



UNIVERSITY
OF LONDON
INTERNATIONAL
PROGRAMMES

UK-Myanmar Higher Education Partnership: Turning Policy into Action

28-29 October 2013, Yangon, Myanmar

CONFERENCE REPORT



IN PARTNERSHIP WITH:



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Executive Summary

Higher Education sector reform is a key part of plans to redevelop education provision in Myanmar. Three recent initiatives have opened the debate on the future of higher education in the country.

The Comprehensive Education Sector Review (CESR) has completed its initial assessment of national education and is now embarking on a detailed review. A further two parliamentary committees have begun redrafting higher education legislation in Myanmar, and planning for the revitalisation of Yangon University. The National Network for Education Reform has carried out its own consultation and is making policy recommendations.

The reform process in Myanmar is being supported by a series of dialogues and delegation visits. As part of this development, the University of London International Programmes, in collaboration with the British Council, the Quality Assurance Agency (QAA) and the Leadership Foundation for Higher Education (LFHE), hosted the *UK-Myanmar Higher Education Partnership: Turning Policy into Action* event on 28-29 October 2013.

This event featured presentations and discussions on the topics of Leadership, Quality Assurance, Governance and Regulation and Cooperation and Partnerships before drawing out practical measures and solutions to support sector reform.

Context

As part of its historical mission to promote access to higher education and support the development of institutions and higher education capacity throughout the world, the University of London International Programmes has been engaging with the HE sector in the Republic of the Union of Myanmar to support their recent education reform processes. In partnership with the British Council, the Leadership Foundation, the UK Quality Assurance Agency (QAA) and other UK universities, the University of London has recently led a high-level symposium about the UK-Myanmar educational relationship and how policy can be developed into meaningful action.



As part of Myanmar's 30 year plan for the strengthening of their education system, the country is seeking to '[cooperate] with international distance education systems'. In addition, there is an emphasis on promoting the reputation of Myanmar HEIs internationally by increasing the quality of the educational provision and by collaborating with international organisations¹.

One of a number of reform processes currently being conducted within the country, the Comprehensive Education Sector Review (CESR) has progressed to the second 'in-depth analysis' phase and progress with other initiatives, such as revisions to legislation for higher education, is being made.

This symposium in October 2013 built on a considerable amount of work and interaction over the past year. A number of Myanmar parliamentarians conducted a study tour in the UK in May 2013, which culminated in a policy dialogue at Senate House in London on the challenges of higher education reform². This was followed in June 2013 by a second policy dialogue event in Naypyitaw, Myanmar, led by the British Council, entitled *Empowering Higher Education*³, which discussed many issues around higher education such as autonomy and decentralisation of higher education, access, inclusivity and equity and internationalisation.

The latest event, *The UK-Myanmar Higher Education Partnership: Turning Policy into Action* was held on 28-29 October 2013 in Yangon, a joint venture between the University of London International Programmes, the British Council, the Quality Assurance Agency (QAA) and the Leadership Foundation, sought to continue the dialogue with delegates in Myanmar and to consider practical measures and solutions to support sector reform. With this event (and future engagements) helping to build academic

links between institutions in the UK and Myanmar, it is hoped that the University of London can lend support to Myanmar's aspirations to revitalise and empower their higher education system, to increase participation and to build strong international links within the higher education system. This in turn will help contribute to Myanmar's socio-economic goals, and foster greater educational opportunities for its citizens.

Event overview

The aims of *The UK-Myanmar Higher Education Partnership* symposium were to:

- Investigate future directions for higher education in Myanmar from regional and UK perspectives
- Consider practical measures and solutions to support sector reform
- Continue to raise UK awareness of the issues facing Myanmar higher education
- Encourage UK institutional partnerships in developing the Myanmar HE sector
- Bring UK HE expertise into the dialogue currently taking place in Myanmar within the national reform agenda
- Investigate local and regional issues around dual degrees and institutional cooperation, with special focuses on quality assurance, leadership and regulation

The event was attended by around 100 delegates and included the following **Speakers, Chairs** and **Panellists**:

