

POLICY INSIGHTS FOR HIGHER EDUCATION

Recommendations for HE reform in Myanmar

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INTRODUCTION

This report summarizes a study tour of British universities undertaken by a delegation of Burmese government representatives from 1-10 May 2013, and reports on the outcomes of a Myanmar-UK policy dialogue held on 9 May in conjunction with the University of London.

It describes what was seen and discussed during the visit, and identifies implications for higher education reform in Myanmar.

The report additionally contains policy insights and recommendations for higher education reform prepared for the British Council by Professor Kenneth King of the University of Edinburgh.

A second policy dialogue, 'Empowering Higher Education', takes place in Naypyitaw on 29-30 June, organised by the British Council with support from ADB, AusAid and UNESCO.

Kevin Mackenzie
British Council, Myanmar
June 2013



L-R: Hon. Prof Dr. Mya Oo, Prof Dr. Aung Kyaw Myat, Dr. Mya Oo, Prof Dr. Myo Myint

BACKGROUND

This study tour was held at the direct request of the leader of Myanmar's National League of Democracy, Aung San Suu Kyi, in her capacity as chair of two *ad hoc* parliamentary committees for 1) Higher Education Law Reform and 2) the Revitalisation of Yangon (Rangoon) University. These committees are formed by members of parliament, ministry officials and university representatives, a number of whom sit on both.

The tour was proposed in February 2013 during a meeting of the law committee at the Burmese parliament in Naypyitaw, to which Kevin Mackenzie, Director British Council, and Kenneth King, Emeritus Professor at the University of Edinburgh were invited. Professor King had been commissioned by the British Council to carry out a review of Higher Education in the country and make recommendations to the committee, also at the request of Aung San Suu Kyi. Professor King's full report is included in this document.

Further tours to Australia, India and Thailand are also envisaged, although by the time of the UK visit (and this report) none had taken place. The overall aim is to learn how higher education is governed and implemented in these countries in order to inform the deliberations of each committee.

The UK tour therefore set out to expose senior policy-makers to policy and practice in UK Higher Education for the benefit of the sector in Myanmar. The visit allowed presentation and analysis of issues related to university policy, governance and management, as well as opportunities to visit campuses, see facilities and meet teachers and students. It was intended that this would inform both the law reform process and more specifically the reinvigoration of Yangon University.

Towards the end of the tour a policy dialogue took place in London, to raise and discuss issues relevant to Burmese higher education in a public forum. The aim of this event was to

1. Raise UK awareness of the issues facing Myanmar's higher education sector
2. Encourage UK institutional links and attract corporate investment in developing the sector
3. Bring UK HE expertise into the dialogue taking place in Myanmar within the national reform agenda.

A second policy dialogue is now planned for 29-30 June 2013, in Naypyitaw. This will attempt to define a vision for Higher Education by sharing the learning of this tour with other education reform initiatives, especially the Comprehensive Education Sector Review (CESR) and the consultation led by the National Network for Education Reform.

THE DELEGATION

The group comprised four committee representatives, including two government officials and two members of parliament, and was accompanied by Kevin Mackenzie.

Prof Dr. Myo Myint	Deputy Union Minister for Education
Hon. Prof Dr. Mya Oo	Member of Amyothar Hluttaw (Upper House of Parliament) Chairman, Women and Children's Affairs Committee
Dr. Mya Oo	Member of Pyithu Hluttaw (Lower House of Parliament) Secretary of Education Development Committee (Pyithu Hluttaw) Secretary of National Education Law Committee Secretary of Higher Education Law Committee
Prof Dr. Aung Kyaw Myat	Director General, Ministry of Science and Technology Member of Education Development Committee



STUDY TOUR

Both Scotland and England were selected for the tour, which began with visits to Edinburgh and Glasgow followed by London. Meetings were held with representatives of the following bodies¹

- British Council Scotland
- Universities Scotland
- Scottish Funding Council
- Scottish Government (Cabinet Secretary for Education and Lifelong Learning)
- National Union of Students, Scotland
- Glasgow Caledonian University
- Scottish Credit & Qualifications Framework
- UK Quality Assurance Agency
- University College London
- School of Oriental and African Studies
- Institute of Education
- University of London International Programmes
- University of London

Meetings largely centred on issues in university governance and the legislation surrounding the sector. The following briefly summarizes the main points discussed.

Sector representation

The role of a representative body was described as essential to the sector. Universities Scotland was said to act as partner/initiator in policy development and chief negotiator with government and funding bodies. It uses evidence to develop the sector's case and maintains a network of relationships and it presents the sector publicly to press and parliament and privately to ministers and civil servants.

The group were particularly keen to learn how disputes are resolved, and this was revealed to be through strategic management of public and private channels of communication. Mutual agreement was achieved through consensus-building.



Funding

While Myanmar's universities receive their funding directly from government, in the UK it is received via funding councils, which act as 'buffer bodies' between government and the sector itself. The group was interested to explore the idea of a non-departmental public body making independent funding decisions, especially in relation to accountability and quality assurance, and the responsibilities of the sector were discussed. The flow of funding (in Scotland, from government via ministers, through the Lifelong Learning Directorate to the Funding Council and then to the HE institutions) was balanced by accountability to government.

Quality assurance is similarly accountable, with QA 'employed' by the funding council. The group's fears that allowing the sector to make its own funding decisions might lead to a lack of responsibility were allayed. "The university sector needs to reassure government that its targets are being met."

¹ The full visit programme is given as Appendix A

Autonomy

This was the main theme of much of the discussion. While the framework for autonomy in England was described as 'regulatory', Scotland's was defined by the Cabinet Secretary as 'responsible autonomy'. This depended on proportionate responsibility and accountability, and the achievement of outcome agreements. A clear correlation between autonomy and success was shown, with universities in Greece and Turkey (which evidently allow minimal autonomy) performing poorly in the Shanghai World League Tables and those in the

more autonomous Japan and (especially) UK performing highly. "The basic principle behind institutional autonomy is that institutions operate better if they are in control of their own destiny" *Global Trends in University Governance* (Fielden 2008).

The importance of diversity and financial sustainability were emphasised, as were the advantages conferred by autonomy in encouraging universities to act entrepreneurially. Professor James Penner of University College London described the legislation surrounding funding councils and stressed the complete absence of any connection between funding and restrictions on academic freedom.



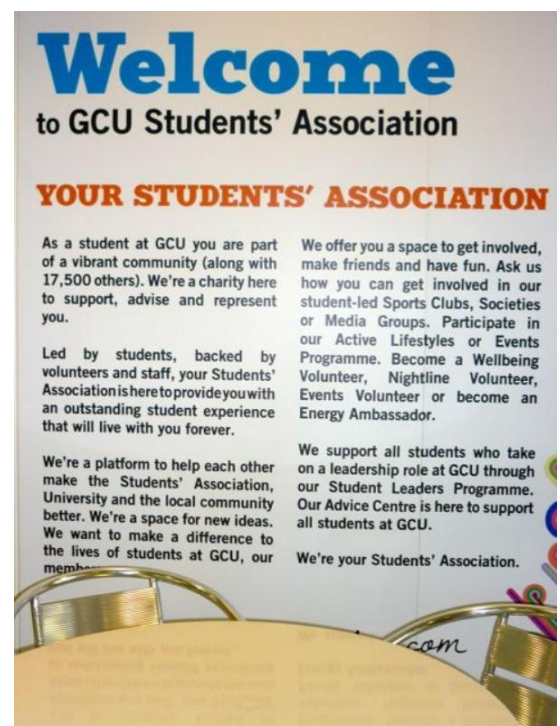
University governance

The recently published (April 2013) Scottish Code of Good HE Governance was presented and discussed. This document acknowledges the work done in the January 2013 Review of HE Governance in Scotland, also presented. There was much in both of these documents that the group considered to be of value to developing a governance structure for Myanmar's universities, particularly the purpose and main principles of governance, and the statement of primary responsibilities. Professor Sir Peter Scott of the Institute of Education gave a clear overview of recent reforms, governance and management in the UK, which provoked many questions.

The role, composition and accountabilities of university governing bodies and academic boards were explored, in particular in a clear and detailed discussion with the Secretary of Glasgow Caledonian University (GCU), Jan Hulme. The group were intrigued by the appointment of a student representative to the university governing body but were assured by all, including NUS Scotland president Robin Parker, that the body's remit is to act in the interests of the institution rather than the constituency each member represents.

Students' associations

These are required by law and represented at national level by the National Union of Students (NUS). How students' associations were structured and appointed to, and their role both in student representation and in a 'vibrant campus culture', was of much interest to the delegation. Students are represented at all levels of university governance, from the governing body through teaching and learning committee to student societies, and the NUS president sits on the Funding Council at which he/she puts forward the students' views.



The group's understanding of the value of student involvement was enhanced by being shown around Edinburgh University by a very capable undergraduate, who took the group into one of the student union buildings, showed them a EUSA² shop and gave a tour of the university's impressive library facilities. A similar tour in Glasgow helped reinforce a very positive impression of Scotland's universities. A later discussion at SOAS explored student radicalism, including the value of this to student engagement, with the result that the role of associations in enhancing the overall student experience was amply portrayed.



Quality assurance

Both agencies that met the group – the Quality Assurance Agency (QAA) and Scottish Credit and Qualifications Framework (SCQF) – emphasised their independence from government and the importance of objective assessment. The group were interested in the framework for lifelong learning, particularly of the SCQF, and in the role of student reviewers. The importance of putting students at the heart of QA and the 2012 BIS consultation on a risk-based approach were presented and discussed.

Collaboration

There was mutual interest in finding ways of collaborating with our host institutions. Good examples came in a meeting with the Vice Chancellor of Glasgow Caledonian University, Pamela Gillies, who described her university's public-private partnerships with institutions in Bangladesh and South Africa. The Deputy Minister described this meeting as 'inspiring'. GCU's social mission to engage parents and children from the local community was also of interest, and the original role of universities to create social benefit was reflected on.

