



# THE NEED OF HIGHER EDUCATION REFORM IN MYANMAR: A STUDY FROM A DIGITAL LEARNING PERSPECTIVE

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# THE NEED OF HIGHER EDUCATION REFORM IN MYANMAR

- Background of the study
- Description of the problem
- Discussion of four areas
- Conclusion

# EDUCATION IN MYANMAR: FROM A DIGITAL LEARNING PERSPECTIVE



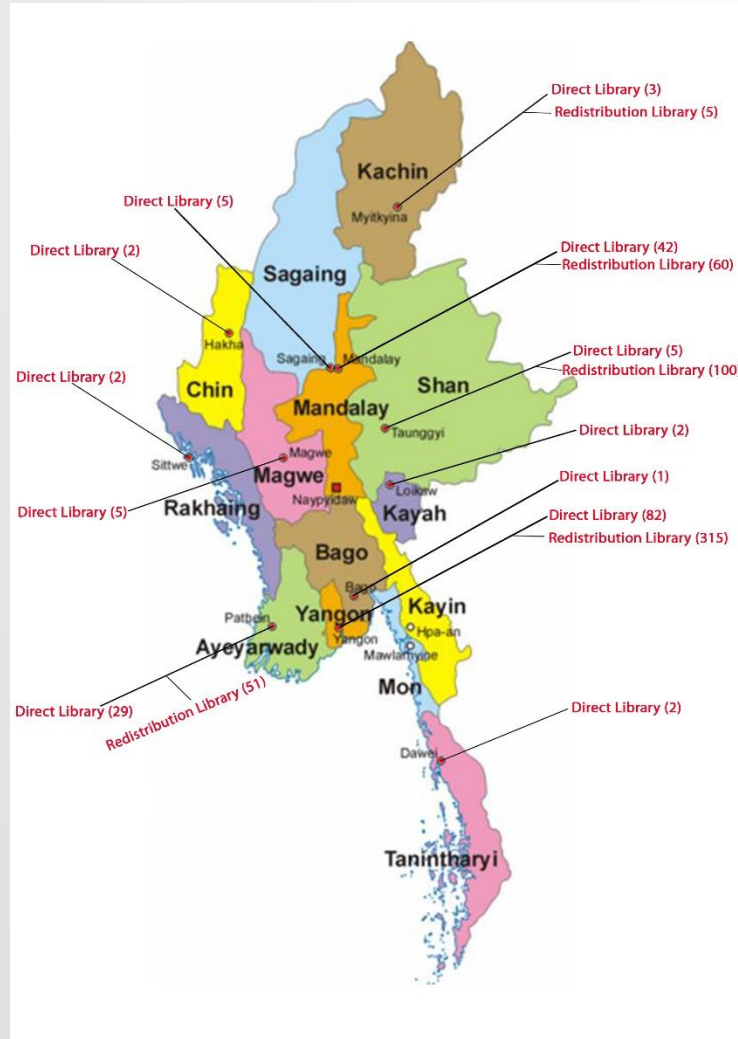
- Was a British colony from 1886 to 1948 (a province of India)
- Was once the richest country in Southeast Asia before 1960s
- Its education system was one of the best in Asia in 1960s
- University of Yangon was top ranked in Asia before 1960s

# EDUCATION IN MYANMAR: FROM A DIGITAL LEARNING PERSPECTIVE



- Military took over government in 1962.
- The prosperity declined after that.
- Quality of education has gone downhill since then.
- Education language changed from English to Burmese in 1964, then changed back to English in 1980s.

# EDUCATION IN MYANMAR: FROM A DIGITAL LEARNING PERSPECTIVE



- 135 ethnic groups with nine major ones. Burmese: 68% of population.
- Many have their own language, culture, and social structures.
- Current education system is one format for all – unified education.
- Poverty and remote areas are the challenges.

# EDUCATION IN MYANMAR: FROM A DIGITAL LEARNING PERSPECTIVE



- After 50 years of closing up, Myanmar started reconnecting with foreign countries.
- Higher education reform becomes one of the top priorities.
- Foreign resources are welcomed and introduced.
- Conferences and forums were held to address the education reform in Myanmar.

# EDUCATION IN MYANMAR: FROM A DIGITAL LEARNING PERSPECTIVE



- Reform areas include:
- policy legislation,
- autonomy of universities,
- equity of school enrollment,
- internationalization,
- Appropriate pedagogies,
- public funds,
- English proficiency, etc.

