participants, as the participants had to be officially nominated by the ministries. Some participants had already been present at the workshops in Yangon in 2018, other participants joined the workshops in Cologne in 2019 for the first time. These processes had to be accepted for the duration of the project because the structures in Myanmar do not allow for any alterations in this regard. Another challenge that the participants faced was the transfer policy in the higher education sector (as mentioned earlier). Any university member (from lecturers to the rector) can be transferred to another university within a very short period of time. In the context of the project, this transfer policy inevitably means that the composition

of the groups of participants changes to some extent from workshop to workshop. This requires flexibility in the conception and implementation of the workshops and repeated team-building measures.

Sustainability

To strengthen the cooperation, a summer school with Cologne students was planned in Mandalay for 2020. The UoC International Office has been organizing summer schools in China for ten years and in India for five years. Financing in these particular summer schools has come from the students' own resources. The organization of summer schools was one of the topics at the "Educational Manager" workshop, and the partners requested to jointly organize a summer school in Myanmar as well. The practical implementation of the concepts presented is intended to support structured internationalization at the respective partner universities in the long term. The constant exchange between the Myanmar and German partners, the processing and recording of what has been worked out so far, and a continuous outlook on the upcoming topics and content are essential for the sustainability of the project. Above all, however, the exchange between the Myanmar project partners is very important. This networking can be promoted, especially during the workshops, but it cannot be monitored during the unsupervised project phases.

Further perspectives: the establishment of functioning international office structures, the strengthening of management and intercultural competencies, and the establishment of effective communication structures should, of course, link the partners to the international research network and help make the Myanmar higher education landscape more visible. This is a path that demands perseverance and which should not be discouraged by inevitable setbacks.

3.3. The Year 2020 – Sustainable Internationalization at YM+

For the third year, the two workshops were planned to be held in Myanmar. Despite the pandemic, the dates for the workshop were set for September. During the course of the year, it became clear that physical travel would not be possible, and the workshop mode would have to be changed.

Development of the Partnership

Due to the extraordinary circumstances of the Covid-19 pandemic, which affected both the partner universities and the University of Cologne, everyone was confronted with the infrastructural challenge of setting up online workshops with a corresponding program that would be in no way inferior in terms of concept or content to on-site workshops of previous years.

To ensure the active participation of all those involved, the “Remote Workshop” had to be designed in such a way that interaction and communication were guaranteed. The joint investigation of a suitable online format, in which both the International Office of the University of Cologne and the partner universities were very committed strengthened the cooperation relationships between all stakeholders. Effective communication and coordination were the key and made the success of the online workshop possible in the first place.

Before the start of the event, an E-learning course was set up on the ILIAS platform of the UoC, which was equipped with previous and new content, but also with a forum and a chat function. In this way, the participants were contacted at an early stage and it was possible to work out together what was needed, the current state of the internationalization efforts of the individual partner universities, and to what extent they were supported in the context of the pandemic. Over the course of the exchange, both the participants and the coordinators of the project at the UoC agreed that the goal was to take all necessary measures so that the workshop could take place in an adapted form. This proved to the partners involved how solid and trusting the relationships are, and how fruitful, constructive and successful the previous workshops and efforts have been, which laid the foundations for mastering the Covid-19 challenges together.

Project Goal Achievement

At the beginning of 2020, the regulation that had been issued to implement IROs in all universities was still in place, however, due to the pandemic the universities could not move forward in their efforts to improve structures. In this context, the partner universities in Myanmar came to the conclusion that numerous measures regarding setting up and efficiently managing an IRO needed to be put on hold until further notice.

On the other hand, the pandemic situation did not slow down the motivation of the respective partner universities and the UoC, but encouraged everyone involved in the project to assess the situation carefully and to flexibly adapt themselves to the new status quo. It was necessary to act quickly and to coordinate the next steps very well. The appropriate technical and infrastructural conditions allowed the UoC to react to the restrictions of the pandemic and to organize a program for both tracks –“Building Sustainable International Networks” for “Educational Managers” and “Improvement of Supervision of Bachelor’s, Master’s, and PhD Dissertations/Theses” for researchers via the digital conferencing tool Zoom.

