

Colonising the curriculum? Challenges in promoting education for sustainable development through open educational resources in a developing country

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SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT GOALS - TO BE ACHIEVED BY 2030



GOAL 4: ENSURE INCLUSIVE AND QUALITY EDUCATION FOR ALL AND PROMOTE LIFELONG LEARNING

- Ensure that all girls and boys complete free, equitable and quality primary and secondary education leading to relevant and Goal-4 effective learning outcomes
- Ensure that all girls and boys have access to quality early childhood development, care and pre-primary education so that they are ready for primary education
- Ensure equal access for all women and men to affordable and quality technical, vocational and tertiary education, including university
- Substantially increase the number of youth and adults who have relevant skills, including technical and vocational skills, for employment, decent jobs and entrepreneurship
- Eliminate gender disparities in education and ensure equal access to all levels of education and vocational training for the vulnerable, including persons with disabilities, indigenous peoples and children in vulnerable situations
- Ensure that all youth and a substantial proportion of adults, both men and women, achieve literacy and numeracy
- Ensure that all learners acquire the knowledge and skills needed to promote sustainable development, including, among others, through education for sustainable development and sustainable lifestyles, human rights, gender equality, promotion of a culture of peace and non-violence, global citizenship and appreciation of cultural diversity and of culture's contribution to sustainable development
- Build and upgrade education facilities that are child, disability and gender sensitive and provide safe, nonviolent, inclusive and effective learning environments for all
- Substantially expand globally the number of scholarships available to developing countries, in particular least developed countries, small island developing States and African countries, for enrolment in higher education, including vocational training and information and communications technology, technical, engineering and scientific programmes, in developed countries and other developing countries
- Substantially increase the supply of qualified teachers, including through international cooperation for teacher training in developing countries, especially least developed countries and small island developing states

SDG GOAL 4 TARGET 7



By 2030, ensure that all learners acquire the knowledge and skills needed to promote sustainable development, including, among others, through education for sustainable development and sustainable lifestyles, human rights, gender equality, promotion of a culture of peace and non-violence, global citizenship and appreciation of cultural diversity and of culture's contribution to sustainable development.

MYANMAR (BURMA) CONTEXT



- ❑ 'Quasi-democratic' system in 2011 after 48 years of military dictatorship
- ❑ Prolonged isolation from international communities
- ❑ Political unrest and civic wars between Myanmar's Army and Ethnic Armed Organizations over 70 years
- ❑ Education was manipulated and controlled
- ❑ Initiated Education reform since 2011, National Education Strategic Plan 2016-21, 2021-26 Plan being developed
- ❑ Time for education reform and reconstruction of HEIs

