

Emerging NHRD in Transitioning Myanmar

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Abstract: *The purpose of this study is to explore the emerging national human resource development (NHRD) in transitioning Myanmar. This exploratory research has been done through case study method synthesizing the literature and document reviews, interviews and focus group discussions with key stakeholders, outlining and checking the perspectives of NHRD, current NHRD practices and policies, driving forces of NHRD in transition period of Myanmar, and the challenges. National Human Resource Development (NHRD) in transitioning Myanmar has various stakeholders and driving forces, defining its environment and system, in a dynamic fashion. There are progressive developments and opportunities for growing but coupling with the challenges as well. It is important to develop the conceptual framework, and then strategies and plans for the future sustainable development of the national human resource and then consequently the comprehensive socio-economic development of the country. Myanmar needs to grasp the chances of taking the population bonus advantage and population divide by investing in education and skills development in emerging youth bulge. It is also important to attract the Myanmar migrants abroad or 'Myanmar Diaspora' to come back to Myanmar, to participate in the development efforts with the accumulated knowledge, experience, skills and financial resources, to grow together. This must be properly carried out with right scheme and motivational incentives at the point of sufficient economic growth. A proposed NHRD model for transitioning Myanmar and the recommendations for effective and efficient contributions of NHRD to the sustainable development of Myanmar has been laid out.*

Keywords: National Human Resource Development (NHRD); NHRD Case Study; NHRD policy; Myanmar; NHRD in transitioning economies

Introduction

Asian Development Bank (2012) stated that Myanmar has been in a transition period. For the last five decades, Myanmar was ruled under dictatorships: socialist and military governments; one after another. Since late 2011, the country has made many significant changes in political structures, including but not limited to transferring power from the military government to the elected government. Now, it has been in the process of transformations from military to democratic governance, and closed economy to market oriented economy (Mieno, 2013). To effect such transformations, one of the main challenges has been to develop the required human resources; people who are healthy, capable, skilled, and competent, taking new jobs in new industries and in new approaches to the transitioning society and economy (Asian Development Bank, 2014). Accordingly, NHRD is a critical success factor in the transition period.

Rationale and Problem Statement

In today's fast changing world, a country's success and sustainable development is fundamentally and critically depends on the capacities, knowledge, skills, and competencies of its people. Accordingly, many countries have developed national human resource development (NHRD) strategies, policies, master plans, and roadmaps, to build the capacities

of their people to make their countries competitive in the globalized world. Theory about the nature and extent of NHRD making impact to the countries' wealth is not new and not recently developed but had been informed by human capital theory by Schultz, since 1961, later by social capital theory by Bourdieu (Boudieu, 1986) and Coleman, in 1988. The human capital theory implies that investment in knowledge and skills brings economic returns, individually and collectively, while social capital theory advising trusting relationships are good for social cohesion, then human capital formation and consequently the economic growth. Both the human capital and social capital theories advise the importance of the capacity and social assets of the people in a nation for its development process.

Exploring the development of the term human resource development (HRD), it is found that it HRD has referred to developing human resource to increase economic productivity and consequently a country's wealth, which is proportionate to the economic outputs (Becker, 1964; Schultz, 1961; Smith, 1776). Within these theoretical perspectives, the skills, knowledge, competencies, capacities and social assets of the people of a nation are considered hidden assets and capital critical not only to the economic goals of modern societies but also essential to attaining their social, political, and economic goals. Although NHRD lies at the heart of both of these concepts, there are still gaps to fill up. It is still a challenge to define how human and social capitals are best developed, how they interact and complement each other, and how these complex development issues can be solved.

Development issues are interrelated among social, political, and economic issues, and time after time globalization and technological advancements are also joining in to play significant roles in the complex development mix.

Accordingly, the processes of HRD unlock the door to modernization (Harbison & Myers, 1964, p. 2). This definition in 1960s clearly expands the operational boundary of HRD beyond that of the organization but as a major component of and contributor to national development.

It is still required to expand and explore the understanding of the complex and dynamic HRD issues in different countries, with different historical, cultural and societal characteristics.

Reviewing the development of HRD theories, it also has been found that it has been much more influenced by the United States and western countries, and then has increasingly been disseminated to other less developed nations resulting in a tendency by the latter to adopt their construct of HRD from the outside rather than to develop such construct from within (Paprock, 2006).

In the last two decades, there have been exploratory studies about NHRD policies and practices in many countries. But, there are still many countries in Asia, Africa and Latin America whose NHRD policies and practices are yet to be explored. Myanmar is one of those countries still need to be explored.

Exploring the different perspectives and characteristics of NHRD in different countries, Cho and McLean (2004) suggested five models of NHRD: (a) centralized NHRD, (b) transitional NHRD, (c) government-initiated NHRD, (d) decentralized/ free market NHRD, and (e) small-nation NHRD. But, importantly, they caution that there is no "pure" model but each country may have mixed structure with different models.

NHRD in transitional countries: changing from communist or socialist or military governance systems to democratic systems and from centrally planned economies to market economies; generally belongs to the transitional NHRD category. But, as Cho and Mclean cautioned, the single model of NHRD for the transitional country may not work in all countries. It is essential to adapt HRD programs and approaches to specific country contexts to ensure effective development. The frameworks for each country's NHRD may depend on various factors and driving forces: social, economic, political and development environment.

This study explores to understand the meaning and perspectives of NHRD, via the literature review and the case study approach, exploring the issues, and challenges of the rapidly changing country, then draw up a model for NHRD in transitioning Myanmar, with an intent to contribute to the development of NHRD strategies and plans, aiming toward the sustainable development of the country. It will also fill up the academic gap of NHRD studies in transitioning economies with a specific and unique country in Asia, of which the literature and information is very rare and often not available in the academic publications.

Significance of the Study

As a transitioning economy, at this stage of transformation from the socialist and then military government to the democratic government, and centrally planned economy to the market-oriented economy, Myanmar pose for an exploratory research and study of its national human resource development perspectives and scenarios, to prepare for its fullest and sustainable development.

Asian Development Bank (2012) stated that with its rich natural resource, abundant labor forces, and strategic location between the two emerging global giants: China and India; and the fast growing emerging market, ASEAN; Myanmar has high potential for rapid growth and development.

But, Myanmar has its constraints, limitations and challenges as well. Since the country had been under the socialist and military dictatorship regimes since 1960s, for about 50 years, the infrastructure needs to be developed, the education systems have been deteriorated, social and cultural values have been treated by the oppressive systems, and the institutions have been weakened.

