

This week's topic is EXTRA CURRICULAR EDUCATION

Historical context:

Following Independence from British rule Burmese became the official language for education, but the teaching of other ethnic languages continued. However, in 1962 after General Nay Win's military coup, education became tightly controlled and centralised. The right to learn ethnic languages ended and the curriculum was narrowed so that it would remain in keeping with the country's political vision. The educational objectives of Burma's existing Basic Education Law, brought into effect in 1964, include intentions "to enable every citizen to become well-equipped with basic education, good health and moral character" and "to give precedence to the teaching of arts capable of preservation and development of culture, fine arts, and literature of the state". However, many state-funded schools especially in rural areas, do not have the funding, facilities or staff to provide any sort of participatory art or sports education. Basic personal social and health education is also not taught in government schools where a copy and paste learning style has become the norm. Most students rely on parents and peers for basic social education. However, within Burma's conservative society sometimes even parents are not comfortable addressing subjects such as sex education. Some state educational reform has begun under Thein Sein's government and a new law is in the process of being passed through parliament.

Facts & figures:

- Burma ranked 150th out of 187 countries in the UN's 2013 Education Index.
- The government increased the country's education budget to Ks 310 billion in 2013. Yet, though the amount accounted for

7.5 per cent of the national budget compared to 5.2 per cent the year before, it was just 1.3 per cent of GDP.

- In a country where 70 per cent of the population lives in rural areas, there is growing demand to improve the quality of education outside towns and cities.
- There are no auxiliary education centres at all in Chin and Kaya States.
- Extracurricular education and activities are those which exist outside the domain of normal curriculum of school education. They can be practical as well as vocational, can release stress and boosts socialising with peers.

Points of view:

"Due to 60 years of centralisation, our education system is the worst in the world. This is because of centralisation"
(Ma Haung Sai, National Network for Education Reform)

"We will promote the nation's education standard to meet the international level and encourage human resource development... we will work in cooperation with international organizations including the UN, INGOs, and NGOs. We will promulgate necessary laws for private education schools."
(President Thein Sein)

"The education and empowerment of women throughout the world cannot fail to result in a more caring, tolerant, just and peaceful life for all." (Aung San Suu Kyi)

Information links:

www.myanmar-education.edu.mm www.moemyanmar.net
www.pshe-association.org.uk www.facebook.com/NNER.mmr
www.unicef.org/myanmar/education.html www.dvb.no