



Changes of education in Myanmar

*Suggest to
change the
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Presented to

Dr. Januar Hakim

By

for example

*"Development in
Myanmar's education
system"*

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| Pattarit | Yamploy | 6104640393 |
| Pongpakorn | Ardharnpichit | 6104640419 |
| Ti | Sakornvasee | 6104640658 |
| Nithiroj | Tanyadet | 6104641144 |
| Ussanai | Banjongsil | 6104641565 |

*The study starts with
a good overview. However
as background sections
are not well-linked
and organized.*

EE361 economics of CLMV countries

Semester 2/2020

B.E. International Program

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Overview

Myanmar is in Southeast Asia, bordered by Bangladesh on the west, India on the northwest, China on the northeast, Laos and Thailand on the east, the Andaman Sea on the south, and the Bay of Bengal on the southwest. It has a land area of 678,500 square kilometres and, as such, is the largest mainland Southeast Asian country and the second largest in the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN) after Indonesia. The capital city is Naypyidaw. The largest and former capital city is Rangoon. Other notable cities are Mandalay, Mrauk U (Rakhine State), and Pagan. These are historical and ancient cities across the country. The official language is Burmese and other recognized languages spoken by the other ethnic groups. The main religion is Theravada Buddhism. Other ethnic groups practice Christianity. Other minority groups practice Hinduism, Islam, Animism, and others. Similar to the United States, Myanmar has its own diversity. However, there is discrimination, and classism exists. The country is largely made up of rain forest, rivers, lakes, coastal region, mountain region, and full of natural resources. There are two ecological niches in the country. First is the lowland central plains, which lie between the Irrawaddy and Salween Rivers in the center of the country and are occupied by the dominant Burmans, and the second is the highlands surrounding the plains, which are primarily inhabited by minority groups such as the Shans, Kachin, Karen, and Chin. The lowland plains are dominated by a monsoon climate of rain from June to October, a cool interlude for a month or two, and then a hot, dry period lasting until the rains return. The mountainous regions experience the same general seasonal fluctuations with slightly cooler temperatures. Temperature could reach 38 Celsius between May and October and fall to 20 Celsius between December and February.

Moving on to the brief history and key events of Myanmar, British ruled Burma from 1824 until 1948. After three Anglo-Burma wars in 1825, 1852 and 1885, Burma was totally conquered by the British colony. Burma became an official colony of British on January 1, 1886. By that time, Myanmar was called Burma in honour of the Burmans, the dominant ethnic group. The British called it "Further India". The Burmese called it "Myanmar Naing Ngan" where this was the source of the name Myanmar in nowadays. The name was changed in 1989. Another interesting event was World War 2, a war that lasted from 1939 to 1945. Burmese was a spy for Japanese's army, but they still lost the war in the end. After the end of the war, Burmese government declared independence from Britain.

With globalization, many aspects of the country have been changed, especially education. It is generally accepted that education provides individuals with the opportunity to improve their lives, become successful members of their communities and actively contribute to national socio-economic development. In Myanmar society, education is traditionally valued as a key determinant for social mobility, and it is widely recognised as a critical building block for nation building, national unity and sustainable development. Therefore, we will study the history of education in Myanmar to recognize the process of the education system in each era. We divided the history of education in Myanmar into 4 eras: 1. Education before independence (1945 - 1948), 2. Education after Independence (1948 - 1962). 3. Education under military rule (1962 - 1988), and 4. Education after the wave of democratization (1988 - 2000).

Each era is different in terms of the education system. For example, in the first period, there were only a few types of schools in Myanmar including Vernacular School, Anglo-Vernacular School, and English School. Mostly, teachers in this period dedicate their work, but it was still not effective. Moreover, high school fees and other expenditure were one of the major problems that obstructed the progress of the education system. In other words, there was a limitation of the opportunity of education for all children in this period. Moving on to the second era, the government of Myanmar introduced the new policy that aims to the new education plan and provide free education for all children in state school.

Hence, it cannot be denied that when time changes, things change. In other words, the education system in Myanmar has been developing throughout the period. There were many education policies in the past, the country still needs to develop new policies since it is said that "In today's global economy a nation's success depends fundamentally on the knowledge, skills and competencies of its people. Countries which invest in education are likely to reap substantial long-term benefits, such as greater economic and social prosperity". The following paragraph will provide key issues, government strategy policies, the role of various development actors, and lessons learned of education in Myanmar.

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of what the paper
seeks to discuss.
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Identification of key issues and challenges

This report will divide the history of education in Myanmar into 4 eras.