Physical infrastructure development in today's world is easier than the past. Construction technologies have been improved. Global financial institutions are investing in infrastructure development projects in developing countries and also especially in those transitional economies, as emerging markets.

But, it is a challenge for the country and the people to wake up, to learn and to catch up with the changes which are happening along with the opening of the country, the economy and the society. So, the HRD as for a whole country in national level, but all inclusively different levels, different regions in the country and different industries existing and developing, i.e., NHRD, is critical. It is not something which can be changed or developed overnight, but will take time. The social and cultural values cannot be redefined in a short time, but to be cultivated overtime. The institutions have to be strengthened with perseverance, but not in a year or two. The technological advancements and the globalization may affect the transition process, but have to be careful with those interventions as well. Then, restructuring, reforming and revitalization of the deteriorated education systems to develop the right people with the right skills, competencies and capacities for the right jobs and positions in the industries of the new economy which the country would have set or developed with its development goals for short term, mid-term and long term futures is most critical.

This study will not only fill up the academic gap of NHRD studies in transitioning economies exploring Myanmar, a specific and unique country in Southeast Asia, of which the literature and information is very limited and often not available in the academic research and scholarly publications, but also it will explore the perspectives, contexts, driving forces, challenges and possible scenarios for the sustainable development of Myanmar, exploring and disseminating the constructs of NHRD from within.

Research methodology

The phenomenon of the study is an interdisciplinary and involved with multi-stakeholders, and multi-levels; and the purpose of this study is exploratory, descriptive, interpretive and explanatory. It coincides with the purposes of the case study research method (Mariano, 1993). Accordingly, a combination of literature review and the case study method with document reviews and multi-stakeholders' interviews have been done, as the research method, to explore and bring up an understanding about the phenomenon of NHRD in Myanmar in transitioning context.

The literature review (reviewing peer-reviewed scholarly published articles) has been made through NIDA Library facilities. Then, the document review has been carried out to collect the data which are not in the scholarly domain, but available in different other forms as publications or reports or conference papers, etc., by government organizations such as Ministry of Education, Ministry of Health, Department of Population; international organizations such as ASEAN, ADB, World Bank, UNDP, UNESCO, UNIDO, UNFPA, WHO, ILO, JICA, KOICA, GIZ, SDC, USAID, DFID, British Council; professional associations, societies and organizations, such as chambers of commerce, Myanmar Engineering Society (MES); NGOs, INGOs such as Save the Children, Asia Society; Consultancy firms such as Oxford Business Group, Deloitte; newspapers and local publications, etc.

Interviews and focus group discussions were carried out with the different types of stakeholders for a balanced, integrated and comprehensive understanding of the area of study, i.e., NHRD in transitioning Myanmar. The participants are selected not only by different types, but also from both urban and rural areas. The interviewees and focus group discussions participants included senior and middle-level government officials, industrial specialists, vocational trainers, agriculture specialists, academic professors, researchers, economists, consultants, international experts from international organizations such as ADB, World Bank, UNDP, UNIDO, UNFPA; employers, business owners, teachers and students from basic, middle and high schools, universities, professional institutes, vocational training institutes, monastic education centers, informal and non-formal education organizations; and other stakeholders such as school drop-out students, Myanmar people working or residing in Thailand, United States of America, Singapore, parents, politicians, members of parliaments, NGOs, retirees, statistical analysts, etc. The participants of this study all together comprised of more than 70 participants from different segments of government, industries, private sector, international organizations, teachers, students, parents, vocational trainers, and other stakeholders involved in and impacted by the NHRD systems in Myanmar, which could help comprehensiveness and inclusivity of the research findings. During the interviews, participants described their perceptions and experiences about how NHRD works and how it impacts their works and their lives, the challenges, the role of stakeholders, and the factors affecting the NHRD system and environment, etc.

The Historical and Transitioning Contexts of NHRD in Myanmar

The current status and environment of NHRD in Myanmar have been significantly impacted by various historical events. For purposes of this inquiry, consideration of the historical context begins from the foundation of Myanmar, then the British colonial era, and then continues the times after the independence in 1948, and going through the socialist and military eras, and then the transitioning Myanmar, zooming into the political, sociocultural and economical aspects of transition which affect to the national human resource development system and environment.

Human Resource Development and Education system in Myanmar in the Past *Influence of Buddhism*

Ireland and Van Benthuyzen (2014) states that it is not possible to consider education in Myanmar, and neighboring countries of South East Asia such as Thailand, without considering the huge and important role that Buddhism has played and still plays in the system of education in this area. The importance of Buddhist teaching and philosophy has formed the foundation of all teaching practices. For the centuries to follow, monkhood and monastic education have provided an opportunity for the poor to become educated and a way for them to move into well-paid working environments. Even today, many people throughout South East Asia are educated in monasteries.

In Early era of Myanmar

Tin (2000) states that education has been highly regarded in Myanmar since early history of Myanmar. He refers to 'Octennial Report on education in Burma' (MOE, 1956) which pointed out that Nicolo Mannuci, a Venetian who travelled in Myanmar about 1700 A.D. described the country "as a kingdom governed by the pen, for not a single person can go from one village into another without a paper or writing" (p1). Life revolved round the village and the values of 'extended families' were strong, he stated.

The report further describes that after the primary education, which was largely a preparation for monk-hood, every Burmese boy joined the Buddhist Order, in his early teens. In his young novice-hood, the Burmese boy completed his secondary education. It was largely religious, and also classical, Pali taking the place of Latin in Western education. Besides three R's (reading, writing and arithmetic), history, geography, astrology and medicine usually formed the curriculum. In larger towns, there were special "schools" for the study of medicine.

According to 'Octennial Report on education in Burma' (MOE, 1956), vocational education and higher technical education were given to teens children and youths as on-job-training in workplaces like agriculture, or village workshops, or apprenticeship to master craftsmen, in such areas like lacquerware, carpentry, wood and ivory carving, weaving, sword-making, sculpture and architecture,

The report also stated that even in those days of widespread illiteracy in Europe, Burma led in the education of women as well. In the Bagan (Pagan) period (1044-1287), girls used to study Pali scriptures over their cooking pots and mothers sang Pali verses as lullabies while the proportion of women authors was also very high. The census report for 1872 described Burma was a country, "where female education was a reality, before Oxford was founded."

In the colonial era

Education in Myanmar (then Burma) in the colonial era until 1948 was colonial, widely criticized by the leaders of independence movement. The British had given to the Burmese people an education for proficiency in the English language, for employments as clerks and minor officials of their administrative machinery.