Collaboration with Burmese universities was discussed with Professor Paul Webley, Principal of SOAS, in particular language studies and help with building centres of excellence for the teaching of English and Myanmar. Faculty staff on sabbatical would be welcome in Myanmar, as would PhD students. The Faculty of Law expressed interest in offering distance learning with support from a local university, and SOAS expressed a willingness to provide training programmes and guest lecturers. Professor Jonathan Kydd, Dean of University of London International Programmes, raised the prospect of Yangon University teaching University of London degrees (already under discussion).



Overall, the delegation gained much from the presentations and discussions. The most successful were those relevant to Myanmar's own context. The group was impressed by the preparation and commitment of the various bodies, and by the lengths gone by our hosts to engage with the issues. The delegation and British Council are very grateful to all participants for making the visit such a success, especially Universities Scotland and the Universities of London, Glasgow and Edinburgh.

² Edinburgh University Students' Association

POLICY DIALOGUE

This was the highlight of the visit³. Attended by some 60 invited participants, it offered a forum for discussion of issues in higher education reform particularly in relation to Myanmar. It was hosted by the University of London in the university's Senate House⁴. In addition to the delegation it included interventions from the following speakers:

- Daw Aung San Suu Kyi (by video)
- Sir John Boyd, Chair of Asia House
- Prof Geoffrey Crossick, Distinguished Professor of the Humanities, University of London
- Prof Pete Downes, Principal, University of Dundee and Convenor of Universities Scotland
- Prof Kenneth King, Emeritus Professor, University of Edinburgh
- Prof Jonathan Kydd, Dean, University of London International Programmes
- Dr Richard Alexander, Lecturer in Financial Law, SOAS
- Dr Jo Beall, Director Education & Society, British Council
- Dr Halima Begum, Director Education East Asia, British Council
- Dr Lee Jones, Lecturer, Queen Mary College
- Dr Justin Watkins, Senior Lecturer in Burmese, SOAS
- Paul Crook, Consultant, Allen Ovary
- Sumi Ghose, Director of Cultural Programmes, Asia House
- David Lock, Director of International Projects, Leadership Foundation
- Daniel Shah, Assistant Director Policy, Higher Education International Unit



The event was opened by Sir John Boyd, who set the context of Myanmar's reforms. This was followed by a video keynote address from Aung San Suu Kyi, who explained the challenges facing Myanmar's HE sector and made a plea for UK support⁵. The Deputy Minister then described the reform initiatives taken so far and outlined priorities for the sector. The subsequent discussions centred around the principles of HE reform, the role of universities in economic transformation, issues for university leadership and opportunities for UK collaboration in strengthening higher education in Myanmar. The following describes the issues discussed.



Whilst recognizing that the role of public universities is sometimes contested, the role of universities serving public good cannot be overstated, and is part of the value the nation places on building bedrocks for societal benefit. It is the public-private settlement of governance structures of any country. The fundamental question which the policy dialogue started and ended with is the issue of autonomy. Why is autonomy the right choice? This fundamental question needs answering first before promoting a particular view of university sector development and expansion.

³ All photos in this section (pages 5-10) are copyright Koïs Miah

⁴ The full dialogue programme is given as Appendix B

⁵ The full transcript of Aung San Suu Kyi's speech is given as Appendix C

Several official reviews have taken place in the UK (covering English, Scotland, Northern Ireland and Wales) to look at both governance and financing models – the latest have been the 2010 Browne Review and the 2011 White Paper on Higher Education in England, the Scottish Green Paper, the Northern Ireland strategy for higher education and the Welsh Review on the economic contribution of higher education. As in the rest of Europe, UK Higher Education policy is facing several challenges, and in particular on the balance of subsidies to domestic students and whether the public purse can maintain the current subsidies.

Within this context, the UK stakeholders to the policy event took a pragmatic approach to supporting Myanmar's current learning efforts - mindful of the complexities in learning between countries and systems and the dynamic political context in Myanmar.



Universities as bringing public benefit

UK universities are not part of the public sector and neither are they owned by government. But they are driven by values around public good and the greater good of society, and they receive the bulk of their funding from public sources. Most universities, while required to demonstrate economic benefit and sustainable business models, are still not commercial. They are legally autonomous 'not-for-profit' organizations. They have a peculiar status in the UK, as they do not have to generate profits, but compared to other public sector bodies, they have much more freedom to deliver their goals and have considerable autonomy to assess their own success and failures – at a comfortable distance from state, society and business stakeholders. The public funding element sustains the domestic student market (which is heavily subsidised) and provides a subsidy to universities and colleges, and in this sense presents an important equity and affordability dimension on top of governance matters.



Professor Geoffrey Crossick and Professor Pete Downes represented a unified voice on the ethics and values of higher education: the public sector must be the bedrock of the university system. The values debate relates to Myanmar directly, which is a national space where society is atomized, values have been depleted and where the need to restore civic life and common values is imperative, and universities are well placed to help achieve this. A public university should serve the people of Myanmar and be responsive to changes in society. The UK experience is steeped in this public tradition, and the HE sector recognizes its core purpose, despite pressures to be more

enterprising, to serve and benefit the public, through the creation, dissemination and application of knowledge. As part of this public mission, public universities should subsidise those that cannot afford to study for a degree whatever the reason.

The role of private universities in particular was to add value in gaining professional skills, or practice-oriented degrees. The case of law was a good example, with practice-oriented training for lawyers being more usefully delivered by private universities. These private universities, among which the BPP was held up as a fine example in London, were best at training future lawyers, not future academics.

Revitalising Myanmar's HE sector: key drivers

The main driver for reforming education, skills, and English is the need to rebuild Myanmar's statehood and its economy. The redevelopment of the HE sector is primarily focused on nation-building rather than on economic transformation, within which universities were catalysts for change. Skills in English language will cement Myanmar's international engagement. There is a question of how we reward creativity in a higher education system focused on technical support such as the CESR or the other reform processes.

Improving education systems and quality of learning

This mainstay of the HE challenge was related to the need to rebuild the entire education system, which the CESR process is indeed doing, and to bear in mind that quality of learning outcomes and teacher/lecturer accountability will be steeped in improvements of the entire system.

Academic freedom, too, mattered as a separate concern to accountability. The role of universities in Myanmar, or rather rectors, is to re-establish academic freedom and defending this space against government influence/interference by allowing students to choose freely. There are considerable pressures on Myanmar's rectors as HE leaders. Some participants considered that the proper role of government is to step back from the HE sector to allow it to grow, and further develop to meet the needs of the 21st century. A positive suggestion was for the development of flagship universities for each region, to help build them to world-class standards which will inadvertently also help with growing ethnic tension in Myanmar.

Inclusivity

Some concerns were highlighted around generating a university sector that is serving only elite students, in a country where the diversity of ethnicity, religion, language, and disabilities is challenging the state provision of education. Language in particular remains a dynamite issue in Myanmar. The UK system has progressively sought to guard against exclusivity, though there are still unsettled issues, but affordability and equity are guiding principles for the expansion of higher education in the UK. In Myanmar a particular challenge exists around the financing of education and the salaries of teachers and academics which leave the sector open to risks such as ghost teaching or academics juggling multiple jobs. Similarly, for curriculum development to be right, it has to be relevant to economy of the whole country.



The recommendations for UK-Myanmar HE reform oscillated between proceeding with caution, realism around what can be changed, and what should move quickly given the Myanmar's current emergency - an emergency that is not the same as education crisis in other post-crisis countries where HE systems need to be rebuilt from scratch, but one where Myanmar's rapid development will demand faster change than what is possible with the pace of current technical reform.

First of all, some aspects of the education system, no matter how much political will there is, cannot be changed by law overnight: pedagogy and learning outcomes. The culture of learning and learning outcomes cannot change without the improvement of salaries - similar cases exist elsewhere in the world. There are no quick fixes to salaries. The system of rotating lecturers adds to a lack of continuity in learning with knock-on impacts on learning and training. Second, how do you reform a culture of learning which is based on rote learning, and now increasingly, with constraints on people's ability to choose full time higher education due to



work needs? Finally a vibrant and dynamic intellectual and campus life does not just happen: it must be actively shaped, nurtured and its participants must be recruited, retained and supported; and this must happen across of Myanmar's major universities, not just Yangon.



The current UK university system is very diverse, with 164 institutions noted by HESA in 2010. It has a very long history that evolved in tandem with changes in society, politics and shifts in the UK's international role. Some were set up in medieval times, and some have recently been awarded university or degree-awarding status in the 21st century. Most are focused on teaching and research at higher level, their primary remit, but universities also engage in a very wide range of work with local communities and charities.

The UK System evolved over a long period of time and yet there are powerful calls for a short cut to

development and reform in Myanmar. This is likely to be a difficult road to steer and yet other countries such as China, for example, have attempted to fast track and accelerate reform. The Scottish experience is best described as responsible autonomy, where autonomy is articulated as a privilege, a privilege that has been earned. Universities therefore have to be responsive to the policy interests of the day; they have to be responsive to wider society, and this view of 'responsiveness' is what affords Scottish universities the right to call for autonomy.

The distinctiveness of universities' offering to society ought to be preserved – they are public institutions, publicly funded, but not regulated by the government or politicians. The shared values of the universities cast a different light on matters of public affairs that is different from other parts of the social contract relationship and state-society mix. It is by working with and to our shared responsive values, around reciprocity for example, that universities may earn more autonomy.

The diversity of the sector is something to nurture and build further, but underpinned by values of universities contributing to public good. This will be the glue that holds together a sector will continue to change in the next foreseeable years. Excessive regulation can therefore stifle growth and this growing diversity.

