

# HIGHER EDUCATION IN POST-COUP MYANMAR

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Spring University Myanmar

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## 1. Acronyms

CBO	Community-Based Organisation
CDM	Civil Disobedience Movement
FGD	Focus Group Discussion
HE	Higher Education
HEI	Higher Education Institution
IEP	Interim Education Provider/Programme
IDI	in-depth Interview
IDP	Internally Displaced Person
INEE	Inter-Agency Network for Education in Emergencies
INGO	International Non-Governmental Organisation
IUC	Interim University Council
KBC	Kachin Baptist Church
KED	Karen Education Department
KMSS	Karuna Myanmar Social Services
KRCEE	Karen Refugee Committee Education Entity
MOE	Ministry of Education
MOWYCA	Ministry of Women, Youth and Child Affairs
NUG	National Unity Government
PDF	People Defence Force
SAC	State Administrative Council
STEM	Science, Technology, Engineering and Mathematics
SU	Students' Union
TOT	Training of Trainers
TVET	Technical and Vocational Education Training
UNICEF	United Nations International Children Emergency Funds

## 2. Introduction

The 2021 military coup has had devastating effects on Myanmar's education sector, and students, teachers, youth platforms, and ethnic groups are coming together to emerge as alternative education providers. According to 2018 statistics, there were 28,851 teaching and office staff under the Department of Higher Education, and in May 2021, over 13,000 staff, nearly 45%, were suspended from their duties due to their involvement in the Civil Disobedience Movement (CDM).<sup>1</sup> Sadly, two dozen teachers have been killed and over 200 others from the education sector have been arrested for their participation in protests and demonstrations.<sup>2</sup> In April 2021, two months after the coup, several interim education providers emerged to fill the educational vacuum for students and CDM academic staff in the higher education sector.<sup>3</sup> These Interim Education Providers (IEPs)<sup>4</sup> began offering short-term and diploma courses, mostly using online-based teaching methods and technological platforms such as Zoom and Google Meet.

This "Higher Education in Post-coup Myanmar" report aims to provide a nuanced picture of the emergence and development of interim education during the Spring movement in Myanmar, with a particular focus on the higher education sector. This report will categorise the profiles of education providers after the coup and address the challenges, difficulties, and experiences faced by IEPs, community leaders, students, and teachers. This project is part of the research work of the Spring University Myanmar and aims to provide comprehensive information about interim education to relevant stakeholders, thereby stimulating informed policy-making.

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<sup>1</sup> Waa, N. S. P. (2021). Junta suspends thousands of academics, university staff. University World News. Retrieved from <https://www.universityworldnews.com/post.php?story=20210514110259910>  
<https://www.universityworldnews.com/post.php?story=20210514110259910>

<sup>2</sup> Gerin, R. (2022). Dozens of teachers killed, hundreds arrested by Myanmar Junta for joining strike. Radio Free Asia. Retrieved from <https://www.rfa.org/english/news/myanmar/teachers-killed-07222022161430.html>

<sup>3</sup> Myint, N. A. (2021). Exiled government establishes alternative he programmes. University World News. Retrieved from <https://www.universityworldnews.com/post.php?story=20210721150221771>

<sup>4</sup> As proposed by the NUG Ministry of Education and in general consensus among the pro-democracy actors, Interim Education Providers (IEPs) are defined as the higher education institutions established in the aftermath of military coup in 2021 that have been offering continuous learning opportunities for the students who are engaged in Civil Disobedience Movement (CDM).

### 3. Methodology

This report utilised a qualitative research method, which involved conducting in-depth interviews (IDIs) with 21 focal persons from interim education providers, including Interim University Councils (IUCs)<sup>5</sup>, youth-led organisations, and community leaders in order to achieve deep understanding on interim education providers. To gather the perspectives of students and teachers who are involved in CDM from diverse backgrounds, focus group discussions (FGDs) were also conducted with 31 teachers and 33 students from various regions. The participants were selected using a purposive random sampling method and by utilising online and institutional communication channels of participants. The Ministry of Education under the National Unity Government and Burma Academy were involved in distributing the surveys and gathering students and teachers. Careful consideration was given to ensure representation of all interim education providers based on their organisational capacity, program delivery, beneficiaries' level, and region. In addition, a quantitative survey was also conducted using a snowball sampling method, with a total of 2,556 students and 375 teachers participating. In addition to that, the quantitative method was applied for the higher education sector profile and involved a secondary analysis of existing data. The information was taken from previously published reports and news articles investigating the situations of stakeholders in Myanmar's education sector. The purpose of this mixed-methods approach was to provide a comprehensive understanding of the emergence and development of interim education during the Spring movement in Myanmar.

**Table (1): Summary Data of Research Activity**

No.	Research activity	# of session	# of participants
1	In-depth Interviews (IDIs)	15	21
2	Students (FGDs)	5	33
3	Teachers (FGDs)	6	31
4	Students (Survey)	N/A	2548
5	Teachers (Survey)	N/A	375

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<sup>5</sup> Interim University Councils (IUCs) can be described as autonomous councils created by individual public universities as a parallel administrative structure to the universities operated under the military junta.

#### 4. Higher Education Sector Profiles

Education is considered a fundamental service in every country. In Myanmar, higher education (HE) has undergone significant reform and tentative efforts since 2012, with the involvement of international aid organisations. The National Education Strategic Plan, formulated in 2016 by the elected civilian government, aimed to strengthen the higher education sector by emphasising research practice, effective teaching, and equality. Over the years, the number of higher education institutions and students in Myanmar has increased from 32 institutions and 131,837 students in 1997-1998 to 174 institutions and 835,433 students in 2017-2018 (Tanaka et al., 2015).

However, on February 1, 2021, the Myanmar military junta seized power, halting the ongoing education reform process. Anti-coup protests began, and civil servants, including academic staff from universities and schools, joined the CDM in the aftermath of the coup in February and March. As a result, many CDM staff members were suspended or expelled, and students boycotted military-run schools and universities. The military junta reportedly suspended 19,000 faculty members and over 125,000 basic education teachers by May 2021. The planned reopening of schools under the military junta faced significant opposition, with 90% of parents and students reportedly boycotting in June 2021 (Education Under Attack 2022, n.d.). Save the Children reported a sharp decline in school enrollment in 2022, with 7.8 million children out of school, an 80% decrease compared to 2020.<sup>6</sup>

Amid the conflicts and violence perpetrated by the junta, students have encountered numerous challenges in accessing education. In response to the military's actions and to provide educational services to students affected by the coup, various interim education providers have emerged. These providers can be categorised as follows:

1. Ethnic Education Departments
2. Online Education Platforms
3. Interim University Councils and Students' Unions
4. Ministries under the National Unity Government (NUG)
5. Community Initiatives in Conflict Areas

##### 4.1 Number of Students and Teachers (Before and After Coup)

Myanmar's public education sector after the coup has witnessed a significant decline in student and teacher numbers due to their active participation in the CDM. Both basic education and higher education students and teachers have refused to attend and work at schools under the unlawful military regime. Table 2 illustrates the stark difference in student and teacher figures before and after the coup. The number of students in public schools plummeted from 8,975,342 in 2020 to 5,600,000 in 2022, indicating a 40% loss in systematic learning opportunities due to the adverse effects of the military coup.

