

Vocational Education System in Myanmar (1948-1962)

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Abstract

Education in a society is so vital that it can be seen as a determinant factor, in the ups and downs of a community or a society, for the education level of the people sets the scale and scope of development and prosperity of a nation. With this vision in mind, the A.F.P.F.L (Anti-Fascist People's Freedom League) Government had tried its best, to promote the education level of the country, by introducing a new national education system. New curriculums were adopted and the outdated curriculums were abolished in the field of vocational education. The Government had attempted to offer vocational subjects from primary to high school students and other government technical institutes were also opened. Thus, vocational education is education that prepares people to work as technicians in various jobs.

Key words: New Life Education Programme, Government Technical Institute, Handicraft School, Agriculture Institute.

Introduction

Prior to the independence period, the education system implemented by the Colonial Government was one-sided for academic studies with a few vocational educations. A new education policy was adopted in 1948 after Myanmar regained her independence in January 1948. However, the new education policy could be implemented only on 1 June 1950 because of the internal instability.¹

Even in 1947 before the independence *Bogyoke* Aung San led in drawing the Two Years Plan for Economic Development of Union of Burma and the vocational and technical education was put in the plan. According to the plan, three grades were divided for the vocational and technical education as follows:

- (1) to produce the first-grade technicians who can provide the management in the works,
- (2) to emerge the second-grade technicians who are the basis of the works, and
- (3) to emerge the skilful workers who are the most important in the works.²

The first-grade technicians were to be produced by Yangon University and in order to produce the technicians of second-grade or medium and the third-grade or skillful workers, the technical schools, the Technical Schools (Evening Classes) and Poly technique Schools were to be opened.

Arrangements were made to open the itinerant schools in order to provide the cultivators with the basic technical knowledge. According to the arrangements, assistant technical teachers were divided into three groups and they were to go to the countryside by Lorries in order to provide the rural people with carpentry, lathe, and the wire-connecting.³ The purpose was to create the pleasant and healthy living conditions, to construct the roads, to build the drainage system, to produce the bricks and to provide the rural areas with other technical classes.⁴ However, the Two Year Plan gained no success because of the weak budget of Union Government and the prevalence of internal unrest and disorder.

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¹*Octennial Report on Education in Burma (1947-8 to 1954-5)*, Rangoon, Superintendent, Government Printing and stationery, Union of Burma, 1956, p. 9-10 (Henceforth: Education in Burma, 1956)

²*Pyi-daung-su Myan-mar Naing-ngan-daw Si-pwa-ye Toe-tet-ye Hne Hnit Si-man-gain* (Two-Year Economic Development Plan of Union of Myanmar), Yangon, Government Printing, 1948, p. 12 (Henceforth: *Two-Year Plan, 1948*)

³*Two-Year Plan, 1948*, 27

⁴*Two-Year Plan, 1948*, 30

A mission of UNESCO (United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization) visited Yangon on 17 December 1950 and studied the education of Myanmar in the following five subject fields:

- (1) fundamental and adult education;
- (2) the development of compulsory education;
- (3) secondary education, including technical education and vocational guidance;
- (4) the education and training of teachers; and
- (5) the administration and financial aspects of these four subject fields⁵

For the education of the country, Myanmar Education Mission led by U Kaung, Director of Education visited the United Kingdom, the United States, Mexico, Canada and Pakistan from 27 November 1951 to 23 May 1952, and it studied the development of education in those countries.⁶

The Education Mission which made studies abroad organized the New Life Education Programme. According to the New Life Education Programme, one of the priorities was given to the production of a sufficient number of technicians and technologists who were Myanmar nationals and who could perform their various duties as citizens of the Union. A plan was drawn to provide the school curriculum of vocational subjects such as practical agriculture, industrial arts, business training, domestic science and pre-medical studies and to open new agricultural and technical schools and institutes.