Breadth of discipline and synergies between interdisciplinary studies was held to be conducive to creative thought, imagination and insight, and good for shaping public society and building new leaders. Caution was exercised about the dangers of separating hard sciences from the social sciences, as often interdisciplinary work, not silos, leads to more creation of knowledge and its application. This breadth of discipline and interdisciplinary studies was one way in which to create not only more educated young people, but imaginative ones with ability to criticize, test out ideas, and seek new solutions to existing problems. This diversity of discipline generates perspectives and encourages critical reflection, reflection and experimentation.



This also relates to several observations around the arts sector and the wider role that creativity brings to society, particularly in societies in transition. Participants drew a direct link between education and arts and diplomatic ties: often when diplomatic relations break, down what is left is cultural relations and cultural bonds remain through educational opportunities.



The recommendations came back to the pace of reform and the need or desirability to fast track evolution to accelerate reform. A dynamic and responsive system was developed in the UK to respond to different environments every five years. Openness to the internationalisation of education will also be one way to build the dynamism in.

Research funding and collaboration from higher level are better initiated from below. Chance and serendipity often spur interest-based collaboration and innovation between researchers on the ground which needs support and investment. Research excellence and new ideas cannot be forced from

the top, therefore the need to create 'sparks' that enable research collaboration to take place is the proper role of higher authorities. However, Myanmar HE leaders will need to look at how to balance research drivers, and elite representation in the research field, with the need to widen access for all. The UK's experience has been mixed on this, too, in terms of participation, but better in terms of funding research on under-represented issues.

Concepts of reciprocity and its related concept mutual benefit should be guiding principles for Myanmar's international engagement with the UK. Reciprocity here was discussed not in classic international relations sense, but from an understanding in social sciences around concepts of social capital and connectedness, and building trust between nations. For all concerned, in the UK and overseas, the future of higher education lies in reciprocity, whether we are talking about borderless education or building straightforward research partnerships between universities, countries, or in government to government relations. If cooperation is to emerge, whatever its outcomes, principles of self-help (in other words the 'who will pay?' question) will best ensure mutual benefit.

Conclusion

The Myanmar delegation was asked to reflect on what particular lessons were emerging from the tour and the dialogue so far. Their hopes and aspirations, stated by Prof Dr Myo Myint, were to seek the quick wins first and also identify the slow burning issues. Not everything needs to take place at the same time, at the same pace be selective, some things can go slowly, and others can go faster.

On a practical level, how to train better academics and teachers and focus back on the education parts of the discussion will be more important than site and residential campus matters. Widening access will be critical, in light of the discussions around inclusiveness and the equity of education. The group also expressed a strong desire to see business investing in Myanmar, with social impact reflected, to help move towards a more sustainable future.



PARTNERS FOR CHANGE

Snapshot recommendations:

- Stay optimistic
- Build strong friendships between the UK and Myanmar
- Invest in English language learning and the development of libraries
- Strengthen student unions and intellectual and civic identity of universities
- Build reciprocity



L-R: Dr Mya Oo, Dr Halima Begum, Hon. Prof. Dr Mya Oo, Prof Dr Myo Myint, Dr Jo Beall, Prof Dr Aung Kyaw Myat, Kevin Mackenzie, Susana Galvan

MEDIA COVERAGE

The tour and event were well-covered in the media. Aung San Suu Kyi's appeal to the UK university sector was run by the BBC, Times Higher Education, the Financial Times and University World News.⁶ The Deputy Minister was interviewed live on BBC World TV on the topic of education reform and, with Kevin Mackenzie, by Times Higher Education and the BBC Myanmar service. The mission was also run by some 13 media outlets in Myanmar.

The media coverage has helped attract wider attention from the UK sector and by corporations interested in supporting the reform.

⁶ Sample clippings are given in Appendix E

HIGHER EDUCATION REFORM IN MYANMAR: POLICY INSIGHTS AND RECOMMENDATIONS⁷

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This is a report of a visit to Myanmar to advise the Parliamentary Higher Education Law (HEL) Committee on the challenges of higher education reform. The visit took place between the 4th and the 16th February 2013. There was an initial meeting with the Parliamentary Committee and its Chair, Daw Aung San Suu Kyi, on the 6th February. This was followed by an intensive week of visits to a range of universities and a series of education-related meetings, the details of which are to be found in the appendix to this report⁸, along with the terms of reference (TOR) for this trip.⁹ There was then a discussion with a sub-group of the Committee on the 14th and a report to the full Committee and its Chair on the 15th February. One of the outcomes of the visit is a series of study tours by Committee members to Australia, India, Thailand and the UK in May 2013. Following the study tours, there will be a policy dialogue meeting to draw together the findings of these visits with the insights from two other current review processes, associated with the National League for Democracy (NLD) and the Comprehensive Education Sector Review (CESR).

Higher Education Reform and the Wider Education Law Reform Process

The work of the HEL Committee is taking place, as just mentioned, alongside two other reviews, associated with the CESR and the NLD. The first, rapid assessment phase of the CESR had produced, on 28th January 2013, a valuable report on The Higher Education Sub-Sector. In a separate initiative, the NLD Education Committee had just produced a short, first draft of its 'Education Policy Recommendations', a dimension of which related to higher education (Thein Lwin, 2013). Prof. King's visit to the NLD Education Committee was followed by a joint meeting of its Chair, Dr. Thein Lwin, with members of the CESR. At this, the summary outcomes of the NLD education review were outlined along with the seven focal areas of the CESR process,¹⁰ and the draft papers from both processes were exchanged.

Two other higher education review processes took place also in February 2013. The UK HE International Unit's Myanmar: Higher Education Scoping Visit, organised through the British Council, was designed to identify opportunities for UK higher education organisations to support the reform and development of the Myanmar (UK HE, 2013). Secondly, the Institute of International Education (IIE)'s Report on the IIE Myanmar Initiative, entitled: Investing in the Future: Rebuilding Higher Education in Myanmar derived from a delegation of ten US universities which had come to Myanmar for a week of visits in that same month (IIE, 2013).

The HEL Committee's work is itself part of a wider Parliamentary education review process. There is a Standing Committee on Education Promotion which has 15 MPs and currently at least three ad hoc committees. The most general of these is the National Education Law (NEL) Committee concerned with all sub-sectors of education, as well as formal, non-formal, public and private education. It has 11 MPs and 20 other members from the Ministry of Education (MOE), Ministry of Science and Technology (MOST), Ministry of Health (MOH) and other ministries. Second, and more specific, is the Higher Education Law (HEL) Committee, already mentioned, with 10 MPs and 9 other members. Most specific of all is the Yangon University Renovation Committee with 6 MPs and 10 other members.

It can be seen that all three committees have some preoccupation with higher education. One is institution-specific, one is concerned with the HE sub-sector as a whole, and the NEL covers all education sub-sectors including HE. There will need clearly to be careful coordination in their final analysis and reporting. Fortunately, there are some members who are on each of the three committees.

⁷ Carried out at the request and through the support of the British Council in Myanmar.

⁸ Appendix D

⁹ Several more universities were visited than are mentioned in the TOR

¹⁰ For the seven focal areas, one of which is higher education, see the TOR of the CESR (2012).



But there has also been a Committee concerned with the Private Higher Education Law, whose work is apparently nearly completed. It will be crucial to ensure that its findings are consistent with the on-going work of these other three Committees. Finally, it is important to note that in Myanmar, the vocational education and training sector is considered to be part of higher education. Hence if a Skill and Employment Law is also being developed, it is crucial that this too is consistent with the decisions of these other four Committees.

There is therefore a considerable coordination challenge ahead. The three consultation and review processes mentioned at the beginning of this report will need to be seized of the outcomes of these different Parliamentary Committees.

This short paper will review a number of the other key challenges facing the higher education sector as they appeared in a series of visits to universities in several parts of the country. Beyond the written sources already mentioned, the paper draws on very open discussions with students, senior staff, both current and retired in a range of higher education settings, including TVET, but all in a very short period. Meetings were both formal and informal. In some cases it has been possible to maintain contact with senior staff by email after leaving Myanmar in mid-February.

The Multi-Ministry Higher Education System

One of the first impressions in visiting universities in Myanmar is that they fall under 13 different ministries. Numerically, the highest number of these are linked to the MOE (64), but there are almost as many linked to MOST (61). The MOH has 15, and the other 10 ministries have between one and five. Although the total number of universities for which the MOE and MOST are responsible is very similar, it should be noted that some 60% of all enrolled students are in distance education (CESR, 2013: 8). As the two main distance education universities (in Mandalay and Yangon) are both under the MOE, then clearly the majority of the 470, 912 students, as of 2012, fall formally under the MOE. Indeed the MOE is responsible for some 77% of all HE enrolments (CESR, 2013:6).

We shall return to the issue of distance education below, but it is worth noting at this point that the overwhelming numbers of distance students is just one of the features that makes Myanmar highly unusual. While the temptation may be to deal in higher education reform with regular, face-to-face students, it must be remembered that the distance education community of students in Myanmar does contain many students, who simply cannot afford full-time higher education, as well as a good number of students who could have attended full-time but wanted to combine work and study.

As my terms of reference had suggested that I visit three universities, one under the MOE, one under the MOH, and one under the Ministry of Agriculture, it was clear from the outset that there was a potential issue around the multi-ministry university system. However, there was very little discussion during this visit about the importance of re-integrating the fragmented universities into a single system. Universities under MOST, MOH and Ministry of Agriculture and Irrigation (MAI) had become used to relating to constituencies in their respective ministries which were much closer in disciplinary terms to their own professional backgrounds. Thus, for several university rectors, this issue of re-integration seemed far from being the first priority in their list of reform issues.

In this respect, it is interesting to note, however, that the draft 'Recommendations' from the NLD Education Committee do assume that there will need to be a change:

'[Among the government ministries] only the MoE shall be associated with educational institutions (universities, vocational education, basic education, early childhood education, etc)'. (Thein Lwin, 2013: 6)

By contrast, the CESR recognises in one of its recommendations the importance of developing in the future an options paper that 'addresses the viability of having one ministry only responsible for the higher education sub-sector' (CESR, 2013: 13).



