

Transformation by Innovation in Distance Education (TIDE) Summative Evaluation Report

Final Version signed-off by Andy Lane on behalf of TIDE 20/05/2021, final clarification 31/05/2021

Contents

Executive Summary	3
1. Introduction	7
1.1 Transformation by Innovation in Distance Education	7
1.2 The Myanmar education system	8
1.3 Open Educational Resources	9
1.4 Evaluation aims and questions	10
2. Evaluation approach and methodology	10
2.1 Process evaluation	10
2.2 Data collection	11
3. Findings: surveys	12
3.1 Student survey	12
3.2 TIDE staff survey	14
4. Findings: OECD-DAC criteria	16
4.1 Relevance	16
4.2 Coherence	17
4.3 Efficiency	18
4.4 Effectiveness	18
4.5 Impact	19
4.6 Sustainability	25
5. Findings: themes from interviews	25
6. Discussion	28
6.1 Changes as a result of TIDE interventions	28
6.2 Influential factors within TIDE	29
6.3 External factors and risks	33
6.4 Lessons learned	34
7. Recommendations	35
8. Conclusion	36
References	38
Appendix 1 Acronyms and abbreviations	39
Appendix 2 Survey questions for TIDE staff and consultants	40

Executive Summary

The Transformation by Innovation in Distance Education (TIDE) project was one of nine projects selected for support by the Strategic Partnerships for Higher Education Innovation and Reform (SPHEIR) programme announced by the then UK Department for International Development (DFID) in 2016¹. SPHEIR is managed by a consortium comprising British Council, PwC and Universities UK and is a major international programme focused on support for Higher Education transformation in developing countries.

There is a considerable and widely recognised need for capacity development and reform of higher and distance education in Myanmar, as well as policy and strategy development at national level. TIDE was designed as a systemic intervention at various levels. At a national level TIDE acted via lobbying and knowledge-development of policymakers. Within the 34 Arts and Science Universities in Myanmar, TIDE influenced institutions, staff and students. The subject focus was the teaching and learning of Education for Environment and Sustainable Development (EfESD). The emphasis on use of open educational resources (OERs) and associated open educational practices for teaching and learning in Myanmar higher education was one of the most important aspects of TIDE.

The TIDE project formally began in February 2018 and was intended to run to September 2021. The funded period was terminated early, at the end of May 2021, due to the military coup in in early February 2021. TIDE focused on three main streams of work:

- Enhancement of staff capacities for academic, teaching and complementary staff
- Enhancement of programmes
- Approaches to the strengthening of Higher Education /Distance Education systems

This report presents findings from the summative phase of the evaluation of TIDE. Due to the military coup, this evaluation was redesigned to omit data collection from Myanmar citizens in country and truncated from 5 to 2 months. This summative evaluation was therefore primarily an account of TIDE reflecting upon itself through the lens of the evaluation questions and the OECD-DAC evaluation criteria². It aimed to capture the intangible factors and unexpected facets of the project that may not have been recorded in Monitoring, Evaluation and Learning (MEL) activity to date.

Political changes in country from 2015 onwards meant the time was right for an intervention to reform higher and distance education. TIDE was recognised as highly relevant and influential at the national level by policy stakeholders including the former Union Minister for Education. Strong political connections were crucial to this, facilitated by Irrawaddy Policy Exchange as an effective Myanmar based partner. Consultants working on TIDE were also working on other Myanmar programmes, thus increasing the influence of TIDE. TIDE raised awareness of the possibilities of online education and supported policymakers to consider these approaches. The commitment to digital skills investment in the Myanmar economic resilience and reform programme was due to the influence of TIDE. TIDE informed and influenced the draft National Education Strategic Plan Stage Two (NESPII), including agreements towards the creation of a Myanmar National Open University. In consultation with employers, a draft Environmental Impact Assessment Competency Framework/code of conduct was developed to support the creation of new certification for

¹ DFID became part of the Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office (FCDO) in 2020

² Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development - Development Assistance Committee

environmental workers. This was alongside the more general Graduate Competency Framework developed by TIDE.

At the institutional level, TIDE was perceived as supporting changes that senior management wanted to implement. The change management strand of TIDE was reconfigured in response to the new 'One Campus Two Systems'³ approach initiated by the Ministry of Education during the early stages of TIDE. Change management support and mentoring thus contributed towards institutional capacity by developing the capacity of individual staff.

Most university teaching and support staff experienced TIDE through training at two residential schools for each cohort, held in country in May and November. Beyond residential schools, development continued via further workshops, project work and mentoring of each of the three staff cohorts (2018, 2019, 2020). In response to the Covid-19 pandemic TIDE pivoted online towards the end of the 2019 cohort activities and delivered an adapted online experience for the 2020 cohort. TIDE has shown how courses may be developed locally by university staff, rather than centrally produced. TIDE has also demonstrated how new EfESD courses may be created by cross-disciplinary teams using creative commons and OERs. At university staff level (academic and ICT, Library and other support), TIDE has raised the ambitions and aspirations of staff to try new approaches to teaching and ways of working. TIDE has started to identify ICT support as a distinct role rather than an ad-hoc activity.

For Myanmar university staff, TIDE has produced courses and resources that will be available beyond the funded period, including:

- a Professional Development Programme with a total of 289 enrolled staff, which has been adapted to enable learners to continue after the funded period.
- a Master Trainer Programme to train about 100 Myanmar education staff in order to support their colleagues
- online Gateway courses for staff (Get started with online learning, How to be an online facilitator, Digital literacy: Succeeding in a digital world, Take your teaching online)
- change management masterclasses
- resources about understanding and using creative commons licences and OERs
- resources to increase staff capacity in teaching EfESD subjects

For students, TIDE has produced four online gateway courses provide new learning opportunities in both English and Myanmar language, with a Certificate of Participation as a motivation (Get started with online learning, Am I ready to study in English? Am I ready to be a distance learner? Digital skills, digital learning). In total, these courses amassed 12,031 unique visits by the end of March 2021. In the longer term, TIDE has raised awareness amongst staff and policymakers of the possibilities of online study to open up education to a wider audience. In particular, to meet the needs of students who are currently unable to access higher education due to the matriculation exam system. In addition, teams of Myanmar staff have produced their own OERs to support student learning in EfESD. For example, Dagon University produced a self-directed OER on Potable Water Treatment, with support from TIDE trained ICT staff, showing a degree of confidence in applying the

³ Launched in 2019, with effect from 2020, 'One Campus Two Systems' was a new approach whereby the 34 Arts and Science universities took on full responsibility for the award and delivery of undergraduate distance education degrees in addition to their existing face to face provision. Previously, distance education degrees were only awarded by two key universities, Yangon University of Distance Education (YUDE) and Mandalay University of Distance Education (MUDE).

TIDE training. Despite challenges including Covid-19 restrictions, all 11 teams from the 2018 cohort have produced an OER.

TIDE has raised awareness and aspirations amongst policymakers, senior university stakeholders and staff. It has introduced new concepts, practices and ways of working. TIDE has succeeded in making a difference, despite the known barriers, and the following unexpected events: late sign-off at UK Ministerial level that delayed the start of the TIDE programme, Covid-19 pandemic, military coup. As stated in the Political Economy Analysis “changing Higher and Distance Education in Myanmar is a Herculean challenge, given the history” (Technopolis, 2019, p6). The intangible impacts of TIDE may be sustainable, although concrete evidence may be elusive due to the nature of these impacts and the political situation in country. Many TIDE participants gained an awareness and knowledge of 21st century teaching and learning approaches and were motivated to innovate.

Recommendations to inform other programmes in future

Drawn from the evaluation, these generalised recommendations are for the benefit of other programmes elsewhere in future that may involve similar interventions. The specific lessons learned from TIDE are discussed in Section 6.4 of this report.

- 1. Build relationships of trust before, during and after the funded period.** This may be through partnerships with organisations and individuals with a track record in country. Face-to-face events and ongoing contact with individuals and organisations over the funded period also build trust. Online contact may be a part of this but is less suited to discussion of sensitive subjects.
- 2. Develop and support team working.** Complicated programmes with multiple partners on multiple sites require clarity about roles, expectations and the involvement of partners in the various strands of activity. Draw upon the experience of all partners including the multiple perspectives involved. Assume that there will be staff changes in a large multi-year programme. Consider how to induct new staff effectively. Also consider the potential benefit of reflecting upon the programme from a fresh perspective whilst mitigating the impact upon continuity due to staff changeover.
- 3. Gather relevant expertise including academic, technical, project management, cultural and in-country experience.** Identify gaps in expertise and bring in specialists in a timely manner. Consider how to recognise the expertise of each colleague and integrate that with the overall programme aims and activities. When adapting to unexpected events, it is important to have experienced personnel who can identify when and how to adapt.
- 4. Provide good communication and accurate information for everyone.**
- 5. Open educational practices have potential to transform educational approaches.** OERs can be a practical way to help staff develop innovative approaches to teaching and learning. They need to build upon a sound understanding of the pedagogical, technical and knowledge aspects.
- 6. Consider how to communicate the identity and core purpose of the project effectively.** The diagrams and other cognitive tools used to manage a complex project may be opaque to participants who only experience one aspect or activity. Consider creating simplified representations specific to each particular audience, showing how an activity fits within the overall plan.
- 7. Be aware of cultural differences, institutional working practices and norms.** Consider the effect upon data collection, design of face-to-face and online development activities. When planning face-to-face events, particularly at scale, consider local conditions and patterns of working, for example, seasonal variations.

8. Before the start of the project, obtain as much information as possible, including a Political Economy Analysis, using appropriate data collection that is sensitive to local culture and language.

1. Introduction

This report presents findings from the summative phase of the evaluation of the Transformation by Innovation in Distance Education (TIDE) programme and complements findings from the formative phase, reported in January 2021.

Due to the military coup in early February 2021, the summative evaluation was redesigned to omit data collection from undergraduate students, university staff and other stakeholders in country, in order to safeguard those Myanmar citizens. Instead, this evaluation draws upon fresh interview data from UK TIDE colleagues and key staff from the British Council, the Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office (FCDO), Irrawaddy Policy Exchange (IPE) and independent consultants who could be contacted without personal risk. The summative evaluation also refers to free text data from the student survey carried out during the formative evaluation, which was not processed earlier due to scheduling constraints.

The schedule for the summative evaluation was truncated due to the early termination of the TIDE project. Rather than the original five months to the end of June, the revised summative evaluation data collection and analysis were compressed into a period of two months to meet the deadline for delivery of the final report.

This summative evaluation is therefore primarily an account of the TIDE project reflecting upon itself through the lens of the evaluation questions and the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development - Development Assistance Committee evaluation criteria (OECD-DAC). It aims to capture the intangible factors and unexpected facets of the project that may not have been recorded in the operational reporting or Monitoring, Evaluation and Learning (MEL) activity to date. In addition, it describes TIDE impacts up until February 2021 and considers the potential continued sustainability of TIDE impact from now onwards, in the light of political events.