Dr Myo Myint	<i>Acting Union Minister for Education</i>
Dr Zaw Min Aung	<i>Deputy Union Minister for Education</i>
Dr Aung Kyaw Myat	<i>Deputy Union Minister for Science and Technology</i>
Dr Maung Thinn	<i>Rector, Meikhtila University</i>
U Nyi Hla Nge	<i>Chairman, Steering Committee for Yangon and Mandalay Technological University</i>
Dr Khin Naing Oo	<i>Rector, Yangon Institute of Economics</i>
Dr Maung Thein	<i>Executive Member, Myanmar Academy of Technology</i>
Professor Sir Adrian Smith	<i>Vice-Chancellor, University of London</i>
Chris Cobb	<i>Chief Operating Officer, University of London</i>
Dr Edward Harcourt	<i>Pro-Vice-Chancellor (External Engagement), Liverpool John Moores University</i>
Prof Michèle Clarke	<i>Assistant Pro Vice Chancellor (International) Asia, University of Nottingham</i>
Dr Rozilini Fernandez-Cheung	<i>Vice-President, HELP University Malaysia</i>
Professor Jonathan Kydd	<i>Special Advisor, University of London International Programmes</i>
Kevin Mackenzie	<i>Director British Council Myanmar</i>
Susana Galvan	<i>Director Education, British Council Myanmar</i>
Jon Gregson	<i>Head of Knowledge Services, Institute for Development Studies</i>
Tim Gore	<i>Director, Global Networks and Communities, University of London International Programmes</i>
David Lock	<i>Head of International Projects, Leadership foundation for Higher Education</i>
Carolyn Campbell	<i>Head of International Collaboration, Quality Assurance Agency, UK</i>
Nigel Billany	<i>Expert on Strategies to Strengthen Higher Education Institutions</i>
Dr Tangjie Ward	<i>Head, Institutions and Global Development, University of London International Programmes</i>
Laura Tyzack	<i>Public Information Project Manager, University of London International Programmes</i>

Event discussions

The UK-Myanmar Higher Education Partnership: Turning Policy into Action symposium was opened by Kevin Mackenzie, Director of the British Council Myanmar, who encouraged delegates to use the event as a platform for discussion. He expressed a hope that the dialogues would lead to opportunities for partnership development with UK institutions in line with the current reforms and the objectives of the CESR.

Professor Sir Adrian Smith, Vice-Chancellor of the University of London, reflected on the role of higher education in society the first of two opening keynote addresses. He gave an overview of the higher education landscape in the UK and highlighted the University of London's access agenda in providing a context for its involvement in Myanmar.

In the session's second keynote, Dr Myo Myint, Acting Union Minister for Education, highlighted key areas of learning and the need for practical measures to support reform objectives and the future directions of HE in Myanmar. In particular he emphasised the need for socio-economic and administrative reform and a recognition of the educational needs of students. Dr Myint also noted that reform was being harnessed through the work of the CESR and that progress was being made towards a full staged plan for reform of the education sector in Myanmar.

Following this opening session, the event provided delegates with the opportunity to receive presentations on educational leadership; quality assurance; governance and regulation; cooperation and partnerships, and an opportunity to engage with speakers and panellists on these topics (see appendix 1 for the full programme).

1. Leadership

The opening presentation in this session proposed four



key aspects of leadership: self, team, organisation and environment, and opened a discussion of each in the context of institutional vision and strategic direction.

Strong leadership was considered a necessity for the effective reform of the higher education sector. Leaders need to be authentic to earn respect and credibility. Qualifications, ability and personality were considered key factors in appointing an authentic leader, rather than assigning leadership according to the age of the candidate and to years of service. Additional key skills identified for effective leadership included creativity, planning capability, confidence and the ability to form clear policy and motivate staff into carrying this out in practice. It was argued that strong leaders should be able to recognise the achievements of people in their institution, improve communication and be able to work informally while maintaining awareness of the formal structures within higher education. Leaders should also work effectively with teams and provide direction during periods of change. It was suggested that leadership training for current and future leaders within higher education would be useful in the pursuit of these attributes.

Discussions also highlighted how effective leadership was a balance between autonomy and accountability. Questions were raised about how Myanmar could move from the current, fully-centralised system of university leadership, to a structure where universities are fully autonomous. Further comments queried whether an autonomous system was realistic and achievable.

2. Quality Assurance

Delegates heard that quality assurance was important for accountability, and that the difference between quality control and quality assurance needed to be reinforced. A culture of quality needs to be created in universities to drive reforms forward. Two methods to help achieve this include the development of national frameworks for both quality and qualifications. In addition, it was argued that individuals who can manage quality at the institutional level need to be identified – they could help to reinforce a culture of quality in their institutions. It was noted, however, that this would require investment in people and autonomy over staffing to move away from the current system in Myanmar which regularly sees transfers of staff between institutions.