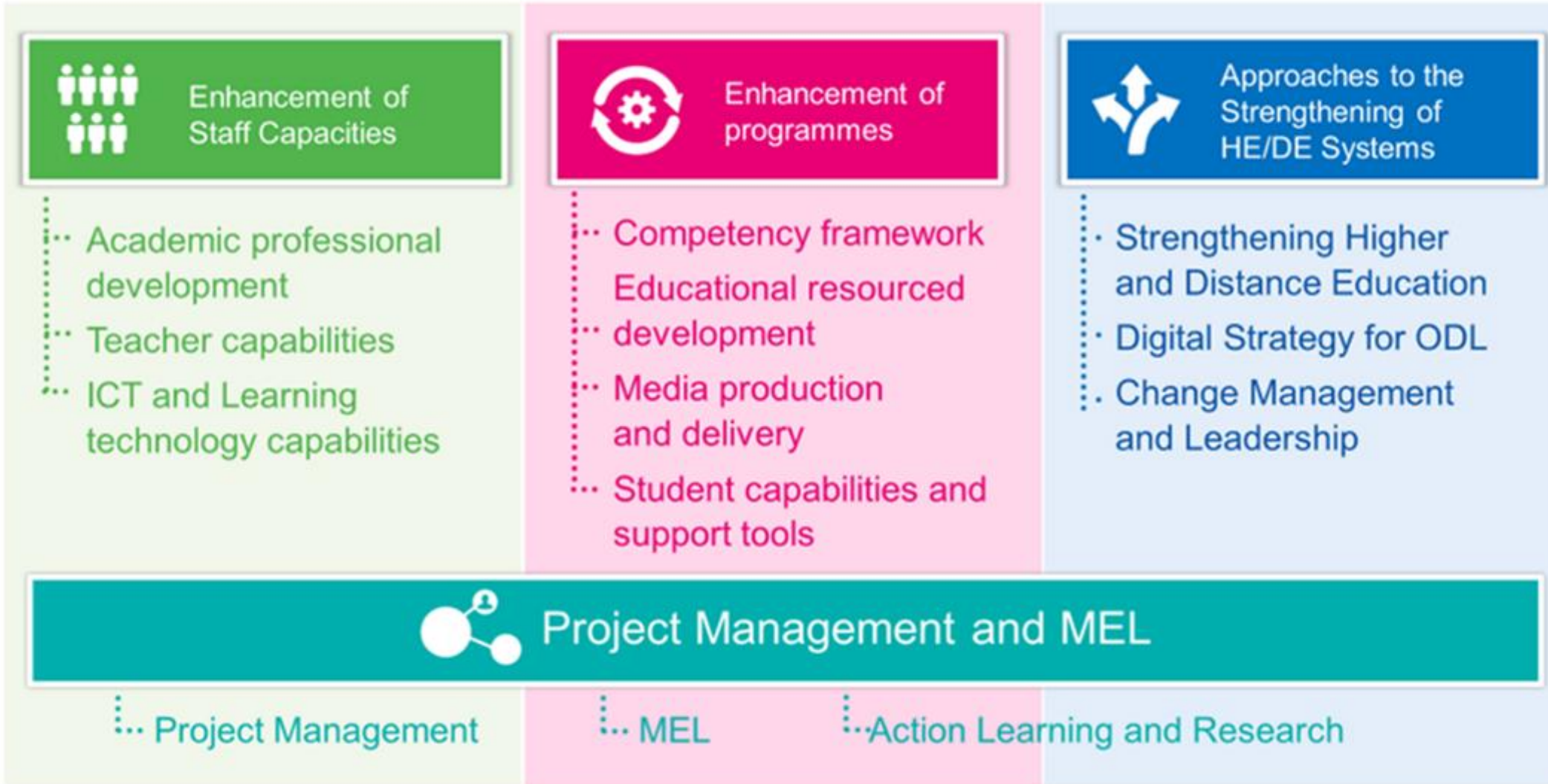
TIDE: TRANSFORMATION BY INNOVATION IN DISTANCE EDUCATION

- ❑ UK AID funded, running March 2018 to September 2021
- ❑ Aims to improve the quality of distance education in Myanmar at a critical time in the country's development.
- ❑ Has been designed to catalyse higher education reform and transformation by supporting the National Education Sector Plan 2016-21
- ❑ Is focused on underpinning the distance education provision through enhanced teaching and technical skills and capabilities in open and distance education and by developing knowledge and capacity in Education for Environment and Sustainable Development (EfESD)
- ❑ Is working with all 40 HEIs involved in distance education system in Myanmar that teach 60% of all HE students