In British time, only children of rich families could seek admission into the Anglo-Vernacular and English schools, where only about ten percent (10%) was admitted for Burmese children. According to 'Octennial Report on education in Burma' (MOE, 1956), in the British period, there was a certain amount of technical and vocational education provided in the areas of forestry, veterinary, public health, medicine, polytechnic, fine arts, survey, teachers education, police training, posts and telegraphs, and also apprentice – systems with the Dockyards of Irrawaddy Flotilla Company, the Rangoon Foundry, and commercial firms.

In Post-independence period (1948 – 62)

After the independence, the government of Burma announced Burmese as a medium of instruction while allowing English at the college level; and the creation of new textbooks

that highlighted the spirit of nationalism. The higher education universities and institutes are limited, but providing quite a quality education, and thus attracted many foreign students to come and study in universities in Myanmar, especially Yangon University (Tin, 2000).

Under Military Rule and Socialist Era

Under military rule and then socialist era (1962-1988) the educational system became highly centralized, and has been used as a political tool for socialism, or for political purposes, largely to underpin the regime in power. In 1987, the country was granted a status of "Least Developed Country" by the United Nations.

1988 – 2011

The military governments under one military General after another ruled the country since 1988 until 2011. The educational system has remained chaotic. The majority of public schools have limited access to textbooks and supplies. Much of the school infrastructure is inadequate. There is a shortage of teachers. And, classrooms are overcrowded. Numerous students and teachers who led the democratization movement were silenced or jailed, and many colleges and universities were periodically shut down (Education Encyclopedia. 2017).

Discrimination against ethnic minorities remains a problem for the education system. Community-based schools have a history of being closed by the government, which only serves to intensify conflict between ethnic minorities and the Myanmar army. In the absence of these schools, minorities are forced to choose state-run schools that do not teach in their native tongue.

Tin (2013) stated that the higher education sector was very much degraded in the military regimes era. Most of Myanmar universities were relocated outside the cities and towns, preventing the anti-government demonstrations in the cities. The academic years were shortened, to produce the quantity of graduates, but not in the quality of education. Political stability was prioritized than national human resource development or education.

The military rulers established technological universities technical institutes all around the country with an ambition to produce engineers and technicians in quantity, but again with very low quality of qualification of those graduates (Tin, 2008).

Tin further stated that the education systems also have been centralized, together with the political systems. The students grew up with rote learning education, and teachers also did not have experience with child-centered teaching methods, or interactive teaching methodologies. Accordingly, children and youth grew up with little practice of thinking.

2011 Afterwards

Mieno, F. (2013) expressed that the quick progress in political and economic reform after March 2012 is welcoming but truly unexpected to the world. Even with the world observing with huge skepticism the political changes to continue, the ex-military government transferred the power to winning NLD party, led by Aung San Suu Kyi, after its landslide winning in 2015 elections. As per the 2008 military-drafted Constitution, Tatmadaw (the Myanmar Armed Forces) nominated 25% of all seats in the bicameral Myanmar parliament and had a virtual 'veto' over any amendment to the Constitution by a requirement that any amendment had to be passed by 75% of the parliament and a national referendum.

In an overview, education and training systems and consequently the national human resource in Myanmar had been weakened in the past as of the mismanagement and lack of resources along the socialist and military governance.

Emerging NHRD in Transitioning Myanmar

Myanmar is changing rapidly from the closed to open economy, and consequently, education and training systems in Myanmar are under increasing pressure to provide the human resources needed to fulfil the required skill-sets for the new jobs in new setting of the economy, and to sustain the continued growth. Reform and development of education system

and environment is recognized as critical to Myanmar's transition to democracy and inclusive economic growth. Myanmar has the advantage of a large workforce of over 34 million people out of 51.4 million population, of which 40% are between the ages of 15-29 (DOP, 2015). But, the challenge is that majority of the workforce, are under-educated and under-skilled.

Childhood development

It is reported that only about 22.9% of children have access to ECCD centers while other ASEAN countries have achieved 57 per cent coverage. (Save the Children, 2015).

Basic education

The current basic education system is a 5-4-2 system (KG+4+4+2). In the basic education system, the teaching and learning environment has been much more with the rote-learning, making less critical thinking or creativity to the students. It is also much more teacher-centered, not the student-centered. The drop-out rates were high. It is estimated that over one million children in Myanmar are still out of school, less than 70% of primary school age children complete a full course of primary education at the correct age, and out of every 100 children entering primary school, only about 20 go on to finish lower secondary school. Issues of low quality of education are also serious (UNICEF, 2017-a).

About two thirds of young population has not completed the middle school.

Basic education reform process is on-going . Ministry of education started drawing up a new curriculum, along with the education reform process, to change to KG+12 (KG+5+4+3), in 2012, and then introduced a new syllabus, in 2016-17, for the kindergarten (KG) standard., but changing the curriculum and training the teachers one grade per academic year. Accordingly, it will be completed by 2028-2029 academic year.

Tin (2000) advocates that since 69% of the population lives in rural areas, provision of education to these rural communities should be geared towards their needs. The curriculum and programs used in rural schools should be flexible not rigid. The rigid, monolithic national curriculum, school terms and timetables that exist today should be reconsidered. For rural areas, a more flexible curriculum based on local needs should be devised and, where seasonal cropping occurs, school terms should be arranged so that rural family units can make full use of the manpower available to them without disrupting the schooling of their children. In such a way, the massive drop-out rate before completion of the primary cycle of education can be staunched in these disadvantaged areas. If rural schools are programmed as urban schools are and the plight of agrarian families is ignored, the pernicious effect of school drop-out rates on the already weakened education system will be increased further.

In many rural areas, the government education system is non-existent. Teachers are usually reluctant to go to the rural areas, particularly because they receive no adequate salaries. As a consequence, rural schools are mostly overcrowded and the student/ teacher ratio is very high. And, schools are mostly poorly equipped and usually lack basic teaching materials such as benches, tables and textbooks. Teachers are mostly poorly trained and teaching methods tend to be repetitive, outdated, teacher centered teaching. The state-run teacher-training system has been steadily deteriorating.