Although I met with rectors from universities which were linked with six different ministries, the issue of re-integration did not emerge as a key element in their agendas, as mentioned above. This is not to say that rectors and others were not conscious of the political reasons that had encouraged the original fragmentation. But since then, a variety of new factors had suggested some advantages of links to professional sectoral ministries.

In comparative terms, it may be useful to look at the example of China, across the border from Myanmar, in relation to multi-ministry systems. There has been in China a long tradition of universities being linked to particular ministries other than Education. But even in 2013, no fewer than 25 out of 98 central universities were under ministries other than Education.¹¹ It would be valuable to examine the experience of China in this regard.

Gender Balance in Higher Education

One of the other striking features of Myanmar's HE system is what the CESR has termed the 'extent of the gender imbalance'.¹² According to CESR, in 2012, no fewer than 60% of all HE students and 82.6% of all staff were female (CESR, 2013: 8). Visits to universities confirm this. Sometimes almost the entire cohort of senior staff appears to be female, even in technological universities. The CESR notes correctly that the reasons for this situation have not been systematically researched (CESR: *ibid*). But apart from the universities that recruit only male students such as the Defence and Maritime, there are clearly issues connected with salary and with the need to migrate for work that are related to this now established pattern.

Revitalisation of Learning in Higher Education

This is one of the recurring themes in most of the current reviews of higher education in Myanmar. Thus 'the promotion of education quality' in no less than 12 different dimensions is one of the key issues in the terms of reference for the 'Renovation, Construction and Promotion of Educational Quality of University of Yangon'. Equally, the recognition of 'the continued emphasis on rote learning' is picked out in the IIE report (IIE, 2013: 19). Also in the CESR, there is a recognition of the 'almost ubiquitous extent of what is commonly termed "parrot" (rote) learning' (CESR: 24). But in the NLD 'Recommendations', it is noteworthy that at each of the main levels of education (primary and lower secondary, upper secondary, and university) there is a strong emphasis on the need for a reformed system of 'teaching, learning and assessment'. This makes the point that the learning system in higher education has been reinforced by earlier stages of education. But it is noteworthy that the 'Recommendations' emphasise that 'Student assessment criteria shall not be based on rote learning and memorisation. The student shall be assessed according to his or her individual quality of academic work and research' (Thein Lwin, 2013: 7).

What is not sufficiently underlined in some of these reviews is just how powerfully this minimalist learning system has become established across higher education, including both face-to-face and distance education. The system of single 'sacred texts' per subject, in English, is reinforced by handbooks, study guides, student guides, answer-books, and private tuition. There are some slight differences in the various universities, but the very poor quality of English across the education system has re-emphasised the importance of memorisation. For the majority of current students who are in distance education, as for those in face-to-face instruction, the key text is the handbook or study guide. This is the essential toolkit to be memorised. In the words of one informant:

These handbooks – for they are the real textbooks – are identified by subject discipline and by year and by university. The students don't need to use library books nor do they use reference books. It is not

¹¹ I am grateful to Dr. Yang Rui of Hong Kong University's Comparative Education Research Centre for this information.

¹² Of course in many university systems there is an entirely opposite gender imbalance, especially at the highest levels of academic staff.



necessary. They actually can't read the textbooks; they are too difficult. The handbook has summarized the essential facts. (Rector to KK, February 2013)

The culture of studying without recourse to libraries, textbooks or face-to-face instruction is very evident in the two very large University of Distance Education systems, where only ten days of targeted advice, if that, is necessary prior to the crucial examinations.¹³ But it is embedded in most of the higher education system. Students in the regular universities have said that they would not need to go to classes, were it not for the roll call. Some have admitted that 'they got a degree, but didn't know anything'.

Undoubtedly, the necessity of memorisation is intensified by the weakness of very many students in English. Even in the universities with the top performing students it is possible to visit classes where the textbook on the student desks is in English, the Powerpoint on the board is in English, and the lecture is being conducted mostly in Myanmar. In recognition of this situation, there was a decision in 2012 to provide summaries in Myanmar in the textbooks for the Yangon University of Distance Education.

It is worth underlining the pervasiveness of this very widespread 'culture of learning'. Not least because major investment in new libraries, internet and other resources may risk being ineffective if this minimalist approach to learning is not itself tackled. It should be recognised that while the system has poor learning outcomes, it is from the students' point of view relatively low cost. Indeed, it is in some sense a reflection of a student body that has for years been dispersed from campus life, and is often looking for ways of combining work with getting a qualification, at minimum cost and minimum time.

Certainly, pedagogy cannot be changed by law. But there will need to be very powerful incentives to promote the kinds of quality outcomes that are described in the NLD's 'Recommendations',¹⁴ in the discussions about quality in the CESR, or in discourse about 'learner-centred approaches' of the MOE.¹⁵ But complex quality assurance systems are currently a world away from the realities of teaching and learning in Myanmar.

Before leaving this enormous reform challenge in the learning system of higher education, it may be worth referring to just one example of a university that seems, at first glance, to operate in a fundamentally different way. This is Yezin Agricultural University (YAU). Its library seems to be heavily used; the students have access to the internet on campus; the staff and the students both report that there is no private tuition. The university appears to have many links and partnerships with international agricultural centres and universities. Many staff have doctorates from overseas universities. Perhaps most importantly, it is residential, and all the students are on the compound.

In addition, it has had a very particular history right back to 1924 when it was the Myanmar Agricultural College and Research Institute (YAU, 2013). But after a series of different incarnations as a constituent college, a faculty of agriculture, an institute of agriculture regarded as a university under the MOE, it has been a university under the Ministry of Agriculture and Irrigation for 20 years. However, many other universities have had a similar history of frequent institutional change. So that may not be the principal reason for its having an apparently very different culture of learning.

¹³ There is in fact a very rich learning kit in principle available for University of Distance Education students including for each subject a study guide, textbook, CD, and MP3, as well as programmes on TV and radio.

¹⁴ For instance the NLD report (p.5) describes this ideal at the upper secondary level: 'Teachers shall evaluate the capacity of each student and guide them to create impact. The teacher shall mentor the student and help develop self-study skills. Freedom of thought and freedom of academic expression shall be encouraged. Ideas and thoughts vary according to individual values and interpretation, and thus analytical and well-structured arguments shall be encouraged. Coherence and reasoning shall take precedence over 'right' or 'wrong.'"

¹⁵ Thus, it is claimed that 'Learner-centred approaches, such as problem-based learning, project-based learning and fieldwork were incorporated into the learning experience of higher education students; (MOE, 2012: 27).



In concluding this short section on the learning culture, we should acknowledge that Myanmar is far from unique in having such a minimalist approach to learning through rote memorisation. It seems possible, however, that the absence of student-centred learning and of the encouragement of critical thinking is accentuated by the lack of academic and institutional autonomy more generally in the higher education system. To this we turn after a brief word on the social dimensions of student life.

Autonomy in Social Learning: Towards ‘A Vibrant Campus Culture’?

For many years, the student bodies have been dispersed and with few exceptions such as YAU, just mentioned, the students have had to find accommodation in shared private rooms and ‘hostels’.¹⁶ With several of the universities allocated premises far outside city or town centres, there is a considerable expense for students regularly to reach the universities, as their cheapest accommodation is in the towns. In a real sense therefore even many of the regular universities have become ‘distance universities’.

Paradoxically, these regular access problems and the need to cover the costs of regular meals away from the cheaper food of the towns has led to some students preferring to join one of the large Universities of Distance Education, even when they had the grades to attend one of the good day universities. There was then minimal pressure to be physically present on campus, except in the case of science students who are encouraged to attend on some weekends.

Even though some of the initial pressures to encourage distance learning were political, over the subsequent decades, many students have actually preferred to follow the distance modality over the regular university, and perhaps especially some young men. They could then combine a full-time job with the absolutely minimal requirements of attendance at the distance universities. Interestingly, the gender ratio in distance education is more balanced than in regular universities where women outnumber men by two to one.

Despite dispersed and often distant accommodation, there are some student societies in face-to-face universities, but most of these are organised by discipline, by language, or even by religion or region of the country. There are few if any university-wide student associations. No student newspapers. There are very few international students, and almost no student travel or exchange. Equally, there is no participation by students in university committees or councils. The minimalist culture of learning discourages involvement in such commitments. Even in regular universities where class attendance is meant to be not less than 75%, it is widely acknowledged that it is often as low as 50%. In other words, just like library use, attendance at lectures is not seen to be essential given the crucial role of the single handbook per subject.

In terms of formal fees student costs are very small, but there are major additional costs to study, with the need to buy guides and handbooks, and in some universities hire older ‘student guides’ and pay for private tuition. One rector calculated that these latter costs would add 125,000 kyats to the formal fee of 800 kyats.

Despite the discussion amongst some of the members of the HEL Committee about the desirability of a ‘vibrant campus culture’, and ‘campus life’,¹⁷ and despite the occasional seminar on the ‘promotion of the quality of students’ and the aspiration to develop ‘the academic and social environment conducive to professional and total development of graduates’,¹⁸ the realities of student life are currently a world away from these ambitions. Changing the social environment of students will be almost as challenging as changing the minimalist learning system. Indeed, currently these two elements reinforce each other; student societies and student activities are not essential to securing a degree or a certificate in the minimum time possible.

¹⁶ The former hostel accommodation for students in the Universities of Yangon and Mandalay has long since been reallocated for the use of staff, or occasionally for graduate students if they participate in tutoring

¹⁷ Tin Hlaing. 2013. Suggestions for the draft of a new higher education law of Myanmar.

¹⁸ Terms of reference for the Renovation, Construction and Promotion of Educational Quality of University of Yangon. n.d.