1.1 Transformation by Innovation in Distance Education

As described by Lane and Fawcett (2019) “The Transformation by Innovation in Distance Education (TIDE) project was one of nine projects selected for support by the Strategic Partnerships for Higher Education Innovation and Reform (SPHEIR) programme announced by the then UK Department for International Development (DFID) in 2016⁴. SPHEIR is managed by a consortium comprising British Council, PwC and Universities UK and is a major international programme focused on support for HE transformation in developing countries.”

The TIDE project formally began in February 2018 and was intended to run to September 2021. It was focused on three main streams of work:

- Enhancement of Staff Capacities for Academic, Teaching and Complementary staff
- Enhancement of Programmes
- Approaches to the strengthening of Higher Education /Distance Education systems

The academic focus for the TIDE project, responding to a request by the State Counsellor, has been on ‘Education for Environment and Sustainable Development (EfESD)’ and this guides the nature of new content being developed in the form of Open Educational Resources (OER) which have the potential to be delivered through new online platforms.”

The main TIDE outputs and activities are summarised in Figure 1.

⁴ DFID became part of the Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office (FCDO) in 2020

TIDE Outputs and Activities

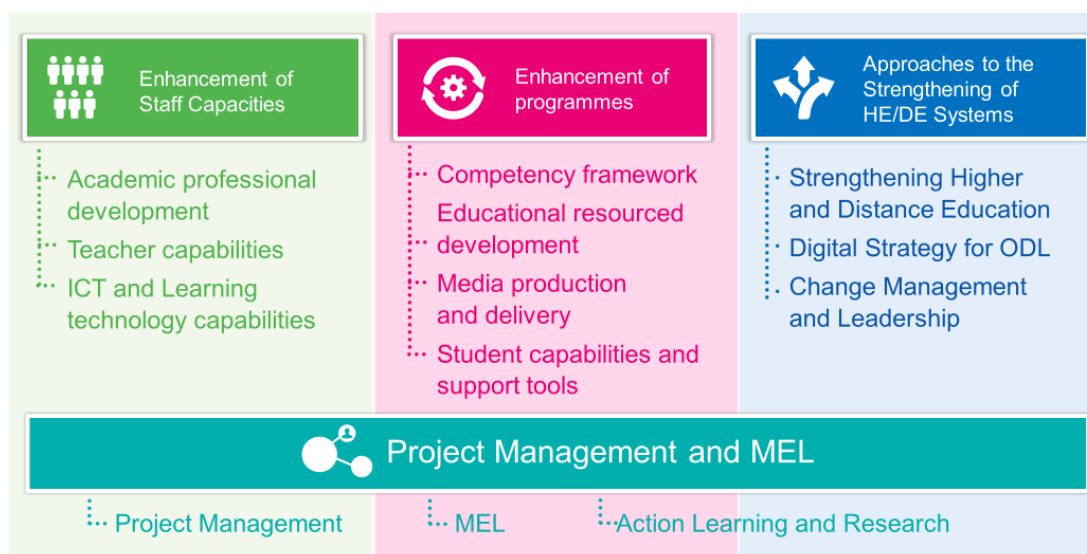


Figure 1. TIDE project outputs and activities.

Most university teaching and support staff experienced TIDE through training at residential schools, held in May and November. Beyond residential schools, development continued via further workshops, project work and mentoring in addition to online seminars, resources and courses. There were three staff cohorts, each of which were expected to undertake a two-year programme starting in March 2018, 2019, and 2020. The 2018 and 2019 cohorts completed four and two residential schools respectively and other face-to-face activities in country. The cohort due to start in March 2020 was delayed due to Covid but commenced a shorter adapted programme in September 2020 along with the 2019 cohort.

The national policy and strategy interventions were mainly carried out via lobbying through appropriate channels. The students were influenced indirectly through the development of staff and directly through the provision of online courses.

1.2 The Myanmar education system

Higher education institutions have an important role in educating professional and skilled graduates to meet national development goals. In a developing country this need is more urgent to give people a chance to catch up with other nations and help them to take their place among the 21st century nations. In the Myanmar context there is an additional need to bring together the different cultures and languages as a nation and prepare them to contribute to their society and work towards sustainable development goals to safeguard rich natural resources of the nation (See Kandiko Howson and Lall, 2020).

There is a two-tier education system in Myanmar, in which 40% of undergraduates are day students, attending university full time for lectures and tuition. The majority of students (60%) study at a distance, based at home without regular tutor contact. As reported in Lane and Gregson (2019), "Since the time of the military government in Myanmar, arts and science undergraduate courses had been offered through 34 'day campus' Universities distributed across the country, and whilst courses were offered on campus the majority of students studied by DE and this remains the case in 2019. The 'day campus' Universities provide some pre-exam, on campus tuition to distance students,

support registration and distribution of printed study materials. English is the expected language of instruction and all DE materials are in English. Although arrangements are now changing, up until 2019 degrees arising from DE study have been awarded by Yangon University of Distance Education (YUDE) and Mandalay University of Distance Education (MUDE), and these two institutions have provided the academic oversight of the degrees, as well as creating all the study materials for the courses.”

While the language of instruction is nominally English, in practice, many staff have a poor level of English language that affects the quality of teaching (as reported in Technopolis 2019, p6). Some students have a better understanding of English than their teachers, due to time spent online. This may place some teachers in a difficult position in front of their students and their staff peers. It may also affect how teachers represent their level of English ability in surveys intended to elicit this information.

The teaching is based upon set books in English, which are produced by subject boards of academic experts and distributed nationally. A typical set book consists of about 75 pages of text and covers one lecture course or module, for example first year Zoology. The distance students receive similar books to the day students with some additional content. For all students, 80% of the final grade depends upon the end of course examination, with an emphasis upon memorisation and reproduction of the information in the set book. There is some practical work, which distance students undertake during a two-week period of face to face tuition before the exam. Students tend to take an instrumental approach, focus on passing the exam rather than deep learning (Technopolis 2019, Section 5.1, p10 and Section 6.1, p12).

Entrance to university is selective, via a national matriculation examination, the results of which determine a student’s path into a day university or elsewhere. Culturally, some subjects are regarded as higher status, for example medicine and engineering. The qualifications obtained by day students are seen as higher status than those of distance students, to the extent that qualifications obtained by distance study are not recognised by some employers. Distance students are often studying in addition to paid work and many have caring responsibilities (Technopolis 2019, *ibid.*).

1.3 Open Educational Resources

The emphasis on use of open educational resources (OERs) and associated open educational practices for teaching and learning in Myanmar higher education was one of the most important aspects of TIDE. Open educational practices are defined as “the next phase in OER development, which will see a shift from a focus on resources to a focus on OEP being a combination of open resources use and open learning architectures to transform learning” (Camilleri and Ehlers, 2011, p6).

The Cape Town Open Education Declaration (2007), one of the founding documents on open education, suggests a broad vision which goes well beyond the proliferation of openly licensed educational content:

“Open education is not limited to just open educational resources. It also draws upon open technologies that facilitate collaborative, flexible learning and the open sharing of teaching practices that empower educators to benefit from the best ideas of their colleagues. It may also grow to include new approaches to assessment, accreditation and collaborative learning.”

This means that by using OERs and adapting open educational practices, teachers can be involved in innovative teaching and learning processes. By designing learning materials that can be shared with

others, teachers can see different learning designs and approaches and start using these innovative approaches in their own teaching. In other words, engaging in open educational practices can become a catalyst for pedagogical innovation in higher education (Paskevicius and Irvine, 2019).

1.4 Evaluation aims and questions

The evaluation addressed the following three overarching questions that can be linked to the theory of change. These are addressed in the discussion section of this report:

1. What changes have occurred as a result of TIDE interventions?
2. What were the most influential factors contributing towards those changes?
3. What lessons have we learned from TIDE interventions, and how do we apply them?

The overarching questions were also explored in relation to each of the five TIDE themes, which are considered in the section of this report on impact:

TIDE Theme 1: Changes in the knowledge, skills and practices of staff

TIDE Theme 2: Changes in the knowledge, skills and practices of students

TIDE Theme 3: Changes in the structures and engagement of stakeholders

TIDE Theme 4: Changes in the structures and processes of open and distance education

TIDE Theme 5: Changes in the use of technologies for teaching and learning

The questions paid due consideration to the OECD-DAC criteria which have been used to structure the findings in this report:

Relevance: Is the intervention doing the right things?

Coherence: How well does the intervention fit?

Effectiveness: Is the intervention achieving its objectives?

Efficiency: How well are resources being used?

Impact: What difference does the intervention make?

Sustainability: Will the benefits last?

2. Evaluation approach and methodology

2.1 Process evaluation

A formative evaluation of TIDE activities was intended to be carried out mid-term to examine the processes set up to achieve the project outcomes. Due to Covid-19, this formative evaluation was delayed until Autumn 2020 and the formative evaluation report was produced in January 2021, shortly before the military coup, so none of the recommendations could be implemented as planned. This summative evaluation builds upon the formative stage.

Evaluating and exploring pathways from outputs to outcomes are a key area for our evaluation. There is a complex relationship between outputs (direct result of project activity) and outcomes (real-world changes due to project), with potentially unexpected or unintended consequences, multiple interwoven influences and environmental factors. The learning questions produced to guide the project and the indicators for the outputs and outcomes were used to help us frame our inquiry.

The evaluation took a holistic view of TIDE, to identify the key learning questions and the required data collection processes. We also considered any areas or details not currently covered by TIDE data collection. The effectiveness of operational aspects to deliver activities and outputs is outside the scope of our enquiry, although findings are presented in relation to the OECD-DAC criteria where there is concurrence.

This summative stage combines the evaluation of the outcomes and processes of TIDE. This approach is the result of recognition that, for complex interventions, “in order for evaluations to inform policy and practice, emphasis was needed not only on whether interventions worked, but on how they were implemented, their causal mechanisms and how effects differed from one context to another” (Moore et al., 2014, p. 6).

Thorough evaluations of interventions allow policymakers, researchers and practitioners to identify effective ways of achieving outcomes and also understand how to improve those outcomes that are not attained completely. In addition, by implementing a process evaluation approach a detailed understanding of the following areas is possible to inform policy and practice:

- Implementation: the structures, resources and processes through which delivery is achieved, and the quantity and quality of what is delivered;
- Mechanisms of impact: how intervention activities, and participants’ interactions with them, trigger change;
- Context: how external factors influence the delivery and functioning of interventions. Process evaluations may be conducted within feasibility testing phases, alongside evaluations of effectiveness, or alongside post-evaluation scale-up (Moore et.al, 2014, p.10).

With the process evaluation approach, it is possible to understand what information is needed to implement the intervention in another context and how to achieve positive outcomes. If the intervention is not successful, the evaluation also needs to clarify whether it is the intervention itself or the poor implementation causing this result. Process evaluation commonly contributes to a larger evaluation comprising outcomes evaluation and/or cost-effectiveness and may help identify implementation problems.

2.2 Data collection

Originally, the data collection plan for the summative phase included a repeat survey for students, a repeat of the survey for university teaching and support staff in Myanmar, interviews with stakeholders and staff (online or via email) and a survey of the TIDE project team.