Higher education

There are 168 higher education institutions in Myanmar, consisting of universities, institutes and colleges (MOE, 2014). Education in Myanmar has been centralized for the management and administrations of the education institutions (UNESCO, 2011). Student enrollment in universities in 2014 was 550,000. Universities offer bachelor, master, and doctorate degree programs. The higher education system follows a 4-1-3 year program with 4 years for a bachelor's degree, one year of qualifying classes, and 3 years for a master's

degree. Engineering students have to study 6 years for bachelor degree, while medical students have to study for 7 years.

University entrance derives from students' scores (or) marks they achieved at matriculation exams. Minimum scores vary depending on the university, but medical schools, engineering institutes, marine university, computer universities demand the higher exam scores. Tuition fees are very small. Teaching revolves around textbook instruction with little to no research focus. Most of the textbooks are not updated. In his book, "Rejuvenating Myanmar Education", Myint (2016) states that despite the support and drive to do research; there is lack of understanding by faculty of the importance of research to them or to the country. He strongly encouraged Myanmar universities should be more enthusiastic about research and give more time and thought to it.

In a transcript of Aung San Suu Kyi's video speech presented at a British Council and University of London policy dialogue event on 9 May 2013, she said "The moves to draft a law on higher education in Burma and to revitalize Rangoon University have to do with much more than mere education. It is really part of our efforts to revitalize and reinvigorate our society. For decades, Burma has suffered from a poor education system and, once the pride of South East Asia; we have now fallen behind all our neighbors. We want to change the situation to give our people pride in themselves and, to do that, we need to strengthen our education system. We need to produce vigorous young people who are capable of meeting the challenges that our country will have to face in the future. Our university system has almost been destroyed by half a century of military rule. Campus life ceased to exist several decades ago, and standard of our university education has fallen so low that graduates have nothing except a photograph of their graduation ceremony to show for the years they spent at university. We want to make our academic institutions independent. We want to make them vital and we want to modernize them to be in keeping with the developments of the times." (Kyi, 2013)

Technical and Vocational Education and Training (TVET)

A Myanmar professor working at a University in United States of America, who has been in United States since 2001, states the need of vocational training and education to produce skilled workers, technicians, competent workforce in various sectors including but not limited to healthcare, agriculture, construction, manufacturing, repairing home-appliances such as refrigerator, air-conditioner, etc. He mentions that producing those skilled workers does not need universities, but, short time certificate or a diploma level training courses may be enough. He adds to have skills assessment and training centers accreditation, for assurance of those skills training.

In a panel at World Economic Forum _ East Asia, held on 18th July 2013, Daw Aung San Suu Kyi stated "our country has suffered very bad education system for many decades. And, so young people and not so young people, because there are many in their forties, are really not equipped to get gainful employment. That is, of course, of poor education system. So, what we need is both education, and jobs. So, what it amounts to us is we have to concentrate on the vocational training and on the job training. Because people in the forties, it is not easy for them to go back to school of any kind. So, they need to be trained on the job, and they need jobs" (Asia Society, 2013).

A central economic committee member of National League for Democracy (NLD) party cum Myanmar Investment Commission (MIC) member states that the vocational high school, agricultural high school, veterinary high school, technical high schools, carpentry school, etc., which were previously existed when he was young and closed by the military government, should be reestablished.

Alternative education (AE) and Non-Formal education (NFE)

Alternative Education: A senior government official from Ministry of Education, says that alternative education (AE) is a potential solution for the early school leavers to continue the basic education, and then to bridge to the vocational training and education. The high proportion of early school leavers in basic education levels is a challenge for the country. It also relates to the country's peace process.

Non-formal Education (NFE): Myanmar has a long history with community-based schools and education systems such as monastic education, Karen community schools, provided by the Buddhist monasteries and churches, etc. While public schooling is not available in many rural regions, there is a monastery in nearly every village (UNESCO, 2002). Traditionally, monastic education is characterized by non-formal education.

Many universities provide short-term courses in some areas such as management and administration, business law, computer science, GIS and Remote Sensing, and information technology, among others. And, there are many private sector training centers and institutes providing short courses in business and management, language studies, computer training programs, vocational training programs, etc. There are some non-formal training programs being initiated and offered by non-governmental organizations (NGOs), with international funding. Apart from those limited activities, there are no particular NFE laws and policies and active non formal educational institutions in Myanmar.

Education Reform

Lwin (2007) states that democracy cannot move forward in Myanmar without education reform. He suggests a decentralized education system from national to classroom level. He promotes 'thinking classrooms' to encourage young people to become democratic citizens. He advocates providing training and professional development for teachers to ensure quality education and to build local capacity, which will meet immediate national needs.

Since 2012 with an increasing need for such human capital, the Myanmar has put the renewal of the education system a national priority. With a Comprehensive Education Sector Review (CESR), then, a National Education Sector Plan (NESP), an enlarged budget, a new national education law and the removal of public school fees, major reform of the entire education sector is well under way.

A regional Minister is very much encouraged with the launch of National Education Strategic Plan (NESP) 2016-21. So does a senior government official from Ministry of Education, They both state that this is the new chapter of education and national human resource development sector for Myanmar. The new NESP has many transformational changes which they both believe will bring the positive effects and benefits to the people, developing the educated human resource, and contributing to the long term socio-economic development of the country. They mentioned about the change of the curricula, from the traditional rote-learning to the student centered approach, helping the students to develop the 21st century knowledge and skills.

But, significant challenges still remain.

Hayden & Martin (2013) states that the physical condition and human resource capacity of the Myanmar's education system is poor by any standard, and teachers, whether in schools, colleges or universities, have few opportunities and little incentive for professional development. They note that a process of recovery is getting underway, but they concern that it will take years before significant improvements are evident. They pointed out three priority areas for immediate attention; (i) funding (ii) more support to the primary schools teacher, and (iii) development of Technical and Vocational Education and Training (TVET).

The central economic committee member of NLD party cum the member of MIC states that he has noted that all the activities in human resource development or education are still very much centralized. He strongly states that it should be decentralized, and localized or regionalized.

The basic education department has more than 400,000 staff including 370,000 teachers. Out of those teachers, 85% are female teachers. The education sector employs about 30% of total number of government employees. Many other government ministries provide their employees many other facilities, such as housing, transportation, etc., apart from the salary and compensations. But, teachers from basic education usually don't receive such facilities as compensation package. It is a challenge for the government to increase the salaries of teachers, to provide the transportation allowance and accommodation to the whole population of teachers, because it will require a significant amount of additional budget or funding, in addition to current budget.

One participant in the focus group discussion, a primary school teacher, expresses that the primary schools have no enough budgets to buy the teaching aids by themselves.

