

Educational Reforms and Challenges of Higher Education in Myanmar

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Abstract

- current situation of higher education in Myanmar is clearly stated and educational reforms performed with great effort of every stakeholder and challenges faced with in the way to the development of higher education in Myanmar are mentioned in detail.


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- It is the time of emerging changes in all sectors in accord with the political change in Myanmar. Among them, educational reforms need much to meet the expectation of the public.


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- When economic reform is practically considered, it is noticed that education is the main requirement as we all know.
 - Therefore, stakeholders and organizations concerned with education are actively participating by giving opinions and suggestions and carrying out activities.

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- H.E. the President asked to plan and conduct short term programmes that can be done practically and immediately, and long term programmes that need time to accomplish, and to take the advice of experts. Moreover, he urged every stakeholder to take part in these programmes.




Bill Committee submitted a proposal last year and it was successfully accepted. That proposal was to formulate National Education Bill for long term benefit and educational reform, and then to formulate necessary bylaws, rules and regulations regarding the law for various sectors of education including higher education.

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- As a result, committees for formulation of *National Education Bill* and *Higher Education Bill* have been formed.
 - Formulation of *National Education Bill* has been done to some extent and studies are still being made for formulation of Higher Education Bill.




In doing so, the following challenges are being faced with

- 1. Free compulsory primary education
- 2. Reconsideration of grades in basic education
- 3. Opportunities of every level for vocational education
- 4. Upgrading teachers' quality

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- 5. Reform of teaching methods
 - 6. Autonomous universities and restructuring the higher education institutions
 - 7. Merging the existing universities
 - 8. University entrance system


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- Concerning with reconsideration of grades in basic education, experts have supposed to change from current system to KG+5+4+3. However, it is a challenge to make the public realize the need to do so and transform without causing any disturbance to the teaching-learning situation in implementing it.

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- Although continuous assessment system has been practiced for one decade, teaching method has not been student-centred as it was aimed. So, although basic education is completed, quality seems to be not so high. Therefore, an examination at a level is considered, but if it is so, vocational education, which had been conducted before, has to be restarted for drop-outs.




University entrance system is encouraging to get high marks and most of the students want to join popular institutes. So, the aim and the result are different.

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- Those who are good at particular subjects may not join the arts and science universities, that is their right place, and most of the students, who join institutes to learn particular fields due to the **pressure** of parents and society, may not be interested in those fields. So, human resources are not in their right places and there is a waste of human resources.

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- So, it is a *challenge* to consider the best university entrance system.
 - There is a higher impression on the degrees conferred from institutions than on the degrees conferred from arts and science universities. It makes the situation worse.


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- Now, it is realized that university education inferiority is correlated with autonomy and decentralization, so founding autonomous universities is attempted but it is another challenge that various barriers have to be overcome to change from rooted centralization system.

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- Although it is true that activities have been done with the aim to obtain equality in higher education access all over the nation, and many universities were founded within last two decades, quality is low due to various requirements such as insufficiency of qualified teachers, lab equipments and research apparatus, transportation difficulty, etc.


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- At that time, there were no relationship with international academic communities and no freedom in educational cooperation, so these are some of the reasons. Now, it is a challenge to change these things and to fulfill the requirements.

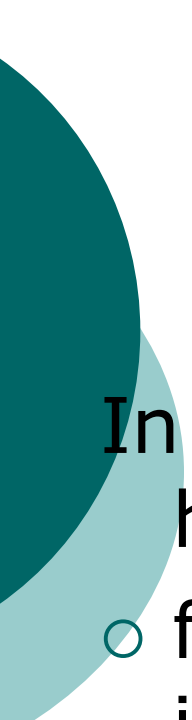
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- At that time, it was considered from the point of view of administration and decided to put universities under 13 ministries and supervise them separately and it has been done so. Now it is not easy to form multi-disciplinary universities consisted of various faculties.


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- However, comprehensive universities and specialized universities have their own strengths and weaknesses, so we need to consider from various points of view.



The last challenge is to get and maintain highly qualified human resources sufficiently for autonomous universities, to have independent organizations that can assess the quality of each university, such as Financing Agency, Quality Assurance Agency, etc, and to improve the relations between ministries, that are responsible for education, and universities.

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- University teaching staff are government servants, so their promotions are considered according to time-scales as other government staff. It is a reason of decrease in efforts of teachers and degrading in quality.
 - It is a subtle matter to make reforms based on the quality and effort.

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- In conclusion, it needs to consider in higher education the following things:
- founding autonomous higher education institutions
 - building academic community that can perform in accordance with that autonomy
 - being able to relate with international experts and cooperate

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- combination of basic education, vocational education, higher education and life-long learning processes



Thank You.