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<sup>6</sup> Save the Children. (2022). Myanmar: Number of children out of school more than doubles in two years - Myanmar. ReliefWeb. Retrieved from <https://reliefweb.int/report/myanmar/myanmar-number-children-out-school-more-doubles-two-years>

**Table (2): Number of Students and Teachers (Before and After Military Coup)**

Category	Pre-coup (2020)	Post-coup (2022)	Difference
Students in public schools	8,975,342 <sup>7</sup>	5,600,000 <sup>8</sup>	-3,375,342 (-40%)
Matriculation exam takers	910,200 <sup>9</sup>	179,800 <sup>10</sup>	-730,400 (-80.24%)
Public university freshman students	303,060 <sup>11</sup>	100,000 <sup>12</sup>	-203,060 (-67%)
Public university total students	1,040,393 <sup>13</sup>	312,118 <sup>14</sup>	-728,275 (-70%)
Public school teachers	397,087 <sup>15</sup>	273,087 <sup>16</sup>	-125,000 (-31.5%)
Public university teachers	27,972 <sup>17</sup>	8,427 <sup>18</sup>	-19,500 (-69.7%)

The number of matriculation exam takers in 2022 witnessed the highest decline, with a decrease of 730,000 students, representing an 80% drop compared to 2020. This was followed by a 67% decrease in freshman students entering public universities and a 70% decrease in the total number of university students. Such a significant decline in matriculation exam takers can

<sup>7</sup> Central Statistical Organisation. (2021). Myanmar Statistical YearBook 2021 (pp.185-186). Retrieved from <https://www.csostat.gov.mm/PublicationAndRelease/StatisticalYearbook>

<sup>8</sup> Mizzima Myanmar News and Insight. (2022). Forty per cent drop in Myanmar student enrollment for 2022-23. Retrieved from <https://mizzima.com/article/forty-cent-drop-myanmar-student-enrollment-2022-23>

<sup>9</sup> Kameke, L. von. (2023). Myanmar: Number of students who appeared for Matriculation Examination. Statista. Retrieved from <https://www.statista.com/statistics/1056726/myanmar-number-students-matriculation-examination/>

<sup>10</sup> RFA Burmese. (2023). Myanmar's school system in shambles since coup as high school exam-takers plunge 80%. Retrieved from <https://www.google.com/amp/s/www.rfa.org/english/news/myanmar/education-sector-03072023171459.html/ampRFA>

<sup>11</sup> Central Statistical Organisation. (2021). Myanmar Statistical YearBook 2021 (pp.207-211). Retrieved from <https://www.csostat.gov.mm/PublicationAndRelease/StatisticalYearbook>

<sup>12</sup> Mon, A. (2022). Students who passed matriculation exam in 2022 attend first-year courses at universities on 21 November. Retrieved from <https://www.mtnewstoday.com/en/?p=862>

<sup>13</sup> Central Statistical Organisation. (2021). Myanmar Statistical YearBook 2021 (pp.207-211). Retrieved from <https://www.csostat.gov.mm/PublicationAndRelease/StatisticalYearbook>

<sup>14</sup> Padone. (2023). Enrolment in state-run universities down '70%' since coup. Retrieved from <https://www.universityworldnews.com/post-mobile.php?story=20230426140655766>

<sup>15</sup> Central Statistical Organisation. (2021). Myanmar Statistical YearBook 2021 (pp.185-186). Retrieved from <https://www.csostat.gov.mm/PublicationAndRelease/StatisticalYearbook>

<sup>16</sup> Reuters. (2021). More than 125,000 Myanmar teachers suspended for opposing coup. Retrieved from <https://www.reuters.com/world/asia-pacific/more-than-125000-myanmar-teachers-suspended-opposing-coup-2021-05-23/>

<sup>17</sup> Central Statistical Organisation. (2021). Myanmar Statistical YearBook 2021 (pp.212-214). Retrieved from <https://www.csostat.gov.mm/PublicationAndRelease/StatisticalYearbook>

<sup>18</sup> Reuters. (2021). More than 125,000 Myanmar teachers suspended for opposing coup. Retrieved from <https://www.reuters.com/world/asia-pacific/more-than-125000-myanmar-teachers-suspended-opposing-coup-2021-05-23/>



have serious negative repercussions on the higher education sector, the future labour market, and the prospects of young people in Myanmar. While interim education providers have made efforts to provide educational services to students who have lost learning opportunities, there are still limitations in reaching all students.

Additionally, in 2022, the number of public university teachers declined by 69% compared to 2020. Similarly, the quantity of public school teachers also significantly decreased, accounting for 31% of the total. Consequently, the military junta that refers to themselves as the State Administrative Council faced challenges in running most public schools, universities and TVET schools during the first year of the coup.

#### 4.1.1 Public Universities under SAC

There are a total of 174 public universities under the control of the SAC. These universities are divided among different government ministries as shown in the table below.

As protests and armed conflicts escalate across the country, the military council's control is diminishing. The People Defence Forces (PDFs) and their allies have gradually gained control in various areas in 2023. Consequently, the military council is unable to effectively operate most universities in regions where the revolutionary forces hold sway, particularly in Sagaing Region, Magway Region, Karen State, Karenni State, and Kachin State. Furthermore, the universities under the SAC face numerous challenges, including student safety, shortage of qualified teachers, and political legitimacy.

**Table (3): Public Universities under SAC**

<b>Ministry under SAC</b>	<b>Number of universities</b>
Ministry of Agriculture Livestock and Irrigation	7
Ministry of Border Affairs	4
Ministry of Defense	6
Ministry of Education	133
Ministry of Health and Sports	16
Ministry of Natural Resources and Environmental Conservation	1
Ministry of Religious Affairs and Culture	5
Ministry of Transportation	2

Source: National Education Strategic Plan, 2021

#### 4.1.2 TVET Schools under SAC

The SAC also oversees 139 Technical and Vocational Education and Training (TVET) schools in addition to public universities. These TVET schools are distributed among different ministries as shown in the table below.