Due to political events in country in early February 2021, the evaluation plan was revised to comply with FCDO requirements, which meant that it was not possible to contact Myanmar staff or students in-country for interviews or surveys. Most of the originally planned data collection was simply not possible. The data collection was reconfigured to draw upon a set of existing data sources and some new data from the UK project team.

We have analysed the existing formative staff interview transcripts further with respect to the summative evaluation questions. In addition, we translated and analysed student survey open-ended comments to understand the opinions and perceptions of students regarding the state of higher education in the country. We also carried out further interviews with UK project team members and three external experts who are knowledgeable about Myanmar higher education and international development projects. TIDE project team members in the UK were sent a survey to gather their perspectives on the effectiveness, impact and sustainability of TIDE project and reflections on their experience.

2.2.1 Semi-structured interviews

Ten semi-structured interviews were carried out, seven with TIDE staff, three with experts from outside the team. Where colleagues had been previously interviewed for the formative evaluation,

the interview questions were customised for each participant to maximise the capture of their specific perspective, considering non-linear interrelationships and intangible or unexpected aspects.

The interview transcripts were produced using artificial intelligence voice-recognition software. Where the meaning was unclear to the evaluator, the transcript was checked line by line against the audio recording. Transcripts were coded using the OECD-DAC criteria as a framework. In addition, coding identified emergent themes that were mentioned by multiple participants or that gave significant insights into the project.

2.2.2 Survey of TIDE staff

All TIDE staff (including consultants) who had worked on the project at any time were invited to participate in an online survey that gathered their perspectives on the impact and sustainability of the various strands of activity in TIDE, their experience of working on TIDE and their reflections of teaching at the residential schools or online, if their work included that activity. The survey was delivered via SurveyMonkey and the questions are included as Appendix 1 to this report.

2.2.3 Student survey

For the formative evaluation phase an online survey for higher education students was designed with the aim of gathering information from students regarding their learning experience and whether any impact of TIDE activities can be observed in students. The survey focused on learning and teaching experiences, such as those that may lead to collaboration or critical thinking. Attitudes towards online and distance learning were also explored. The survey was conducted in Myanmar language, distributed via a generic link on Facebook pages associated with Myanmar universities. The responses are anonymous with no collection of IP data. There were 1137 valid responses to the survey. Brief initial findings from the survey were presented in the formative evaluation phase, but no further analysis was carried out at that time due to scheduling constraints.

For this summative phase, a sample of the longest free text responses from 120 students was translated into English using online translation software, then checked by a mother tongue Myanmar language speaker. The free text responses were analysed thematically by focusing on each question separately. The aim was to gather data about students' learning experiences, and their thoughts regarding the teaching practices. Analysis of these open-ended comments is presented below.

3. Findings: surveys

3.1 Student survey

The survey included questions on students' ideas and thoughts regarding:

- the important areas/issues in distance education.
- most significant contribution to their learning in the current course
- aspects making their learning challenging in the course, and
- what change they would ask in their course, and the way it is taught, to improve it.

When students were asked what was important for them in distance education, their answers indicated that the most important thing for many of the participants who answered this question was being able to work and study at the same time. More than half of respondents mentioned in their responses that distance learners are able to start working alongside their studying and gain work experience earlier than the students attending day universities (47 out of 82 students who answered the question). They were also aware that by studying at a distance they are no longer a

burden on their parents financially and can even support them. Another point mentioned by a number of respondents was the possibility of studying additional areas due to flexibility in the distance education programmes and this was in addition to the answers by respondents mentioning that distance education saves time and money

Teachers and the quality of teaching were other areas mentioned as a response to the 'important areas in distance education', however respondents did not elaborate on in what ways these points were important. Teachers and teaching related issues were one of the areas most commonly mentioned as an answer to most of the questions asked in the survey, e.g. as an important factor, as the most contributing factor to their learning, etc.

The use of technology in distance education was mentioned by a smaller proportion of respondents (10 students) in the context of its importance and as a way of providing interaction in the learning environment. The other areas mentioned were interaction with other students and teachers and the possibility of social relationships in distance education. Students also commented that the quality of distance education needs to be improved and people need to be informed about the importance and value of distance education.

Students' comments regarding the aspects that most significantly contributed to their learning emphasised teachers and interactions with teachers as the most significant contributor. 87 students provided an answer for this open-ended question. About one fifth of students (N=16) mentioned interaction with teachers as the most significant factor and a similar number of students mentioned teachers and teaching as the most significant factor for them (N=15). This was followed by the 'practical training' (mentioned by 11 students). We do not have detailed information regarding the nature of this practical training but from students' comments it is clear that students highly value this as they find the practical training aspect of their course directly related to skills they will need in real life. Other areas mentioned by students were the use of technology (mentioned by 8 students) and also being able to earn money while studying (mentioned by 4 students).

The question regarding the challenges they face in their course was answered by 78 students and more than half of students mentioned aspects related to teaching and teaching support and the curriculum. For example, the rote-learning, lack of interaction and support, the lack of relevance of the curriculum to real life requirements of a job and the difficulty of studying at masters and higher levels. The next area mentioned by students (N=14) was the assessment, exams and lack of adequate time for exam reparation. Internet access related difficulties were mentioned by 11 students and the other areas were not having adequate English to follow lessons, and difficulties related to studying and working at the same time.

When asked about in what ways they would change the course they are studying, many students had a comment about the improvements they would like (N=74). About half the students who answered this question wanted the teaching approach or curriculum changed but most did not elaborate what change they would like. Next it was the scheduling of the course and the need for more and flexible study time (mentioned by 18 students). Students seemed to need more flexibility and more time when studying. Interestingly requests for more practical, real life related authentic teaching and learning was the next most commented area (mentioned by 15 students). Other comments were related to more non-rote learning and facilitation of student interaction in courses as desirable changes. Language and study skills, access to technology and how to learn using technology was among the other areas mentioned by the students.

These comments from students indicate that students are aware of the need to improve education at university level in the areas of curriculum, teaching pedagogy, using technology for learning and teaching and providing support for learners. As some of those students now have access to examples of teaching materials from the internet they can see the possibilities and a wide variety of teaching resources and, consequently, are able to evaluate the learning materials they are provided with more critically.

3.2 TIDE staff survey

The staff survey explored TIDE staff experiences of teaching at residential school and working within the wider programme.

3.2.1 Experience of working on TIDE

The TIDE staff survey elicited responses about the experience of working on the TIDE, via statements with 5-point Likert scales. Figure 2 below shows the results. The statements are included in the figure. There was generally strong agreement that individuals had the relevant support of colleagues to carry out their role (14 strongly agreed, 10 agreed, out of 24 responses). Responses to the statements about effectiveness of project management and efficient use of staff time were in less strong agreement, with some neutral and disagree responses. Regarding effectiveness of management, 22 agreed or strongly agreed, 1 neutral, 1 disagreed out of 24 responses. Regarding effective use of UK staff, 19 agreed or strongly agreed, 3 neutral, 2 disagreed, out of 24 responses. Communication was predominantly agreed rather than strongly agreed to be effective (6 strongly agreed, 15 agreed, 2 neutral, 1 strongly disagreed). This was the only question where anyone strongly disagreed, although that was only one response out of 24. Regarding whether involvement in TIDE contributed to an enhancement of their other work, the majority of respondents agreed or strongly agreed (11 strongly agreed, 10 agreed, 1 neutral, 2 disagreed)

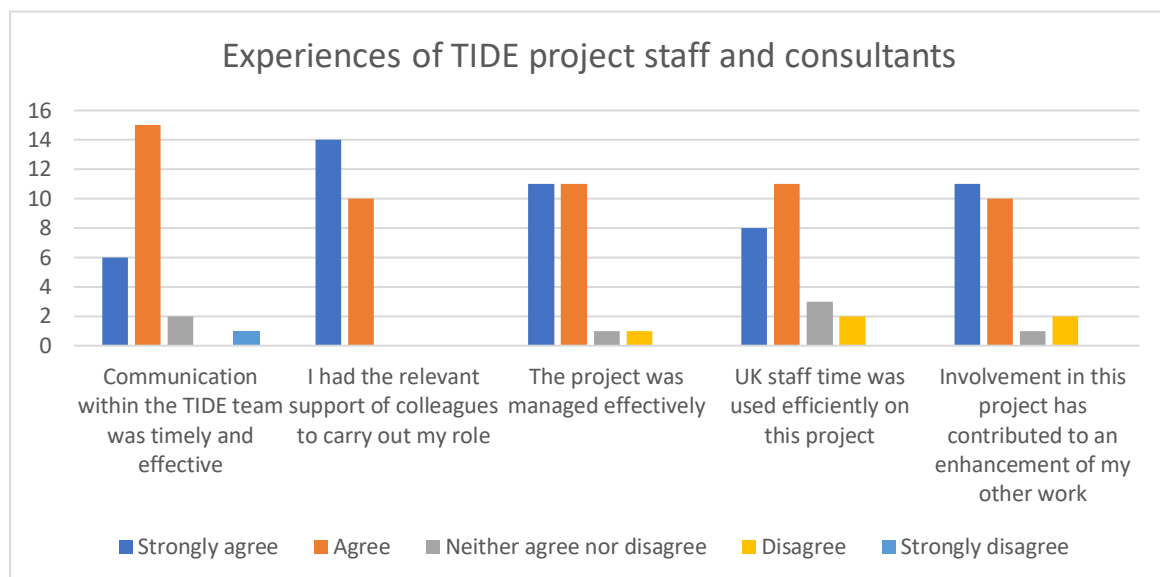


Figure 2. Reported experiences of TIDE staff and consultants N=24

3.2.1 Experience of teaching at residential school

The TIDE staff and consultants who were involved in teaching (or development) activities with Myanmar staff at residential school, in workshops or online were asked to reflect on their teaching experience. We received responses from contributors about their subject areas in addition to learning and teaching related activities.

All the respondents who did teaching (or development) activities thought that they were very well or well-prepared for teaching the activities. Some respondents were also authors of the teaching materials and also subject specialists. Only one respondent mentioned that he/she was not well prepared because of the breadth of interest from participants, English level proficiency of participants and having a translator with no subject knowledge. However, the issues of level of English proficiency of participants, need for translators and the difficulty of gauging the relevance of materials to participants were also mentioned by four other respondents. The presence of support in the country was also mentioned as exemplary, by one of the respondents who was required to teach at short notice.

The challenges mentioned were mainly related to the participants' variable levels of English (11 out of 17 respondents), preventing higher levels of interaction and after the introduction of translators, getting used to working with a translator when teaching. A few of the respondents also mentioned wide range of backgrounds of participants and also cultural differences mainly in learning and teaching approaches.

The majority of respondents mentioned that working with Myanmar colleagues was a very rewarding process and found them enthusiastic and very interested. It was possible to see them implementing skills learnt in previous residential schools and providing honest feedback after getting used to this new way of working. Some respondents specifically mentioned hands-on activities as very engaging. In addition, it was personally rewarding for respondents themselves, to be able to work in such a positive environment where their contributions were valued.