Academic Autonomy

As we move now to what was a central issue for many of our discussions about the reform of higher education, it must be noted that the more thoughtful responses recognised that there could not just be change just at the level of higher education:

We need capacity building; academic autonomy; more time for students; better student teacher ratios; financial autonomy; and we need access overseas; there is a need for sincerity in reporting and sincerity in analyzing and for speaking our minds. But we need to emphasise the critical importance of change in BASIC education. Otherwise these won't work. It is too late if you start in HE. (Rector to KK, February 2013)

This emphasises, of course, the need for the work of the Parliamentary National Education Committee to go hand in hand with the work of the Higher Education Committee. A similar point was also made about the higher education sub-sector itself: that it would be inappropriate to focus a whole series of changes just on one or on a tiny group of 3-4 centres of excellence, leaving the rest of the constituency till later on.

The term 'academic autonomy' was frequently mentioned in interviews and the related reports, but the range of what was covered by this umbrella term was very large.¹⁹ Universities have 'no authority on appointments, travel, research, promotion, curriculum development, disciplinary association conference, even the planning of a golden anniversary university conference' (Senior staff comment). Another rector noted that there was no authority to appoint even lower order maintenance staff, even a window-cleaner. Everything had to go up 'through proper channels'. Even when a member of staff is invited to a prestigious conference in the region, the conference date may have passed before any decision is taken 'on high'. If someone is allowed to travel to a meeting, the passport has to be returned afterwards.

Academic autonomy meant different things to different people. Academics were in fact civil servants but many were not in fact anxious to change this status. For others, academic freedom meant a change to the situation in which they had almost no free time. For staff in regular arts & science universities there were major demands on their time from the several cycles of assessment, intensive 10-day preparation, related to the requirements of the distance university students. This was compulsory for them. So their concern was not so much academic freedom, but they had almost no free time at all during the year.

It may appear strange that on the one hand there is a learning culture which might seem to make minimal demands on teaching staff in terms of student-centred learning, small group work, curriculum development, research supervision etc and yet on the other hand there is a very great deal of work related to assessment and certification.

Academic freedom is often presented in rather general terms without a direct relationship with multiplicity of different processes which at the moment have to be put up 'through proper channels'. Indeed the very first lines of the NLD Education Committee's 'Recommendations' claim: 'The goal of Myanmar Education Policy is based on educational freedom, in order to increase opportunities for learning, raise the secondary school completion rates and the quality of education' (Thein Lwin: 1). And it goes on later to state that: 'There shall be academic freedom in research and freedom to publish the findings. Universities shall have the freedom to engage with different universities and institutions around the world for educational purposes' (Thein Lwin: 7). But the same 'Recommendations' suggest that although different university departments should write their own curriculum, they also say that the university's council should compile a draft curriculum, and then send it up to the Universities Central Council for approval. Surprisingly, the NLD Committee consider that on the very critical language question, which we have noted is a key issue in the culture of learning, the 'Medium of instruction shall be decided independently by each university [e.g. English, Myanmar, etc.]' (ibid.).

¹⁹ Interestingly, the term 'academic autonomy' does not appear in the terms of reference of the Committee for the Renovation of University of Yangon.



When so many dimensions of individual academic and wider institutional autonomy have been restricted over such a long period, discussions about how to move towards a policy regime of greater autonomy have scarcely begun. On the one hand there is a view that it is a time for a bold and comprehensive approach; but at the same time it is recognised that despite the attractions of rapid change, it will need to be a question of making haste slowly. Even the CESR, which has thought about this issue of institutional autonomy more than most, is cautious in its first rapid assessment report: 'HEIs are not all ready for institutional autonomy - indeed some may feel more at ease in not having it' (CESR, 2013: 17). Hence they proceed to recommend a pilot project for bringing in gradually greater institutional and financial autonomy in a small number of the strongest HEIs.

Towards Greater Financial Autonomy?

HEIs have been formally without financial autonomy since the 1970s. However, from 1998, there has been the possibility of a measure of income generation through what are termed Human Resource Development (HRD) courses in most if not all HEIs under the MOE. These often take place early in the day, before regular working hours, or after work. As the CESR notes, the scale and the income associated with what are in effect parallel courses are not well-known. But in at least one major university, the HRD numbers in masters and diploma courses are almost 50% of the entire university enrolment.²⁰ Also, CESR notes that the total number of HRD courses are 195 as compared with regular courses which are 215.

HEIs under other ministries may deal with income generation in different ways. For instance, the medical universities acknowledge that involvement in private practice can compensate staff for there not being income generation from the parallel HRD courses. By contrast, the universities under MOST have generally not been involved in this form of income generation, but at least two of the major institutions under that Ministry are currently planning for substantial income-generating HRD courses.

Beyond HRD, there are opportunities for income generation through private tuition in many HEIs. But again the scale of this, as in so many other systems of 'shadow education', is not well known. However, what both the popularity of the HRD parallel courses and private tuition testify to is a huge demand for certification, often combined with working. This is also evident in the range of completely private providers, offering courses that are attested by foreign bodies whether in the UK or in Australia.

Further, there is some discussion of the potential of the private sector, alumni gifts, public private partnerships, and funds from overseas research bodies. But there are currently few formal incentives for private sector involvement in the public higher education sector. Again, Yezin Agricultural University appears to be unusual in attracting scholarship funds from foreign multinationals as well as from Myanmar's domestic private sector. Research partnerships and internships for the private sector are also underway.

Before leaving the issue of financial autonomy, it is worth underlining the point that Myanmar's planned approach towards technical and vocational education and training (TVET) – which is seen as part of higher education - is strongly influenced by what is the Swiss dual system of vocational training where students/apprentices divide their time progressively between the private sector (workplace) and the classroom. This has been illustrated by the Swiss Centre for Vocational Training in Yangon since the 1990s. As in Switzerland, it is now planned that those in vocational tracks in Myanmar nationally can connect with higher education if their talents and interests coincide. This is another key feature of Myanmar's higher education.

Review of Options for Greater Autonomy

Greater autonomy is at the centre of the current debate and discourse about higher education in Myanmar, and it may be noted that the NLD Committee's 'Recommendations' for the University are that: 'Universities and colleges in Myanmar shall remain autonomous and be managed by the University Council (UC) of the

²⁰ I owe this to Amanda Selvaratnam of the University of York.



respective universities, rather than any particular government ministry' (Thein Lwin: 6). But in a system that may be characterised as having very little autonomy, what might be the starting point for any plan to increase progressively university autonomy?

It is important to recognise that there is very little written about the relationships amongst the several kinds of increased autonomy that we have been discussing: greater autonomy in student learning; greater academic staff autonomy; more institutional autonomy; and greater financial autonomy. We shall conclude this section with a review of some of these critical inter-relations.

At one level, it should be recognised that many measures of institutional autonomy do not make sense without greater financial autonomy. On the other hand, certain measures of financial autonomy such as HRD classes, private tuition, and private consultancy may directly work against greater autonomy in student learning. Equally, measures designed to provide staff incentives to secure prestigious research moneys may prove much more demanding than staff involvement in the easily accessible private tuition and HRD parallel teaching markets.

If staff time is not to be taken up merely with teaching similar material in three or four different settings, - regular classes, HRD parallel classes, distance education, and private tuition, there will need to be serious incentive systems introduced to encourage research applications, publications, conference travel and fieldwork. But even though the NLD 'Recommendations' affirm that 'University learning shall be founded on academic research', the CESR notes that 'there are at present no incentives for lecturers to conduct research' (CESR: 32).

If on the other hand, a primary concern is to create greater autonomy within the students' currently minimalist 'culture of learning' and to create a more vibrant campus culture, is the starting point a change in the examination process, or is it halls of residence, libraries, and ready access to the internet? These are very different initiatives carrying very different costs.

Consultation, Review and Policy Learning

We stated at the beginning of this short report that there are three review and consultation processes currently underway, linked to the NLD's 'Education Policy Recommendations', to the seven domains of the CESR's first phase, and to the Higher Education Law (HEL) Committee. The first two of these are already engaged in a series of regional and national consultations; and it can be assumed that within the higher education area, the focus will be on the stated sub-themes of each. In the case of the NLD's 'Recommendations', these are: Management & Planning; Curriculum; Faculty; and Teaching, Learning and Assessment. In the CESR's summary of priority areas for HEIs, the domains are: Need for a vision; Coordination & Planning; Structure; Governance & Management; Finance & Private Sector Investment; and Quality Assurance. Given that both these two processes are concerned with the whole of the education system, and not just with higher education, there will inevitably be a need to prioritise and to focus within these key areas of higher education. In the consultation process, it will be entirely possible that concerns from the public may not be with greater autonomy, but rather with greater access and with the links between higher education and employment.

The third review and consultation process via study tours for members of HEL is getting underway at the very beginning of May 2013, and they too have a rich agenda of concerns even if there is not yet any draft from their current Committee deliberations. No less that 16 'areas of focus' have been identified for these study tours. Many of these are directly related to the concerns we have discussed – such as university management and finance; staff and research incentives; teaching and learning resources; academic and social environments for student development.²¹

²¹ See for fuller detail, 'UK HE Study Tour for Myanmar Parliamentarians', British Council, Yangon.



The key challenge of any study tour circles around policy insights, policy borrowing and policy learning. Whether in Australia, India, Thailand or the UK, the study team will be confronted with what may seem mature systems for quality assurance, assessment of research excellence, and teaching and learning. Hopefully, the study processes will also pay attention to the history of higher education reforms in the four case study countries, recognising how much that is now regarded as part of the HE landscape was simply not in place 20 or 30 years ago.

Successful study tours revolve around policy insights rather than policy borrowing or policy transfer. So the issue is less one of sourcing models of quality assurance, research assessment, or qualification frameworks. Rather, it is to encourage a process of policy learning whereby insights gathered abroad can fit into a process of local learning. For this to happen, there needs to be an awareness of 'best practice' in some of these domains within Myanmar, and a series of strong mechanisms for adapting rather than adopting insights from abroad that resonate with the best of local traditions. This is a tall order, and not least as the study tours will have been exposed to four rather different external traditions of higher education.