Two thirds or 67% of participating university students answer that their parents strongly involve in their application process of universities, and which universities they should apply for and in which order.

Many students in Science and Arts universities and Universities of Distance education are studying only for the sake of graduation, to have a nice picture with a beautiful graduation gown, and to put it in the visible place of their house (Interview Transcript #FGI1_notes; #FGI3. 145-150; FGI4. 218-230).

And, most of the parents want their children to be medical doctors or engineers or computer professionals. There are many medical doctors who didn't want to be medical doctors, but they followed their parents' command or wish, and then become medical doctors. So do many engineers, and computer graduates. After the university studies, they change their careers, like doing business or enter into politics, etc. The purpose and value of education has been miserable. The quality and relevancy of the education have to be rectified and revitalized.

A senior official from Ministry of Industry states that teaching approach should be child centered approach (CCA), or student centered approach (SCA), instead of teacher centered approach which currently being practiced.

The teacher from the education college expresses that she is very happy to learn the new teaching techniques and methods, like CCA / SCA, and being eye-opened while attending a series of training workshops British Council (BC) sponsored. But, she, together with the other teachers who attended those training workshops, still have to train the teachers-to-be students at the education colleges to experience those new approach teaching methods. It will take time and challenging; before these new (and existing) teachers change the way they teach the students in the classrooms (Interview Transcript #FGI03. 246-283).

National Education Strategic Plan 2016-21 (MOE, 2017) reminds that even the basic education reforms will need to be implemented over a period of at least ten years in order to become fully established in schools across the country. There are more than 330,000 teachers in Myanmar's basic education schools and it will take at least ten years to train and support them to adopt new interactive teaching and classroom assessment methods.

Challenges for NHRD

Apart from the above mentioned priority areas in the education reforms, there are a few other underlying issues and challenges for NHRD as follows;

- Under-educated and under-skilled workforce: The advantage of possession of a large workforce and a youth bulge may not be realized as the majority of them are under-educated and under-skilled.

- Traditional Teachers: Tin (2008) notes that teachers are as a group, highly conservative and traditionalist, and tend to resist change. He mentioned an example that the two Departments of Basic Education and the Myanmar Education Research Bureau had held training sessions on new methodologies and classroom strategies to counter rote learning but with little success. When the teachers returned to their classrooms, they reverted to their old methods after a time.

- Authoritarianism: Tin (2008) pointed out that Myanmar has had an extreme authoritarianism since the early 1960s, as well as suffering the indignity of colonial rule and the long legacy of rule by extreme authoritarian kings and feudal lords, and accordingly it is extremely difficult to break out of the mold.

- Knowledge, skills and competencies lagging behind: Lorch (2008) states that international organizations and Myanmar businesses experience, when recruiting or interviewing, the lack of skills and competencies of the young people. The younger, the lower, he states.

- Critical thinking and creativity missing: Lorch (2008) states that as a result of a continuing erosion of the education system, the critical thinking and creativity are missing in the current education system and the students. This erosion is characterized not only by a lack of access to, and the quality of, education, but by 'a system that suppresses critical thinking and...discourages creativity', he stated.

- Teachers-training degraded: Lorch (2008) also states that teachers and professors often lack basic qualifications, because the state-run teacher-training system has been steadily degrading.

- Low level of Multi-stakeholders engagement in Education: Along the socialist and military regime time, the role of the international aid community in the field of education was limited, as the government is highly suspicious of international involvement. Even though civil-society groups have managed to bridge some of the gaps that exist in the formal education sector, they lack the capacity to provide a substitute for a functioning state-run education system. The NHRD in transitioning Myanmar is not only for the government to be responsible, but it is very much required that many other stakeholders must get involved. The stakeholders may include but not limited to the union government, regional government, civil societies, private sectors, industrial zones management committees, industries, non-government organizations, universities, academic institutions, teachers, students, village heads, community leaders, experts, training centers, etc. (Interview Transcript #02. 464 – 468). The NHRD must be dynamic. It must be adaptable to changes.

- Ethnic Diversity: Ethnic diversity is another distinctive characteristic of Myanmar (Hayden & Martin, 2013). It has as many as 135 different ethnic nationalities within its borders (Oxford Burma Alliance, 2013). Burmans/ Bamar accounts for 68% of population, and other ethnic minorities, accounting for much smaller proportions of the population, include Shan (9%), Karen (7%), Rakhine (4%), Chinese (3%), Indian (2%) and Mon (2%). Different ethnic groups have their own history, culture and language. The governments of Myanmar in the past traditionally emphasized a centralized Myanmar language education system that some ethnic group members believed provided little space for their languages, cultures and ethnic identities to be preserved, practiced and valued. Subsequently, conflicts arise. As Bamar/ Burmese/ Myanmar language is not their mother tongue language, ethnic minority children drop out in the very early stage of basic education.

- Educational Attainment: Primary school education is compulsory, but the net enrolment rate in primary school in 2010-11 was estimated to be only 84.6% (MOE, 2012).

Many of them drop out even in primary school, i.e., still very early stage of basic education. The results from the 2014 Myanmar Census show that educational attainment overall is quite low: almost two thirds (61.3 per cent) of the population aged 25 and over had either only progressed to primary level education (completed or incomplete) or had no education at all; and, there are very little option for them to continue education and training (DOP, 2017). Secondary education poses a critical "choke point" in Myanmar's education system and requires reforms of curriculum, teaching, and student assessment.

- **Mindset:** It has been frequently debated during the individual interviews and focus group interviews that because the whole society in transitioning Myanmar experiencing a notable shift from the closed society, socialist mechanism and dictatorship government to open society, market economy, and democratic government, there is an urgent need for mindset change in the various areas of work places, both private and government organizations.

- **Resource Dependency:** Myanmar's abundant natural resources include oil and gas, minerals like gold, copper, silver, lead, zinc, tin, antimony, iron, etc., gemstones like jade, rubies, sapphires, etc., forest and timber, water resources like rivers, water ways, delta, and lakes, and unusually fertile land for agriculture. Myanmar survived on those natural resources. As per census in 2014 (DOP, 2015), transitioning Myanmar has a population bonus or population advantage, with a strong percentage of young population and the population in the active age groups (15 – 64 years) being 67% (see Fig. 1). Within this group those aged 5-14 are the largest group and forms a "Youth Bulge" that can offer a possible "demographic dividend". To reap the benefits in the next 10-15 years, there needs to be targeted investments and work opportunities for young people, when they enter the working age. UNFPA urges Myanmar to act quickly and decisively in order for the country to prepare for reaping the demographic dividend. Investing in a highly educated workforce as well as creating equal job opportunities for boys and girls should be at the forefront of the Myanmar on-going social economic transition (UNFPA, 2015).

