**Influencing National Level Policy Reform and System Transformation for the Higher Education Sector**

## **Study Guide**

## Introduction

Welcome to the course ‘Influencing National Level Policy Reform and System Transformation for the Higher Education Sector’ which represents Pathway 2 for Level 3 of the Change Management Competency Course.

This short course provides guidance on how to influence Higher Education policy in Myanmar at the National level, focussing particularly on Distance Education and the ‘Arts and Science’ Universities. The course has four components, the first of which covers some theory relevant to policy influencing and includes an overview of the Myanmar Education Sector Policy Context. This is followed by three case example components each of which explores how a potentially important area for policy reform and system transformation could be developed. The titles of the four components are:

* An introduction to influencing Higher Education policy in Myanmar
* Case 1: Developing a policy for the HE sector to support lifelong learning through open education
* Case 2: Thinking about Inclusion in Higher Education
* Case 3: An introduction to Learning Platforms and Policy

These topics were chosen based on experience gained by the TIDE project team from 2017 to 2021 in Myanmar which focused on transforming distance education in Myanmar. It worked with over 34 universities across the country building faculty and support staff capacity and senior management leadership to manage change. The four components relate to the context and challenges in the current higher education system that were emerging as priority areas for reform in the next decade in the National Education Strategic Plan (NESP2) drafting process. The goal here is to provide HE sector change agents with relevant knowledge and insights into the process of influencing policy reform in Myanmar, recognising that there are many stakeholders, and the context can be rapidly changing e.g. as a result of unexpected events such as the Covid-19 pandemic. The change agents who take this course are not expected to be policy makers themselves at the National level, though they may make policy for example for their institutions.

This course is entirely self-study. It has 4 components, each requiring 1 hour of study, a total of 4 hours for the course. Each component consists of a short introduction, a video presentation, and activities to help you reflect on your learning and consider how you might engage successfully in a relevant reform process. The course is assessed by an end of course quiz and a Statement of Participation is available.

## Learning outcomes

Learning outcomes are what you will know and be able to do after studying the course. The learning outcomes of the course are:

* Understand policy influencing theory
* Understand the context for policy influencing in Myanmar
* Have knowledge of three examples which explore different thematic areas where policy influencing within the Higher Education Sector in Myanmar could take place
* Be able to develop strategies and ideas for future Higher Education policy in Myanmar

## Course content

The course is made up of a study guide which introduces the 4 components and is the spine of the course as it guides you on your learning journey. There is also a video presentation for each approach, and a workbook. The workbook contains the activity to support each approach and is where you can capture your learning from the course and your answers and reflections to the activities. This will develop your thinking on policy influencing at the National level.

## Assessment

In order to gain your Statement of Participation, a pass grade of at least 60% is needed in the end of course quiz. There is no limit to the number of times you can attempt the quiz, although only your last attempt will be counted.

## Getting started

Please go to Component 1 to begin your study of the course

1. An introduction to influencing Higher Education policy in Myanmar

### Introduction

Policy influencing, whether it is at the institutional or national level, is a complex and at times messy process. There are two contrasting theories related to this process. One sees policy creation and reform as a linear process where a range of stages must be worked through sequentially. The other sees the process as essentially messy and non-linear, involving a high level of negotiation with competing stakeholders. This module starts by introducing some theory related to policy making, and the through use of an example the importance of evidence is illustrated and the concept of the ‘policy entrepreneur’ is explained.

The Myanmar policy context for Higher Education is influenced primarily by the Myanmar National Education Law (2014) which was amended in 2015, and by the National Education Strategic Plan (NESP). NESP1 runs from 2016 until the end of September 2021 and plans for NESP2 which was intended to cover the ten year period to 2030 were progressing well until January 2021. The process of developing NESP1 and NESP2 involves national and international consultants engaging with stakeholders to identify and agree on major areas for reform. Other documents such as the Myanmar Sustainable Development Plan (2018-2030) and Myanmar National Export Strategy also less directly express and influence Education Sector Policy.

Please go to the narrated presentation. After you have listened to the presentation, go to the workbook to answer the activities for this component.

1. Case 1: Developing policy for the HE Sector to support Lifelong Learning through Open Education

## Introduction

The education sector in Myanmar suffers from many points where students drop out from formal education, and subsequently lack the opportunities to re-engage and maximise their opportunities for valuable employment. This is damaging both for the individual, their families who they may support and for the wider society and economy. Until January 2021, Myanmar had a Ministerial level policy statement guiding the Education sector which focussed on an education for all strategy, where ‘No child is left behind’, and where there are ‘no drop-outs’ and ‘no wastage’. Implicit in this is a commitment to lifelong learning, and a comprehensive qualifications framework was emerging in the NESP2 drafting process that would provide opportunities for students of all ages, and in particular for youth. Within this framework a new Myanmar Open University was also proposed that would operate with an ‘Open Education’ model.

Drawing on examples this component explores the strengths and argument for an Open Education policy, discusses the process for developing such a policy, and highlights some of the challenges in getting it adopted and implemented.

Please go to the narrated presentation. After you have listened to the presentation, go to the workbook to answer the activities for this component.

1. Case 2: Thinking about Inclusivity in Higher Education

### Introduction

An ‘Education for All’ policy that seeks to be equitable and provide the opportunity to access good quality education to all of Myanmar’s people requires consideration of many factors including gender, age, location, ethnicity, and provision for special learning needs. Myanmar society comprises a diverse mix of many different ethnic groups with an estimate of over one hundred languages spoken, so the challenge of inclusion is significant, and the context is never static.

This component explores different dimensions of inclusion and examines what may be needed within a Higher Education Institution to promote inclusion and inclusive practices for both on-campus and distance education students. It invites participants to reflect on how inclusive policies and practices can be developed and introduced within HEIs, and on what can be done at the national level to provide an enabling and supportive environment, recognising that significant investment is also important to support the implementation of new teaching, learning, admissions, technical and administrative approaches that promote inclusion.

Please go to the narrated presentation. After you have listened to the presentation, go to the workbook to answer the activities for this component.

1. Case 3: Developing policy for Teaching and Learning platforms

### Introduction

Technology enhanced learning is becoming an area of great interest in Myanmar as the technical infrastructure for broadband connectivity steadily improves across the country and within the Education sector, driven by the rapid expansion since 2015 in the availability and use of mobile technology.

Online teaching and learning platforms can benefit students studying off campus for example by distance education and can also bring benefits to those studying on campus. In both cases such platforms can form part of a blended learning model that mixes different modes of delivery. This component explains the nature of an online platform and identifies some of the different options that could be available to HEIs, including making use of national provision for online education. It discusses key considerations for developing a policy related to HEI adoption of a platform, relating to management, use, maintenance and how it can be effective in supporting a teaching strategy.

Please go to the narrated presentation. After you have listened to the presentation, go to the workbook to answer the activities for this component.

## Conclusion

## This short course has explored policy influencing with reference to emerging National level reform priorities for distance / higher education in Myanmar. It has introduced relevant theory, explored the context, identified evidence that would be important for influencing reform, and discussed the reform process highlighting the importance of different stakeholder agendas. You should now be in a position to consider how you could engage in influencing National level policy creation and reform that is important for you or your University in order to strengthen distance education in the country.

## References

* Lall M (2020) Myanmar’s Education Reforms: A pathway to social justice ?, UCL Press
* Myanmar Ministry of Education (2016) National Education Strategic Plan (NESP) 2016-2021.
* National Education Strategic Plan (NESP) 2021-2030 Draft (unpublished material)