

# **The Development of Vocational Education in Myanmar (1988 – 1997)**

Su SuNaing  
Lecturer  
Department of History  
University of Yangon

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## **Abstract**

Vocational Education as an integral aspect of human resources development is one of the principal means of improving the ability of the individuals to contribute effectively to society. As it provides access to skills and entry routes into the labour market, it can be an important route towards a better life. Since investing in a strong, public vocational education sector must be crucial in knowledge-based societies as well as in developing countries, the Government of Myanmar has been implementing to promote the vocational education as a vital aspect of educational process in the country. At present time, the study of vocational education focuses on discussion of vocational factors in education. This study is an attempt to reveal how the Government of Myanmar establishing the Department of Technical, Agricultural and Vocational Education endeavours to promote societal and economic development introducing vocational education. It analyses the vocational programs, training, curriculum, and syllabus introduced in Myanmar. Based on the statistics of vocational education from 1988 to 1997, this paper makes an effort to assess the development of vocational education in Myanmar.

Keywords: vocational education, government's effort, vocational programs and trainings

## **Introduction**

Myanmar has high esteem on education which guarantees equal right to education without discrimination as she has been practising Buddha Teaching and following good guidance of religion. Every citizen, whether rich or poor, has the right to education. For the poor people or person who could not complete school education, vocational education has been introduced to enable one to earn a living. This paper is an attempt to reveal how the Government of Myanmar establishing the Department of Technical, Agricultural and Vocational Education endeavours to promote societal and economic development introducing vocational education. It attempts to analyse the vocational programs, training, curriculum, and syllabus introduced in Myanmar.

## **I. I : The Formation of the Department of Vocational Education**

Vocational Education as an integral aspect of human resources development is one of the principal means of improving the ability of the individuals to contribute effectively to society, and also to further their own self development. In Myanmar, the Department of Vocational Education was formed on 15 March 1972, in order to produce technicians and skilled craftsmen for the country.<sup>1</sup>

In an effort to obtain skill labour in agriculture, industries and other professions the Revolutionary Council (1962-1974) promulgated the Technical, Agricultural and Art of Living Law in 1974.<sup>2</sup> According to this law, the Department of Technical and Vocational Education became the Department of Technical, Agricultural and Vocational Education. It was one of seven major departments under the Ministry of Education.

## **I.II : Function of the Department of Vocational Education**

The main functions of the Department of Technical, Agricultural and Vocational Education were as follows:

- To cultivate technicians and skillful workers who are needed for the building industries.
- To cultivate technicians and skillful workers who are capable of using modern technology for the development of Agriculture and Livestock Breeding,
- To extend the vocational education to be in conformity with politics, economic and social system of Union of Myanmar,
- To cultivate skillful workers who have patriotism.<sup>3</sup>

The Department of Technical, Agricultural and Vocational Education had carried out these functions under the guidance of Myanmar Education Committee and the Council of Department of Technical, Agricultural and Vocational Education.

The Department of Technical, Agricultural and Vocational Education supervised the enlargement of teaching subjects in Institutes and schools under the department, the extension of opening schools and Institutes, the adoption of curriculum, syllabus, text books and duration of study time, the opening of teachers training courses and the managing of Institutes and school under the department.<sup>4</sup>

## **II : Organizations of the Department of Vocational Education**

Under the Department of Technical, Agricultural and Vocational Education, Government Technical Institutes, State Agricultural Institutes, Agricultural High Schools, Commercial Schools, Machinery Repair and Maintenance Schools, Handicraft Schools, Schools of Domestic Chores and School of Fisheries were opened for vocational education. Weaving Schools were handed over to the Ministry of Co-operatives since 1982. In 1987 there were ten Government Technical Institutes, seven State Agricultural Institutes, twelve Technical High Schools, nine Agricultural High Schools, three Commercial Schools, two Machinery Repair and Maintenance Schools, seven Handicrafts Schools, six schools of Domestic Chores and two School of Fisheries, and one Technical Teachers Training Institute, two Engineering Technology Evening Courses and five Evening Working Courses, totalling sixty-six institutes and schools.<sup>5</sup>

