



Transformation by Innovation in Distance Education Project Summative Evaluation Management Response

Context

The Transformation by Innovation in Distance Education (TIDE) project has succeeded in driving forward improvements to the quality and effectiveness of distance teaching in Myanmar. TIDE responded to Myanmar's demand for skilled graduates to meet new employment needs, particularly in relation to managing Myanmar's natural resources sustainably. The project provided Higher Education staff opportunities to gain valuable experience in Open Educational Resources and Online Distance Education. Through introducing new concepts, practices and ways of working, TIDE has raised awareness and aspirations amongst senior university stakeholders and staff. TIDE also provided a valuable advisory function to Distance and Higher Education policymakers as the country embarked on education reform.

Launched in 2018, TIDE was led by The Open University (UK), working with Yangon University, Yangon University of Distance Education and Yadanabon University in Myanmar, Irrawaddy Policy Exchange, Oxford University, and University of Manchester in the UK.

The summative evaluation of TIDE project was adapted following the military coup in Myanmar and the subsequent early closure of the project, and before the formative evaluation could be considered and acted upon. The summative evaluation builds on the formative evaluation but mainly reflects views from team members and stakeholders. The report confirms that the TIDE project has succeeded in making a difference in under three and a half years and at a critical time in the country's development, and also provides recommendations for similar projects in the future.

The management response below therefore refrains from addressing the recommendations of the summative evaluation in detail but does note some points of clarification.

TIDE Management Response

While recognising that this summative evaluation is based on limited data on the outcomes of the TIDE project, due to the military coup in Myanmar, the TIDE Partnership regards the evaluation report as a sound analysis of the available information and agrees with most of the conclusions and recommendations made in the report. However, the complexity and scale of the project means that the evaluators recorded understandings differ slightly from those of the management team in a few cases.

For example, on page 9 we were not aware that the day students receive the study guide books, which relate normally to a unit rather than a full year; on page 19 we did consider having our IPE office within the MOE/DHE, but we felt there was a danger then of co-option and loss of effective TIDE management control, so this was dismissed; on page 24 there was no explicit change management strand at the residential schools; on page 35 onboarding visits to new participating universities included some aspects of focus group and discussion; while also on page 35 project communication during the period of adaptation to Covid-19 restrictions was comprehensive and effective.

In the end, these and other clarifications do not change the main thrust and direction of the summative evaluation, but do highlight the challenges of doing such work in a compressed time scale and through not being able to engage with most participants, the three Myanmar partner universities and other Myanmar based stakeholders.