The question of how well the participants were able to learn what was being presented was also asked and the responses indicated that this was not an easy question to answer. Although the majority of respondents answered that the participants learned what they were trying to teach them 'very well' or reasonably well' there was mention of language issues again and the variable background of participants making the content challenging for some of the participants.

Respondents commented that how well Myanmar participants will be able to practice what they have learnt is dependent upon many factors. One participant mentioned that "They will be able to make use of resources and tools and if the institutions they are working are permissive, they can apply these new skills and approaches in their professional practice but the activities were cut short and not completed as planned". Another respondent commented that "...the knowledge gained related to learning design, use of open licensed content, and other material will be applied by many, and the cascading to colleagues will also widen the knowledge and skill base".

In terms of improvement to the activities, the respondents mentioned that more time and more emphasis on practical activities would be beneficial, as well as local language support in the shape of translated materials and maybe opportunities to discuss issues in local language where appropriate. The importance of knowing about the participants' background was also mentioned.

The overall reflections of respondents focused on the uniqueness of the experience for themselves and their own learning resulting from working with welcoming, keen and hard-working Myanmar colleagues.

In summary, the following key points were identified in the responses to survey questions.

Challenges:

- hard to adapt teaching content for groups with a wide range of backgrounds and abilities, lack of knowledge about participants background and scientific knowledge
- English language capabilities of participants, working through an interpreter

Rewarding moments for a teacher:

- enthusiasm and engagement of participants
- group cohesion following a successful group exercise, hands on group activities
- developing relationships of trust over several residential schools, seeing how participants implemented what they had learned

The learning of Myanmar participants:

- difficult to assess due to language barrier and lack of conceptual understanding of open and distance teaching,
- some Myanmar staff participants were able to reflect and share their teaching practices during the session

4. Findings: OECD-DAC criteria

This section summarises the main points arising from coding of the transcripts of the semi-structured interviews from the summative evaluation interviews. It synthesises the main points, rather than drawing upon direct quotation, due to the limits of anonymity in reporting from small number of interviews with colleagues. It does not attempt to be comprehensive in its coverage, especially as some of these topics are well documented elsewhere within TIDE. Rather, it highlights key points arising from reflections of TIDE staff and others. Where relevant, some findings from the formative evaluation are reproduced here, including interviews with TIDE staff and the survey of Myanmar university staff. Some information from TIDE MEL reports has been included here to provide a fuller description.

4.1 Relevance

TIDE was recognised as highly relevant at the national level by policy stakeholders including the former Union Minister for Education. They reported that there is a huge need for capacity development and reform of higher and distance education in Myanmar as well as policy and strategy development at national level.

At the institutional level, TIDE was perceived as supporting changes that senior management wanted to implement. The change management strand of TIDE was reconfigured in response to the new 'One Campus Two Systems' approach initiated by the Ministry of Education during the early stages of TIDE. Change management support and mentoring thus contributed to institutional capacity development.

At the individual university staff level, the main TIDE activities of residential schools, face to face seminars, online workshops, mentoring and shared teaching materials appeared to be generally relevant. Experiences at the first residential school, reported in the formative evaluation phase,

suggest that although a needs analysis had been carried out, there were some differences between the expectations of the UK staff running the workshops and the experience that Myanmar staff brought to the event. In particular, interviewees⁵ highlighted challenges with understanding English for academic purposes, the lack of practice in critical thinking of the Myanmar academic staff and the presence of Myanmar staff who did not seem best placed to benefit from the events due to their role or experience (and consequently did not participate fully). The latter appears to have been due to the process of asking senior university staff to nominate colleagues to attend the events. It was commented that this process was as per instructions from the Ministry of Education and the Department of Higher Education

TIDE staff adapted the workshop sessions and design of activities to take into account these unexpected challenges. These adaptations included live translation of verbal presentations, bilingual PowerPoint slides and local language versions of handouts. UK staff adapted the pace and content of their workshops to meet the needs of Myanmar staff, including a more step by step approach, demonstrating how a UK academic might encourage critical thinking in students through assessment or other activities.

4.2 Coherence

Political changes in country from 2015 onwards meant the time was right for an intervention to reform higher and distance education. The need for reform was widely recognised and local policy actors were seeking ways to move forward. TIDE fitted with the changing context of education in Myanmar and was seen by the former Union Minister for Education as supporting national strategic objectives.

TIDE built upon pre-existing relationships of trust, in particular with staff from Manchester University, due to previous successful work in country on a highly successful hydrology and hydropower research project. Other key TIDE staff were already working in country on policy documents and had established relationships with Ministerial and other key stakeholders within the HE sector. The high reputation of UK University partners was another important factor. All three universities have an international reputation for quality education. Oxford University was held in high regard in country as the alma mater of the State Counsellor for Myanmar.

Consultants working on TIDE were also working on other Myanmar projects, thus increasing the influence of TIDE. TIDE was timely in occurring whilst National Education Strategic Plan Two (NESP II) was being developed, so TIDE could feed into the distance education sections of the draft. IPE staff were influencing other sections, and a core TIDE team member was also working on another section. So, there were direct and indirect influences on NESP II.

Coherence between TIDE and other international interventions was difficult to gauge based upon limited information from two interviews. It appears that TIDE was unusual in focusing upon distance education. The Open University is also a partner in the Towards Results In Education and English (TREE) component of the Myanmar-UK Partnership for Education (MUPE)⁶, working with teacher trainers to improve the English and pedagogic skills of newly-qualified teachers at initial teacher

⁵ Note that although the person responding to questions would usually be referred to as an interview participant, for the sake of this report the term 'interviewee' is used to distinguish between colleagues interviewed and Myanmar participants in TIDE activities.

⁶ Funded by UK-AID through the Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office (FCDO) and delivered by the British Council in partnership with The Open University. Montrose and Voluntary Service Overseas. <https://www.britishcouncil.org.mm/TREE-project>

training colleges in Myanmar. Other examples of education interventions included Japanese sponsored scholarship schemes, an Australian donor intervention to improve quality processes and various interventions to improve education for children.

Coherence may also be considered at an organisational level, between TIDE processes and the university culture in Myanmar, particularly management structures. An interviewee commented that the level of support from university senior staff varied between institutions. Apparently, some Rectors required instructions from the Ministry before taking any initiative. Another interviewee reflected that in his/her experience, Myanmar staff generally required permission from superiors before commencing any innovative work. He/she perceived the management system to be strongly hierarchical and vertical, with a practice of passing decisions up the chain, especially for women.

4.3 Efficiency

The financial aspects of TIDE are outside the scope of this report and value for money has been documented in TIDE MEL reports (Obi, 2019; Servis and Obi 2020). The following comments are key points from interviews and thus cover a limited perspective.

It was commented that, in the early stages of TIDE, teams from UK partner universities might have been more productive if they had been able to bring in more academic expertise. Financial and contractual structures limited this.

The efficiency of some residential schools may have been reduced due to unavailability of some facilities, although these are side factors. (Note that Myanmar University partners provided the rooms, some equipment, and other facilities for the residential schools as contributions in kind. In the UK, Open University residential schools usually take place in familiar locations with the support of experienced technical staff both at the OU and the host university).

TIDE staff made the following comments for clarification. Myanmar university staff time was a significant in-kind contribution to TIDE. In regard to their training, Myanmar university staff were carrying out TIDE work on an unpaid basis in addition to their usual duties. For attendance at training activities such as residential schools all expenses were paid – transport, accommodation, and subsistence. Later due to Covid-19, TIDE also paid for participants' data usage expenses as they were spending more time at home and could no longer rely on their institutions free WIFI. Focal lead staff who helped with the reporting and promoting of TIDE work were not paid directly by TIDE.

4.4 Effectiveness

The effectiveness of TIDE in achieving its objectives has been documented in TIDE MEL reports (Obi, 2019; Servis and Obi 2020). The following comments are key points from interviews and thus cover a limited perspective.

At a national level, TIDE was described as highly effective in influencing policy and strategy. Multiple interviewees highlighted strong political connections as crucial to this, facilitated by IPE as an effective Myanmar partner. It was commented that the CEO of IPE was key to keeping TIDE in the minds of policymakers. The support of the (former) Union Minister for Education and his attendance at residential schools were considered important in establishing TIDE as a high-status activity. One interviewee commented that TIDE integrated UK and Myanmar partners in a very deep way. Another interviewee offered an alternative perspective, suggesting that policy development might have been more effective if there had been a constant TIDE presence at an operational level within the Ministry, to work on budget allocation and roadmaps to implementation. It was suggested that having a dedicated TIDE contact based within the Ministry might have been more effective than

discussions with consultants who were not based in-country, even if those consultants had good ministerial links, because there was a need for continuity in a rapidly-changing context.

TIDE staff commented that the policy strand was on track and in many ways exceeded expectations with the engagement with NESP II, One Campus Two Systems, and Myanmar Digital Education Platform. For the Myanmar National Open University, it was commented that there was slower progress because Myanmar senior leaders wanted to discuss the proposal amongst themselves and own it, before re-engaging with TIDE for further support.

Some unexpected challenges have had positive effects, because TIDE staff were able to adapt activities to the circumstances. Staff rotation and One Campus Two Systems initiative have meant that far more universities and staff are aware of TIDE than first envisaged. It was commented that the Covid-19 pandemic motivated organisations to move online and some TIDE initiatives, e.g. Gateway courses, gave TIDE participants some practical experience of online learning.

4.4.1 Covid-19 pandemic and effectiveness

The Covid-19 pandemic meant that TIDE could not continue to hold face to face seminars or residential schools. Initially, equivalent activities were planned to be held as online tutorials using Zoom involving UK and Myanmar based tutors, making it more difficult to build rapport. Before this mode could be rolled out, the Central Covid-19 Prevention, Control and Management Committee on 31st August 2020 required the temporary suspension of training and workshops supported by the Ministry of Education from 1 September 2020. Further clarification confirmed this included online events as staff tended to gather around for these. So online delivery had to be reconfigured as self study or peer-mentored, reducing effectiveness to some extent, although increasing the Myanmar staff experience of peer support. TIDE staff commented that the highest impact was for Myanmar staff in the 2018 cohort who completed the programme as planned. Towards the end of its two-year period, the planned face-to-face activities for the 2019 and 2020 cohorts pivoted to online delivery due to the Covid-19 pandemic. TIDE staff commented that the adapted online Professional Development Programme (PDP) developed as a result for both 2019 and 2020 cohorts was probably more effective in theory due to (a) having the full programme set out (b) being able to work at one's own pace and around existing workload (c) taking on board learning from 2018 cohort.

For the policy strand, the lack of face-to-face contact in country from March 2020 hindered the discussions and development of plans and pilot activities, which were more difficult to conduct via video conference. Also, the Chair of the steering group for the Myanmar National Open University plans was a senior medic heavily involved in Covid-19 response, so his lack of availability led to delays.