- **Managerial Capacity:** The senior government official of Ministry of Education (MoE), states "The education reform is ongoing, but we need the effective and efficient management. We need to upgrade managerial skills of our senior government officials, project leaders, key stakeholders, to make the reform process efficient and effective."

- **Disasters:** Myanmar is prone to natural disasters such as floods, cyclones and earthquakes. In May 2008, Cyclone Nargis struck the Ayeyarwady delta, killing nearly 140,000 people and impacting about 2.4 million, according to official figures. In 2015, flooding and Cyclone Komen killed dozens and impacted millions of people. Most recently, the United Nation's 2016 Global Climate Risk report identified Myanmar as one of 20 countries in a "conflict-climate nexus", a combination of severe environmental vulnerability along with pre-existing social fragility and weak institutions.

Perspectives of NHRD

The study is carried out via the case study approach. The literature review, document review, stake-holders interviews and focus groups discussions provided the perspectives of NHRD in transitioning Myanmar, being summarized as follows:

- NHRD is an important foundation and driving force for the long term sustainable development of the country.
- But, the current situation of NHRD in Myanmar is not satisfactory, and it will be a chocking point for the sustainable development of the country.
- The foundation for NHRD is education.
- NHRD Starts from the pregnancy and early childhood until the end of life.

- NHRD must be comprehensive, with sectorial and regional development plans developed by the stakeholders, and then integrated and linked together.
- The other important areas for NHRD are development of youth, investment in human capital, development of critical thinking, creativity and innovation, physical trainings and sports, and development of life skills.

Emerging NHRD in Transitioning Myanmar

The National Human Resource Development (NHRD) has not been planned, implemented, or operated in proper manner in the last decades. The socialist and military government had made the education system failed, and the education reform process is in its early stage. TVET development is also in infant stage. Early childcare services, childhood development programs, and public healthcare programs are also in their early stages of development. In such a nutshell, virtually, there is no National Comprehensive Human Resource Development strategy and plan properly developed yet, and the NHRD activities are in sectoral divide, and not linked or integrated each other.

The transition of the country is very much exciting for the citizens of Myanmar. People are hopeful. People expect positive changes in various aspects of life. People expect development in all socio-economic areas from the new government, and especially from the new leader, Daw Aung San Suu Kyi. People feel freedom, even though there are still limitations of freedom of speech and media.

Return of Myanmar Diaspora or Brain Gain

There are about 4 - 5 million Myanmar migrant workers (about 10% of the population) abroad. Majority in Thailand and Malaysia, as factory workers, and some professional workers (like engineers, IT professionals, accounting, etc.,) working in Singapore and a few other countries. Those international migrants or 'Myanmar Diaspora', gaining knowledge, experience, skills and accumulated financial resources would be useful for Myanmar's development as and when they eventually return to their place of birth. They must be attracted to come back to Myanmar, to participate in the development efforts, and to grow together, with right scheme and motivational incentives at a point of sufficient economic growth.

The minister of Mandalay regional government states that there is a trend of Myanmar migrant workers coming back to Myanmar, since the beginning of the transition.

The Myanmar Professor at a University in United States, narrates his efforts to contribute to the development of the country, and his experience that he was warmly responded by State Counsellor Daw Aung San Suu Kyi that he should come and share his experience with the top cabinet ministers, when he wrote to her that he would like to share his knowledge and ideas especially in education, environmental conservation, and forestry management areas. Accordingly he visited Myanmar, and contacted her office, and then it was arranged for him to meet with those related cabinets Ministers, one after another, to share his knowledge on those mentioned areas. He says that at the moment he cannot come back to Myanmar for good yet, as of socio-economic reasons. But, he will come back frequently and will share his knowledge and ideas gained from studies abroad, and working abroad.

Learning by Doing, Doing by Learning

Starting from the beginning of the transition, there are international cooperation and assistance in many professional and technical areas, where Myanmar professionals, executives, academia, and technicians are in the process of learning by doing, and doing by learning, through many capacity building, capacity development programs going on in various areas, in various government ministries, civil societies and private sector, by various

development programs, by various development partners. The expert trainer from UN institute express that now the country is opening up and there are so many international donors coming in and giving financial and other support for these human resource development.

A lecturer from Mandalay Technological University is also happy that the country is opening, and he has been getting the opportunities to learn more, and to work with international partners, and also to work with other government departments . He works with GIS (Geographic Information Systems) and remote sensing technologies, and the author interviewed him at Chiang Mai, Thailand, while he was attending the regional science meeting on land cover land use change studies using GIS and remote sensing technologies, being organized by NASA (the National Aeronautics and Space Agency) of United States together with NARIT (National Astronomical Research Institute of Thailand) and many other academic institutions and research organizations. He states that we are legged behind too many years and so we need to update and upgrade our knowledge and skills and competencies, and so that to grow properly, we need to learn how to do things with the latest technologies and updated knowledge, in such a way of learning by doing, and doing by learning.

Proposed NHRD Model for Transitioning Myanmar

The proposed model of the NHRD for the transitioning Myanmar is presented in infographics in figure 3.

The background shape represents the population pyramid of Myanmar as of 2017. (See Figure 2. Population Pyramid of Myanmar -2017).