According to the New Life Education Programme, arrangements were made to teach the children the painting, gardening and general science beginning from the primary schools and they were to be encouraged to study the animal husbandry, nature of birds, painting and arts. It was intended to pay attention to the carpentry, technical subjects and commerce in the middle schools of urban areas and to the agriculture, animal husbandry and rural arts in those of rural areas. The following subjects were to be paid much attention to the high schools:

- (1) Pre-medical studies (for both boys and girls)
- (2) General Workshop for technical subjects (for boys only)
- (3) Domestic sciences including home nursing (for girls only)
- (4) Commerce (for both boys and girls)

Table I

The Growth of Vocational High Schools from 1956-57 to 1959-60

No.	Year	Technical High School	Commercial High School	Agricultural High School		
				High School	Middle School	Primary School
1	1956-57	33	2	11	10	150
2	1957-58	40	2	26	14	197
3	1958-59	48	2	33	12	197
4	1959-60	52	2	37	12	197

Source: *Myan-mar Naing-ngan-daw Si-pwa-yay Sit-tan* (Economic Survey of Myanmar), Yangon, Government Printing and Stationery, 1960, p.109 (Henceforth: *Economic Survey, 1960*)

⁵*Education in Burma, 1956, 31*

⁶*Education in Burma, 1956, 32*

The new classes teaching the above vocational subjects were to be opened in the high schools. At that time, the students were being provided with the commerce subject in the Government Central High School of Yangon and in No.3 Government High School of Mandalay. Agricultural subjects were also to be taught in the primary, middle and high schools.

The pre-medical studies subject had been taught in the high schools of Yangon and Mandalay beginning from 1952. This subject began to be taught in the middle of 1953 in the high schools of Sitwe, Patheingyi and Mawlamyine. Domestic Science was being taught in the selected 35 high schools. Moreover, it was found that arrangements were made to extend the number of high schools teaching Domestic Science.⁷

Industrial arts began to be taught in three high schools beginning from June of 1953. In order to provide the students with the subjects of agriculture, animal husbandry and rural arts, twenty schools were selected and lectures were given to them with the necessary apparatus.

Five fundamental principles were adopted in the New Life Education Programme and the second fundamental principle was to ensure the production of a sufficient number of technicians and technologists. It is noted that beginning from 1954 academic year the following vocational subjects were being taught in the primary, middle and high schools.

- (1) Technology
- (2) Agriculture and Animal Husbandry
- (3) Commerce⁸

According to the New Life Education Programme, handicraft, and gardening were provided in the primary schools. After completing the primary studies, the students could attend the technical schools, agricultural middle schools and technical learning centres based on their hobby. Agriculture, animal husbandry, technology, domestic science and painting were taught in the middle schools and after passing the seventh standard, the students could attend the technical schools, agricultural schools, teacher training schools and the state Commerce High Schools. In the high schools, the subjects of agriculture, animal husbandry, commerce, technology, domestic science and painting were provided to the students, and after passing the matriculation, an opportunity was given to the students to attend the Agricultural Institute, Technical Institute and Teacher Training School at their own will.

A Committee of Technical Agricultural and other Vocational Education was organized with U Kaung, Director of Education as the chairman in September 1954 to provide the students with the technical, agricultural and vocational subjects.

The Ministry of Education has added three other departments known as Technical Education, Teacher Training and Text-book Production to the existing department of education. The Director of Technical Education is the head who was transferred to the Ministry of Education.⁹

The educational institutions under the control of this Directorate were:

- (1) Government Technical Institute, Insein
- (2) Government Technical Institute, Mandalay
(in the planning stage to be opened 11 June 1955)
- (3) Artisan Training Centre, Rangoon
- (4) Artisan Training Centre, Mandalay
- (5) Engineering Technology Evening Classes, Rangoon
- (6) Handicraft School, Rangoon

⁷*Ba-wa-thit Hpan-ti-hmu Pyin-nya-ye Si-man-kein* (New Life Education Plan), Yangon, Ministry of Information, 1955, 9-11 (Henceforth: New Life Education Plan, 1955)

⁸*Pyin-nya-ye Du-ti-ya Lay hnit Si-man-kein* (The Second Four Years Education Plan 1956-60), Ministry of Education, The Union of Myanmar, 1956, p.38 (Henceforth: The Second Four Years Education Plan, 1956)