For the promotion of accessibility to vocational education, the institutes and schools were increasingly opened throughout the country. In 1997, two Government Technical Institutes, five Technical High Schools, one Agricultural School, four Handicraft Schools and one School of Domestic Chores, four evening working courses were established. School of Handicrafts were opened in ShwePyithar, Hlaingthaya and Waibhagi Townships in Yangon Division. In 1993-94, Technical High Schools were opened in Kyaukpadaung and Pa-an. Kalaw Government Technical Institute was moved to Ayethaya new township in Taunggyi. There were eighty-four schools and institutes under the Department of Technical, Agricultural and Vocational Education in 1997.<sup>6</sup>

With the increased opening of schools, the numbers of students increased. The number of students increased from 1, 8781 in 1987-88 to 2, 0107 students in 1992-93. Furthermore, teachers were increasingly to be appointed for the teaching and instructing students. Teachers have been appointed in 1992-93 academic year. In 1987-88, 1, 336 teachers served in schools and institutes of vocational education. Therefore, a total three hundred and forty-four teachers were appointed from 1988-1993.<sup>7</sup>

Not only persons who had passed the matriculation examination but also persons who had completed elementary school could join the vocational schools or institutes. Regular courses as well as special short-time courses were opened in Handicrafts schools and Schools of Domestic Chores. Basic Computer Course was opened in Commercial School, Yangon. Moreover, Chemical, Food Technology Course and Plastic and Rubber Technology Course were opened in Government Technical Institutes.

In 1997, 8581 students enrolled in thirteen Technical Institutes, 3, 500 students in seventeen Technical High School, 232 students in eleven Handicraft Schools, forty-seven students in two Machinery repair and Maintenance Schools, 1, 314 students in two Engineering Technology Evening Courses and 1, 189 students in nine three-month Working Evening Courses.<sup>8</sup> Department of Technical, Agricultural and Vocational Education operated eighty-four institutions and schools including one Technical Teacher Training Institute with an annual output of about 24, 000 graduates ranking from technicians to semi-skilled worker in 1997. It seems that the accessibility to pursue in vocational education increased to a certain extent and most of the out of school children and youth could get the opportunity to learn vocational education.

For those who passed the Basic Education High School Examination in either "A" list or "B" list there is a possibility of joining the Government Technical Institutes, the State Agricultural Institutes or Commercial Schools. Due to the high demand for seats in these institutes, applicants have to appear for an entrance examination conducted by the Department of Technical, Agricultural and Vocational Education. There were no entrance examinations for students who wish to enter the Technical and Agricultural High Schools. They could join these schools after passing the nine grade. No academic qualifications and entrance examinations were required for those entering the Machinery Repair and Maintenance Schools, Handicraft Schools, School of Fisheries and School of Domestic Chores, except that they must be able to read and write.

Commercial Schools were founded since 1969. Accountancy, Book keeping and Office Working Courses were taught in the Commercial School. The aims of opening commercial schools were:

- To complete a course of study on vocational education within a short time,
- To make a living after the completion of studying vocational education for those who could not study the university education due to various circumstances,
- To cultivate skilful workers who could contribute their skills for the productive force of the State.<sup>9</sup>

The courses taught in commercial schools are:

- (a) Accountancy and Bookkeeping (Main) Course,
- (b) Office Working (Main) Course,
- (c) Shorthand Typing (Main) Course and
- (d) Typing (Main) Course.

The duration of the course was nine months, teaching lasted for six months and practising three months. Expert accountants and efficient clerks were produced from these Commercial Schools.<sup>10</sup>

The Schools of Domestic Chores includes the schools of vocational education. The objectives of the School of Domestic Chores were:

- To make a living by learning tailoring and cooking in a short time for poor people and person who could not afford to complete normal education,

- To cultivate technicians and experts for the need of building industries,
- To extend the teaching of vocational education in consistency with the political, economic and social objectives of the Union of Myanmar
- To create technicians and intelligent and outstanding workers who have conviction, awareness and will to serve their beloved country.<sup>11</sup>