The response of TIDE to the Covid-19 pandemic appeared to be one of continual adaptation to changing circumstances. This pandemic was unprecedented in modern times and government regulations in Myanmar and the UK were changing month by month. Global pandemic was not on the risk register. Some interviewees conjectured that, in retrospect, an alternative response to Covid-19, that may possibly have been more effective, might have been to have one re-set, perhaps focusing upon fewer universities at a smaller scale with more depth.

4.5 Impact

This section describes the situation and trajectory before the coup in early February 2021. The situation from then onwards is discussed under sustainability. The comments made in interviews about impacts due to TIDE are summarised below under the five core TIDE themes. Where relevant, information from TIDE MEL reports has been included.

Although TIDE has been built around the three output strands, staff noted that the situation is far more complex, with the different activities fitting together like a jigsaw. Different aspects influence each other, so it is difficult to allocate a specific impact to a particular strand alone. This is a reflection of the systemic nature of the changes involved in TIDE.

There was an unexpected impact on some UK academics in EfESD, who realised that ideas and approaches that they had taken for granted in the UK were unfamiliar to Myanmar colleagues. This led them to reflect upon their own teaching material and how to apply their research in a new context.

4.5.1 TIDE Theme 1: Changes in the knowledge, skills and practices of staff

As reported by Servis and Obi (2020, p13), enhancement of staff capacities was delivered through three main strands: the professional development programme, academic staff trainer training and cascade training.

- By September 2020, a cumulative total of 346 academic and support staff from Myanmar universities had received training from TIDE through the professional development programme (259 female, 88 male). An additional 121 participants (86 female, 35 male) were recruited for the 2020 cohort.
- “The residential school that was due in May 2020 planned to incorporate co-tutors from the 2018 cohort who had completed their TIDE training activities and would be able to deliver the training activities in support of the UK subject leads. The pivot to the online model of delivering led to a greater role for the co-tutors, leading sessions in Myanmar and facilitating sessions with the second pivot. A recruitment for co-tutors was successfully carried out with 38 being appointed, greater than the required number.”
- “The impact of TIDE is being increased through cascade training being delivered by those participants who deliver training in their own universities based on their experiences. When asked about cascade trainings in a series of focus groups, conducted in early September 2020, 18 out of 19 HEIs reported that they had delivered cascade training activities to staff who have not been able to attend residential schools, with the numbers receiving the training across the members ranging from 20 to over 100.”

The following comments are from the perspective of interviewees who drew upon their experience of the equivalent UK roles to develop the capacity of Myanmar academic, technical and support staff.

Several interviewees described how the residential schools motivated university staff and exposed them to good practice for 21st century education, through working alongside UK staff. UK academic staff explained the underlying pedagogy and thinking behind their lectures, working with Myanmar staff as peers. In this way, Myanmar staff experienced the working practices of UK academics to some extent. Critical thinking skills were developed through pragmatic activities about teaching and assessment of specific topics within the subject. Some EfESD specialists reported that, at first, Myanmar academics struggled to produce examples suitable for the assessment of critical thinking. It appeared that a practice of learning as knowledge transfer was assumed as the norm. As a result of TIDE, teaching staff were moving towards a learner-centred approach with more interactive classes, group work and presentations.

TIDE raised awareness of the possibilities of technology for education and improved digital literacy skills for university staff in a range of roles. For ICT, Library and support staff, very positive changes were reported in feedback from residential schools, in terms of knowledge about effective distance

education, technical skills development and pedagogy. This gave participants increased confidence to try new approaches to teaching and learning.

One development was that TIDE appeared to help some participants move into areas they were interested in. Apparently, Myanmar staff wanted to become peer academic mentors, indicating a willingness to take on new roles. The change management strand supported individual staff to take on additional activities within their institutions. Some of the residential school participants from the first cohort (2108) have been promoted to higher-status positions within universities. It is not clear whether this was a direct result of TIDE, or whether staff who showed potential were more likely to be chosen to participate in TIDE. One interviewee commented that it was difficult to show the qualitative aspect of the TIDE outcomes. Another interviewee, familiar with local culture, suggested that Myanmar citizens may avoid saying 'we do not understand' out of politeness.

In the Myanmar staff survey from the formative evaluation, when asked about the changes that occurred in their work as a result of attending TIDE activities, participants indicated changes in many areas. In particular, most reported that the following areas changed to some extent:

- how they think about their work in education (8 out of 10 responses)
- the way they produce new educational content (8 out of 9 responses)
- how they work with their colleagues (6 out of 10 responses)

Larger changes were reported in the ways Myanmar staff expected students to work with each other (4 changed to a great extent, 3 changed to some extent, out of 8 responses). Lesser changes were reported in how the staff work with their students (2 changed to a great extent, 4 changed to some extent, 3 changed a little, out of 9 responses).

In the open-ended Myanmar staff survey comments, the participants mentioned that they were able to change their teaching and learning approaches and share what they have experienced in TIDE with their colleagues. One participant also mentioned that they were carrying out "collaborative work group discussion and interactive teaching and learning" with their students. Another mentioned that their "teaching methods included discussion, question and answer, quiz, assignment". The participants felt that they were now familiar with student-centred approaches, open educational resources (OER) and online learning tools. The participants stated that the most effective aspects of TIDE contributing to changes were assessment and teaching related components, online courses and OERs, and communication activities. One participant also mentioned environmental impact related content. Staff faced difficulties in finding tools and time to carry out teaching and learning activities originating from TIDE. They needed more people working together with them in their institution.

When asked about their use of OERs, almost all the Myanmar staff survey participants mentioned that they used an existing one (7 out of 8 responses). Half of the participants adapted, helped to produce or designed a new OER and the rest were planning to in the future. Their reasons for using OER were to support their teaching, blended and online learning activities and getting familiar with innovative teaching learning approaches. Only one participant mentioned that they were using OERs because they were free. Two participants also mentioned that they were using their newly acquired skills in collaborative learning, online interaction and knowledge of new tools such as Zoom with their students and colleagues.

In this survey, Myanmar staff were asked what additional areas would be good to include in TIDE programs. They identified environmental science courses, English courses, IT skills and teacher professional development activities.

For information, the online courses developed by UK partners for Myanmar staff are described briefly below.

The following Gateway courses for staff were developed by TIDE as a rapid response to COVID, helping staff to transition to online learning⁷:

- Get started with online learning
- How to be an online facilitator
- Digital literacy: Succeeding in a digital world
- Take your Teaching online

TIDE has developed the online Master Trainer Programme for Myanmar staff. This will continue beyond the initial funding period for TIDE, to develop the skills and knowledge in a cadre of staff who may then support their colleagues. One potential future impact is to move from training to influencing the behaviour of staff. There are three Master Trainer Programmes for Myanmar university staff. Approximately 100 staff have participated to date:

- Functioning and Maintenance of Natural Ecosystems (Manchester University course presented on Blackboard until Coup intervened, course materials to be available on OpenLearn Create)
- Post Graduate Qualification in Online and Distance Education (H880 Open University course adapted for FutureLearn with licence funded for 4 years from September 2021)
- Copyright and Open Licensing in Myanmar (Creative Commons course presented on OpenLearn Create, Open University UK)

In addition to these courses, TIDE staff have developed resources that will be available online for Myanmar staff beyond the funding period:

- change management masterclass
- understanding and using creative commons licences and OERs
- resources to increase staff capacity in teaching EfESD subjects

4.5.2 TIDE Theme 2: Changes in the knowledge, skills and practices of students

This is a longer-term goal and there is no comparison data available for this summative evaluation due to the early termination of TIDE. The development of academic and support staff enabled them to introduce innovative practices in their work that would directly benefit students, where institutional structures allowed. It is generally difficult to observe the effect of professional development of teachers on students and in the short term it is not possible. One interviewee commented that it takes four years for a Myanmar student to gain a degree, so the impact of TIDE upon graduation might not be apparent within the shorter funded period of TIDE.

TIDE has raised awareness of the possibilities of online study to open up education to a wider audience. In particular, to meet the needs of students who are currently unable to access higher education due to the matriculation exam system.

For information, the online courses developed for Myanmar students are described briefly below.

⁷ www.TIDEstaff.org

The following online Gateway courses developed by the Open University provide new learning opportunities for students in Myanmar language, with a Certificate of Participation as a motivation⁸:

- Get started with online learning
- Am I ready to study in English?
- Am I ready to be a distance learner?
- Digital skills, digital learning

In addition, staff from various Myanmar universities have produced OERs for students, as reported in Servis and Obi (2020, p15):

- Despite challenges including Covid-19 restrictions, all 11 teams from the 2018 cohort have produced an OER.
- TIDE participants have produced their own self-directed OER. “An example of this is the development of an OER from Dagon University on Potable Water Treatment, which was developed by TIDE participant academics from the Botany and Industrial Chemistry departments with support from TIDE trained ICT Support staff, showing a degree of confidence in applying the TIDE training” (Servis and Obi, 2020, p15).

4.5.3 TIDE Theme 3: Changes in the structures and engagement of stakeholders

These summary comments are from the perspective of interviewees who were all external to the stakeholder groups described here.

For government policymakers, TIDE gave support and confidence to consider new approaches and provided examples of good practice. TIDE held three in country scoping workshops and two digital strategy workshops that enabled sharing of examples of good practice, and the development of new ideas related to systems, structures and policies. TIDE contributed to the inclusion of a commitment towards a Myanmar National Open University in the draft NESP II.

University senior management apparently saw TIDE as a solution to existing needs. TIDE change management supported the implementation of One Campus Two Systems initiative. TIDE developed approaches to professional development that could be replicated across the Arts and Science Universities.

The following extracts from TIDE MEL reports provide further context.

Employers were consulted about the skills required of graduates, as reported by Servis and Obi (2020) “TIDE activities in this area have consisted of seeking employer feedback on OER courses and incorporating this into the learning cycle. There has been evidence of employer engagement in the development of resources, with a team from Dawei university, led by two TIDE participants working with the local tourism authority to develop a short course on tourism in February/March 2020 and engaging with local employers as part of the course.”

TIDE developed a new competence framework for graduates, as reported by Servis and Obi (2020) “TIDE has also been working to develop the Environmental Impact Assessment Competency Framework/code of conduct within Myanmar and as reported in our mid-year review, a Memorandum of Understanding was signed with the Myanmar Environment Assessment Association

⁸ www.TIDEstudent.org

(MEAA), who were key partners in producing version 1 of this document. This was alongside the Graduate Competency Framework, version 2 of which was produced in December 2019.”

4.5.4 TIDE Theme 4: Changes in the structures and processes of open and distance education

TIDE has introduced the concept and practical application of online open educational resources (OERs) to university staff. Staff capacity in the use, adaptation and authoring of open educational resources has been developed considerably, starting from a very low baseline. Creative Commons licensing has been introduced as both a conceptual and functional approach to generating teaching content.

The following extracts from TIDE MEL reports provide further context. Servis and Obi (2020, p14-15):

- There has been progress in Open Educational Resource development despite the challenges encountered in the early stages of TIDE. All 11 teams from the 2018 cohort have produced an OER. All 24 teams in the 2019 cohort have completed phase one of the activities. Two teams have completed phase two.
- Three Myanmar universities have produced their own self-directed educational resources.