Some of these generative ideas from other traditions may reinforce themes that are emerging in the Committee for Higher Education Law; others relating for example to pedagogy may not be appropriate for including in formal legal frameworks. But they may, nevertheless, support emerging initiatives for reform of teaching and learning in Myanmar such as we noted in Yezin Agricultural University.

By the time these three streams of review and consultation come back together in late June or, more likely, early July 2013, there can then be a well-informed national policy dialogue around higher education reform. But carrying these insights into practice may well require policy learning by a more powerful higher education commission or coordinating body than is presently evident in Myanmar's higher education landscape.

Towards Some Initial Policy Recommendations for Higher Education

There are already embedded in this short report a number of preliminary recommendations. It is entirely appropriate that these recommendations are marked as preliminary and tentative, since they emerge from a review process of just over a week of intensive visits and conversations. The very much longer period of analysis by the CESR and by the NLD Education Committee must be borne in mind. However, for what they are worth, the following recommendations for further reflection are offered, drawing particularly on a comparative and international education perspective.

Recognise the mutually reinforcing nature of the present system

The present HE system is extremely low cost, and its key components reinforce each other. No single initiative is likely to change this, whether in campus life, examination reform, staff autonomy, or institutional autonomy. HE reform will need to impact on many of the different elements of the current system, and hence will involve substantially higher costs. We look in turn at a series of reforms that might impact on each of the key dimensions of the present system, but they will need to be considered as a whole.

Revitalising student life on campus

In approaching this, we should be aware that the majority of the country's students have voted against campus life, by enrolling in one of the two huge distance universities. Arguably, their interest is to secure certification at minimal cost and in minimum time, in ways that allow continuation of work or employment. Changing the requirements for interaction with staff on campus may lead to a reduction in the numbers of distance education students.



For the bulk of undergraduate students who are not currently on campus,²² and not in halls of residence, there will be massive additional costs in recreating student residences, even for a small proportion of students. The four study tours will reveal many different approaches to the provision of student accommodation, including by both the public and the private sector.

Vibrant campus culture is not derived from a single element such as residences. But it could include the much more complex issues of student elections to representative bodies, student participation in university committees, student connections to political parties, student media, student travel, the role of international students, access to wifi and social media. On either side of Myanmar there are countries which illustrate very different dimensions of this. In China, there are student residences and a very powerful culture of student learning, but very little interest by students in politics. In Bangladesh, a highly politicised student culture with political parties closely connected to students.

Staff Salaries

The currently very low level of staff salaries is one explanation for the unique gender balance in favour of women in Myanmar's universities. These low salary levels are also the reason that many staff secure additional income from Human Resource Development (HRD) parallel courses, or from private tuition. Thus it can be seen that changing salary levels could impact not only the gender balance but also on the parallel systems of higher education in HRD and tuition.

On the other hand, there will be little hope of making many of the current staff 'research-active' unless they have sufficient salary to encourage them to undertake research, in addition to teaching.

Equally, if the intention is to create an increasing number of 'research universities', the incentive to carry out research, often for no extra income, has to outweigh the attractions of doing a series of consultancies. The promotion systems have to reinforce research productivity rather than engagement in HRD or consultancy. Similarly, salaries have to be sufficient so that staff are ready to take on the supervision of doctoral students rather than doing consultancies.

So again the salary issue has implications for many other dimensions.

Impacting on the Culture of Learning

This is one of the most demanding areas for possible intervention. The current system has developed over the last 40-50 years, and is powerfully embedded in schools as in higher education. It is focused around the single 'sacred text' per subject, and the memorisation of answers in a language, English, in which the majority of students have inadequate skills. Reforming this system-wide phenomenon has implications for examination reform, but equally for the reform of language policy.

There are of course compelling reasons for maintaining English as the 'gold standard'²³ for higher education, but there are very substantial costs for this in a nation which has shifted its position on English so dramatically over the past 40 years. A nation of 60 million people might want to reflect on how nations as small as Denmark (five million) can offer the majority of its degrees in Danish while ensuring that English as a subject is so effectively taught.

Equally, in respect of the learning culture, reinforced by the examination and tutorial system, there are very major costs involved in changing examinations to be more challenging to students. These have implications for capacity building in the examination bodies, as well as with teachers, and with text books. A move

²² There are research students currently residing on the campuses of the Universities of Mandalay and Yangon, but no under-graduates. Students are however on campus in Yezin Agricultural University.

²³ President Julius Nyerere was persuaded that English needed to be retained at university in Tanzania, so that what he called the 'gold standard' was secured.



towards more critical thinking in examinations is easily said but is intimately related to many other dimensions of the system.

Arms-length Funding, Quality Assurance and Qualification Bodies

There are good reasons for there to be bodies between universities and the government which take responsibility for funding, quality and qualifications. Such bodies are increasingly common. But there are also good reasons for Myanmar to proceed more slowly when it comes to such bodies. They have very major implications for capacity building and for the introduction of dedicated units in the higher education institutions which take responsibility for these new demands. Often they are based on developed systems of peer review which, again, can be very demanding in terms of staff time.

What may be useful is to be clear about the existing, internal systems for the evaluation of quality, for example, and to explore ways in which, at relatively low cost, these can be made more robust.

It should be noted that at present there are very powerful incentives for staff not to fail students, and not to pay attention to the 75% rule for attendance in class. The evaluation of their own performance as staff may relate to the success of their students in the examinations.

The Role of the Private Sector

It is interesting that the legal situation for private HE bodies appears to be being expedited more rapidly than the legislation for the public HE sector. There are however a series of areas where the private sector should be strongly encouraged to be involved. One very obvious area is in the dual system of vocational training, where, as we have noted, there is a strong interest in Myanmar in developing a local version of the dual system. The Swiss Centre for Vocational Training in Yangon is an illustration of this.

The private sector could also be involved, as in the UK, in the provision of student accommodation at rates parallel to the public sector.

As mentioned above, there may soon be legally accessible private universities in Myanmar. These may include bodies with links to home universities in Australia, US, UK and elsewhere. It will be very important that the quality of Myanmar universities is increased prior to any such situation of alternative provision.

Shortcuts and Longer Cuts in Higher Education Reform

Daw Aung San Suu Kyi talked in the London Policy Dialogue meeting of 9th May 2013 of the importance of a 'shortcut to an education system that will enable us to face the 21st century and centuries to come'. She also underlined the recreation of campus life as her first priority for HE reform.²⁴ And she told us in the UK 'to tell us what we should do' to find this shortcut.

The burden of this report, however, is that Myanmar's academics, policymakers and politicians are not so much asking Australia, India, Thailand and the UK what they should do, but rather what they in Myanmar can learn from these four very different higher education policy environments. This is precisely Aung San Suu Kyi's own message about learning also: 'Now we have to learn all over again. We have to learn not only from you (in the UK) but from other countries in the world who have managed to change their education systems'.

On the British side, there will of course be a good deal of interest in re-establishing partnerships with the universities of Myanmar, and with other parts of its higher education system. It will be very important to ensure, however, that any new partnerships are not a distraction from the essential reforms in higher education. Partnerships, therefore, which offer the opportunity to explore via one-year masters degrees the

²⁴ Aung San Suu Kyi 2013 'Keynote address', May 9th 2013



pros and cons of the quality assurance and qualification systems of the UK and Australia could be very valuable. Equally, the attachment of British staff (perhaps retired) in initiatives for examination reform, English language teaching, and distance teaching could all be invaluable.

In the very near-term, one of the greatest contributions of the British resource could be to support Myanmar in drawing together the different strands of analytical work going on at the moment, including the NLD and CESR consultations, as well as the insights from the four study tours. A policy dialogue meeting in 'Tying the Strands together' could provide an invaluable opportunity for genuine policy learning.

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APPENDIX A

Study tour programme

Wednesday 1 May, Edinburgh		
0945	Lucy Young Head of Education British Council Scotland	Introduction to Higher Education, Scotland
1100	Alastair Sim Chief Executive Universities Scotland	Universities Scotland is the representative body of Scotland's 19 higher education institutions. They develop policy on behalf of the university sector and campaign publicly on higher education issues.
1145	Mark Batho Chief Executive Scottish Funding Council	The Scottish Further and Higher Education Funding Council (SFC) is the national, strategic body that is responsible for funding teaching and learning provision, research and other activities in Scotland's 37 colleges and 19 universities and higher education institutions www.sfc.ac.uk/
1330	Michael Russell MSP Cabinet Secretary for Education and Lifelong Learning Scottish Government	Michael Russell was elected to the Scottish Parliament in 1999 as a Regional Member for the South of Scotland, was a founding member of the Parliamentary Bureau and then served as Shadow Minister for Children, Education and Culture. He was re-elected for the same region in 2007 when he was appointed Minister for Environment. He was Minister for Culture, External Affairs and the Constitution from February until December 2009 when he was appointed Education Secretary. http://www.scotland.gov.uk/About/People/14944/Scottish-Cabinet/michaelrussellmsp
1415	Susan Whittaker Team Leader, Research and International, Higher Education and Learner Support Division Stephen O'Connor Policy Officer, Funding and Governance, Higher Education and Learner Support Division	Scottish Government The devolved government for Scotland is responsible for health, education, justice, rural affairs, and transport. The Scottish Government was established in 1999 following the first elections to the Scottish Parliament. The current administration was formed after elections in May 2011 http://www.scotland.gov.uk/Topics/Education
1500	Robin Parker President National Union of Students Scotland	The National Union of Students (NUS) is a voluntary membership organisation for students. Their role is to promote, defend and extend the rights of students and develop and champion strong students' unions. http://www.nus.org.uk/en/nus-scotland/



