

# **CHINLONE WP1 REPORT**

**Second CHINLONE Meeting & Conference  
Naypyidaw, 3 – 5 September 2018**



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# PRESENTATION PLAN

**1 – The two objectives of the Report**

**2 – Research Methodology**

**3 – The Report's Contents**

- *Governance*
- *Teaching*
- *Research*
- *International Relations*

**4 – Conclusions**





***1 – The two objectives of the Report***



# Mapping the terrain

Opinions of three specific target groups:

- governance members;
- teaching staff;
- students.

Research Object: analyzing the current status of Myanmar's HES reform.

# Suggestions and Recommendations

Viable and constructive suggestions to:

- 1) modernizing the Myanmar HES efficaciously;
- 2) organizing capacity-building activities;
- 3) Supporting knowledge-sharing experiences.

*Objective:* bridging the gap between analysis and practice.

## PART 2 – Research Methodology



# Research Methodology

## Qualitative Research Methodology:

- Semi-structured interviews;
- Focus groups.

## Interviewees:

- Governance members;
- Teaching staff;
- Students.

## Two sessions:

- 1<sup>st</sup> interview session: March 2018;
- 2<sup>nd</sup> interview session: Autumn 2018.



## **3 – The Report's Contents**

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# Four Areas Subject to Investigation

The Report is divided into four pivotal sections:

- governance;
- teaching;
- research;
- International relations.

A blurred background image of a modern office or meeting room. Several people are visible, some standing and some sitting at a long table, engaged in conversation. Large windows in the background let in bright light, creating a high-key, airy atmosphere. The overall scene suggests a collaborative work environment.

## ***Governance***



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# Academic Governance

By tradition, very centralized structure:

- Ministry of Education (MoE);
- its Department of Higher Education (DHE).

Extreme fragmentation.

Search for a new *modus vivendi* and greater autonomy.

# Multi-Ministerial Structure: Strengths and Flaws

This “dual jurisdiction” is the source of excessive bureaucratization.

Lack of meritocratic procedures in allocating funds among different Universities.

Positive effects only for specialized universities.

# Towards Autonomy

Need for autonomy and larger freedom of movement.

- Independent research initiatives;
- more active local leadership;
- overcoming the 'rotation' system;
- new models for students' recruitment;
- regulatory/statutory/administrative autonomy (and then...).

# Empowering Universities: Collective Bodies

First fulfilled objectives:

- new charters;
- new governance collective bodies.

Needs for a further improvement:

- setup of an updated normative framework;
- proactive attitude of local actors.



## *Teaching*



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# Curricula and Course Design

Crucial tenets of the HES policy agenda:

- updating of academic curricula;
- updating learning methodologies;
- updating assessment tools.

Steps towards the improvement:

- student-centered approach;
- Quality Assurance mechanisms (new activities, objective assessing criteria, improving the teaching environment and pedagogical methods).



# Delivery of Quality Learning

Needs to satisfy:

- improved and enhanced physical facilities;
- easier access to tertiary education;
- fostering 'deep learning' and critical thinking;
- improving the mastery of English (useful as Medium of Instruction);
- paradigm shift: student-centered approach (ex. still limited interaction between faculty and students)

Fulfilled objective: closer relations with the changing labor market.

*Teaching*

# Human Resources

Today, high student-teacher ratio: in a.y. 2017/2018, in MoE's University there were 21,157 teachers and instructors and 830,000 students.

Low rate of men teaching at university level as compared to women, due to low salaries and the 'rotation system'.

# Human Resources

Multiple activities by a limited number of human resources.

'Syndrome by Overstretching' = teaching staff carry out:

- teaching activities;
- research activities;
- administrative duties.



## ***Research***



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# Upgrading Research Environments

A difficulty to overcome is the shortage of laboratories, libraries, computers, specialized equipment, and information technologies.

Need for facilities' improvements and renovation.

Fulfilled objectives:

- use of e-libraries, sometimes accessible in rural areas, too;
- establishment of 'centers of research excellence' in several Universities.

# Rewarding Research Productivity

Current obstacles:

- facilities limitations;
- limited funding;
- disproportionate workload in terms of teaching hours and administrative duties.

Goal to accomplish: creation of a new framework in which research productivity is effectively assessed and incentivized.

Need for:

- setup of formal and universally-recognized benchmarks;
- setup of rewards for the highest performing scholars (career advancements, salary progressions, etc.)

*Research*

# Prioritizing Key Research Fields

Myanmar's ultimate goals:

- capitalizing the ongoing economic boom;
- investing in human capital (enhancement of the labor force's quality and skills);
- raising the population's life standards.