The TIDE change management programme was adapted in response to various challenges. The original intention was to develop and support dedicated teams within key universities for this programme. Instead, Myanmar staff participating in TIDE were redistributed across many universities, often then working alone with no immediate TIDE colleagues in the same organisation. One year after TIDE started, a dedicated change manager with UK business experience was recruited to lead this work and the change management strand was redesigned to cope with the transfers. There were several face to face change management workshops in country (once per quarter). When Covid-19 arrived, this strand was redesigned again, pivoting to online delivery with live online webinars via Zoom and other sessions via a dedicated Facebook Group.

There was early success in the change management strand at residential schools and workshops. In between residential schools, there was extensive work to mentor Myanmar academics one-to-one with expert advice. Some Myanmar staff with better English language skills developed into rising stars. This created pockets of excellence, although overall the programme struggled to meet its potential. Substantial barriers include the lack of face-to-face contact to discuss sensitive issues and motivate staff, insufficient UK and Myanmar staff time and lack of individual staff agency within organisations. The goals set by TIDE were very ambitious for a four-year programme. It may have been possible to make some clear progress with a focus on a few institutions, as originally planned, but in the current situation, a typical timescale for embedding organisational change would be several years or even decades for a major cultural shift. Hence this activity was refocused as more realistic case study outputs.

Change management seems to be an especially challenging activity for the participants because it implies a major shift in organisational culture from rigid centrally controlled curriculum to more practitioner-driven development. TIDE aimed to empower individuals and groups of staff to take the initiative and write curriculum. A major barrier identified was that staff felt they needed permission to change anything. An interviewee commented that they perceived that this area was substantially hindered due to Covid-19, because face-to-face discussion is particularly important when addressing sensitive and complex issues around staffing structures and norms.

4.5.5 TIDE Theme 5: Changes in the use of technologies for teaching and learning

TIDE has developed the capacity of ICT, Library and support staff, particularly librarians, to facilitate and encourage online learning. Online learning has been introduced for academic and support staff in universities and staff who are engaged in change management.

As reported by Servis and Obi (2020), “A key step in progress towards digital capacity building is the adoption of Microsoft 365 by HEIs. This is supported by the Ministry of Education and a basic package is provided for free. This process is ongoing, with universities stating that they are engaging with a variety of providers to access training on the software, a number of these are being conducted with technical HEIs in Myanmar, such as the University of Computer Science in Yangon. This process has been aided by TIDE staff capacity building activities, including the ICT pilot project using Office 365 to develop a student registration system at Patheingyi University in collaboration with ATG as well as training delivered in OER development workshops.”

“In order to develop strategic approaches to digital capacity in terms of digital literacy and skills for online learning, TIDE established an ICT working group, which organised two Digital Strategy workshops and implemented four ICT pilot projects involving Universities working collaboratively with private sector organisations. The workshops have led to the production of a ‘TIDE Digital Strategy’ report highlighting recommendations for Digital Strategy, which was produced in English and Myanmar language versions in September 2020. This report has been shared with key stakeholders including Rectors Committee, DHE and NEPC, and with Universities involved in TIDE and with a particular interest in ICTs and education. The report will also be a useful reference and input for the NESP II process.”

4.6 Sustainability

At the time of writing the summative evaluation report, the effects of the military coup are uncertain. The situation in March 2021, when the interviews were conducted, was that UK staff could not engage with the Ministry of Education or contact Myanmar colleagues. There was no clear institutional infrastructure in Myanmar to relate to. There was uncertainty about the ongoing position of the British Council in country. It was no longer possible to talk about TIDE openly in country.

The following documents produced during TIDE may influence policy level work in future:

- a ‘TIDE Digital Strategy’ report highlighting recommendations for Digital Strategy, which was produced in English and Myanmar language versions in September 2020. This report was shared with key stakeholders including Rectors Committee and with Universities involved in TIDE and with a particular interest in ICTs and education.
- a roadmap towards the formation of Myanmar National Open University
- TIDE contributions to NESP II
- Environmental Impact Assessment Competency Framework/code of conduct
- Graduate Competency Framework

In addition, TIDE legacy online courses and resources will be available after the termination of the programme. These are listed in the Section 4.5.1 of this report.

5. Findings: themes from interviews

5.1 Residential schools

The residential schools were at the core of the original plan for TIDE activity to increase staff capacity. TIDE staff and Myanmar participants reported that these events were beneficial in

introducing new ideas and ways of teaching and working. In practice, staff development activities for Outputs 1 and 2 were carried out in parallel at residential schools. TIDE staff reported that a central activity was connecting people with different roles and from different organisations. The sessions provided a space for Myanmar staff to share their experiences with colleagues they would not normally work with. This space to have attention and support was a huge benefit for Myanmar staff and was very well received. Due to the organisational structures and culture within universities, there was not normally an opportunity for this type of activity. In terms of impact, an important factor was the enthusiasm of participants. Myanmar staff gained confidence in applying their ideas to design new materials.

For academic staff this was a rich co-learning experience for many participants. It was an opportunity for UK academics to demonstrate their working practices and academic critical thinking, previously not widely practised within the Myanmar academic community.

When the Covid-19 pandemic forced a pivot to online learning as a substitute for residential schools, UK staff worked to reproduce as much of that learning experience as they could, although the richness of the face-to-face event was difficult to reproduce via video calls. Open University, Manchester and Oxford University colleagues produced materials based upon PowerPoint slides with audio recording of the presentation plus teaching notes. UK university partners continued to run group zoom sessions with Myanmar academics until Covid-19 restrictions were imposed. Although different from the original face-to-face activities, online webinars also contributed to the development of subject knowledge and teaching practice.

5.2 English language abilities of staff

The challenge of working in English as an additional language was considerable for the Myanmar staff at residential school. Although a needs analysis was carried out, the self-reported level of English language was insufficient for fluent discussion of the academic content.

TIDE promoted critical thinking, groupwork and more interactive teaching as good practice for academic staff, although it is difficult to express complex ideas in second or third language. EfESD requires mastery of the subtleties of different usages of vocabulary in different contexts. This can be a challenge even for those who have English as a mother tongue.

As a response to this need, interpreters were employed at residential schools, although this brought challenges such as the translation of specialist terms and the slower pace of delivery, so less material could be covered in a session. A residential school tutor commented that they would have preferred more time in advance with the translator to establish relationship of trust and rehearse more technical aspects. Mitigation was more effective at later residential schools, although language still remained a core issue.

5.3 Focus and boundaries of TIDE

Comments from outside the TIDE team indicate that the reputation and influence of TIDE extended beyond the planned boundaries of the programme. The perceived influence of TIDE also went beyond its subject boundaries into disciplines other than EfESD. Despite the reconfigurations of various activities in response to external factors, TIDE remained in scope, as reported in the Theory of Change review conducted in early 2021.

The centralised power structure in Myanmar meant that TIDE needed authorisation from a high level in order to operate effectively. When working closely with the Union Minister for Education and

government stakeholders, they tended to find other areas that needed work, because there is need everywhere, so TIDE devised different ways to achieve similar ends as the context and demands changed e.g. student engagement work was brought forward and reconfigured to help feed into MDEP debates

Several interviewees commented that TIDE was very ambitious, and that scaling back might have been beneficial. These comments indicate that although it is important to be recognized as an innovative and useful programme, it might be also detrimental to get involved in too many activities at once. Several interviewees suggested that on reflection, it might have been better to start small, get the lessons right, then build on that and scale up. In response, for clarification, TIDE staff noted that this was part of the design of Output 2 and 3 activities, that only output 1 really started at scale, and even that was built up in scale over the project duration.

TIDE set out with high ambitions that raised hopes within universities, government and other organisations for extensive improvements in online and distance education. Although this had the positive effect of generating enthusiasm for the programme, TIDE staff have been engaged in managing expectations from the start of the programme. An unexpected impact was that TIDE was talked of as a brand. It is not clear what the TIDE brand stood for, although it related to the transformation of higher education. It may have indicated a high awareness of the TIDE name, perhaps with lower understanding of the details of the aims and activities of TIDE.

5.4 Communicating the identity of TIDE

On reflection, a member of TIDE staff commented that it was good to have a simple idea at the heart of TIDE – bringing people together to work collaboratively. As well as responding to external factors, it would have been helpful to maintain this simple central idea and identity.

TIDE aimed to catalyse systemic change at the levels of individual staff, programmes of study, universities and nationally. This inevitably involved complexity and interrelationships between these various levels and activities. Maintaining a core identity for TIDE during this process was a challenge.

There is some evidence that the purpose of TIDE was not clear to some participants at the early residential schools. In particular, the diagrams used to explain TIDE were seen as quite complicated and required a high level of English to interpret. It was commented that TIDE staff didn't explain the nature of TIDE in simple enough language at the beginning. In response to this, a simplified diagram showing the TIDE story⁹ of change was produced.

5.5 Open Educational Resources and ICT capacity development

There was relatively low awareness of Creative Commons and Open Educational Resources amongst university staff before the TIDE intervention, with the exception of university library staff. A new copyright law had recently been introduced that replaced a far older legal framework, so there was a need for the staff development that TIDE provided. At the first residential school, it became apparent that Myanmar staff were not accustomed to practising critical thinking skills, appraising resources found on the web or considering learning design to produce structured teaching materials. In order to develop capacity in OER production, these foundational approaches and cognitive skills needed to be developed. TIDE staff reported that there was an open and enthusiastic sharing of experience at residential school, so they were able to adapt the sessions to the needs of participants. The face to face time was identified as very important for this process, particularly

⁹ distinct from the TIDE Theory of Change

listening to participants. Participants cascaded the training to their colleagues, for example using a slideshow in an online session.

OER development required collaboration with ICT support staff and technical experts. ICT support is well-established as a distinct role in UK universities, but not in Myanmar, where it tends to be carried out on a more ad-hoc basis by staff from various backgrounds, including librarians and computer science specialists. Five pilots were set up with public-private partnerships to develop institutional and staff capacity in specific topics, such as the use of Office 365 or the production of audio-visual materials for OERs. There was very little capacity for producing audio or video material within universities.

6. Discussion

This section responds to the three evaluation questions below, drawing upon data from the formative and summative evaluations:

1. What changes have occurred as a result of TIDE interventions?
2. What were the most influential factors contributing towards those changes?
3. What lessons have we learned from TIDE interventions, and how do we apply them?

6.1 Changes as a result of TIDE interventions

Practitioners and national policy makers understand more about what is involved in 21st century distance and online education and how to do it at national, institutional and individual staff levels. Staff have more awareness of tools and practices and more confidence to use these in their work. Policy makers are better informed and more confident about moving to digitally supported learning. When the Myanmar digital education platform (MDEP) was established as a response to Covid-19, transition was relatively easier for TIDE participants due to training received from TIDE. TIDE aims are long term and the indicators for sustainability and effectiveness may take time to appear.

The details of changes due to TIDE have been described in the findings section of this report. A summary list is presented here to encapsulate the range and variety of the changes due to TIDE upon national policymakers, institutions and staff.