PARTNERS FOR CHANGE

Thursday 2 May, Edinburgh		
0930	Professor Stephen Hillier Vice Principal International	The University of Edinburgh, founded in 1583, is ranked 5 in the UK and 32 in the world (THE 2012-13). It is a member of the Russell Group, the League of European Research Universities, and Universitas 21
1045	Round table discussion	<p>Governance & Structures (including committees, finance, Colleges/Schools, planning)</p> <p>Academic Staff experience (including career progression, REF, Institute for Academic Development)</p> <p>Student experience (including EUSA, The Student Experience Project, Teaching & Learning)</p> <p>Quality Assurance</p>
1300	Lunch	With Burmese students, staff and local community
1400	Campus tour, University of Edinburgh	Including visits to library and students' union buildings, accompanied by a student
1900	Dinner	Hosted by University of Edinburgh

Friday 3 May, Glasgow		
1000	Professor Pamela Gillies CBE Principal and Vice Chancellor Glasgow Caledonian University	<p>Glasgow Caledonian University (GCU) is a vibrant, innovative and multi-award winning university. The focus is on employability, leadership and responsibility, enabling graduates to excel both locally and internationally, widening access for talented individuals regardless of their backgrounds.</p> <p>GCU has three academic schools offering high quality teaching, innovative facilities and specialist areas of study.</p> <p>School of Engineering and Built Environment School for Business and Society School of Health and Life Sciences</p> <p>www.gcu.ac.uk/</p>
1100	Campus tour	
1200	Lunch	With members of GCU Executive Board
1230	Student recruitment and experience	<p>Trish Boyle Student Experience Project Manager</p> <p>Lyndsey Loudon Team Leader International Support Services</p> <p>Eleanor Wilson Director of UK Recruitment & Outreach</p>



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1315	University Policy and Governance at GCU	Jan Hulme University Secretary
1500	Aileen Ponton Chief Executive Scottish Credit and Qualifications Framework Partnership	The Scottish Credit and Qualifications Framework promotes lifelong learning in Scotland. The Framework supports everyone in Scotland, including learning providers and employers, by: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ helping people of all ages and circumstances to get access to appropriate education and training so they can meet their full potential; ■ helping employers, learners and the general public to understand the full range of Scottish qualifications, how qualifications relate to each other and to other forms of learning, and how different types of qualification can contribute to improving the skills of the workforce.

Tuesday 7 May, London

1030	Professor James Penner Head of Law/Vice-Dean University College London Tour of UCL Faculty of Law	UCL was established in 1826 to open up education in England for the first time to students of any race, class or religion. UCL was also the first university to welcome female students on equal terms with men. Academic excellence and conducting research that addresses real-world problems inform their ethos to this day. http://www.ucl.ac.uk/laws/academics/penner
1200	Professor Paul Webley Director and Principal SOAS	School of African and Oriental Studies reception SOAS, University of London is the only Higher Education institution in Europe specialising in the study of Asia, Africa and the Near and Middle East. Combining language scholarship, disciplinary expertise and regional focus, SOAS has the largest concentration in Europe of academic staff concerned with Africa, Asia and the Middle East. http://www.soas.ac.uk/
1300	Lunch with invited University of London and SOAS guests	
1400	Dr Richard Alexander Lecturer in Financial Law	
1900	Dinner hosted by University of London	Number Twelve restaurant 12 Upper Woburn Place London WC1H 0HX http://www.numbertwelve-restaurant.co.uk/



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Wednesday 8 May, London		
0930	Interview with Times Higher Education	Dr Myo Myint Kevin Mackenzie
1100	Discussion of university governance, leadership and management in the UK	A graduate college of the University of London founded in 1902, as a teacher training college in London, the IOE is now a world-class research and teaching institution. Mike Winter Director of International Affairs Dr Mary Stiasny Pro-Director: Learning and International Sir Peter Scott Professor of Higher Education Studies
1400	University of London International Programmes	Professor Jonathan Kydd, Dean Stephanie Wilson, Head of Corporate Performance and Quality Tangjie Ward, Head of Institutions
1415	Interview, BBC World TV and BBC Myanmar	Dr Myo Myint Kevin Mackenzie
1600	Professor Sir Adrian Smith Vice-Chancellor, University of London	Room 129 Senate House
1700	House of Lords	Tea and a tour of the House, with Lord Alton of Liverpool

Thursday 9 May, London		
0930 - 1700	Myanmar - a new future through higher education? A Myanmar-UK policy dialogue	See separate programme



APPENDIX B

Policy dialogue programme

Myanmar - a new future through higher education? A Myanmar-UK policy dialogue

SENATE HOUSE, UNIVERSITY OF LONDON
THURSDAY 9 MAY 2013, 9.30AM - 5PM

Universities are key pillars supporting a nation's economic, social and industrial transformation at a time of rapid global change. Myanmar's Universities are under pressure to reform and change in a highly complex political environment and their leaders face unprecedented challenges in this new globalised context. In the coming years Myanmar will take up the chair of ASEAN as the region moves closer to economic integration in 2015. This Policy Dialogue looks at what university leadership and autonomy mean in the Myanmar context today and considers how these can be embedded at all levels of Myanmar's evolving institutions. It will explore how the Myanmar-UK partnership can be developed through higher education and how our two higher education systems can build effective linkages.

PROGRAMME

Time	9 May 2013
0900	Registration of delegates
0930	Welcome Address and Keynotes: MC: Kevin Mackenzie, Director British Council Myanmar Sir John Boyd KCMG, Chairman Asia House Daw Aung San Suu Kyi [via video] Prof. Dr. Myo Myint, Deputy Union Minister for Education
1030	Talking Heads/Panel Response: <i>Future direction of Myanmar's higher education sector: opportunities and challenges in revitalizing higher education in Myanmar</i> Chair: Dr Halima Begum, Director Education East Asia, British Council Professor Geoffrey Crossick, Director, AHRC Cultural Value Project Professor Pete Downes, Principal and Vice-Chancellor, University of Dundee <i>The Big Picture:</i> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Myanmar• Policy Insights from English and Scottish systems for re-establishing the Higher Education system in Myanmar.• UK experience of restructuring at system level and reviewing curricula as a result of political or education reforms. Lessons to be learnt from major HE reform and transformations.
1100	Break



1130	<p>Myanmar's HE reform process: Q&A</p> <p>Chair: Dr Halima Begum, Director Education, East Asia, British Council</p> <p>Panel: Myanmar delegation</p>
1200	<p>Economic Prosperity: Role of Universities in Economic Transformation</p> <p>Chair: Professor Jonathan Kydd, Dean, University of London International Programmes</p> <p>Panel: Dr Richard Alexander, Lecturer in Financial Law, SOAS; Sumi Ghose, Director of Cultural Programmes, Asia House; Paul Crook, Consultant, Allen Ovary</p> <p><i>How can universities and government work together to create, productive, and economically competitive future for the Myanmar nation?</i></p> <p><i>What are the roles of public and private sectors?</i></p>
1245	Lunch
1345	<p>University Leadership – what will this involve?</p> <p>Chair: David Lock, Director of International Projects, Leadership Foundation</p> <p>Panel: Justin Watkins, Senior Lecturer in Myanmar, SOAS; Hon. Prof. Dr. Mya Oo, Amyothar Hluttaw (Parliament)</p> <p><i>University leaders are confronting a wide range of issues in order to ensure their institutions' success today and for the future.</i></p> <p><i>How are successful leaders meeting these challenges?</i></p> <p><i>How are they leading for change, developing internationalisation, and balancing the need for strong entrepreneurial links with business and academic integrity?</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Role of universities in building vibrant communities, engagement with wider society, and community well-being.</i> • <i>Global good practice and vision of university governance, regulatory framework, funding and research councils.</i> • <i>Enabling universities to function effectively</i> • <i>Student engagement with education – student centredness and representation in higher education processes</i> <p>With support from Leadership Foundation for Higher Education (www.lfhe.ac.uk).</p>
1445	Break
1515	<p>Session 3 – Plenary:</p> <p>Where are we today and where we aim to be tomorrow? Recommendations for UK-Myanmar strengthening of HE sector in Myanmar</p> <p>Panel: Dr Jo Beall, Director Education and Society, British Council; Professor Kenneth King, School of Education, University of Edinburgh; Daniel Shah, Assistant Director, Policy at Higher Education International Unit; Dr Aung Kyaw Myat, Director General, Ministry of Science and Technology, Myanmar</p>
1645	Closing remarks
1700	Dialogue ends



APPENDIX C

Keynote address by Aung San Suu Kyi

The moves to draft a law on higher education in Burma and to revitalise Rangoon university have to do with much more than mere education. It is really part of our efforts to revitalise and reinvigorate our society. For decades, Burma has suffered from a poor education system and, once the pride of South East Asia, we have now fallen behind all our neighbours. We want to change the situation to give our people pride in themselves and to do that we need to strengthen our education system. We need to produce vigorous young people who are capable of meeting the challenges that our country will have to face in the future.

Our university system has almost been destroyed by half a century of military rule. Campus life ceased to exist several decades ago, and standard of our university education has fallen so low that graduates have nothing except a photograph of their graduation ceremony to show for the years they spent at university. We want to make our academic institutions independent. We want to make them vital and we want to modernise them to be in keeping with the developments of the times. We have to learn from everybody because we have fallen so far behind. We are now planning to send two study groups to the United Kingdom to see how we would be able to revitalise our universities, and to draw up a higher education law that will help us to achieve what our young people have been trying to achieve for decades. A country in which we are capable of carving out our own destiny, because we have been educated, we have been trained, we have been equipped to deal with whatever the future might throw at us.

What we need to learn from you is so much that I will not go into the details now. What I would like to ask of you is to support us in our efforts, to tell us what we should do, to take a shortcut to an education system that will enable us to face the 21st century and centuries to come. At one time the education system in Burma was very closely linked to the education system in Britain. In fact we could say that modern education was introduced to Burma by the British government. Now we have to learn all over again. We have to learn not only from you but from other countries in the world who have managed to change their education systems to deal with the demands of modern times.