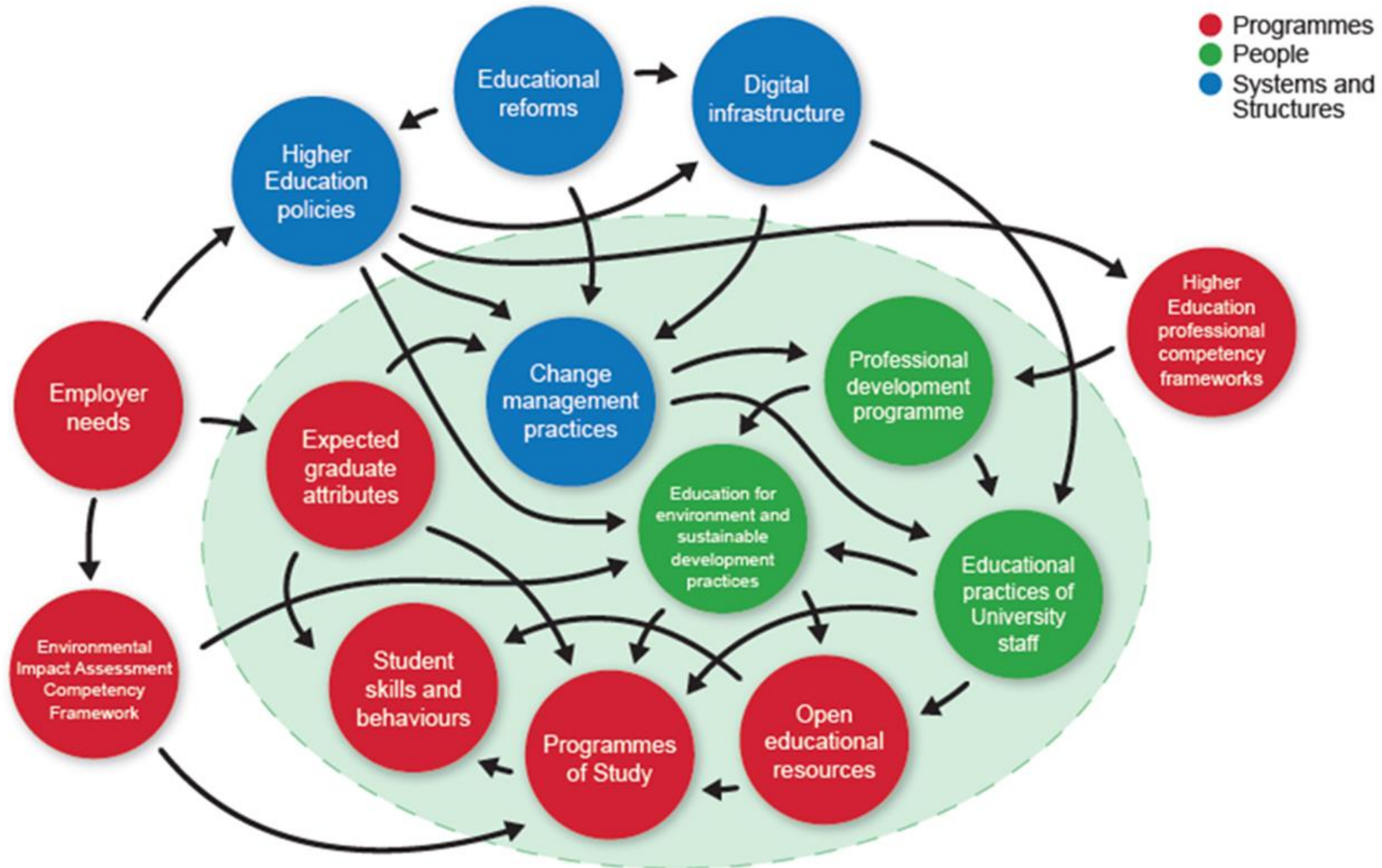


SPHEIR
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TIDE OUTPUTS AND ACTIVITIES