Similar to universities under the SAC, TVET schools face challenges related to student safety, lack of trained technical personnel, and political legitimacy. Furthermore, many TVET schools in Sagaing Region, Magway Region, Karen State, Karenni State, and Kachin State are unable to operate during the military coup. In these regions, interim education institutions play a crucial role in providing education alternatives for young people affected by the disruptions.

**Table (4): TVET Schools under SAC**

<b>Ministry under SAC</b>	<b>Number of TVET schools</b>
Ministry of Agriculture Livestock and Irrigation	55
Ministry of Industry	6
Ministry of Social Welfare	20
Ministry of Border Affairs	52
Ministry of Labor, Immigration and Population	6

Source: National Education Strategic Plan, 2021

#### 4.2 Post-secondary Education Providers

A collective response from numerous education providers has emerged after the coup, demonstrating a commitment to upholding the right to education for all. These dedicated entities, such as the IUCs, Private Online Institutes, Ethnic Education Departments, and Community Initiatives, have rallied together to ensure that educational opportunities persist amidst the tumultuous times.

##### 4.2.1 Ethnic Colleges

Ethnic colleges, established by various ethnic groups in Myanmar such as Chin, Kachin, Karen, Karenni, Kayan, Shan, Lahu, Mon, Pa-O, and Ta'ang, offer post-secondary education programs tailored to the needs of their respective communities. These colleges are located in the control areas of ethnic armed groups and provide on-campus training programs. Despite facing challenges such as SAC offences, limited academic resources, and staffing issues, ethnic colleges play a vital role in improving access to quality education for marginalised ethnicities residing in remote areas with limited access to formal higher education administered by Naypyitaw. They bridge the gap in educational services for ethnic communities, offering a range of programs including certificates, diplomas, and bachelor's degrees in fields such as Social

Sciences, Computer Sciences, Public Administration and Governance, Federalism, Peace and Conflict Studies, and STEM. The most well-known ethnic education providers are as follows:

1. Interim Chin National Consultative Council
2. Karen Education and Culture Department
3. Karenni State Consultative Council
4. Kayan National Education Committee
5. Kachin Political Interim Coordination Team
6. Lahu Democratic Union
7. Mon State Consultative Council
8. Mai Ja Yang College
9. Pa-O National Federal Council
10. Ta'ang National Education Committee

#### **4.2.2 Private (Commercial) Colleges**

Following the coup in Myanmar, private (commercial) colleges have played a significant role in providing post-secondary education. Yangon houses 16 renowned private colleges, with two in Naypyitaw. These institutions often collaborate with universities in Australia, Malaysia, the Philippines, Thailand, and the UK to offer dual degree programs. These private colleges and universities have to register under the SAC and operate according to their regulations.

Enrollment figures for private colleges during this period are difficult to identify. However, it is likely that some financially capable students who are unwilling to attend military-led universities opt for private colleges instead. Yet, private colleges face challenges such as high costs and operating under strict control of the military junta.

Most private colleges offer a range of programs, from certificates to master's degrees, in fields like IT, Business Management, STEM, and Vocational Training. They employ hybrid and on-campus models, primarily in urban areas. However, limited financial accessibility means that only a fraction of students can attend private colleges. Furthermore, as most of these institutions are concentrated in major cities like Yangon, Mandalay, and Naypyitaw, students from different regions and states face limited access to these schools.

#### **4.2.3 Ministries under NUG**

In response to the hostile environment created by the military, which resulted in the destruction of educational infrastructure and limited access to formal education for many students, the ministries under the NUG have taken significant steps to bridge these gaps. These ministries have been actively engaged in providing a wide range of training and classes to students, staff, and the defence forces.

##### *Ministry of Education*

The Ministry of Education has collaborated with the IUCs, IEPs, and international organisations to ensure continuous learning opportunities for students involved in the CDM and those affected by the military coup. The ministry has set five primary objectives, including ensuring continuous

learning, promoting knowledge about federal and democratic principles, facilitating entry into the workforce, supporting the establishment of a Federal Democratic Union, and enhancing expertise in academic fields. The MOE has been offering a variety of educational programs, including short-term courses, modular courses for master's degree programs and undergraduate courses, and college preparatory courses.

#### Ministry of Women, Youth, and Child Affairs

The Ministry of Women, Youth, and Child Affairs is among the most active ministries offering capacity building and training programmes for their target audiences. For MOWCYA, they have organised a range of civic education training such as federalism, mental health, often in partnership with civil society groups. Some of these trainings are online although they have started to organise in-person workshops and classes in liberated areas. They also offer career empowerment programmes and employability enhancement training for women and marginalised groups such as merchandise production using recycled materials, eco-printing, and tailoring.

#### Ministry of Health

Through the initiative called Telekyanmar, the Ministry of Health has been providing healthcare services and sharing health-related educational videos with the public. Additionally, the ministry collaborates with medical IUCs to offer programs in nursery and midwifery, as well as various medical degree programs and short courses.

#### Ministry of Justice

The Ministry of Justice has been actively involved in delivering short-term training on transitional justice and social justice, aiming to foster a better understanding of these important concepts.

#### Ministry of Human Rights

The Ministry of Human Rights has been one of the most proactive ministries in offering human rights-related training in collaboration with civil society organisations. These trainings are provided to the defence forces, students, and staff, highlighting the importance of human rights and promoting awareness and advocacy.

#### Ministry of Federal Union Affairs

The Ministry of Federal Union Affairs conducts short-term training specifically focusing on federalism for the staff members involved in the CDM. These trainings aim to enhance their understanding of federal principles and governance.

### **4.2.4 Interim University Councils and Students Unions**

The IUCs play a vital role in providing educational opportunities during the ongoing crisis in Myanmar. There are two types of IUCs: stand-alone IUCs, which are independent institutions, and alliance IUCs, which collaborate with MOE and other organisations. There are 11 stand-alone IUCs and 119 alliance IUCs, with a total of 281 and 533 teachers, respectively,

delivering educational services to students according to Ministry of Education under National Unity Government. According to the “First Higher Education Conference and Spring Revolution” Conference held by the Ministry of Education of National Unity Government in April 2023, The stand-alone IUCs have served 4,131 students, while the alliance IUCs have catered to 7,286 students. However, the total number of 11,417 students benefiting from IUCs is relatively small compared to the number of students who have joined the CDM.

