

The State of Higher Education in Myanmar

- Challenges and Recommendations
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Introduction

1. The effect of the political climate on higher education in Myanmar
2. Challenges in higher education in Myanmar
3. Project-Capacity building-Teaching and Learning resources for two colleges
4. Recommendations for improving higher education in Myanmar

Political climate

- Myanmar transitioning into a democratization and internationalization
- Still highly politicized-international organizations forced to “take sides” in order to engage in Myanmar
- Some opposing parties remain fighting for a “voice” and power
- Former exiles returning to Myanmar

- Ties of the US and Myanmar since 2011
- Economic sanctions suspended in 2013 with Obama's visit
- Aung San Suu Kyi elected as (de-facto) President of Myanmar in 2016 with U Htin Kyaw as 'puppet' President.

Lack of Social Capital

- Myanmar multi-ethnic country, still facing ethnic conflict (Rakhine)
- Still little trust in universities-rely too much on a centralized direction by government

Lack of capacity to build international ties

- Universities lack of independent administrative units to manage international research exchanges-created repository
- Poor infrastructure to support international academic partnerships
- Foreign exchange professor program
- American University of Yangon

Centralization/Decentralization of bureaucracy and higher education

- Thirteen different ministries oversee higher education
- Ministry of Education (MoE) largest overseer-split into Northern unit (MDY) and Southern unit (YGN)
- Students, faculty and universities lack autonomy and choice

education (cont.)

- Example: student wants to become a dentist but performance on national achievement test dictates where student ends up.
- Universities have limited budget-government education budget is less than 10%

education (cont.)

- A number of private universities have been established, some with MOU's with international universities in the UK, US and Australia
- New Basic Education Law and Higher Education Laws are being rewritten and will be implemented soon

Centralization/Decentralization of Bureaucracy and Higher Education (cont.)

- Infrastructure remains a big problem:
 - Frequent power cuts during hot and wet season
 - Internet access-majority of citizens access the Internet using a smartphone
 - Foreign investment by international telecoms Telenor, and Ooredoo have expanded coverage. MPT remains dominant provider

Educational Context

- Myanmar people value education highly, but are often disappointed with lack of qualified programs and shortage of educators
- Poor physical buildings, inadequate computer labs, libraries, labs
- Teaching style is slowly moving from rote learning to interactive teaching and learning

Educational Context

- Since many citizens cannot go to college due to financial or academic performance, they often resort to obtaining informal training.
- A few schools are accredited by international accreditation bodies such as WASC, Swiss and UK accreditation

Educational Context

- Due to emphasis on testing, class attendance and participation is poor.
- Students often don't come to class if there is no graded assignment/activity

Importance of Leadership and Entrepreneurship

- There is an interest for educational reform in part driven by competition from other Southeast Asian countries
- Desire to work with international organizations to reclaim status as top educational system pre-1962 (coup d'état)

Challenges in Higher Education

- Major overhaul is needed to either renovate or erect new physical infrastructure as well as the academic curriculum (MDC&NMDC)
- Modernization is underway with aid from NGO's (NMDC&MDC renovating NMDC and tech in classrooms)
- No magic formula, may take a generation

Challenges in Higher Education (cont.)

- Strong leadership is needed for higher education reform
- ASSK promised to overhaul education; lack of competent leadership
- Lack of competent leadership to handle policy and legislation that is needed for reform

Challenges in Higher Education (cont.)

- Understanding that competent human talent is needed especially in scientific, engineering and managerial resources that currently constrains Myanmar's economic growth and technological development
- Talent issue is the result of universities not fulfilling this void

Challenges in Higher Education (cont.)

- Physical Infrastructure
 - Outdated building; Project-renovations under way
 - Public universities have dormitories often in state of disrepair, no adequate utilities, Internet access, computer labs lack sufficient computers for students, outdated equipment, software (Win98), no technical support staff
 - Project: Schools got wired with fibre optics and WiFi access points. WiFi throughout entire campus.

Challenges in Higher Education (cont.)

- Teaching and Learning Resources:
 - Lack of teaching and learning resources
 - Properly trained support staff
 - Ex. librarians do not have MLS-lack technical expertise
 - Ex: chemists lack practical experience due to insufficient lab work

Challenges in Higher Education (cont.)

- Curriculum

- Faculty lack up-to-date textbooks (Project-open textbook resources)
- Rote learning (Project: Lesson plans-adding interactivity, project-based learning-challenging)
- English language is still lacking for some teachers and student (Project: teacher training)

Challenges in Higher Education (cont.)

- Faculty
 - Often do not have postgraduate degrees, or often do not teach what they went to school for
 - Ex: Masters in Zoology teaching HTM
 - Little to no teacher training and faculty development

Challenges in Higher Education (cont.)

- Information technology
 - Poor state of Internet access and overall IT and telecommunications (Project-foreign investment from Telenor and Ooredoo improving greatly)
 - Technology in the classroom lacking (Project-edX platform, mobile learning, micro-learning; college information system, repository for research-Bern)

Recommendations

- Stronger leadership needed for policy and legislative changes to place in higher education
- Further develop physical and technological infrastructure
- Enhance English language capacity
- Leverage Resources-open source teaching and learning resources

Questions?