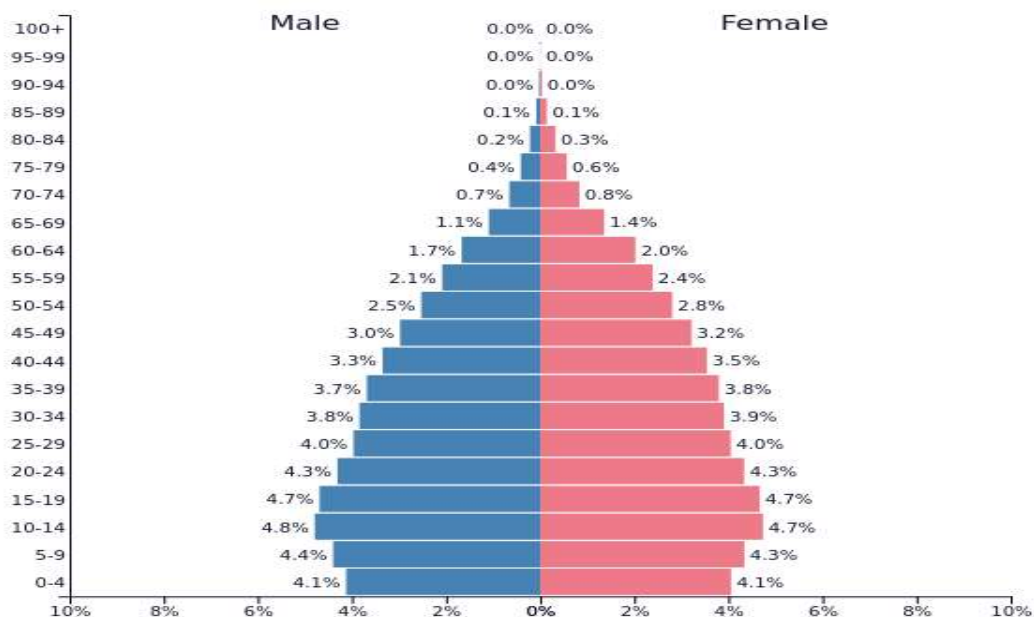


Figure 2. Population Pyramid of Myanmar – 2017 Retrieved from Population Pyramid of the World Website ; <https://www.populationpyramid.net/myanmar/2017/>

The right-sided labels of the proposed NHRD model represent the age range of the population. The age-groups are colored, as of pregnancy, early-childhood, schooling age, university/ college age, working age, and post-working age. Even though the whole population didn't go through each level of schooling, and the university/ college education, it

has been colored for the purpose of distinction of the age-groups. But, in the box for that age-groups, the focus areas of attentions for those age-groups have been presented. For example, the TVET (Technical Vocational Education and Training) has been in the fox for schooling aged group and the university/ college aged group. It is because there are many young people out of school and not going to high school nor the university and colleges nor any other higher education. They should be equipped with the technical education or vocational education. The dual education is also mentioned as many of them have been working and they need to be trained and equipped with more skills and training by dual education learning and working in parallel.

The population advantage of emerging youth bulge has been emphasized as a source of working population for coming decades as resources for growth. This demographic dividend or population advantage or population bonus will not last forever. This youth bulge will transform to the older age group as dependents, and then the population advantage will be expired. So, the country has to reap the advantage quickly by equipping the youth with the necessary skills and competencies to maximize the productivity and to contribute to the development process of the country. The potential brain gain effect by returning Myanmar Diasporas working abroad also has been presented as an important input to the national human resources to support and strengthen the development efforts.

Proposed National Human Resource Development (NHRD) model for Transitioning Myanmar

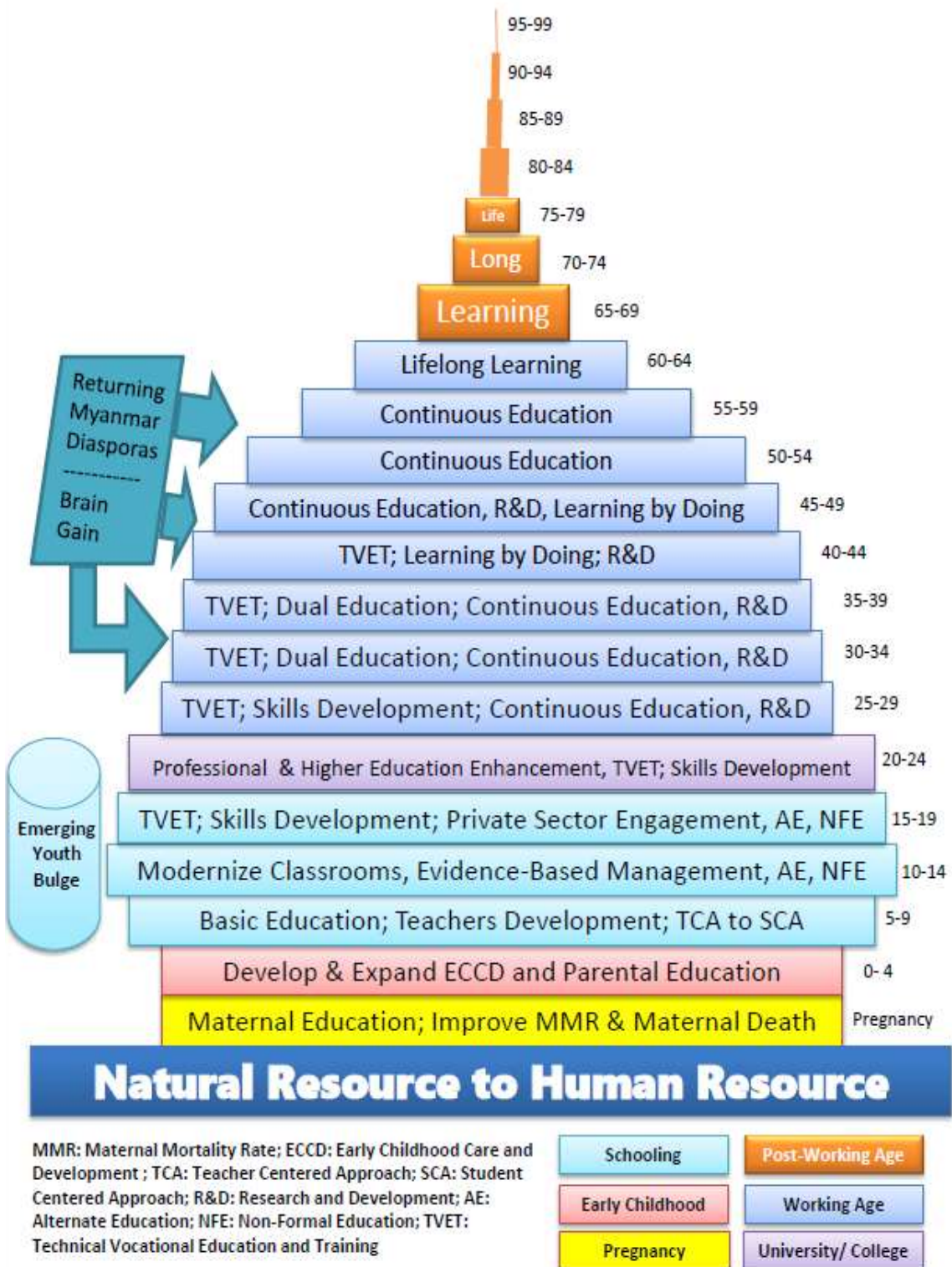


Figure 3. Proposed National Human Resource Development (NHRD) Model for Transitioning Myanmar

Recommendations

It is important to develop the conceptual framework, and then strategies and plans for the future sustainable development of the national human resource and then consequently the comprehensive socio-economic development of the country. And, Myanmar needs to grasp the chances of taking the population bonus advantage and population divide by investing in education and skills development in emerging youth bulge. It is also important to attract the Myanmar migrants abroad or 'Myanmar Diaspora' to come back to Myanmar, to participate in the development efforts with the accumulated knowledge, experience, skills and financial resources, to grow together. This must be properly carried out with right scheme and motivational incentives at the point of sufficient economic growth.