#### **4.2.5 Online Education Platforms**

The absence of students and teachers in both basic and higher education settings has highlighted the crucial role of online education institutions in supporting continuous learning and providing assistance to CDM teachers who faced expulsion or financial and moral suspension under the military junta.

These online educational institutions consist of dismissed university professors, practitioners, and international faculty, offering various educational programs such as certificates, diplomas, and international credit transfers across disciplines like Social Sciences, Federalism, Public Administration and Governance, STEM, Vocational training, and Humanities.

According to our research, there are 15 non-state education providers<sup>19</sup> that have started to offer online courses in the aftermath of the military coup in 2021. These providers are mostly accustomed to online platforms, delivering courses and degrees through applications such as Zoom, Google Meet, Google Classroom, and Moodle. This emergence of massive online courses and degrees from non-state interim education providers occurred during the military coup.

Despite the challenging circumstances, these interim education institutions operate with full autonomy in their management and teaching systems, while maintaining financial independence. Their primary objective is to create an inclusive environment that offers higher education services to individuals who cannot access physical campuses during the military coup. However, the reliance on online platforms means that only students with internet access and electricity can participate. Students from rural areas, particularly in Sagaing, Magway, Chin, Karenni, and Karen, still face difficulties in accessing higher education. Although on-site training and classes for basic education have been provided by township education boards, community leaders, and Students' Unions (SUs), these efforts have not fully addressed the higher education needs of students. Non-state interim education providers have encountered various challenges during this revolutionary period, including targeting by the military junta, insufficient funding, and limited infrastructure (electricity, internet, and devices).

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<sup>19</sup> The list of 15 Non-state Education Providers identified as part of this research are; Burma Academy, E-University, Education for Social Science, Federal School of Social Science, Freedom Myanmar Education, Irrawaddy Law School, Minority Affairs Institute, National University of the Union of Myanmar - Global Campus, Oak Awe Institute, Run Free, S2J, Spring University Myanmar, The River, Virtual Federal University, and Zarmani.

#### 4.2.6 Community Initiatives in Conflict Areas

Access to quality education is a fundamental right for all individuals, including refugees, internally displaced persons (IDPs), and migrants. However, the military coup in February 2021 resulted in a significant increase in the number of IDPs, rising from 328,000 to 1,500,700. (See Table 5) The military junta's attacks and violence forced people to flee their homes in search of safety. Sagaing region witnessed the highest number of IDPs, followed by Rakhine State and Magway region. (See the Table 5) Along the Myanmar-China border, over 960,000 individuals reside in 138 IDP camps in Kachin State, where local churches, monasteries, INGOs like Kachin Baptist Convention (KBC), Karuna Myanmar Social Services (KMSS), and UNICEF play a crucial role in providing education to IDPs. The Inter-Agency Network for Education in Emergencies (INEE) also plays a significant role in providing education services during emergencies (ETWG, 2014 & Thwe, 2018).

In Karen state, the Karen Refugee Committee Education Entity (KRCEE), NGOs, and Community-Based Organizations (CBOs) take charge of managing education programs in IDP and refugee camps. After the military coup, the number of IDPs in Karen state dramatically rose from 1,900 to 114,200. Many children sought refuge in Thailand due to air attacks and violence, attending Karen refugee camps, Migrant Learning Centers, and even Thai state schools. Children from IDP camps in Karen can access education through government schools, the Karen Education Department (KED), and faith-based schools owned by communities. In Thailand, 64 Karen schools across 7 camps offer education programs for refugees, and refugee children can also enrol in schools established by Migrant Learning Centers and the Thai government.

Following the military coup, an estimated 88,300 refugees migrated to neighbouring countries such as Thailand and India (Myanmar Emergency - UNHCR Regional Update, 2023). In the 2014 census, over two million people from Myanmar migrated abroad, with 70.2% residing in Thailand, while others settled in Malaysia, Singapore, China, and elsewhere. Estimating the precise number of migrants after the coup is challenging. Nonetheless, providing quality education in safe learning environments for all IDPs, refugees, and migrant children is of utmost importance. Despite the efforts of various organisations to provide educational services to IDPs and refugees, many children still lack opportunities to access formal education, particularly in higher education, due to the military coup.

**Table (5): Number of IDPs by States and Regions**

State/Region	Prior to Feb 2021	Post Feb 2021	Total # of IDPs	Percentage
Shan State (North)	8,800	6,800	15,600	0.9 %
Mon State	-	30,900	30,900	1.7 %
Rakhine State (North)	35,700	700	36,400	2.0 %
Tanintharyi Region	-	50,400	50,400	2.8 %

Chin State	5,500	48,700	54,200	3.0 %
Shan State (South)	-	67,000	67,000	3.7 %
Bago Region (East)	-	81,800	81,800	4.5 %
Karenni State	-	95,600	95,600	5.2 %
Karen State	1,900	114,200	116,100	6.3 %
Kachin State	89,600	27,400	117,000	6.4 %
Rakhine State (Central)	186,500	8,700	195,200	10.7 %
Magway Region	-	205,400	205,400	11.2 %
Sagaing Region	-	763,100	763,100	41.7 %
<b>Grand Total</b>	<b>328,000</b>	<b>1,500,700</b>	<b>1,828,700</b>	<b>100.0 %</b>

Source: UNHRC, Myanmar Displacement Overview, 15-May-2023

#### 4.2.7 International Scholarship Programmes

Since the military coup in 2021, universities from the following countries have offered dedicated slots for Myanmar scholars: Australia, Canada, China, Czech Republic, Germany, India, Indonesia, Italy, Japan, Netherlands, New Zealand, the Philippines, Singapore, South Korea, Sweden, Switzerland, Thailand, the UK, USA and Vietnam. Some of the well known scholarship programmes in some countries are described below.