At the School of Domestic Chores,

- (a) Women's Wear, Child's Wear
- (b) Women's Wear, Handicraft
- (c) General Sewing
- (d) Underwear
- (e) Men's Shirt and Jacket
- (f) Men's Shirt and Trouser
- (g) Western Style Coat
- (h) Myanmar Traditional Food
- (i) Jam and candied fruit and
- (j) Snacks were taught.<sup>12</sup>

Among these courses, the duration of studying time for stitching western style coat was six months. Other courses of study could be completed within three months.<sup>13</sup> Chief Cooks and talented Tailors who were provided the state to a certain extent were produced from School of Domestic Chores. Some graduated trainees at the School of Domestic Chores could do successful business by opening the tailoring shops and they were also able to open the tailoring courses for the new trainees.<sup>14</sup> Some were successful in opening tailoring courses having over 30 trainees.<sup>15</sup>

Machinery Repair and Maintenance Schools were opened in accordance with the motto "Having Vocational Education" to complete the studying in short time and be able to make a living on one's own education. The courses which were opened in these schools were as follows:

- (i) Repairing Home Electrics Course
- (ii) Repairing Office Machine parts Course
- (iii) Repairing Clocks and Watches Course
- (iv) Repairing Machinery Course
- (v) Repairing Sewing Machine and Key Course
- (vi) Repairing Bicycle Course<sup>16</sup>

The period of Courses lasted for six months, one module was three-month. If a person would like to attend up to the completion of the course, he must attend six months, module one and module two.

Schools of Handicraft were opened to create skilful craftsmen and workers to serve the national interest in some other way. The Courses taught in these schools were:

- (i) Sewing Course
- (ii) Hairdressing Course
- (iii) Repairing Domestic Electric Parts Course
- (iv) Cane and Bamboo Working Course
- (v) Wood-Working Course.<sup>17</sup>

Schools of Fisheries were also opened in KadonKani and Kyaukphyu Township. At these schools, one can learn the technology of fisheries and method of catching prawn and shrimp etc. It is found that the Schools of Handicraft such as Schools of Fisheries were opened in the coastal regions

such as Kyaukphyu Township and KadonKani in Ayeyarwady Division where the fisheries are available so that the local youths could learn more scientific knowledge of fishery.

The students must study not only learning literature but also practising in work to upgrade their quality and ability. The Syllabus and Curriculum were compiled according to module system and published text books for the development of teaching method and easy to teach. Lesson Plans had submitted once a week and the conditions of the students were also examined weekly for development of learner creativity, analytical skills, and ability to utilize modern technology. The Curriculum was reviewed and reformed in accordance with modern age. The Seminars and Discussion on Courses Outline and Board of Study were also held under the supervision of the Department of Agricultural, Technical and Vocational Education. The teaching methods were practically the same as in all schools and institutes. It can be found that teachers' hand-out notes and skills-based literature were published with the collaboration of United Nations International Children's Emergency Fund. Vocational schools were for the students earn a livelihood stand after completion from these schools. So practising was greatly emphasised. Examinations were set in the last weekend of the course.<sup>18</sup> The students could pass with credit or ordinary level depending on their qualification. It was found that no one failed the examination, all students passed in full percentage.

Regarding the financing of students, sixty percent of all students pursuing education at the Technical High School, Agricultural High School, Government Technical Institute and State Agricultural Institute were awarded stipends. Housing in the form of hostels was also provided. Recreation and sport activities were held in all schools and institutions. Prior to 1982, students were afforded the opportunity to continue education at higher levels but this was suspended from 1982 to 1989. Starting from Academic Year 1990-91, continuing education to higher levels was allowed for those who were qualified to enter into the higher institutions.