1.1 Education before Independence (1945-1948)

In this period, there were only a few types of schools in Myanmar including Vernacular School, Anglo-Vernacular School, and English School. Mostly, teachers in this period dedicate their work, but it was still not effective. Moreover, high school fees and other expenditure were one of the major problems that obstructed the progress of the education system in this period. For example, Anglo-Vernacular and English schools, these schools mostly had high school fees and other minor expenditure, causing there were only a few parents that had a high income and affordable to send their children to the school. In other words, there was a limitation of the opportunity of education for all children in this period. In 1947, the government of Myanmar had reconstructed the concept of a homogeneous system of schools involving state provided and state controlled. However, it still had private school and monastic school at their own expense. In addition to the monastic school still in this period, they had added religious instruction in the secular curriculum.

Reorganised System of School

- Primary School (6-11 years old) and Post-Primary School (11-15 years old) were free for all children
- Pre-University School (15-18 years old), the government will subsidize the children.
- Curriculum that related to their real life such as civil and occupation environments, agricultural, and rural nature of life in Myanmar.
- Encourage Bilingual instruction, especially in Primary and Post school.
- Introducing Romanised script, this is able to help the foreigner able to learn Burmese language faster and it was very useful for commercial purposes too.

1.2 Education after Independence (1948-1962)

The government of Myanmar in that time found that their policy in the previous era was not achieved due to the factors beyond their control involving the outbreak of civil war in the nascent and Union of Burma that the government was able to control only the major urban centres at that time. (Thein Lwin, 2000) In 1953, the government of Myanmar introduced the new policy that aims to the new education plan and provide free education for all children

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in state school. Firstly, they want to ensure that every citizen has a foundation. Secondly, they want to make themselves get back to the position that they were in the past by training an effective number of technicians and technologists. Thirdly, they want to train their youngsters to have their own responsibility, especially the responsibility to be the citizens of Myanmar. So, the curriculum in that time would prioritize the practical and prevocational subjects, such as gardening, art, and so on. Furthermore, they classify the level in the education system that is more precise.

- Nursery (3-5 years old)
- Primary (5-10 years old)
- Middle (10-13 years old)
- High (13-16 years old)
- Vocational and Technical (16+ years old)

What are the issues/challenges?

1.3 Education under Military Rule (1962-1988)

This period was divided into two phases involving 1. Absolute military rule (1962-1974), 2. Constitutional dictatorship (1974-1988). This period had a huge change in the educational system of Myanmar. The government of Myanmar at that time wanted to focus more on science subject than art subject. Moreover, several citizens at that time felt that there was no equality of opportunity in the education system, because most of the education policy was based on socialist and they benefited from it. In other words, there was a discrimination in the education system in this era including classify A-list student and B-list student. To elaborate, A-list students were able to study science at high school and able to apply for the university, while B-list students were able to study only arts subjects and only able to apply for vocational institutes. Furthermore, Christian school was removed in 1962. In 1961, the government of Myanmar tried to reorganise the system of education involving basic education, technical, agriculture, vocational, and higher education.

Reorganised the system of education

The educational system was reorganised to comprise:

- Primary School (5-10 years old)
- Middle School (10-14 years old)
- High School (14-16 years old)


The outstanding situation in this era was the discrimination regarding "full citizenship". According to the data, 1.5 to 2 million people from the population in Myanmar, especially Indian and Chinese, face this issue at that time, causing them difficulty in providing education

to their child. In 1974, it was very difficult for the children who graduated at that time to find a job, except the children who graduated in the educational research field, which is the most crucial role in that time. Lastly, this generation was the beginning era that caused numerous problems to Myanmar's education system.

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1.4 Education on the wave of democratisation (1988-2000)

In 1988, they had changed from Constitutional dictatorship to absolute military rule again. Moreover, they face the problem in the education system that came from the previous periods including equity, quality, and efficiency. In this period, Myanmar was faced with a low enrolment rate and a high dropout rate in school, particularly in the rural areas. There were several reasons why the children dropped out from the school including their parents is not affordable to pay high school fees, the environment in the class did not encourage the children to learn due to the shortage of education facilities and lack of qualified teachers. All of these reasons cause numerous parents to have a low expectation concerning the value of education, particularly undeveloped areas. Nevertheless, the turning point in this period is their joint effort in the "Education Sector Study Project". In 1992, they set the goals to improve the quality of their education including upgrading their curriculum to meet their real life, creating a fair and efficient selection system, making evaluation learning-oriented, developing the quality of instruction, providing the effective facilities, and enhancing sector management. (Thein Lwin, 2000)

 From 4 eras of education above, it can be implied that there had been an inequality among the education system in Myanmar where not every child got an opportunity to attend school and moreover, the school standard quality is not the same as all schools in the country.