**Table (6): Scholarship Programmes by Some Countries**

Country	Scholarships	Level of studies
Australia	Australia Award Scholarships	Masters
Canada	Canada-ASEAN Scholarships and Educational Exchanges for Development SEED 2023, Canada.	Bachelors, Masters
China	Chinese Government Scholarship-Bilateral Program 2023	Bachelor, Masters, PhD, Post Doc
	Chinese Government Scholarship-Chinese University Program 2023	Masters, PhD
Germany	DAAD Bilateral Exchange of Academics 2023	Masters, PhD
Japan	Asian Development Bank-Japan Scholarship Program 2023	Masters
	Japanese Government (MEXT) Scholarships	Bachelors

	2023	
South Korea	KAIST International Student Scholarship	Bachelors
	Chung-Ang University Undergraduate & Graduate Scholarship	Bachelors, Masters
Thailand	Child's Dream Scholarship	Bachelors
	Prospect Burma	Bachelors, Masters
United Kingdom	Chevening Scholarship	Masters
United States	Fulbright Scholarship	Masters
	US-ASEAN Business Council Institute	Bachelors, Masters
	Humphrey Fellowship	Masters
	YSEALI Fellowship	Short-term Exchange
	Lincoln Scholarship	Masters

**Table (7): Comparison of Post-secondary Education Providers Before and After Coup**

Pre-coup (2020)	Post-coup (2023)
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Public universities by Naypyitaw <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Degree colleges</li> <li>○ Vocational institutes (TVETs)</li> <li>○ Religious universities</li> </ul> </li> <li>● Ethnic colleges</li> <li>● Private (Commercial) colleges</li> <li>● Non-profit, community-based organisations</li> <li>● International scholarship programmes</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Public universities by SAC <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Degree colleges</li> <li>○ Vocational institutes (TVETs)</li> <li>○ Religious universities</li> </ul> </li> <li>● Ethnic colleges</li> <li>● Private (Commercial) colleges</li> <li>● Interim University Councils</li> <li>● NUG Ministries</li> <li>● Online education platforms</li> <li>● Community initiatives in conflict areas <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Teaching centres in IDP camps</li> <li>○ Migrant and refugee schools in border areas</li> </ul> </li> <li>● International scholarship programmes</li> </ul>

Despite the continuous efforts made by NUG ministries, the IUCs and other interim education institutions to provide education programs, the number of students who have gained access to



education is still limited compared to the number of students who have joined the CDM and those who have lost educational opportunities due to the military coup and armed conflict. It is worth noting that the participation of university teachers in these interim education institutions is relatively low compared to the number of university teachers involved in the CDM. This discrepancy may be attributed to factors such as security concerns, limited internet connectivity, power outages, and personal family circumstances.

## 5. Students, Teachers and Interim Education Programmes (IEPs)

In response to the military coup, a significant number of students and teachers have united under the banner of the CDM to resist and counter the oppressive regime. This collective effort encompasses a diverse range of roles, with some teachers actively engaged as teaching forces while others contribute through administrative tasks. As they navigate this challenging landscape, it is crucial to examine the various obstacles they face, their expectations for change, and the valuable suggestions they put forth. The following section delves into these aspects, shedding light on the experiences of students and teachers amidst the ongoing struggle.

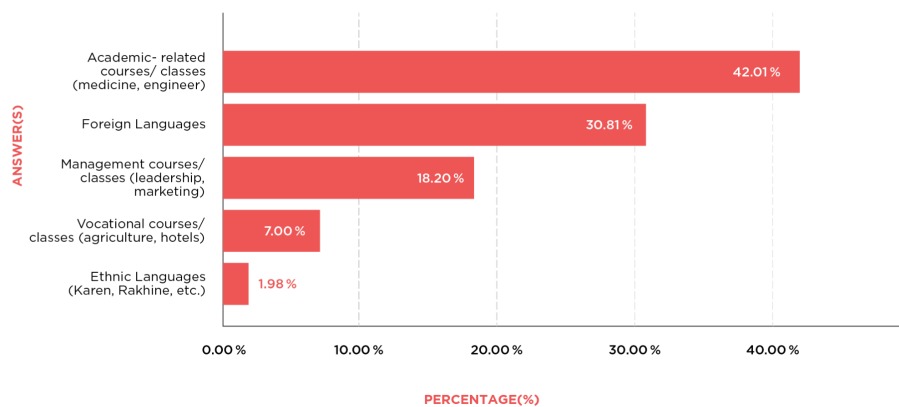
### 5.1 Students and IEPs

To better understand the experiences of the students joining the Interim Education Programmes (IEPs), Spring University Myanmar organised focus group discussions, involving students from diverse regions. These discussions provided a valuable platform for students to openly share their perspectives on IEPs, offering important insights that contribute to the ongoing discourse surrounding education in the post-coup era.

#### 5.1.1 Preferred Courses by Students

Of those who attended courses from IEPs, 42.01% preferred academic-oriented courses, followed by 30.81% who preferred language courses. A smaller percentage expressed interest in vocational courses (7%) and ethnic language courses (1.98%).

Figure (1): Preferred Courses by Students



#### 5.1.2 Challenges Faced by Students

The survey conducted among students revealed the various difficulties and challenges they face when participating in interim education programmes. Among the respondents, 21.53% identified electricity outage as a significant challenge, indicating that power disruptions hinder their ability to access online resources and attend virtual classes. Poor internet connectivity was another

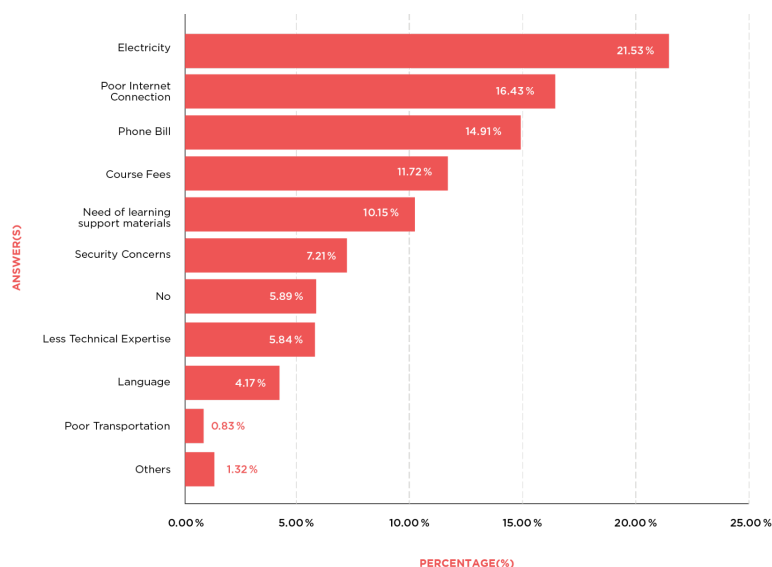
distinct issue, affecting 16.43% of the students and impeding their online learning experience. Additionally, 14.91% expressed concerns about expensive phone bills or high data charges, which pose financial constraints for accessing educational materials and participating in online activities.