At national level:

- the commitment to digital skills investment in the Myanmar economic resilience and reform programme was due to the influence of TIDE
- TIDE informed and influenced NESP II
- TIDE was involved in plans for a Myanmar National Open University
- TIDE raised awareness of the possibilities of online education and supported policymakers to consider these approaches

At university and programme level:

- TIDE has shown how courses may be developed locally by university staff, rather than centrally produced.
- demonstrated how new EfESD courses may be created by cross-disciplinary teams using OERs
- TIDE change management activities contributed towards developing capacity and understanding (through mentoring, workshops and team activity) that is intended to promote longer term sustained change within Universities and programmes, although that level of impact cannot be claimed at this point in time

At university staff level (academic and ICT, Library and other support):

- introduced new ways of working in teams of specialists to Myanmar staff
- cross-disciplinary working has also been introduced for EfESD
- introduced Creative Commons and OER to staff
- raised ambitions and aspirations of staff
- started to identify ICT support as a distinct role rather than an ad-hoc activity
- produced Professional Development Programmes with a total of 289 enrolled staff, which has been adapted to enable learners to continue after the funded period.
- established Master Trainer Programme to train about 100 Myanmar education staff to continue working on these areas after funded period
- produced legacy materials about Creative Commons and related topics as a resource for Myanmar education staff
- produced online Gateway courses for staff (Get started with online learning, How to be an online facilitator, Digital literacy: Succeeding in a digital world, Take your teaching online)

For students, TIDE has raised awareness of the possibilities of online study to open up education to a wider audience. In particular, to meet the needs of students who are currently unable to access higher education due to the matriculation exam system. Online gateway courses provide new learning opportunities for students in both English and Myanmar language, with a Certificate of Participation as a motivation (Get started with online learning, Am I ready to study in English? Am I ready to be a distance learner? Digital skills, digital learning), which amassed 12,031 unique visits by the end of March.

6.2 Influential factors within TIDE

This section highlights factors that have influenced TIDE, whether positively or negatively.

6.2.1 Building relationships of trust with stakeholders and senior staff

TIDE had an exceptional degree of access to the government, including the former Union Minister for Education. The TIDE team was in country regularly and local engagement was strong. Previous work in-country by staff and consultants from UK partner universities had developed trust. Compared with other international interventions, TIDE was a longer-term programme with a relatively large budget available and a consistency of offer, enabling longer-term working relationships to develop.

TIDE had good access to Myanmar political leadership at a national level, but expectations were also high. These expectations were met according to senior members of the TIDE team. Managing the expectations of national stakeholders became a key activity. TIDE senior management maintained a balance to keep a good relationship with the Ministry and keep to TIDE's objectives, without scope creep. The Rectors Committee, which brings together the Rectors of all the Myanmar universities, was a key stakeholder group influenced by TIDE.

In the Myanmar universities, the support of senior management was important in enabling individual staff to work on TIDE practices. Levels of familiarity with online learning and attitudes towards online education varied between individual university staff members. UK staff reported that trust was built with Myanmar staff through the residential schools, especially for staff who attended more than one event. Generally, Myanmar staff involved in TIDE were enthusiastic about the possibilities. MOE, DHE and Senior management support was such that participants were required to undertake cascade training to staff at their institution after each residential school. When they

returned to their own universities to implement TIDE practices with their colleagues, the results were affected by the level of support from their senior management and the attitudes of their colleagues. The organisational structure and culture of universities was an inhibiting factor. Staff felt they needed permission to change their teaching materials or course content.

6.2.2 Team working

As reported in the formative evaluation, TIDE brought about these changes by bringing people together from different roles, organisations and subject areas. The TIDE residential schools were highly effective in motivating participants and introducing them to 21st Century teaching and learning practices.

TIDE had a good team dynamic with a wide range of relevant specialist expertise including knowledge experts and good communication between partners. TIDE promoted team working amongst Myanmar staff. Open University working practices are generally based upon team working, so this was one of the norms that the OU brought to TIDE. EfESD as a subject is interdisciplinary, so teamwork was required as a foundation.

There were some barriers to team working, notably that it was not an established part of Myanmar academic practice. The university staff rotation scheme had a major impact upon activities based upon teams formed at residential schools. Team members became dispersed between different universities, some of which had not originally planned to participate in TIDE. The activities were adapted by maintaining continuity with individual staff, even if they had transferred to universities outside the original TIDE remit.

6.2.3 Relevant expertise

The senior TIDE team have a great deal of relevant experience, both country related and goals related, and included experienced in-country based personnel.

The UK partners brought expertise in higher education, distance learning, OERs and environmental science. As lead partner, the Open University (OU) brought the expertise of a leading global distance learning provider, as well as considerable experience in large-scale development project management. The OU had systems in place to distribute this expertise, such as OpenLearn, which delivers HE level OERs as free courses internationally. Manchester University had a successful track record of working in country, having previously carried out hydrology research, with a knowledge of Myanmar culture. Manchester and Oxford Universities both brought expertise in EfESD and pedagogy in the context of internationally recognised reputations for high quality teaching and research and a track record in Myanmar. Irrawaddy Policy Exchange, based in country, had a track record of work in this area and prior working relationships with ministerial and other high-status stakeholders. The core Myanmar partners brought experience of day and distance education in the context of a higher education system undergoing innovative reforms: Yangon University, Yangon University of Distance Education (YUDE) and Yadanabon University.

One of the critical success factors of TIDE is the combination of this expertise. The relevance of team experience, connections and networking to the TIDE goals was another important factor. In addition, the goals were highly relevant to the needs of staff, universities and the education system in Myanmar.

6.2.4 Adaptive management and evaluation

Senior TIDE staff provided effective leadership in guiding the programme through a process of adaptive management, navigating political, financial, operational and academic challenges. A major strength of TIDE has been the ability and willingness of TIDE staff in the UK and Myanmar to adapt the activities rapidly as the work progresses, in response to the needs of the participants and various unexpected challenges. SPHEIR have been accommodating and supportive in enabling TIDE to adapt within the detailed framework and reporting processes. This was facilitated by timely and accurate information, communicated effectively. The Monitoring, Evaluation and Learning activity of TIDE was very effective.

Highly effective project management was crucial to the success of TIDE, both in delivering planned activities and in responding to unexpected events. Dedicated project management support would have been useful at the very beginning of the programme. It was underestimated and built up slowly. Some activities were initiated later than originally planned and communication might have been more effective had a dedicated project manager been in post earlier. An interim project manager was in post from the start in March 2018, managing TIDE alongside other work. In part, this can be attributed to staff changes and the late sign off of the programme and the impact that had on putting project management capacity in place right from the start. It would also have been helpful to work on the formative and summative evaluation stages (outside MEL frameworks) from the start of the programme, with data collection as required. Although the budget for summative evaluation was ringfenced from the start, detailed guidance from SPHEIR came through later to programmes.

As TIDE developed and adapted over a few years, the core team gained a deep understanding of the details of the intervention and interrelationships between the various activities. It is possible that some of these understandings may have taken the form of tacit knowledge. When staff changes occurred, there were reported discontinuities in Myanmar leadership. There were also staff changes within the UK team and partners. The complexity of the project and changing plans due to adaptive management may have made it more of a challenge for new staff to understand how their roles and activities fitted into the overall plan, despite induction by experienced staff members, perhaps due to the emergent nature of the shared knowledge about TIDE.

6.2.5 Norms and working practices

In Myanmar, teamworking and critical thinking have been discouraged in the past. There is relatively little research activity at universities compared with UK norms. Several interviewees noted that there was perhaps too high an expectation that Myanmar academics could easily evolve their own thinking about the discipline as well as the teaching and learning aspects. This is in marked contrast to UK academic norms of team working, critical thinking, reflective practice and engagement in research alongside teaching. All these aspects plus tacit knowledge and organisational norms, might need to be discussed explicitly when introducing new practices from one culture to another.

6.2.6 Communicating TIDE identity and core purpose

Generally, communication within TIDE was felt to be effective, with the caveat of English language issues described elsewhere.

The complexity of TIDE may have obscured the central purpose of the programme. Interviews revealed a range of responses to the questions 'What is the purpose of TIDE, from your perspective?' Some interviewees identified multiple purposes. One interviewee noted that the distance education aspect of TIDE might have been overlooked at times.

The diagrams and other cognitive tools used to manage a complex programme were apparently opaque to some participants who only experienced one aspect or activity. A different cognitive tool might be more appropriate for an audience outside the core TIDE team. If the Theory of Change were regarded as a map of the overall territory, it appears that what may have been needed was a guide to explain where participants in a specific activity might be located on that map, and what pathway they might follow. For example, an explanation of how the current activity fits into the overall scheme, its purpose and intended outcomes, with some proposed next steps.

6.2.7 Residential schools

Myanmar staff needed experience of critical thinking and then opportunities to design learning to encourage critical thinking for their students. On realising that their planned sessions were beyond the reach of Myanmar colleagues, UK staff adjusted the content to better meet the needs of Myanmar colleagues. One interviewee commented that residential schools involved high transactional costs for the participants, who had to take time out from their regular duties and travel to attend.

In between residential schools, participants were supported through online seminars and other processes. It appears that the infrastructure and working environment of the Myanmar staff were not always conducive to completing some of the learning tasks. For example, Myanmar staff required more help in producing their own OER after the first residential school in 2018 than was expected by UK staff. The tasks were modified to take this into account.

6.2.8 The early stages of TIDE

TIDE started two months later than scheduled, due to issues beyond the control of SPHEIR or DfID. A UK Ministerial reshuffle delayed the sign-off. This caused challenges in carrying out preparation for the first residential school, recruiting dedicated project management and completing the first year of planned activities in the remaining nine months. It is not clear whether the delays had any detrimental impact upon the first residential school. Because residential schools were a core component of this programme, any factor that reduced that impact might undermine the effectiveness of TIDE to some extent. There is some evidence that the needs and perspectives of participants were not fully understood before the event. One interviewee wondered how to assess participants' readiness for change.

The published reports of baseline SPHEIR data and the Myanmar PEA are dated December 2019. The final report was made available to the TIDE team a few weeks before it was published. This was over 18 months after the start of the programme in early 2018. Information in the baseline report and PEA was highly relevant to the work on all three TIDE outputs from the start of the funded period. It is not clear whether the late availability of this information impacted the effectiveness of TIDE.

6.2.9 Open Educational Resources

With the aim of improving and reforming distance education, especially for students who have only access to distance education, TIDE focused on teachers and support staff in higher education institutions and on the use of open educational practices and open educational resources (OERs). The OER activities designed for Myanmar academic and support staff in residential school, webinars and mentoring aimed to build the knowledge and skills necessary to create OERs for study by distance education students. These TIDE interventions also built collaborative working relationships to strengthen capacity. Through the use of OERs and open educational practices, Myanmar academic and support staff have been introduced to innovative teaching and learning processes and, in turn,

will be able to introduce their students (and colleagues) to these practices. As it is the teachers and the faculty in the universities that are delivering distance education, what they are able to accomplish in their teaching will help to raise their students to the level of 21st century learning taking place in other countries.