Government/state strategies, policies and legislation

To start with, in 1988, Myanmar had changed from Constitutional dictatorship to absolute military rule. Moreover, they face the problem in the education system that came from the previous periods including equity, quality, and efficiency. In this period, Myanmar was faced with a low enrolment rate and a high dropout rate in school, particularly in the rural areas. There were several reasons why the children dropped out from the school including their parents is not affordable to pay high school fees, the environment in the class did not encourage the children to learn due to the shortage of education facilities and lack of qualified teachers. All these reasons cause numerous parents to have a low expectation concerning the value of education, particularly undeveloped areas. Nevertheless, the turning point in this period is their joint effort in the "Education Sector Study Project". In 1992, they set the goals to improve the quality of their education including upgrading their curriculum to meet their real life, creating a fair and efficient selection system, making evaluation learning-oriented, developing the quality of instruction, providing the effective facilities, and enhancing sector management. (Thein Lwin, 2000)

NESP goal

The MOE commits to achieving the following NESP goal statement by the end of the 2020-21 fiscal year:

To improve the quality of teaching and learning, vocational education and training, research and innovation leading to measurable improvements in student achievement in all schools and educational institutions.

The three main reasons for this goal are as follows.

(a) High expectations from parents and students

There are several discussions between education stakeholders consulted to develop the NESP program that parents want their children to significantly develop their learning achievement at all educational levels in the national education system. To achieve those parent expectations, wide range reforming and innovative strategies must be applied over the next five years to improve student learning performance in all school and educational institutions.

Please explain what NESP is, since this is the first use of the term in this report.

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(b) Teachers have a key role to play in implementation of NESP reforms

There is much relevant national and international research evidence on education quality that focused on how important the role of the teachers is to succeed in implementing the reforms outlined in the NESP program within all school and educational institutions. For instance, in the fundamental education sector teachers will play an important role in successful implementation of the new education curriculum, as well as to adopt the new interactive pedagogy and application of a new assessment system. As a result, teacher is a key centre of the NESP goal.

(c) TVET and higher education are fundamental for Myanmar's long-term social and economic development

High-quality technical and vocational education and training (TVET) that equips Myanmar's economy with a skilled and competitive labour force is essential for sustainable socio-economic development in the long term. In the following year, a larger number of skilled employees will be demanded in agricultural, energy, manufacturing, infrastructure, livestock, fisheries and tourism sectors. To address this higher demand, the TVET system must equip students with knowledge, skills and competencies to achieve in their career inspiration and contribute to the economic growth and development of Myanmar.

Higher education is responsible for searching in skilled human capital needed in government, business and other industrial sectors. Higher education institutions have an important role to undertake and embrace the innovative and creative thinking needed for national and international economic society.

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The nine transformation shifts to achieve the NESP goals.

A transformation shift is examined as a high-level vision statement of MOE that will describe a desired future state of a specific part of the education sector in Myanmar within 2021. Significantly, these nine transformation shifts will help MOE to make a significant change towards the sustainable development goal of education in Myanmar, namely: SDG 4: ensure inclusive and equitable quality education and for lifelong learning opportunities for all.

1.1) **Basic education curriculum:** All school children develop knowledge, skills, attitudes and competencies that are relevant to their lives and to the socio-economic development needs of 21 century Myanmar.

1.2) **Student assessment and examinations:** Teachers and education managers implement a quality assessment system to improve student learning achievement.

1.3) **Teacher education and management:** Teachers support, develop and apply interactive classroom teaching and learning benefiting all students.

1.4) **Alternative education:** Learners can access and graduate from quality assured, certified and nationally credentialed alternative education programmes to achieve student learning and career aspiration.

1.5) **TVET:** More learners can access TVET and graduate from quality assured and labour market responsive TVET programmes under a more effective TVET management system.

1.6) **Higher education:** Students have equitable access to a world class higher education system, leading to better opportunities for employment and significant contributions to a knowledge-based economy.

1.7) **Management capacity development and quality assurance:** Education managers at all levels apply evidence-based decision making and demand accountability for improved teaching and learning in school and educational institutions.

1.8) **Preschool and kindergarten education:** All children get a head start on their learning pathway through accessing quality preschool and kindergarten education.

1.9) **Basic education - access, quality and inclusion:** All children can access, progress through and successfully complete quality basic education.

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