Finally, it was highlighted that a strong quality assurance culture, and particularly an external assessment system, would provide reassurance for institutions' autonomy in the context of the complex ministerial governing structure of higher education in Myanmar.



Delegates were asked to consider the six fundamental questions of quality and consider the responses for universities in Myanmar:

1. What are you trying to do?
2. Why are you trying to do it?
3. How are you doing it?
4. Why are you doing it that way?
5. Why is it the best way of doing it?
6. How do you know it works?

3. Governance and Regulation

In UK higher education governing bodies are *"unambiguously and collectively responsible for overseeing the institution's activities, determining its future direction and fostering an environment in which the institutional mission is achieved and the potential of all learners is maximised. The governing body shall ensure compliance with the statutes, ordinances and provisions regulating the institution and its framework of governance and, subject to these, it shall take all final decisions on matters of fundamental concern to the institution."*⁴

Strong governance is vital to underpin trust and confidence in an institution. Delegates heard that this is achieved through being clear, transparent and having separate strategic and operational plans. It was highlighted that strong governance was also important in maintaining the balance between autonomy and accountability during periods of transition. In addition, governance and quality assurance were essential elements of effective international partnerships.



Good governance should support a framework that is sufficiently flexible and allows for evolution to ensure it is fit for purpose. 'Buffer', or intermediary, organisations were discussed as a possible option which for consideration in the context of Myanmar higher education (UK examples given included the Higher Education Funding Council for

England and the Scottish Funding Council). Discussions also considered the importance of stakeholders, partners and students in ensuring effective governance.

4. Cooperation and Partnerships

This session considered different models of partnership, including those related to research, teaching and learning. It was argued that partnerships should be a reciprocal and mutually beneficial process for both parties.

In the experience of UK panellists, research partnerships were initiated either through a strategic ('top down') approach, or through individual collaboration, a 'bottom up' approach. Teaching and learning partnerships tended to be established for specific purposes, including transnational education (TNE), joint and dual degree offerings, PhD training programmes, institutional and governmental collaboration, energy and agriculture, English and teacher training, and for sharing best practice.

It was noted that partnerships need to be nurtured from inception in order to build trust between partners and develop the relationship. This would require an investment of time and resources in addition to a measure of perseverance from both parties. It was noted that although some collaboration between UK and Myanmar institutions currently takes place, improving student exchange programmes could help to further increase cooperation and improve partnerships.

The session also identified differences in approach to partnerships between universities in the public and private sector – there tends to be more flexibility within the latter. However, there remains a strong need for collaboration and development in the public sector to ensure there is not an exodus of elite students from the public to private institutions.

Practical measures

Delegates formed discussion groups to consider practical measures and solutions to support sector reform. The following suggestions were made:

PROGRAMME STRUCTURES

- Effective exchange programmes for students and faculty members
- Programmes for fellowships and scholarships to promote knowledge and technology transfers
- Sandwich programmes for graduate students

RESEARCH

- Research collaborations (pure and applied)
- Research/academic training to improve student satisfaction

- Research-level partnerships (considered easy to develop as a 'quick win')
- Research links

FUNDING AND RESOURCES

- Development of non-state funded programmes within traditional universities
- Greater investment in resources and capacity
- Greater investment in professional development and the role of stakeholders
- Teacher training
- Resources and e-libraries
- Raising awareness of the contributions students can make to quality education provision (student-funded programmes)

PARTNERSHIPS AND COLLABORATION

- Identifying key partners, including employers
- British Council to facilitate links between institutions
- Improve mobility of staff

CAPACITY AND INFRASTRUCTURE

- UK institutions to continue to inform on capacity building, support and institution mergers
- Development of additional subject strands in partnership with UK institutions
- Staff and student development
- Improve mobility of staff
- Review current infrastructure to engage more fully with distance learning and online opportunities
- Improvements in staffing levels in institutions to reduce teaching and administration workloads
- Fellowship opportunities

GENERAL POLICY

- A more stable higher education system
- Defining a reform process (formal and informal steps) which is supported with new legislation
- Continuing to participate in policy dialogue
- General framework or memorandum of understanding for continuation of discussions
- Host study visits to the UK
- Opportunities for small schemes to develop



Conclusions

Myanmar continues to progress with reforms to its education sector by engaging in dialogue and learning from the experiences and lessons learned of other countries. Education has a key role to play in Myanmar's development, prosperity and journey to democracy.

This event provided a platform for dialogue on the future direction of Myanmar higher education and for suggestions on practical measures that could be implemented.