Even though most of the IEPs offer free-of-charge education programmes, course fees were identified as a challenge by 11.72% of the respondents, highlighting the financial burden associated with enrolling in certain programs offered by Interim Education Providers. A significant number of students (10.15%) also emphasised the need for learning support materials, suggesting a lack of availability or accessibility to essential resources necessary for their studies. Security concerns were reported by 7.21% of the students, indicating that safety issues and potential risks by the SAC impact their engagement with the IEPs.

A small portion of the respondents (5.89%) did not indicate any specific difficulty or challenge, implying that they have relatively smooth experiences with the interim education programmes. However, 5.84% mentioned having less technical expertise, which suggests that some students may struggle with navigating online platforms or utilising digital tools effectively. Language barriers were identified as a challenge by 4.17% of the students, indicating that the language used in the educational materials or instructional delivery may hinder their comprehension and learning progress.

Other challenges mentioned by the students accounted for 1.32% of the responses and encompassed a range of diverse issues not explicitly listed in the survey options. These challenges could include personal circumstances, limited access to devices, or other obstacles that hinder their participation in the interim education programs. Additionally, poor transportation was identified as a minimal concern, affecting only 0.83% of the students in the remote areas, indicating that commuting difficulties have a relatively minor impact while attending the education programmes by local community initiatives.

**Figure (2): Challenges Faced by Students**

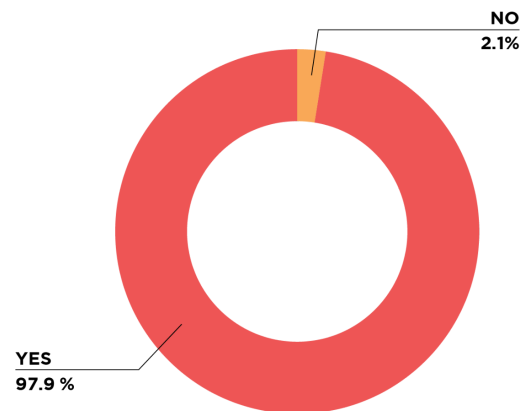


### 5.1.3 Accreditation Expectations by Students

Most students suggested seeking recognition from international universities for their certificates and degrees. Interim education institutions are making efforts to gain recognition by collaborating with international universities. Students also requested long-term classes such as diplomas or bachelor's degrees, which would require hiring long-term teaching staff. It is notable that additional training needs to be provided to meet the needs of students and be designed according to a standardised Quality Assurance Framework to gain official recognition. A respondent suggested if there is an accreditation committee set up by the MoE under NUG, it could make this process easier. Almost all students (97.9%) want recognition from international educational institutions for their courses which mean they desire certificates and degrees that contribute to their further study and profession.

**Figure (3): Accreditation Expectations by Students**

**Do you want the classes to be accredited by international educational institutions?**



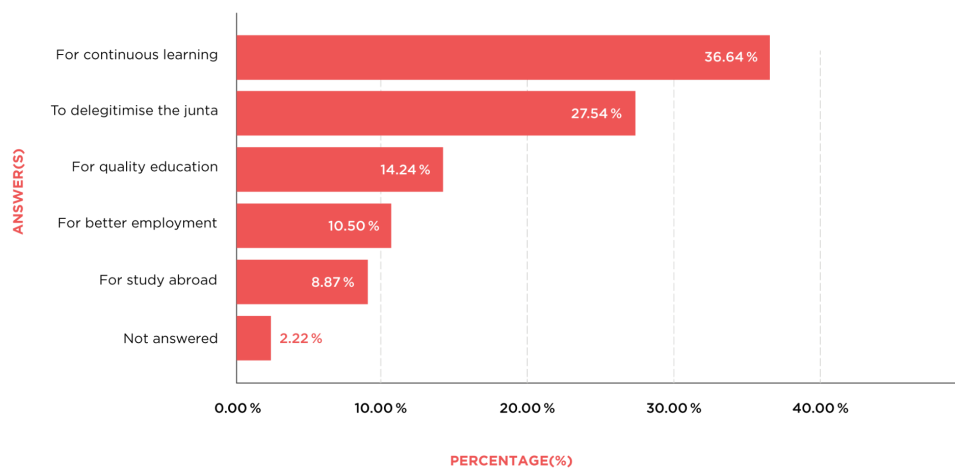
### 5.1.4 Completion Rates in Interim Education Programmes

Some newly opened courses at interim education institutions are experiencing lower completion rates, which may be due to a lack of strict policies. The increase in mobile internet usage and prolonged power outages are also factors affecting completion rates. Certain courses, particularly those requested by students, generate more interest than foundation courses. The MOE under NUG mentioned that attendance rates can be improved by offering courses that are in demand by the public or popular internationally. Other challenges faced by students in completing courses include internet outages, high data charges, security concerns, poor management of teaching assistants, unstable schedules, changes in instructors/mentors, and inadequate practical lessons.

### 5.1.5 Reasons of Students Joining IEPs

Factors encouraging students to join interim education programs include continuing their studies after being distanced from universities due to the pandemic and coup d'état, supporting career growth or change, and financially supporting the Spring Revolution. Other reasons include interest in new courses, low course fees, and a belief in the need for human resources during the country's rebuilding period. Many students attend courses that are different from their previous university studies, and some continue their previous studies due to their increased popularity. The highest percentage of respondents (36.64%) attended IEPs to continue their learning, while 27.54% attended to support the collapse of the military junta.

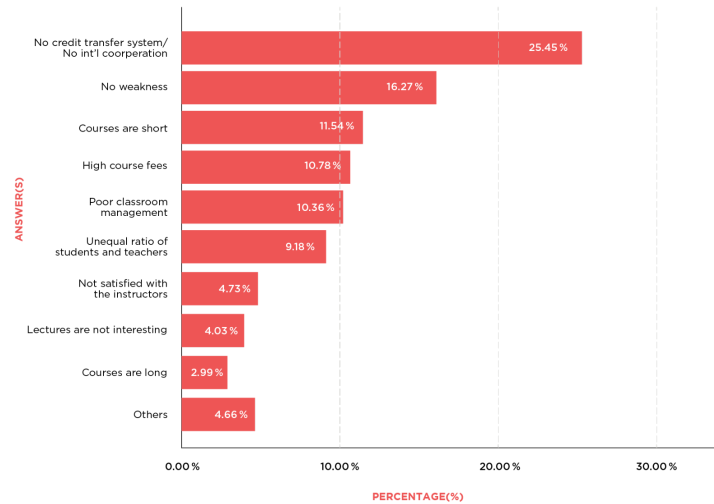
**Figure (4): Reasons of Students Joining IEPs**



### 5.1.6 Demands by Students

Students have various demands from interim education providers, including opening advanced classes in specific subjects, providing sufficient teaching aids and resources, improving communication channels, and waiving course fees and offering scholarship programs. Some students also suggest opening diploma programs for undergraduates. Lack of teaching aids can cause difficulties for group assignments and lead to mental stress, which, in turn, leads to dropping out of the classes. To improve communication, alternative platforms and ice-breaking activities are recommended. To make education more accessible, affordable fees, course fee support, and instalments are suggested.