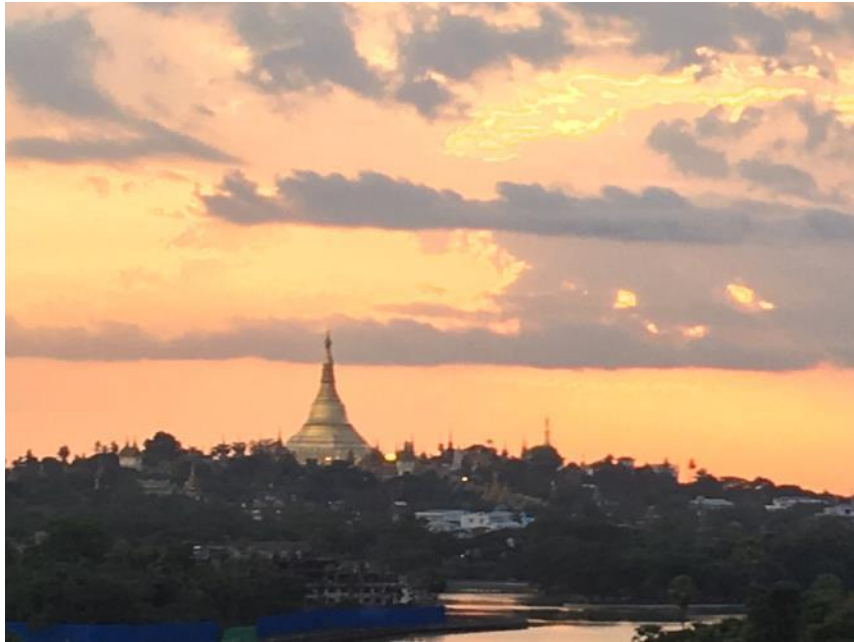


AN INFLUENCE DIAGRAM OF INTER-RELATIONSHIPS IN TIDE ACTIVITIES



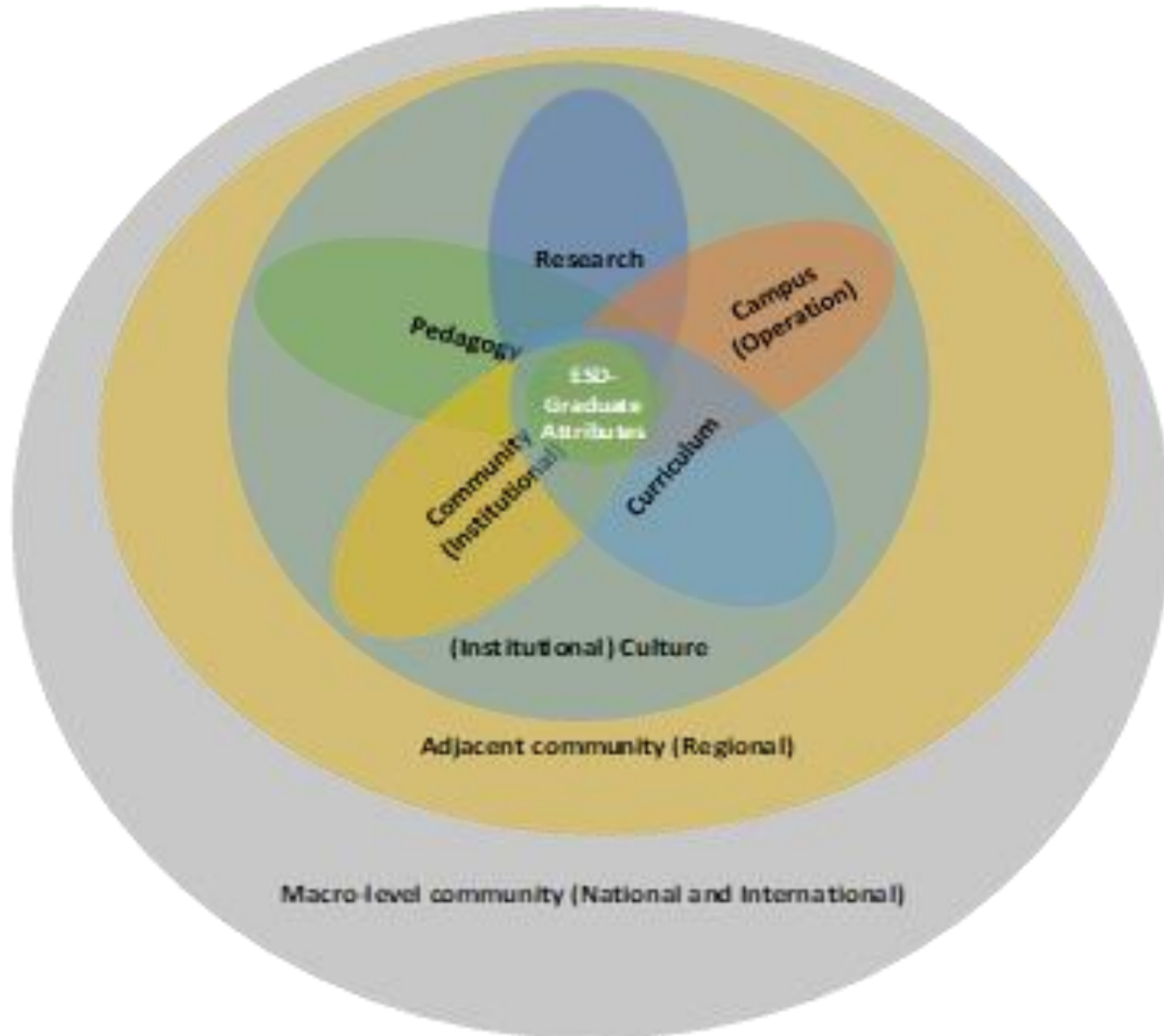
WHOSE CURRICULUM?