The strategic, policy and tactical recommendations for a long term, sustainable and holistic national human resource development (NHRD) in Myanmar have been laid out.

The first strategic recommendation is to switch the dependency on the natural resources to the human resource for the sustainable development of the country. It has been suggested to establish a National Human Resource Development Council (NHRDC) for the interactive development of country's National Human Resource Development (NHRD) policy, strategic conceptual framework, and then the NHRD Plan, with the stakeholders' inputs, and lessons learnt from regional and similar other countries. Then, it also has recommended developing a National Skills Development Fund (NSDF) to equip the youth with the necessary skills required for the incoming jobs with opening the country. It also advises to create an attractive environment to bring back the Myanmar Diasporas abroad. The coordination among the government ministries, regional governments, encouraging private sector to get into the education, training and vocational training areas, effective utilization of today's technologies including the rapidly growing mobile phones, internet, web-based teaching-learning, smart TVs, etc., decentralization of education sector management, budget allocation priorities and then encouraging to cooperate with the ASEAN and its member countries.

Tactically, the following recommendations are made:

Education Management

- to utilize the evidence-based decision making tools
- To expand early childhood care and development centers (ECCD) for better reach and coverage, by bringing in all the stakeholders including government ministries, private sector, regional and local governments, township level authorities

Teachers Development

- to develop the teachers, with a motto "Teachers First"
- to make incentive and motivational programs for outstanding teachers such as trips to visit other cities in Myanmar, industry visits, social and professional visits to foreign countries, etc., providing them exposure as well,

Basic Education

- to encourage the schools to engage with the local communities, private sector, local industries, by making the school field trips, inviting the local industries to schools to meet and greet with the students, engage with the students,
- to enhance the schools not only in physical aspects but also in the aspects of the morale and motivation of the teachers and students by means of providing as much as possible their basic needs, social needs, linking up with communities, linking up with outside worlds, recognition of their efforts, and giving them the warmth of being in the school and being in the education sector
- to provide the education to the rural communities gearing towards their needs;
- to develop student centered approach in classrooms in both basic and higher educations

- to encourage and bring in the private sector to engage and invest in education as (social) business

Higher Education

- to revitalize the campus life in higher education institutions, as of being lost it for many years under the military government
 - to promote and encourage research activities
 - to decentralize the management and administration of universities and institutes, and provide the autonomy
 - to give the students the right to choose and apply to any higher education institution as he or she like, making him or her more passionate with the studies which he or she chooses
 - to gradually provide the right to collect the competitive tuition fees by the individual higher education institutions within a specified range
 - to encourage the cooperation and collaboration with international academic institutions

Skills Development

- to develop diverse means solutions for alternative, non-formal, and vocational education areas,
 - to support (administrative, political, technical and financial) and encourage the private sector to engage in the skills development training as social business providing the demand-driven skill trainings,
 - to develop digital platforms for non-formal education such as eLearning systems, distance learning programs, mobile apps and broadcasting education programs especially for people in the rural and remote areas and the dropped-out students engaged in work-forces,
 - To work out possible arrangements to start vocational trainings in the mornings or in the evenings and in the weekends in current education institutions' buildings
 - To encourage private sector to invest in technical vocational training
 - To develop the model technical and vocational training centers in a few major cities, then to transform them self-dependent social enterprises, and then to multiply them into other cities and towns
 - To foster and support those vocational trainings in the hot-spot areas of economic development such as hotel and tourism, agriculture and livestock, textile, construction, industry welding, industry automation, electrical and electronic technicians, etc.,
 - To explore and start possible PPP (public private partnership) ideas, programs and projects for technical and vocational education training areas
 - To support and encourage education/ industry links, to fulfil the human resources requirements of the industries and businesses and to link the education with the world of works

Life Long Education/ Learning Nation

- to develop the culture of life-long learning nationwide
- To effectively help all the citizens learning continuously
- To make the nation "The Learning Nation"

Suggestions for Future Inquiry and Discovery

The exploratory nature of this research provided a limited applicability of the findings. Therefore, further empirical research needs to be carried out on the emergent constructs of NHRD in the transitioning Myanmar in order to extend the applicability of these findings. For example, a central focus of the extended empirical research on NHRD in transitioning Myanmar should deal with issues related to the possibility of improving skills and competencies development of the working aged people, i.e., two thirds of the population, aiming for them for better jobs.

It is further suggested that more research be carried out in the following specific areas which this study has little touched upon ;

- The role of Alternative Education (AE) for the NHRD in Transitioning Myanmar
- The current status, perspectives and challenges of vocational education for the NHRD in Myanmar
- The opportunities and challenges by AEC (ASEAN Economic Community) to the NHRD in Myanmar
- Change and development of moral characteristics of students in Myanmar universities and colleges
- Push and pull factors for Myanmar migrant workers to come back to Myanmar contributing in the construction and development of the country
- Occupational supply and demand analysis of Myanmar

Conclusion

NHRD in transitioning Myanmar has various stakeholders and various driving forces, defining its environment and system, in a dynamic fashion. There are progressive developments of NHRD system in the transition, but coupling with the challenges ahead as well. There are opportunities for growing by learning and doing together with the development partners. It is also important to develop the conceptual framework, and then strategies and plans for the future sustainable development of the national human resource and then consequently the comprehensive socio-economic development of the country. Myanmar needs to grasp the chances of taking the advantage of population bonus advantage and population divide by investing in education and skills development. It is also important to attract the Myanmar migrants abroad or 'Myanmar Diaspora' to come back to Myanmar, to participate in the development efforts with the accumulated knowledge, experience, skills and financial resources, and to grow together. This must be properly carried out with right scheme and motivational incentives at the point of sufficient economic growth.

It is to be concluded that the harmonized, integrated and comprehensive national human resource development is important and critical for the sustainable development of Myanmar in its transition from old Myanmar to new Myanmar.

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