Qualified Students from Technical High Schools were allowed to join Engineering Technical Evening Classes and Government Technical Institutions. Qualified Students from Government Technical Institutes were given opportunity to join the Institute of Technology for further studies. Moreover, qualified students from Agricultural High Schools could do further studies in State Agricultural Institutes. Opportunities were opened for those who desired to study further at a higher level.<sup>19</sup>

### **III. Endeavours of the Department of Vocational Education**

The important endeavour by the Department of Technical, Agricultural and Vocational Education to diversify learning opportunities was the formation of "The Mobile Team for Teaching Technology". This team toured remote areas and border areas including Kunglun, Kyaington, Tachileik, Myeik and Kawthaung. The members of the team taught them vocational subjects. Teaching aids were also provided. From 15 June 1990 to 24 June 1990 Sewing Course was given in DaikOo Township, Bago Division. Sewing and Cooking Courses were also opened in Thayaaye village, Bago Division from 3 to 13 July 1990 in Thirimingala Quarter and Zeyathiri Quarter. Sewing Course and Crochet Course were opened from 3 September to 2 October 1990 and from 15 October and 14 November 1990 respectively. With coordination of Army Corp No (22), Sewing and Wood Working (Carpenter) courses were opened in Myainggalay, Mon State.

With collaboration of Social Welfare Department, Co-operative Department and Technical, Agricultural and Vocational Department, three- month course for sewing and cooking 1/92 was

opened from 16 March to 15 June 1992. In June 1992 sewing and cooking courses were opened in Mawlamyine, Thaton and the School of Development of National Races in Yangon. Domestic Chores Course 2/92 was also opened in Tachileik and Kawthaung under the programme of the implementation of development for border areas and national races in July 1992. New Domestic Chores Courses were opened in Lasho, Kyaington and Myeik and regular courses were continued from November to December 1992. With the cooperation of United Nations Development Funds, the basic vocational course for out of school children and youth were opened in Halingthaya Township. Wood-working, craft of mason and sewing subjects are taught in these courses.

In February 1993, wood-working, masonry, crochet and sewing courses were opened in Kuanglu, Shirt Tailoring Course in Myitkyina, furniture making, masonry, hairdressing course were opened in Army Corp No (88), Myitkyina. Tailoring courses for shirt and trouser were opened in No (101) Corp, Pakokku. Moreover, domestic chores course No 5/93 was opened in Kyaington, Lasho and Myeik, No 6/93 was opened in Kawthaung and Tachileik in November 1993. These Domestic Chores courses were started in Kyeinchaung, Maungtau Township, Rakhine State and in Chinshwehaw and Namtak, ShanState. In February 1994 these courses were continued in Kawthaung, Lasho, Tachileik, Kyaington and Myeik.<sup>20</sup> It can be found that Domestic Chores Courses consist of sewing, cooking, crochet, tapestry courses were taught to the family of corps and battalions in remote and border area. These resulted in the cultivation of out-of-school children and youth to stand by themselves throughout their life.

To promote vocational education, many measures were taken with the assistance of Non-Governmental Organizations. With the help of United Nations Development Programme, enhancing the strength of students' project and training teachers in institutes and schools project were accomplished. Teaching aids were imported for use in these projects by loan of Organization of Petroleum Exporting Countries.<sup>21</sup> In 1990-91, four training courses were opened by the cooperation of Israel and eighty-three candidates attended. It seems that in spite of sending abroad individual, the opening of courses in mother country reduced the expenditure and time for study. Moreover, Domestic technicians and skilful workers were created simultaneously.<sup>22</sup> The necessary laboratories were constructed with the collaboration of the Commission of Natural Farming in Asia and Pacific and International Natural Farming Research Bureau in Atami, Japan. Under this programme, natural farming research work and the contribution of technology of farming were started in Agricultural High School, Taikkyi. Research works were carried out in agricultural institutes and high schools. To strengthen the teachers' quality and ability, teachers from domestic chores school attended the courses in Kandawgyi Palace Hotel.<sup>23</sup>