- ❑ TIDE is promoting open educational practices through the adaptation of OERs but most OERs are in English and originate from western universities
- ❑ While SE Asian/Myanmar examples and case studies can localize the OERs that participants are creating, does that fully reflect the cultural traditions and diversity of Myanmar
- ❑ Different understandings on sustainability and sustainable development have led scholars to debate what is required from ESD including defining expected graduate attributes.
- ❑ Similarly, which activities of HEIs should contribute to the development of these ESD related graduate attributes; activities such as outreach, innovation and advocacy beyond their main tasks of teaching and research.
- ❑ The integration of ESD has been discussed, tested, initiated and reviewed in different HEIs in different contexts around the world and it is particularly well developed in western countries.
- ❑ Accordingly, the ESD concept and its practice is more heavily informed by Western ideology and culture than Asian ones.



Global Challenge Research Fund funded Doctoral studentship running 2019-2022 focusing on the following research questions:

- ❑ How might Myanmar HEIs conceptualise ESD?
- ❑ What are the graduate attributes to be expected from ESD in Myanmar?
- ❑ What transformations in Myanmar HEIs' policy and practice are needed to develop ESD?



- ❑ An adapted model for ESD integration in HEIs building on models developed by Jones et al. (2010) and Anand et al. (2015)
- ❑ It focuses on the main operational aspects of HEIs and how each might contribute to ESD
- ❑ It also acknowledges the many layers of external influence on those HEIs

There can be different approaches for the reforming or reconstruction of HEIs

The concept of 'educational reconstruction' developed by Arnhold et al. (1998), is particularly suitable for countries with prolonged civil unrest or in the transitional stage (Esson and Wang, 2018)

The five areas of Arnhold et al.'s (1998) reconstruction model are:

- 1) Physical reconstruction
- 2) **Ideological reconstruction**
- 3) Psychological reconstruction
- 4) Provision of materials and curricular reconstruction
- 5) Human resources development

- ❑ ESD does not have a high profile in the HE sector in Myanmar and more awareness of the UN's SDGs is needed among the academic staff.
- ❑ The curriculum reform to follow is a question of whether to integrate or not to integrate ESD in university education, and whether stand-alone courses or a 'hidden' curriculum approach should be used.
- ❑ Teachers' competency on innovative teaching methods was frequently mentioned in discussions and interviews because the students interviewed expected graduate attributes to cover a wide range of skills and knowledge.
- ❑ All stakeholders' interests and participation must be recognized in all levels of the educational reform process
- ❑ Transformational developments in university leadership, administration and management are highly demanded

IS CHANGING THE CURRICULUM ENOUGH?

- There has been little research and few publications on Myanmar's higher education institutions and no research on ESD in Myanmar higher education
- There is a need to see if the integration models are relevant and sufficient enough to follow in Myanmar, a low-income developing country with prolonged conflict, poverty and environmental issues
- How much of the formal ESD curriculum is set out (or not) in the educational resources being used in a programme of study?
- How much does informal learning about ESD arise from non-curricular activities?
- How much does that curriculum need to be defined by local cultures and traditions as well as global 'science'?
- Will a dominant indigenous culture replace 'minor' cultures as much as a global 'ESD culture' determines the curriculum

- ❑ TIDE may be helping build capacity within Myanmar but is it still promoting a Western, Global view of open education and ESD and thus colonizing the curriculum despite our best intentions?
- ❑ It is too early to tell but the need and pace of reform in Myanmar often needs international investment and support which leads to global solutions being brought to the fore.
- ❑ We have more questions than answers at the moment, but we are keen to see the voices and experiences in Myanmar shared and respected
- ❑ In essence we must acknowledge that we need to learn from each other if we are to co-develop a curriculum to help achieve the SDGs.

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