**Figure (5): Weaknesses of IEPs**

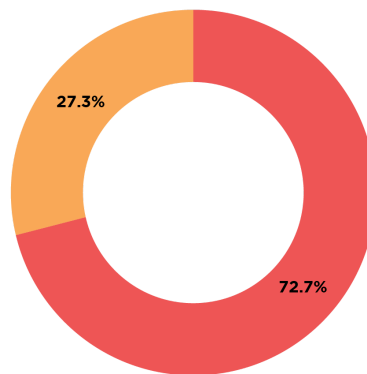


### 5.1.7 Student's Preference on Learning Method

According to survey results, connecting with international academic institutions and high course fees are common concerns. Over 72% of respondents prefer live online classes with instructors, while over 27% prefer pre-recorded lectures.

**Figure (6): Student's Preference on Learning Method**

In which form, do you want to learn the upcoming IEPs courses?



- Direct communication with the instructors via online (zoom/ skype live class)
- Learning with pre-recorded videos (pre-recorded lectures)

### 5.1.8 Suggestions on IEPs by Students

Institutions conduct need-assessment surveys to understand student demands before opening courses. The institution board then decides on teaching style and subjects based on the findings. Interim universities facilitate discussions with students to establish teaching methods

aligned with the suggestions. They conduct short courses that are delivered virtually with a self-centred approach. Moreover, Training for Trainers (ToT) programs are organised for teachers for the purpose of developing curriculum and pedagogy. Feedback from such programs helps develop better teaching methods. There is a high students' demand for practical demonstration video lessons and live lectures at medical-related institutions.

Students wish for recognition of interim education certificates and diplomas by international universities and in job applications. Some institutions are making efforts to gain recognition by linking with international universities.

A new way of thinking is needed to preserve educational opportunities for students with internet problems and those joining local defence forces. In regard to this, it is found out that one Interim Education Provider provides education boxes that work with solar energy to aid students in areas without internet or electricity, ensuring the right to education amidst the conflicts.

Competency evaluations through quizzes are suggested by students instead of standard grading systems. Some IUCs pointed out that the teachers should also work with NUG to open in-person classes and exams in liberated areas. It is also pointed out that more comprehensive strategies should be established to ensure university freedom in higher education.

Instead of relying on public donations, it is also suggested that some interim educational institutions will be better if they can sustain themselves financially.

## 5.2 Teachers and IEPs

In an effort to gain deeper insights into the experiences and challenges faced by teachers during these challenging times, a comprehensive survey and a series of focused group discussions were conducted.

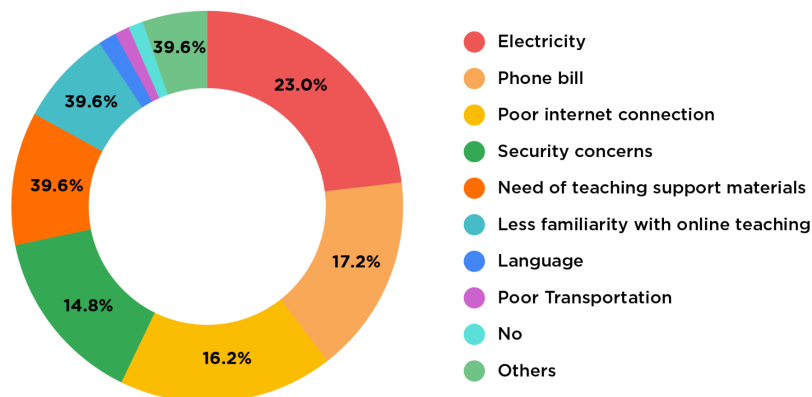
### 5.2.1 Challenges Faced by teachers

Teachers participating in interim education programmes face several difficulties including:

- Security concerns due to the lack of proper measures in some interim education providers
- Difficulty in participating in interim university councils due to a small number of CDM teachers and lack of cooperation between universities and the National Unity Government
- Prioritising their livelihoods, which makes it challenging to participate in interim education programs
- Adapting to new teaching styles and curricula, especially for subjects like engineering that require both theoretical and practical lessons
- Facing difficulties in assessing students' understanding of practical subjects
- Dealing with mental illness, insecurity, and depression caused by the current situation
- Dealing with issues such as electricity shortages, lack of phone bills, poor internet connection, and security problems

Despite these challenges, teachers are still passionate about their work and willing to contribute to the education system in any way possible.