⁹*Report, 1956, 39*

(7) Technical High School, Park Road, Rangoon

(in the planning stage, to be opened in June 1956)

Mr. A. C. Ducat, Director of Technical Education whose services were obtained under ECA Aid Programme, left in May 1954 on the expiry of his contract and Mr. Chelk Pin Lee became Director.¹⁰

Insein Technical School was opened in 1890 in the Colonial Period and graduates from this school got their jobs in the factories and administrative departments of the Government. The Second World War caused the loss of materials and instruments of the school and the school building was damaged by bombing. The reconstruction of the school building was held-up due to the internal insurgency which caused another damages to it. Insein Technical Institute played an important role in the industrial development of the country and thus the government paid much attention to establishing it as the first-grade technical college. The technical instructors of this institute enjoyed an increased monthly salary in March 1954. The institute opened three-year classes and subjects provided to the students were:

- Civil Engineering (Sub-Assistant Engineering)
- Civil Engineering (Draughtmanship)
- Electrical (Power Engineering)
- Electrical (Communication) Engineering and
- Mechanical Engineering.

Necessary qualifications for admission of the institute were that the candidates must be young citizens of the Union who have passed the High School Final or Matriculation Examination. Each student is awarded a stipend of *Kyats* 60 a month and students who agreed to serve on Government Boards may get stipends of *Kyats* 80 each. Every student enjoyed free tuition and free hostel accommodations.¹¹

The United States Government proposed that it would like to provide US \$ 4,000 for the technical and vocational education of Myanmar and monthly salaries for two assistant technical experts and money to buy industrial facilities for Insein Government Technical Institute. Government Technical Institute, Insein was reopened on 1st June 1951 and in that academic year, the institute saw a total of 84 students. Of them, 44 students were studying the Civil Engineering and 20 students' military engineering and 20, the sketching.¹²

According to the Columbo Plan, the British Government donated a total of 4, 500 books to Government Technical Institute, Insein, worth *Kyats* 40,000. The books covered a wide variety of subjects, including Mathematics, Physics, Chemistry, radio and electricity, building construction, carpentry, highway engineering, mechanics and machine construction and metallurgy.¹³ On 20 February 1950, British Ambassador to the Union of Myanmar Mr. R.H.S. Allan handed over 5,000 books concerning technical education to Minister for Education and Culture, U Tun Tin in Government Technical Institute, Insein.¹⁴

The Government Technical Institute was opened in Mandalay on 15 July 1955. There was a same level between the technical subjects of Mandalay and Insein Government Technical Institutes. Some subjects were taught in the new institute of Mandalay based on local needs. However, some subjects could be studied by the students only in the Government Technical Institute, Insein, not in Mandalay. It was intended to enroll 120 students at first and

¹⁰Thakin Tin, *Burma*, Vol. V, No. 3, Advances made in New Education Plan, Yangon, Government Press, April 1955, p.19, 24 (Henceforth: Thakin Tin, 1955)

¹¹ *The Report of the Technical, Agricultural and Vocational Education Committee*, Ministry of Education, Rangoon, Superintendent, Central Press, 1956, pp. 16-18 (Henceforth: *Report of T.A.V.E*, 1956)

¹²*The New Light of Myanmar* Newspaper, 21-6-1951, 10

¹³*The Guardian* Newspaper, 21-3-1957, 1

¹⁴*The Guardian* Newspaper, 20-2-1958), 4

to extend the enrolment up to 200 students.¹⁵ In 1957-58 Academic Year the following technical subjects were provided to the students in the Government Technical Institute, Mandalay.