The management workshop covered creating and maintaining sustainable, international university networks and focused on the following sub-topics: the planning and implementation of alumni projects, the institutionalization and anchor-

ing of university partnerships based on MoUs, as well as on the maintenance and expansion of existing university networks at the mobility and research level. Both the UoC and the partner universities presented exemplary pilot projects in line with these topics.

Added Value of New Contacts

An opportunity was found to give sustainable added value to the online format. Regional experts from all over the world, with whom we have been working for many years within our DIES ProGRANT program, were invited to the respective workshops to present topics regarding the internationalization measures their universities are engaged in. The experts who participated are researchers from Vietnam, Malaysia, Kenya, Argentina, India and Lebanon. The presentations gave the participants an insight into the internationalization strategies of other universities and further networking opportunities. It would have been difficult to organize the same as an on-site workshop with international participation from seven different countries, even in non-Covid times (due to lack of funding). Even though digital formats may never be able to completely replace face-to-face workshops, they offer the advantage of connecting the world.

Workshops

“Building Sustainable International Networks” was the designated topic for the university management workshop. The seminar units included the following contents: the development of university alumni networks and partnership agreements (MoUs), the organization of summer schools, the supervision of incoming students, the advantages of a “Research Management Office”, the exchange of outgoing students to partner universities, the improvement of the university’s website and social media appearance, and the importance of an internationalization strategy. The aim of all presentations was to emphasize how important it is to work with international partners at all levels, to cooperate and constantly observe which structures should be adapted in order to continue to be an attractive research and study location for students and academic staff likewise. The Myanmar partners stressed that they would like to be involved in more networks worldwide, especially within Asia. The management workshop offered an excellent platform to establish contact with other international partners.

The focus of our online workshop was an intensive and practice-oriented exchange on concrete and descriptive university management topics. This was only possible through the incorporation of our competent partners from our regional expert network, who brought their commitment, intercultural competence and different perspectives on internationalization.

This included, in particular, the expansion of the German / European-Myanmar dialogue towards an exchange with representatives from Argentina, India, Kenya, Lebanon, Malaysia and Vietnam, who provided their perspectives on university management issues, enlivening and intensifying the discussion. A network of contacts and exchanges was created during the course of the week, from which our Myanmar partners benefited in particular, as several of the challenges outlined by the experts were similar to those of the Myanmar universities.

Lessons Learned

Unlike in previous years, we were not faced with any major administrative hurdles concerning the workshop dates. This fact is essentially due to the online mode. During the scheduling and planning phase, which took place in May, it was decided that the workshops should take place in September. The dates were sent to the Ministry of Education through our partners in Myanmar. The online mode was an essential advantage because both planning and execution of the workshop were more transparent.

Nevertheless, new challenges had to be faced. The planning phase required professional coordination and clear communication within the team, but also with the partner universities. Needs, status quos and directions had to be enquired about, evaluated and analyzed, appointments and pre-meetings had to be agreed upon in advance. The implementation of the online workshops also required a lot of detailed organization and efficient teamwork. The distribution of tasks and roles had to be clearly defined. While one person was the host and led the program, the next took care of the recordings, and the third took care of the technical support. These organizational and technical necessities ultimately prompted us to involve several team members.

Another challenge was the content-related and interactive design of the remote workshop. Although face-to-face and online workshops differ in format and the active participation of those involved is only as vivid as the digital tools used, a lively content-related and interactive exchange between the participants and the speakers as well as between the participants among each other was initiated.

This is attributed to the fact that an E-Learning course with a chat function and a forum were set up so the project team were able to get in touch with the participants early on to find out what the participants' needs were. This feedback was used to design the content of the workshops.

Sustainability

As outlined in the last chapter, the University of Mandalay had planned to organize a summer school in Mandalay in partnership with the other Myanmar partners and the UoC. During the course of 2020, the ongoing Covid-19 situation and the associated travel restrictions demonstrated that it was not possible to hold an on-site summer school. It was mutually decided not to convert the summer school to an online format. The on-site organization of a summer school program and the “back-stage” coordination creates appropriate practical experience that opens up further doors within the framework of the internationalization efforts. It is planned to reconsider this joint endeavor once the world has overcome the pandemic.