Action points

1. Institutions and organisations in Myanmar are encouraged to review the practical measures in section 5, identify those of most importance, and follow-up with the British Council Myanmar or UK HE contacts from the symposium to develop next steps for individual projects. In particular it is recommended that these measures are considered in relation to the aims of the ASEAN 2015 Work Plan on Education .
2. University of London International Programmes (www.londoninternational.ac.uk) will continue to develop relationships with local Myanmar teaching institutions in the public and private sectors in relation to their model of distance and flexible learning
3. Other UK HE institutions and organisations in attendance will continue to develop their own collaborative relationships and partnerships with contacts in Myanmar in relation to governance, regulation leadership, quality assurance and other aspects of higher education identified in this report. They are encouraged to engage with the British Council in Myanmar to facilitate these mutual projects.
4. The Centre for Distance Education (www.cde.london.ac.uk) will investigate the opportunities for collaborative research projects relating to best practice in distance education, online learning, capacity building with local institutions and organisations in Myanmar.

References

1. Ministry of Education, Department of Education (Lower Myanmar), 2013. Thirty-Year Long-Term Education Development Plan (2001-2002 FY – 2030-2031 FY) [online] Available at: <http://www.myanmar-education.edu.mm/dhel/panorama-of-myanmar-higher-education/thirty-year-long-term-education-development-plan-2001-2002-fy-2030-2031-fy/> [Accessed 13 November 2013]
2. <https://ihe.britishcouncil.org/sites/default/files/import-content/Policy%20Insights%20for%20Higher%20Education.pdf>
3. https://ihe.britishcouncil.org/sites/default/files/import-content/Report_Empowering_Higher_Education_Dialogue.pdf
4. http://www.hefce.ac.uk/media/hefce/1/pubs/hefce/2009/0914/09_14.pdf

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 Professor Jonathan Kydd, Special Advisor, University of London International Programmes

More information

www.londoninternational.ac.uk
www.cde.london.ac.uk
www.britishcouncil.org/burma.htm
www.lfhe.ac.uk
www.qaa.ac.uk



UK-MYANMAR HIGHER EDUCATION PARTNERSHIP: CONFERENCE REPORT

Appendix 1: The UK-Myanmar Education Partnership – final programme

The UK-Myanmar Higher Education Partnership: Turning Policy into Action

28-29 October 2013, Yadanar Room, Park Royal Hotel, Yangon - DRAFT PROGRAMME

MONDAY 28 OCTOBER

REGISTRATION	08.30-09.00
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Opening session	09.00-09.40
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Opening remarks (Kevin Mackenzie, Director British Council Myanmar)

Keynote Address 1: Setting the Scene – the UK context (Professor Sir Adrian Smith, Vice-Chancellor, University of London)

Keynote Address 2: Setting the Scene (Dr Myo Myint, Acting Union Minister for Education)

Session 1 – Educational Leadership	09.40-10.30
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Presenter & Chair: David Lock, Head of International Projects, Leadership foundation for Higher Education

Panel: Dr. Maung Thinn, Dr Edward Harcourt, Professor Jonathan Kydd

- Presentation and panel discussion with focus on leadership development and organisational aspects in HE in countries at a similar stage of development to Myanmar. Focussing on those elements that really make a difference and represent value for money.

TEA/COFFEE (HOTEL FOYER)	10.30-11.00
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Session 2 – Quality Assurance	11.00-12.15
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Presenter & Chair: Carolyn Campbell, Head of International Collaboration, Quality Assurance Agency, UK

Panel: Dr. Aung Kyaw Myat, Nigel Billany, Dr Rozilini Fernandez-Cheung

- Presentation and panel discussion on quality assurance in developing countries/systems, incorporating working experiences from similar countries (Pakistan, Libya, Sri Lanka) including: aligning quality to ASEAN norms, benchmarking, and lessons learned

LUNCH AND NETWORKING (La Brasserie – Level 1)	12.15-13.15
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Session 3 –

The development of higher education in Myanmar: establishing governance and regulation	13.15-14.30
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Chair: Chris Cobb, Chief Operating Officer, University of London

Panel: U Nyi Hla Nge, David Lock, Carolyn Campbell, Professor Jonathan Kydd

- Panel and open discussion looking at the effective governance and regulation in setting up new partnerships, collaborations and establishing new programmes.