Academic freedom, which to you seems natural, is for us a distant dream. Or let me put it this way, it would have been a distant dream but for the changes that took place over the last year. As a member of the legislature I have been appointed to the Chair of the committee for the drafting of the higher education bill as well as the committee for the revitalisation of Rangoon University. I would like to use these opportunities to once again establish Burma on the map of countries with an admirable system of education.

The very first thing we need to do, which perhaps may come to you as a surprise, is to recreate campus life. Our young people have not known campus life for decades. The focus of the military government was on maintaining discipline, not on providing education. Young people gathering at a university campus were considered dangerous. They were looked upon as would-be demonstrators, young troublemakers who would demand the fall of government. Of course, young people like to voice their opinions and also to oppose what governments do if they think that governments are not doing what they should be doing. But to try to destroy campus life in order to keep our young people quiescent is to destroy the future of our country.

There are no residential universities in Burma. Added to this, hostels are not allowed to be built within the vicinity of universities. These are steps deliberately aimed at keeping our young students separated from one another that they might not gather together and become a force for change. Which young people need to be. We need to transform Rangoon University into the kind of institution where young people can learn life skills, social skills, where they can lay the foundations of the kind of destiny they want to carve for themselves and for our nation. Starting with that, we want to provide them with the highest educational standards possible, not just in our region but in the whole world. We have to be ambitious. We have been left so far behind that we have to aim at the highest peak, that we may be able to catch up with our neighbours and with the rest of the world.

I believe that the study tours that are being planned will help our committee to learn what is possible, and how to achieve it. Perhaps I could go further and say that we should also be prepared to achieve what seems impossible now but what we must make possible through our efforts and through your help and support.

Please help us to put Burma back on the map of those countries where education is enjoyed by as many people as possible, and the education that they enjoy is one that will help not just our country but the world to build a happier human society. Thank you.



APPENDIX D

Terms of Reference for Professor King and visit plan

Objective

To provide policy recommendations and advices to University Education Law Drafting Committee for review of the existing law and reform of University Education

Plan of Activity

Meeting with Main Committee and Sub-Committee members of University Education Law Drafting Committee

To visit universities:

Visit Yangon University and meeting with rector, staff – both admin and academic and students (Only post-graduate students are attending in RU – Ministry of Education)

Visit Institute of Medicine in Mandalay and meeting with rector, staff – both admin and academic and students (Under Ministry of Health)

Visit Yezin Agricultural University which is located near Nay Pyi Taw - meeting with rector, staff – both admin and academic and students (Under Ministry of Agriculture)

Meeting with retired professors, lecturers and rectors (10-15 approx)

Literature review on existing university law and proposals for revised law

Coordinate with Comprehensive Education Sector Review Research team

Expected Outcome

Policy recommendations for University Education (Higher Education)

Suggested draft law for University Education

Duration

(February, 2013 - ??)

*Most of the Committee members are in Nay Pyi Taw during parliamentary session – January to March 2013

**Our suggestion is on his arrival he can visit Yangon University first, then come to Nay Pyi Taw for meeting with Committee members and work there. From here, he can visit Yezin University (Day return) and Mandalay Medical Institute.



Plan for Professor King's visit 4 – 17 February 2013

Date	Time	Events
4 Feb	1.45 pm	Arrival to YGN airport and checking into a hotel
	3.00 to 5.00 pm	Meeting with Kevin Mackenzie (Country Director, British Council), David Maynard (Deputy Director, BC) and Maurice Robson (CESR)
	6.30 pm	HE UK Reception to attend with Kevin Mackenzie
5 Feb	All day	Meeting with CESR
6 Feb	Morning	Flight to Naypyidaw
	1.30 pm	Meeting with DASSK and Committee Members in Naypyidaw
	Evening	Fly back to Yangon
7 Feb	10.00 am	Meeting with Rector, staff and students from Yangon Technological University
	2.00 pm	Meeting with Sardar Umar Alam at UNESCO
	Evening	EU Reception at Traders
8 Feb	10.30 am	Meeting with Dr. Thein Lwin and NLD Education Committee
	Afternoon	CESR office (Dr. Thein Lwin will accompany Prof King to CESR to meet Maurice, Tin Tin Shu and U Tin Hla)
	2.00 pm	With U Tin Hlaing School visit, Lumbini School. Tomoko Masuda, JICA
9 Feb	Morning / afternoon	EU meeting on Quality in Higher Education (Traders) KK presentation at 11.00 O.J. Gamache, MIT, at hotel
10 Feb	11:00 am	Appointment with Dr. Justin Watkins (SOAS)



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	Evening	Flight to MDY
11 Feb	10:30 am	Meeting with Mandalay University of Medicine rector, staff and students (Walk around the campus and talk to students)
		Kyaw Swa Win LCCI Classes and MU Campus Tour and Hostels
12 Feb	Morning	Flying to Taunggyi via Heho
	11:00 am	Meeting with Rector, staff from Taunggyi University
	Evening	Flying to Ygn from Taunggyi via Heho
13 Feb	8:30 am	Meeting with Dr. Tin Hlaing
	10:00 am	Meeting with Dr. Tin Tun, Rector, staff and students Ygn University
	12:00 noon	Meeting with Vice-Rector Uni of Distance Learning
	3:00 pm	Meeting with U Than Oo and fellows (Myanmar Academy of Arts and Science) Oh Taw Saung Hlaing Campus
	5:30 pm	Meeting with Khin Lay Myint & former Sithu U Thaw Kaung
14 Feb	Morning	Flight from Ygn to NPT
	2:00 pm	Meeting with Dr. Chan Nyein, Dr. Myo Myint and Dr. Mya Oo
15 Feb	9:00 am	Meeting with Committee members and DASSK
	1:30 pm – 3:30 pm	Meeting with Yezin Rector, staff and students, Dr. King will give a speech on Research and Teaching Methods in HE
	Afternoon	Flying back to Yangon
16 Feb	Morning	Meeting with Umar Alam, UNESCO
	1:00 pm	Meeting with Dr. sc. nat. Karl Kiser from Centre for Vocational Training Myanmar
17 Feb	7.15 am	Flight to UK



APPENDIX E

Aung San Suu Kyi seeks UK help for Burma's universities

By Sean Coughlan

BBC News education correspondent



"Campus life ceased to exist several decades ago," says Aung San Suu Kyi

Nobel Peace Prize winner Aung San Suu Kyi is calling on the UK to help rebuild Burma's universities, which she says were "destroyed" by military rule.

The Burmese opposition leader is using a video message to address a gathering of university leaders in London.

"The focus of the military government was on maintaining discipline, not on providing education," she says.

Burma's university system needs to be "put back on the map" of international higher education, Ms Suu Kyi says.

"Now the standard of our university education has fallen so low that graduates have nothing except a photograph of their graduation ceremony to show for the years they spent at university," she says.

Threats to the regime

Ms Suu Kyi chairs a parliamentary committee drafting laws to reform higher education in Burma.

She says that Burmese higher education has suffered badly from decades of political unrest, with academics and students seen as threats to the regime.



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"Our university system has almost been destroyed by half a century of military rule. Campus life ceased to exist several decades ago," she says.

Ms Suu Kyi says that her country needs to develop a modern, independent university system where academic freedom is guaranteed.

She says: "Academic freedom, which to you seems natural, is for us a distant dream." Campus life needs to be regenerated to encourage young people to meet and share ideas.

"To try to destroy campus life in order to keep our young people quiescent is to destroy the future of our country," Ms Suu Kyi says.

She has been speaking at the end of a study tour of UK institutions by senior Burma representatives, organised by the British Council.

Emphasised long links

While Burma's universities have been isolated, globalisation and international competition in higher education have accelerated.

There are now efforts to reconnect Burma's universities with other countries. Already this year a delegation of United States universities has visited Burma and announced a series of partnerships.

But Ms Suu Kyi has emphasised the long links between Burma and the UK.

"At one time the education system in Burma was very closely linked to the education system in Britain. In fact, we could say that modern education was introduced to Burma by the British government. Now we have to learn all over again.

"We have to learn not only from you but from other countries in the world who have managed to change their education systems to deal with the demands of modern times."



Aung San Suu Kyi calls for help from UK universities

9 May 2013 | By [John Morgan](#)

Nobel Peace Prize winner Aung San Suu Kyi has called on British universities to help remedy the suppression of Burmese universities by the nation's former military regime



Source: [Htoo Tay Zar](#)

The Burmese opposition leader told an event held at the University of London today that there were “no residential universities in Burma”. Campus life had been “destroyed” by the military regime – which ruled Burma between 1962 and 2011 – as it feared gatherings of young people were “dangerous” and would “demand the fall of the government”, she added.

Ms Suu Kyi was speaking, via a specially pre-recorded video message, at a UK-Burma policy dialogue co-hosted by the British Council.

After elections were held in Burma in 2010, a nominally civilian government led by President Thein Sein - who served as a general and then prime minister under the junta - was installed in March 2011.

In 2012 two parliamentary committees were formed, each chaired by Ms Suu Kyi, who leads the opposition National League for Democracy, and tasked with drafting a new law on Burmese higher education, and specifically the revitalisation of the University of Rangoon.

In her address, Ms Suu Kyi, a University of Oxford graduate, said: “The focus of the military government was on maintaining discipline, not on providing education.

“Now the standard of our university education has fallen so low that graduates have nothing except a photograph of their graduation ceremony to show for the years they spent at university.”

Higher education reform was about “much more than mere education. It is really part of our efforts to revitalise and reinvigorate our society,” she said.



She continued: “We want to make our academic institutions independent. We want to make them vital and we want to modernise them to be in keeping with the developments of the times.

“The very first thing we need to do...is to recreate campus life. Our young people have not known campus life for decades...Starting with that, we want to provide them with the highest educational standards possible, not just in our region but in the whole world. We have to be ambitious.”

She appealed for help from British universities to aid education reform and help build “a happier human society”.

The policy dialogue was the culmination of a tour of Scottish and English universities by a Burmese delegation, organised by the British Council.

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