With respect to the upcoming workshops, “Sustainable Internationalization in Focus” and “International Publishing: Principles of Review and Establishment and Management of an International Scientific Journal”, it is probable that they may not take place on-site either. In any case, the project team has to adapt quickly and flexibly to any new or changing external conditions that the pandemic may still have in store.

4. CYM+ LESSONS LEARNED

The University of Cologne had been considering cooperation development through education for several years. Our collaboration with the DAAD through projects like DIES Partnerships with Myanmar (CYM+) and the DIES Training Course project ProGRANT had been essential to the conversation. For the UoC, cooperation development has been about finding excellent partners abroad and going through a learning and development process with them. It is through such exchange projects and processes that both sides can further develop expertise, assist each other in their own efforts, and also take a critical stance on strategies and positions in order to strive for continuous improvement. For the UoC, cooperation development projects are not only an essential part of the Global Responsibility Unit and philosophy, but also an essential tool for creating equitable and long-lasting partnerships.

The DIES CYM+ project has shown that it is possible to build up internationalization structures in Myanmar. However, in order to be sustainable, it is necessary to build up reliable structures building on a holistic approach, bringing together different aspects of research and administration. The project has shown that, despite obstacles and special challenges, a process of internationalization can be started on an administrative level with a long term impact on the development of the university and the country. In future, it will be important to maintain the successes achieved in order to support the democratization process in Myanmar.

After three years of working within the project, a few lessons have been learnt. First, building up a cooperation with Myanmar partners from scratch cannot be

achieved in a short period of time. The prevailing hierarchical and implicit structures make it difficult to communicate directly with the colleagues involved. Prof. Kraas had been well connected with partner institutions in Myanmar for numerous years through research and personal contacts before we applied for the DIES Partnerships line. It was crucial for the project formation to talk to the proper authorities and to know the official ways to approach them.

Second, the issue of time stands alongside the aforementioned structures. Various projects funded by German ministries are designed to run for a short period only. However, becoming established in Myanmar takes several years. It is important to understand the partners' reality to be able to cater to their scientific needs and to build up a sustainable partnership. Furthermore, the partners' trust has to be gained first. After the first workshops took place, communication was facilitated through personal contacts. Since the DIES Partnerships line runs for four years, it was the ideal opportunity for a cooperation with Myanmar partners.

Third, the administrative barriers that were encountered in the first two project years came down with the start of the pandemic. It turned out to be less demanding for the Myanmar partners to organize workshops in an online format, which certainly presents itself as a potential opportunity for future cooperation. Since the CYM+ project officially ends in 2021, the online format seems to be the most sustainable way to continue the partnership over the years to come.

To ensure that our Myanmar partners will continue to engage themselves in the topic of internationalization on the whole, a sustainable internationalization app was designed. The Android version can be accessed through the following link: <http://uni-koeln.sciebo.de/s/tN6iM6xEzUXuJ2i>. The iOS version can be downloaded via the Apple AppStore. The team also created a teaser video on the remote workshop which gives insights into the project and can be viewed on our website¹⁰⁸.

In light of recent events, it is difficult to predict what 2021 may bring, and in which way the cooperation will be continued. As the past years of the project have shown, it is imperative to stay flexible, and so we will try to prepare for short-term adjustments. This DIES Partnerships project has certainly contributed to the capacity building of the project team and of the International Office of the University of Cologne on the whole. We hope to continue our endeavors together with our Myanmar partners, both now and in the future.

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PROJECT PARTNERS

The CHINLONE consortium works under the supervision of UNIBO as Project Coordinator, and it gathers five Universities from Myanmar, together with three Higher Education Institutions and one University Association from the EU. The Department of Higher Education of Myanmar's Ministry of Education, moreover, acts as Project Partner.

Partners: University of Bologna, University of Yangon, Yangon University of Economics, Yezin Agricultural University, University of Mandalay, Dagon University, Uppsala University, University of Granada, The Coimbra Group, Department of Higher Education, Ministry of Education - Republic of the Union of Myanmar.



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