Session 4 – Cooperation and partnerships	14.30-15.45
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Chair: Jonathan Kydd, Special Advisor, University of London International Programmes

Panel: Dr. Zaw Min Aung, Dr Edward Harcourt, Professor Michele Clark, Tim Gore

- Panel Discussion on degrees that are run in cooperation with UK institutions, educational partnerships and institutional collaboration

COFFEE/TEA BREAK	15.45-16.15
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Closing session 16.15-17.00

Chair: Susana Galvan, Director Education, British Council Myanmar

- Establish key proposals from the day
- Short summing up panel discussion with three panellists – Dr. Khin Naing Oo, Tim Gore, David Maynard
- Set up discussions for next day

TUESDAY 29 OCTOBER

REGISTRATION 08.30-09.00

Welcome 09.00-09.10

Introduction to second day (Susana Galvan, Director Education, British Council Myanmar)

Session 6 – Next steps and practical measures for HE in Myanmar 09.10-10.30

Chair: Tim Gore

Presentations and panel: Dr. Maung Thein, David Lock, Carolyn Campbell, Chris Cobb, Susana Galvan

Presentations and breakout session to determine the next steps for HE in Myanmar – practical measures for development and solutions to existing issues

- Breakout session to discuss next steps, facilitated by panellists
- Possible topics: capacity building, quality of teaching, ICT issues, how to partner up with UK universities

TEA/COFFEE AT FOYER 10.30-11.00

Final session - Wrap-up and closing remarks 11.00-12.00

Chair: Professor Sir Adrian Smith

- Wrapping up discussions – feedback from key contributors; to include Tim Gore, David Lock, Carolyn Campbell, Susana Galvan, Professor Jonathan Kydd

Closing remarks (Dr. Zaw Min Aung, Deputy Union Minister for Education) 12.00-12.15

LUNCH AND NETWORKING (La Brasserie – Level 1) 12.15-13.15

Workshops sessions (optional – see page 4 for programme details) 13.15-15.00

- University of London International Programmes: Institutions workshop session

UK-MYANMAR HIGHER EDUCATION PARTNERSHIP: CONFERENCE REPORT

SPEAKERS, PRESENTERS AND PANELLISTS

- Dr. Myo Myint, Acting Union Minister for Education
- Dr. Aung Kyaw Myat, Deputy Union Minister for Science and Technology
- Dr. Zaw Min Aung, Deputy Union Minister for Education
- Kevin Mackenzie, Director British Council Myanmar
- Susana Galvan, Director Education British Council Myanmar
- Professor Sir Adrian Smith, Vice-Chancellor, University of London
- Chris Cobb, Chief Operating Officer, University of London
- Professor Jonathan Kydd, Special Advisor, University of London International Programmes
- Edward Harcourt, Pro-Vice-Chancellor (External Engagement), Liverpool John Moores University
- Dr Rozilini M Fernandez-Chung, Vice-President, HELP University Malaysia
- Tim Gore, OBE, Director Global Networks and Communities, University of London International Programmes
- David Lock, Head of International Projects, Leadership Foundation for Higher Education
- Carolyn Campbell, Head of International Collaboration, Quality Assurance Agency
- Jon Gregson, Head of Knowledge Services, Institute for Development Studies
- Professor Michèle Clarke, Assistant Pro Vice Chancellor (International) Asia, University of Nottingham
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- Professor Nyi Hla Nge, Chairman, Steering Committee for Yangon and Mandalay Technological University
- Dr. Maung Thein, Executive Member, Myanmar Academy of Technology
- Dr. Maung Thinn, Rector, Meikhtila University
- Dr. Khin Naing Oo, Rector, Yangon Institute of Economics
- Nigel Billany, Expert on Strategies to Strengthen Higher Education Institutions



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You are invited to join us for a half-day workshop to about our global network of teaching centres and to explore common ground for working together. Please find below the draft programme for the workshop.

Date & Venue

Tuesday 29th October 2013

Padamyar Room 2, Parkroyal Hotel, Yangon

Registration

Register at the registration desk located right outside Yadanar Ballroom at the end of the first day of the conference.

Venue: Park Royal Hotel, Yangon

Lunch: 12.15

Workshop programme: 13.15

Introductions of participants and discussion of workshop objectives

Interactive session led by Dr. Tangjie Ward (Head of Institutions & Global Development)

Welcome by Professor Jonathan Kydd, Adviser to the University of London Vice Chancellor for International Affairs

History of University of London International Programmes

Informative session led by Dr. Tangjie Ward

How we work with institutions

Informative session led by Dr Tangjie Ward

Introduction to University of London undergraduate and postgraduate courses

Workshop close: 16.30