The Artisan Training Centres were opened in Yangon and Mandalay. The candidates who passed the seventh standard and did not want to attend the high schools could apply for admission to those centres. The training centres provided the students with two-year training and the students were given a stipend of *Kyats* 50 per month. After having completed their studies, the students had an opportunity to get jobs in the government factories with a monthly salary of *Kyats* 70 plus cost of living allowance. The selected candidates could choose one of the following courses:

1. Radio Mechanics,
2. Electricity (house-wiring, armature winding, and appliance repair),
3. Machine Shop Practice,
4. Diesel Engines-repair and maintenance,
5. Automobile Mechanics,
6. Blacksmithy,
7. Fitting and Welding Practice,
8. Foundry and Moulding Practice,
9. Carpentry.¹⁶

The Engineering Technology Evening Classes were reopened in 1948. In fact, the evening classes had started functioning in 1923. The objective was to provide supplementary and advance training to people who were engaged in engineering pursuits. The Engineering Technology Evening Classes were fortunate in having the use of Engineering Department's class rooms, draughting rooms and equipment. In 1952-53 Academic Year, the classes had to be suspended because a new accommodation was being constructed. The classes were resumed on 5 October 1953 at 135, Boundary Road, Yangon.

The Engineering Technology Evening Classes offered three-year courses. The subjects offered in the classes were Civil, Mechanical and Electrical Engineering. The classes were held a total of six to eight hours a week, Mondays, Wednesdays and Fridays from 5 p.m. to 7 p.m. Second year students in Civil Engineering and Mechanical Engineering Courses had to put in two hours more on Sunday, 7 p.m to 9 p.m in Practical Surveying and Machine Shop Practice respectively.

The Handicraft School was established with a view to providing the trade courses to "School Leavers" boys who for one reason or other could not continue their studies in an ordinary school. The following were the courses offered in the Handicraft School:-

- (1) Toy Making and Carpentry
- (2) Book Binding
- (3) Cane and Bamboo Work
- (4) Tin Smithy

The students could choose one of the above four courses and each course was of one year duration.

A site for the Technical High School was chosen on Park Road, opposite the Bogyoke Park. The construction of the building was started in June 1956. The Technical High School admitted the students who completed the Middle School (Seventh Standard). The subjects to each then were Myanmar, English, Arithmetic, Mathematics, Chemistry and Physics. The Technical High School offered the following basic trade preparatory and pre-apprenticeship subjects:

¹⁵*The Report of the Technical, Agricultural and Vocational Education Committee*, Minister of Education, Rangoon, Superintendent, Central Press, 1956,p.22-3(Henceforth: Report of T.A.V.E, 1956)

¹⁶*Report of T.A.V.E, 1956, 26-27*

- Radio Mechanics
- Electricity
- Automobile Mechanics
- Machine Shop Practice
- Building Trades (Carpentry, Bricklaying, plumbing)
- Metal Trades (Foundry, Blacksmithy, Sheet metal and Welding)
- Technical Drafting

Many graduates got the jobs in the industry and their studies in the School permitted quite a large number of students to enter the Government Technical Institute, and a smaller group to join the University.

In order to open new kinds of vocational education according to the New Life Education Programme, arrangements were made to establish the Agricultural High Schools. The existing primary schools offered the gardening course based on the students interest, the middles schools, the Agricultural Science, Animal Husbandry and Rural Handicraft. It is found that a plan was drawn to open the Agricultural Institute for those who completed the High School and wanted to continue the studies of Agricultural Science.¹⁷

After the First Four-Year Education Plan, courses of Agricultural Science and Animal Husbandry were offered in the primary, middle, and high schools in 1954. A plan was drawn to open the Government Agricultural Schools. The following were three kinds of Agricultural Schools opened in the four year period.

1. The Government Agricultural Middle School (for the students who completed the primary school)
2. The Government Agricultural High School (for the students who completed the middle school)
3. The Government Agricultural Institute (for the students who completed the high school)

The future prospects of agricultural graduates were also taken into consideration. The graduates from the Agricultural Middle School could expect the following government services.

1. To become service personnel with monthly salary of Kyats 70-5-110 in the Government Agricultural Department
2. To get jobs in the agricultural boards and companies not inferior to those with a monthly salary of Kyats 70-5.110
3. To serve as the primary teachers in the agricultural schools after completing the courses in the State Teachers Training Colleges
4. To go to the Government Agricultural High School for studies.

The following were the prospects which could be expected by the graduates from the Government Agricultural High School and these plans were also put into action.