## **Conclusion**

The government had increased the opening of schools, increased the number of courses to promote the accessibility to vocational education. The Syllabus and Curriculum were reformed and revised to upgrade the quality in conformity with modern age. Moreover, Mobile Teams were formed to teach vocational education in remote and border areas. Research works were carried out and Training Courses were opened with the coordination of UN and other agencies from abroad. However, scholars were not sent abroad for further studies in Domestic Chores Schools like other schools and institutes under the department. Thus, the persons who are involved in the vocational education are not able to learn the experiences of the other countries' vocational education. Some of the foreign countries were successful in teaching the Vocational Education on Domestic Chores. It was believed that teachers in Domestic Chores Schools should be sent abroad for further studies and for the benefit of the country. Students from vocational schools became technicians, outstanding and efficient clerks, chief cooks, skilful workers and expert in industries, hotels, foreign going shipping and co-operative department and the graduate trainees from the School of Domestic Chores also became successful tailors and could open the tailoring courses for the new trainees. Therefore vocational education could bring not only benefit for those but also progress for the country. However, it was found that the number of students was low in some of the courses. It is because the awareness of the importance of the vocational education is not thoroughly known among the people. Nevertheless, to become modern developed industrialized nation, advance science and technology are essential and urgently needed. According to this need, on 1 January 1997, the former Department of Technical, Agricultural and Vocational Education was taken over by the Ministry of Science and Technology as the Department of Technical and Vocational Education. Likewise, the State Agricultural Institutes and Agricultural High Schools were taken over by the Ministry of Agriculture and Irrigation, School of Domestic Chores by the Ministry of Social Welfare, Relief and Resettlement, Commercials Schools by the Ministry of Co-operative, Schools of Fisheries by the Ministry of Livestock and Fisheries. Nevertheless, it cannot be doubted that the establishment of the Department of Technical, Agricultural and Vocational Education led to the promotion of accessibility, quality and diversity to vocational education.

**Appendix (1)**  
**The List of Schools and Institutes under**  
**the Department of Technical, Agricultural and Vocational Education**

Sr.	Name of School and Institutes	Number of Schools & Institutes	
		1988	1997
1	Government Technical Institute	10	12
2	Government Agricultural Institute	7	7
3	Technical High School	12	17
4	Agricultural High School	9	10
5	Commercial School	3	3
6	School of Domestic Chores	6	7
7	School of Handicraft	7	11
8	Machinery Repair and Maintenance School	2	2
9	School of Fisheries	2	2
10	Technical Teachers Training Institute	1	1
11	Engineering Technology Evening Course	2	2
12	Evening Working Course	5	9
13	Basic Computer Course	-	1
	Total	66	84



## Appendix (2)

### The List of the Number of Teachers and Students

#### in Technical, Agricultural and Vocational Schools and Institutes

Sr.	Name of School and Institutes	1987-88		1992-93	
		Teachers	Students	Teachers	Students
1	Government Technical Institute	426	6493	587	4311
2	Government Agricultural Institute	155	695	178	541
3	Technical High School	373	4446	404	3575
4	Agricultural High School	89	284	94	256
5	Commercial School	23	427	23	620
6	School of Domestic Chores	85	2688	101	4025
7	School of Handicrafts	55	305	115	1638
8	Machinery Repair and Maintenance School	19	195	19	252
9	School of Fisheries	13	29	10	111
10	Technical Teachers Training Institute	5	90	21	32
11	Engineering Technology Evening Course	56	1098	56	1033
12	Evening Working Course	37	2031	70	3671
13	Basic Computer Course	-	-	3	40
	Total	1336	18781	1680	20107



Figure (1) : Government School of Domestic Chores, Yangon, Myanmar



Figure (2) : Trainees learning how to make Myanmar Traditional Food



Figure (3) :General Sewing Course at School of Domestic Chores



Figure (4):The Products of Handicrafts and Knitted Items from School of Domestic Chores



Figure (5) :Knitting Course for Shawls

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U Than Oo,	Director General (Rtd) Department of Education
U TunHla.	Deputy Director General Educational Planning & Training Department
Daw San SanWai	Director Department of Technical and Vocational Education
U Aye Maw	Principal Co-operative Commercial School, Yangon
U Aye Kyu	Principal Machinery Repair and Maintenance School, Aung San
Daw Tin Tin Aye	Principal School of Domestic Chores, Yangon
U Aung Moe	Director General Department of Technical and Vocational Education
ThidarLwin	Head of Hsesar Tailoring Course No. 3, DawThein Tin Road Kan Taw Lay, Yangon
Ma ThetHnin Dar	No.7/ 09 Saw Maha Street, Bo Cho (2) Quarter Yangon
Zin Mar Htwe	No. 19, Ground FloorKyuntawkyangStreet Sanchaung, Yangon

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