**Figure (7): Difficulties Faced by Teachers in Teaching Classes at IEPs**

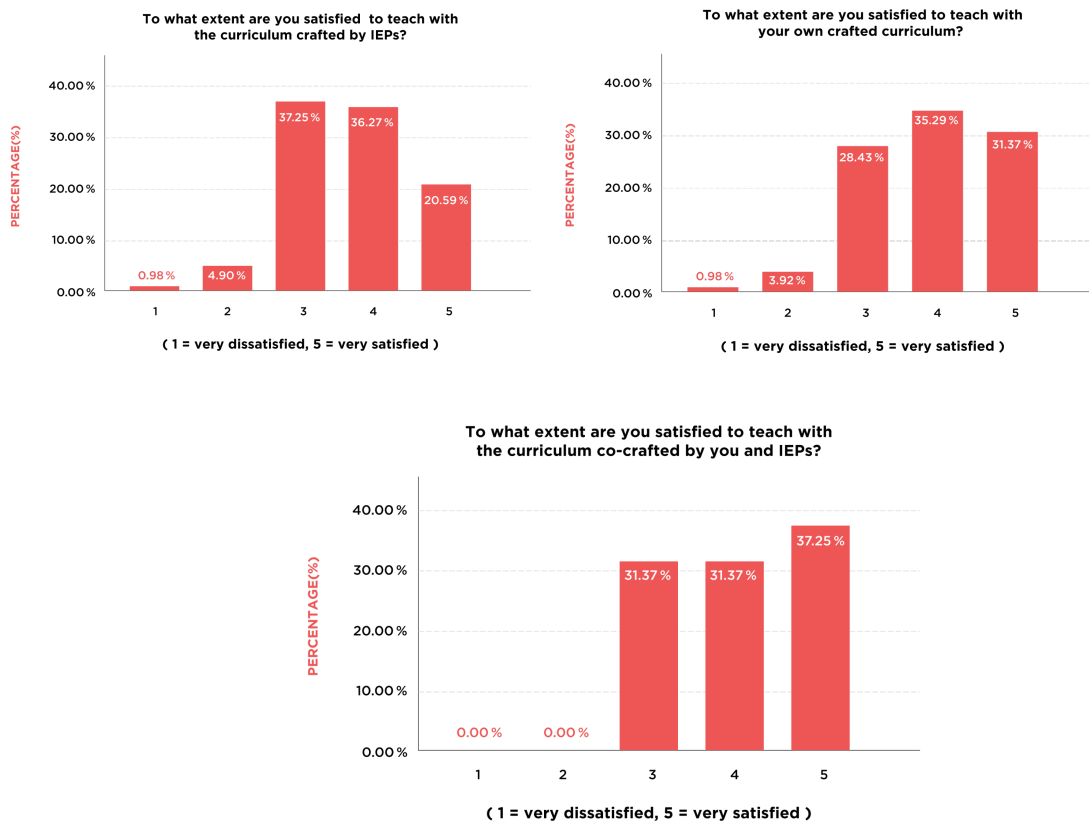




## 5.2.2 Teacher satisfaction on joining IEPs

Teachers who participated in the survey reported satisfaction with becoming familiar with creative teaching styles different from formal methods. Most respondents were satisfied or very satisfied with teaching their own designed curriculum, and the majority also expressed satisfaction with teaching with interim education providers' designed curriculum. Additionally, many respondents favoured crafting combined curriculums with institutions. Although 47.06% of the respondents were neutral, 30.39% of them reported satisfaction and 9.8% reported very satisfaction with interim education programs and courses.

**Figure (8): Teachers' Satisfaction on Designing the Curriculum**



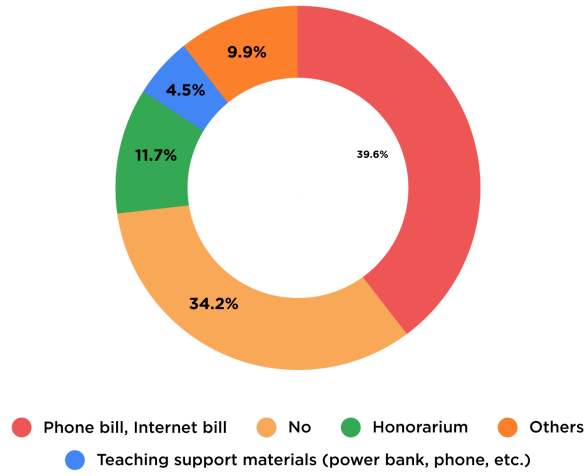
## 5.2.3 Suggestions by Teachers

Teachers have suggested that interim education programs require emotional support, financial support, and academic credibility. They also recommend strengthening linkages between programs and providing long-term courses and educational support materials. Teachers are satisfied with creative teaching styles and the use of pre-reading materials to facilitate discussion. Some teachers have developed new curricula to better engage with students.

Inquiring about the support received from Interim Education Providers, respondents indicated receiving phone and internet bills (39.6%), no support (34.2%), honorarium (11.7%), and teaching support materials (4.5%).

**Figure (9): Support for teachers by IEPs**

What kind of support have you received from IEPs?



## **6. Conclusion**

In conclusion, the beginning of the federal education system is shifting away from the former military education system, and interim education programs based on universities are gaining self-governing authority without top-down control. These programs can choose their own systems and have financial independence. The use of digital technology in education is also observed, with innovative techniques that promote student quality and teamwork. However, students face challenges in attending and completing the programs due to various factors such as electricity, internet connectivity and security concerns. Security, financial constraints, and curriculum development were discussed among teachers, with security concerns addressed through measures to prevent tracking by SAC. Financial constraints were also an issue, but not heavily discussed, and teachers struggled to match the new curriculum with the interim education programs and deliver lessons effectively online.

Despite the ongoing efforts by NUG ministries, Interim University Councils, and other interim education institutions to provide a diverse range of educational programs, the accessibility of these programs remains limited. In comparison to the significant number of students affected by the military coup and armed conflicts, only a fraction of them have been able to avail themselves of these educational opportunities. It is noteworthy that the participation of university teachers in interim education institutions is relatively low compared to the numbers involved in the Civil Disobedience Movement (CDM). This discrepancy can be attributed to various factors, such as concerns over security, challenges related to internet connectivity and electricity outages, as well as personal and family responsibilities.

## 7. Recommendations

Despite several shortcomings and challenges, new actors emerged after the coup are playing a crucial role in providing alternative education pathways for youth communities and also experimenting with potential frameworks for a future federal education system. As outlined throughout this report, the post-coup higher education landscape is highly decentralised in terms of political affiliations, greatly diversified in terms of their founding philosophies, mandate, and target audiences, and vastly creative in terms of programme planning and delivery.

For any stakeholders - donors, development agencies, universities, researchers, technical and pedagogical experts, practitioners, and others - considering to get involved, it is important to recognise and appreciate the evolving landscape and the myriad of platforms actively implementing programmes. Thus, one should not characterise this as a bipolar struggle between SAC and NUG, and should consider partnering with several competent education providers which operate outside those two domains.

Development partners and funding organisations in particular are also recommended to support grassroots organisations and locally grown initiatives who are enabling education access to at-risk youths and traditionally marginalised communities. These nascent projects are seemingly complementary to established institutions such as ethnic education departments. Beyond monetary assistance, these platforms may also benefit from digital tools such as VPNs and Zoom accounts, and insights on curriculum and learning resources, student administration procedures, educational management practices, and possible pathways for accreditation.

And lastly and perhaps most importantly, as voiced out unanimously by students, teachers, and administrators in this research, their commitment and attitude are a political statement of resisting authoritarian rule, striving for justice, and standing in solidarity with their friends and peers behind bars, in the jungle, or fallen in rallies and battles. It is a bitter truth that the education sector will continue to be politicised as part of the pro-democracy movement. Future partners of this fragile system are recommended not to be dismissive of such political aspirations from the local actors but to embrace such robust spirits for social change, democracy, and human rights to prevail in Myanmar.

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