The graduates from the Government Agricultural High School would be given the following government services.

1. to become service personnel with a monthly salary of *Kyats* 110-10-200 in the Government Agricultural Department
2. to get jobs not inferior to those with a monthly salary of *Kyats* 110-10-200 in the agricultural boards and companies
3. to serve as agricultural middle school teachers after completing the curses in the State Teachers Training Colleges
4. to go to the Agricultural Institute at Pinyinmana for further studies

¹⁷*New Life Education Plan, 1955, 9-11*

5. to take the matriculation examination after taking Agricultural Science as an additional subject in this school.¹⁸

Agricultural is the most important sector of the Myanmar economy and it produced 40 percent of the national income at that time. Therefore The State Agricultural Institute was opened at Pinyinmana in August 1954.

The report of the Technical, Agricultural and Vocational Education Committee suggested that some reforms should be introduced to that kind of education to match the times. In order to give such advice, the Technical Education Council was formed.

Technical Education Council, the Council would constitute an advisory body to assist to Minister for Education and the Director of Technical Education in the following areas of technical education:

- (1) long range overall programme planning for Technical Education,
- (2) advisability of, and location of new technical schools and programmes,
- (3) facilities, equipment and design,
- (4) curriculum and teaching
- (5) co-ordination with industry and labour,
- (6) the procurement of competent teaching personal
- (7) investigation of training needs and facilities to prevent programme duplication
- (8) technical occupations, guidance and counseling.¹⁹

At the end of the Second Four-Year Education Plan (1956-60) of the Union of Myanmar, the Third Four-Year Education Plan (1960-64) was drawn. Much attention was paid to the offering of the technical and vocational courses in the schools in the Third Four-Year Education Plan. The aim of education of the Union of Myanmar was to nurture the students not only to become good citizens but also to serve the interest of the State after becoming experts in one of the technical and vocational subjects when they grew up.²⁰ In order to achieve that aim, the curriculum was divided into two parts: general curriculum and technical and vocational curriculum. It was intended in the Third Four-Year Education Plan to open more technical schools.²¹

The A.F.P.F.L (Anti-Fascist People's Freedom League) Government opened two Government Technical Institutes with 674 students, One Technical High School with 420 students, two Technical Training Schools with 319 students, one Artisan School with 75 students, 69 Technical-Affiliated Schools with 31,838 students in order to produce technicians and technical experts.²² However, the Revolutionary Council took the state duty on 2 March 1962 and the Third Four-Year Education Plan could not be implemented.

Conclusion

During the A.F.P.F.L. period the students could choose one of many vocational schools and institutes according to their situations. For admission to Government Technical Institutes, candidates must pass the High School (or) Matriculation Examination. For admission to the Artisan Training Centers candidates must pass seven the standard. For examination admission to the Engineering Technology Evening Classes candidates must have studied up to the Eight Standard. Technical High School admitted students who completed the Middle School (Seven Standard). The handicraft school was intended for school leaver boys

¹⁸*The Second Four Years Education Plan, 1956, 45-7*

¹⁹*Report of T.A.V.E, 1956, 59*

²⁰*The Annual Report for 1960-61 Academic Year, Ministry of Education, The Revolutionary Council, Yangon, Government Printing and Stationery, 1963, p.9 (Henceforth: Report, 1960-61)*

²¹*Report, 1960-61, 8*

²²U Min Htwe, *Khit-haung-pyin-nya-ye Sa-nit Ar Lay-la-chyak (A study on the old Education System)*, Yangon, Government Printing, 1960, p.80 (Henceforth : Min Htwe,1960)

who cannot continue their studies. With only 4 or 5 years of schooling in the primary schools, they do not qualify for admission to any trade courses in the Artisan Training Centre.

But the government spending on technical and vocational education was a little, compared to other primary and post primary education. By the year of 1959 and 1960, A.F.P.F.L. The government spent only one percent of the education budget on vocational education. So, the progress of vocational education was not encouraging. The A.F.P.F.L. Government gave priority to vocational education to become a developed country, but in practice the government did not spend enough money on vocational education.

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