Myanmar's University will have to give a new stimulus to the country's socio-economic advancement.

Key economic sectors:

- agriculture;
- tourism;
- extraction of natural resources.

# A Shared 'Research Culture'

Academia's needs:

- independence in research;
- priority to research rather than to other goals;
- access to national and transnational scientific resources and networks;
- dissemination of good practices regarding plagiarism and standardized evaluation procedures (e.g. peer-reviewing).





## ***International Relations***



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# Training the IROs

Due to the last decades' isolation, IROs are new bodies in Myanmarese Universities.

Among the major obstacles:

- need for qualified personnel;
- framing the ongoing internationalization process within a coherent enhancement of the IROs staff's management skills;
- limited opportunities for career advancement.

Viable strategy: implementing training and pedagogical programs for local officers.

# A Coherent Vision

Viable strategies:

- “training the trainers”;
- capacity-building projects (knowledge-sharing opportunities for Myanmar IROs and faculty).

# Addressing Funding Issues

Difficulties to overcome:

- lack of adequate fund's allocation;
- need for ad hoc agreements with foreign partners;
- need for new exchange programs;
- need for greater financial autonomy.

# Overcoming Practical Barriers

Practical barriers discouraging inbound and outbound mobility:

- Shortage of accommodation facilities;
- Insufficient diffusion of English as a tool of Instruction.

Viable strategies:

- Enhancing the use of English as a Medium of Instruction;
- Creation/consolidation of programs in EFL.

Aim: creation of a stimulating, multicultural environment.

## 4 – Conclusions

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# Some Crucial Points

Several priorities to further nurture Myanmar's ongoing reform in the field of higher education:

## •Academic Governance

The bulk of Myanmar's nation-wide debate on the future of higher education is largely centered on the recurring mantra of increased 'autonomy'.

The most important measures that should be taken into account revolve around:

- The obsolescence of the rotation system and the possible ways to replace it;
- The creation of Schools or Departments, so as to achieve a better division of tasks among the personnel;
- The full implementation of a standardized credit system;
- The introduction of a clear, effective, and transparent selection method for faculty members;
- The introduction of entrance exams for students drafted by the single universities;
- The necessity of developing collegial institutional organs.

# Some Crucial Points

## Teaching activities

The NESP explicitly envisions a transformational shift towards a “student-centered” approach, aimed at producing qualified young graduates who can act as the protagonists of Myanmar’s socio-economic development in the years to come, while safeguarding accessibility to high quality education with no discrimination and regardless of the students’ social and economic background. To pursue these ambitious objectives, however, it is quintessential to concentrate significant efforts on the following areas:

- The introduction of a higher degree of autonomies in the hands of departmental authorities, especially in curriculum design;
- The consolidation of **quality assurance mechanisms** aiming at guiding and monitoring the formulation of new activities, through the articulation of objective criteria and guidelines in terms of curricula design, teaching environments, and pedagogical methods;
- The implementation of updated trainings for educators targeted at spreading innovative pedagogical competences;
- The promotion of English as a medium of instruction;
- The framing of a new promotion system for faculty members aimed at rewarding research productivity and scientific preparation, also through salary increases;
- The adoption of new practices and channels to strengthen communication between students and faculty;
- The upgrading of the facilities and learning environments devoted to teaching programs.



# Some Crucial Points

## Research

Myanmarese HEIs are increasingly regarded by policymakers and ordinary citizens as key hubs to nurture a sustainable path of socio-economic progress and political transition, while faculty members are finally experiencing much more room of maneuver in foreign projects with international exposure. The NESP recognizes the strategic importance of research in the general mission pursued by the local HES, and local universities are thus required to develop innovative research program, by tackling a variety of longstanding challenges. More specifically, the key issues and constraints currently faced by local researchers concern:

- The introduction of new incentives to **reward** research productivity;
- The establishment of a shared ‘research culture’;
- A strong overhaul of the physical infrastructures devoted to research (dormitories, laboratories, libraries, etc.);
- The spread of information technology;
- The consolidation of effective links between academic research and the labor market, especially in exploring new venues of public-private cooperation in the field of applied research;
- The development of a stronger synergy between research and training activities.

# Some Crucial Points

## International relations

The field of International Relations has recently witnessed relevant progresses through the establishment of IROs in the vast majority of local universities. These promising signs, however, need to be sustained by achieving the following goals:

- The strengthening of nascent IROs through dedicated staff;
- A strong enhancement in the availability of funding for instructors, staff and students mobility.



**Thank you for your attention**

Contacts

Prof. Antonio Fiori

CHINLONE Coordinator

E-Mail address: [antonio.fiori@unibo.it](mailto:antonio.fiori@unibo.it)