# DESCRIPTION OF THE PROBLEM

- Golden future of the e-learning market in the Asia-Pacific was a illusion and false expectation even with its large population, rapid economic growth, and unmet demand of higher ed.
- Duplication of Western online education neglected the cultural social aspects of education assuming identical learning styles for all.
- The advantages of digital learning should not be limited to the misconception of convenience and inexpensive delivery process.



# FROM A DIGITAL LEARNING PERSPECTIVE

According to Leite, “post-colonial” used to refer to a historical period of colonial empires established by European nations.

“Nowadays, this term commonly distinguishes a field of contemporary studies of ‘defamiliarisation of the imperial North’ made up of successive acts of unlearning and re-learning”  
(Leite, 2010)

# RESEARCH QUESTION

- What would the development of digital learning in the cultural and economic context of Myanmar contribute to educational reform?

# THE DISCUSSION TACKLES THE RESEARCH QUESTION FROM FOUR AREAS:

- 1) inclusive-approach education
- 2) diverse pedagogies
- 3) faculty development
- 4) internationalization

**INCLUSIVE-APPROACH  
EDUCATION:** TO REDUCE  
THE INEQUALITY AND  
DISPARITY OF ETHNICITY,  
CULTURE, LANGUAGE,  
AND RELIGION.

- Dei (2005) defines “inclusive education” as education that responds to the concerns, aspiration and interests of a diverse body, and draws on the accumulated knowledge, creativity and resourcefulness of local people”
- Zhou and Fischer (2013):  
“education reform should reflect cultural diversity and embed teaching practices into the cultural history of the nation and to promote positive inclusion of minority and indigenous history so as to maximize successful adoption by teachers and parents.”

**INCLUSIVE-APPROACH  
EDUCATION:** TO REDUCE  
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- Digital learning can enhance the retention of minority languages in Myanmar and the connection to minority communities online.
- It has been found that the impact of the internet “is likely to protect subsidiary languages” rather than to endanger them.
- Internet provides an equal platform for economically and politically marginalized groups to express and promote their culture.
- Digital learning makes learning convenient and accessible reaching all learners.

**DIVERSE PEDAGOGIES:**  
RENOVATION OF THE  
INVARIABLE TEACHING  
METHOD AND  
PEDAGOGY.

- Digital learning enhances the communication between teacher and student, allowing more guidance and reflection. (apprenticeship)
- Digital learning enhances the communication between student and student, allowing construction of knowledge. (collaborative apprenticeship)
- Dialogue and interactions promote learning motivation and enhance learning outcomes.

**DIVERSE PEDAGOGIES:**  
RENOVATION OF THE  
INVARIABLE TEACHING  
METHOD AND  
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- Digital learning provides platform for collaborative learning as the communities of practices developed online. Learning through social participation and sense of belonging.
- Social theory of learning: Learning happens when one is making meaning of words and ideas in the communities of practices, and such experience forms one's identity.
- Digital learning challenges instructors to rethink a curriculum that supports students' learning.

**FACULTY  
DEVELOPMENT:  
TRAINING OF  
SCHOOL TEACHERS**

- Cases of Mozambique, Open University in the U.K., Brazilian Open University
- Training for facilitating or designing online instruction is essential for all traditional classroom instructor.
- Design of digital learning needs collaboration of course designer and classroom teacher.
- Faculty development is the emphasis in the development and investment of digital learning.



## **INTERNATIONALIZATION**

- Reestablish the quality of its academic and research competency.
- There is a need to construct Myanmar's own education models
- Educators and administrators should be aware of cultural issues when developing and delivering transnational education.
- There is a need of some well-developed regulations for the transnational digital education programs.

# CONCLUSION: DIGITAL LEARNING IS AN ALTERNATIVE MEANS

- 1) Digital learning opens a boundless academic enterprise realm.
  - 2) A comprehensive, long-term and well-planned national strategy and investment be implemented.
  - 3) Some successful cases on a national level can be great resources.
- Challenges: infrastructure shortage, low financial support, unclear education regulations, lack of technology, low number of qualified trainers and competent administrators, and cultural barriers.

# CONCLUSION:

Inclusive-approach education

Diverse pedagogies

Faculty development

Internationalization