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CHINLONE project and the development of Myanmar Higher Education

29 April 2021

On 29 April 2021, the University of Bologna organized the online seminar “Navigating the Evolution of Myanmar Higher Education: Reflections on the 2011-2021 Timeframe”. During the seminar, Professor Antonio Fiori, from the department of Political and Social Science at the University of Bologna, and Professor Rosalie Metro, from the College of Education at the University of Missouri-Columbia, shared their perspectives on the changes universities in Myanmar have been going through in the last ten years.

This event marked the end of **CHINLONE**, a four-year (2017-2020) capacity building project co-funded by the Erasmus+ programme of the European Union. Coordinated by the University of Bologna, in partnership with higher education institutions from Myanmar (the Universities of Yangon, Mandalay, Dagon, the Yezin Agricultural University, the Yangon University of Economics as well as the Ministry of Education) and Europe (the Universities of Uppsala and Granada) in addition to the Coimbra Group, this international collaborative endeavor has addressed issues related to the **modernization and internationalization of Myanmar’s higher education system**.

CHINLONE was launched to support the ongoing Myanmar’s Higher Education System (HES) reform. Starting from 2011, the national HES has undergone several reforms (including the drafting of the National Education Law in 2014), which eventually led to the development of the National Education Strategic Plan (NESP) 2016-2021. The plan included strategies aimed at strengthening higher education governance and management capacity, improving the quality and relevance of higher education and intensifying equitable access. The reforms stimulated an intense discussion on the future steps that would allow Myanmar to reach the same level of some of its neighbors and other more developed countries, as far as higher education is concerned. The reform charged Myanmar universities – the key drivers in the process – with the responsibility of “producing” graduates with the required skills, knowledge and attitudes demanded by an economy increasingly connected with the global market: this highlighted the need to copiously reengineer higher education institutions and their strategies. Within the proposed institutional autonomy framework, universities would not only need human and financial resources, along with much necessary infrastructures, but also set quality criteria and measures in line with ASEAN and international standards.

The CHINLONE project has been carefully operating within this context, addressing the needs of the Myanmar higher education institutions by leveraging the experience of European universities involved in the project and adapting lessons learned to the country’s specificities.

In particular, CHINLONE has worked on three specific aspects:

university governance;

academics; sponsored 22 training events in Myanmar; organized 7 international conferences attended by more than 500 Myanmar scholars. Moreover, to foster internationalization activities, CHINLONE has provided equipment for 5 new International Relations Offices (IROs) and trained their staff thanks to an online tutorship programmes organized by Uppsala University. These activities have concretely improved the strategic institutional guidelines of Myanmar partner universities towards a better management of governance, teaching and internationalization activities. The lesson learned were included in policy papers drafted by the Consortium ([POLICY REPORTS – Connecting Higher education Institutions for a New Leadership On National Education – CHINLONE \(unibo.it\)](#)) that the Myanmar's Ministry of Education and National Education Policy Commission have shared with the country's 174 universities. Different stakeholders regard the CHINLONE experience as a success story of EU-Myanmar cooperation in the higher education sector.

The end of the CHINLONE project does not indicate the conclusion of an intense, fruitful and stimulating collaboration between European institutions and Southeast Asia, which will continue under the umbrella of the capacity building projects [TOOLKIT](#) and [ENGAGE](#) (both coordinated by the University of Bologna). These projects will surely create new opportunities for better integration and mutual understanding between Europe and Asia.


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