6.3 External factors and risks

There have been three external factors that have had a substantial impact upon TIDE staff time and resource. Despite this there were some unexpected positive outcomes and TIDE adapted to make the most of these opportunities. In addition to the three risk factors listed below, the formation of FCDO had a negative impact upon staff workload, as staff spent time reconfiguring activities to fit the new financial constraints. There was a period of uncertainty over the extent of the budget reallocation that delayed the reconfiguration. TIDE staff commented that the lack of clarity on project extension beyond September was more of a project management challenge than the formation of FCDO and/ or budget reduction.

The three risk factors are discussed briefly below.

- The Myanmar university staff rotation system
- The new One campus Two systems approach
- The Covid-19 pandemic (not on the risk register)

6.3.1 Myanmar staff rotation

The Myanmar university staff rotation system, which transfers staff between the arts and science universities, caused challenges in terms of delivering TIDE as a partnership, because there were more universities to contact, making it more challenging for IPE and other TIDE staff. It was difficult to collaboratively redesign the programme in response to other factors. A positive effect was to reach more staff due to rotation, because staff on TIDE programme kept in contact, even if moved to universities not originally included. Collaboration started in other universities without being involved in TIDE directly, so there was some additional impact for Universities that had not yet become active in TIDE.

In addition to the staff rotation, there were major changes in the leadership of key Myanmar partners, due to staff promotions. These were significant in the engagement of core Myanmar University partners.

6.3.2 One Campus Two Systems

As a result of policy changes by the Ministry of Education, the new One campus Two Systems approach was implemented very rapidly. This change made it more difficult for TIDE to influence the development of distance education in a small number of core higher education institutions as originally planned. On a positive note, it substantially changed the emphasis upon distance education across Myanmar.

Launched in 2019, with effect from 2020, 'One Campus Two Systems' was a new approach whereby the 34 Arts and Science universities took on full responsibility for the award and delivery of undergraduate distance education degrees in addition to their existing face to face provision. As explained by Lane and Gregson (2019) "Since the time of the military government in Myanmar, arts and science undergraduate courses had been offered through 34 'day campus' Universities distributed across the country, and whilst courses were offered on campus the majority of students studied by DE and this remains the case in 2019. The 'day campus' Universities provide some pre-

exam, on campus tuition to distance students, support registration and distribution of printed study materials. English is the expected language of instruction and all DE materials are in English. Although arrangements are now changing, up until 2019 degrees arising from DE study have been awarded by Yangon University of Distance Education (YUDE) and Mandalay University of Distance Education (MUDE), and these two institutions have provided the academic oversight of the degrees, as well as creating all the study materials for the courses.” 6.3.3 Covid-19 pandemic

The Covid-19 pandemic had several direct effects upon TIDE:

- travel to Myanmar was halted, so residential schools and other meetings were cancelled, for example with stakeholders
- group gatherings were discontinued, so it was not possible to deliver webinars from the UK to groups in country
- university staff work was restricted to essential Covid-19 response, so participation in training courses was discontinued
- uncertainty over when pandemic related constraints would end, led to assumptions having to be made and subsequently adjusted which also made planning beyond a few months more challenging
- the nature of engagement in policy related discussions was changed, with new challenges of engaging with senior decision makers in a different time zone from a distance

Stakeholder expectations changed as a result of the Covid-19 pandemic, creating an opportunity. A need to fast track the development of MDEP for online education did not come specifically from TIDE, but TIDE contributed to this essential shift, and moved its own activities to an online mode. Stakeholders and policymakers realised that online learning was necessary to continue educational provision and became aware of what it could do. Due to a request from the Ministry of Education TIDE developed seven gateway courses designed to prepare HE staff and students transition effectively to online learning. In relation to the proposed Myanmar National Open University, TIDE supported Myanmar staff to produce exemplars of OERs that might form an alternative online pathway into higher education for students who do not succeed at the matriculation exam, for example, the Sustainable Tourism in Myanmar course.

Covid-19 drove a push to move education online, with more blended learning. When asked about the effect of Covid-19 on their work, some Myanmar staff survey participants reflected that it made them more aware of what online learning can do for teaching and learning.

6.4 Lessons learned from TIDE

This section summarises lessons learned and offers suggestions for reflection upon by TIDE. Further generalisable recommendations are presented in Section 7.

(a) Education programmes are time-sensitive due to the need to fit with academic terms and student cohorts. Due to events beyond the control of TIDE staff or the fundholders (SPHEIR), the late sign-off caused delays at the start of the project. One possibility might be to add the possibility of this type of delay to the risk register, so the effects can be anticipated and/or mitigated.

(b) The residential schools were high profile and involved a large investment of staff time for all concerned, with transactional costs from the Myanmar staff perspective. The workshops at the first residential school appear to have functioned as experience gathering to a greater extent than was planned. This perhaps indicates that a more effective approach to needs analysis may have been to hold focus groups or other discussion activities, rather than relying upon surveys and university

visits. For clarification, TIDE staff commented that focus groups were held during the inception phase.

(c) The residential schools seem to have been highly effective. Face to face meetings are important, especially when developing deep learning or discussing nuances of different cultural norms and working practices. The pivot to online delivery due to Covid-19 showed the value of designing the intervention as a programme of learning that has a coherent pathway from the perspective of each participant. Residential schools or equivalent online activities are more effective when framed within a learning journey that makes sense to each participant according to their role, previous experiences, initial knowledge and skillset.

(d) When designing face-to-face or online interventions to develop staff capacity, base them upon established theories and practices. When introducing practices that are novel to the participants, such as OERs, ensure sufficient time and support to develop participants' conceptual understanding as well as practical skills.

(e) TIDE required accurate and timely baseline information about the situation and needs of the participants and stakeholders in country. Authentic communication requires relationships of trust and some data collection tools may be more suitable than others, depending upon cultural norms.

(f) Adaptive management needs very good communication, particularly when the programme is responding to major environmental changes such as Covid-19. Although the core TIDE team may gain an in-depth understanding of the details, other staff and actors may need additional information to understand how their roles and activities fit into the overall plan. This is particularly important when there are staff changes, because tacit knowledge may be held by individuals rather than recorded in shared documents.

7. Recommendations to inform other programmes in future

These recommendations have been drawn out of the evaluation data and lessons learned from TIDE. They are intended to inform future projects that may build upon the processes and experiences of TIDE, such as the use of residential schools or Open Educational Resources. The specific lessons learned from TIDE are discussed in Section 6.4 of this report.

1. Build relationships of trust before, during and after the funded period. This may be through partnerships with organisations and individuals with a track record in country. Face-to-face events and ongoing contact with individuals and organisations over the funded period also build trust. Online contact may be a part of this but is less suited to discussion of sensitive subjects.

2. Develop and support team working. Complicated programmes with multiple partners on multiple sites require clarity about roles, expectations and the involvement of partners in the various strands of activity. Draw upon the experience of all partners including the multiple perspectives involved. Assume that there will be staff changes in a large multi-year programme. Consider how to induct new staff effectively. Also consider the potential benefit of reflecting upon the programme from a fresh perspective whilst mitigating the impact upon continuity due to staff changeover.

3. Gather relevant expertise including academic, technical, project management, cultural and in-country experience. Identify gaps in expertise and bring in specialists in a timely manner. Consider how to recognise the expertise of each colleague and integrate that with the overall programme aims and activities. When adapting to unexpected events, it is important to have experienced personnel who can identify when and how to adapt.

4. Provide good communication and accurate information for everyone.

5. Open educational practices have potential to transform educational approaches. OERs can be a practical way to help staff develop innovative approaches to teaching and learning. They need to build upon a sound understanding of the pedagogical, technical and knowledge aspects.

6. Consider how to communicate the identity and core purpose of the project effectively. The diagrams and other cognitive tools used to manage a complex project may be opaque to participants who only experience one aspect or activity. Consider creating simplified representations specific to each particular audience, showing how an activity fits within the overall plan.

7. Be aware of cultural differences, institutional working practices and norms. Consider the effect upon data collection, design of face-to-face and online development activities. When planning face-to-face events in country, particularly at scale, consider local conditions and patterns of working, for example, seasonal variations.

8. Before the start of the project, obtain as much information as possible, including a Political Economy Analysis, using appropriate data collection that is sensitive to local culture and language.

8. Conclusion

As stated in the Political Economy Analysis “changing Higher and Distance Education in Myanmar is a Herculean challenge, given the history” (Technopolis, 2019, p6). TIDE has succeeded in making a difference, despite the known barriers, and the following unexpected events:

- delay in starting TIDE programme
- Covid-19 pandemic
- military coup

The intangible impacts of TIDE may be sustainable, although concrete evidence may be elusive due to the nature of these impacts and the political situation in country. Many TIDE participants gained an awareness of 21st century teaching and learning approaches and were motivated to innovate.

Policy makers are better informed and more confident about moving to digitally supported learning with the development of the Myanmar digital education platform (MDEP). They have greater awareness of the differences between distance and face to face education.

The intangible benefits for teachers and ICT and support staff included increased confidence, awareness, skills and knowledge. For example, creative commons and copyright law were new to librarians, ICT and support staff. The benefit for teachers in HE has been practical exposure to different ways to design their teaching and the confidence to apply them. The emphasis upon OER may empower individuals and groups to produce new learning opportunities at some point in the future.

The effects of Myanmar academics’ awareness of other practices through TIDE may not surface in a predictable way. They may have an opportunity to incorporate some of what they have learned in their work or course production. There is now a community of people influenced by TIDE, who have experienced alternatives to the current education system.

Many of the university staff participants who attended early TIDE events were promoted to positions of higher status, with some influence over educational work. Before the coup, this was a possible indirect impact of TIDE. That situation changed in early February 2021 because TIDE was widely perceived as an initiative strongly associated with the former government at the highest levels.

Association with TIDE may hinder career progression under the new administration. The perception of TIDE also raises safeguarding questions in terms of the personal risk to anyone who participated in TIDE or who may try to access TIDE materials in future online, especially as the military have control of the national internet and potentially the associated tracking data. Despite all this, what academic and support staff experienced working with UK colleagues may still be transferred into good practice for learning and teaching in higher education institutions and help students to develop 21st century skills.

References

- Camilleri, A. F., and Ehlers, U.-D. (2011). Mainstreaming Open Educational Practice: Recommendations for Policy. Retrieved from
- The Cape Town Open Education Declaration. (2007). Cape Town, South Africa. Retrieved from <http://www.capetowndeclaration.org/>.
- Gregson, J., Lane, A., Foster, M., 2019. *Adaptive Project Design: Early insights from working on the transformation of the Distance Education System in Myanmar*. in: Pan-Commonwealth Forum 9 (PCF9). Presented at the Pan-Commonwealth Forum 9 (PCF9), Edinburgh. UK.
- Kandiko Howson, C., and Lall, M. (2020). Higher education reform in Myanmar: neoliberalism versus an inclusive developmental agenda. *Globalisation, Societies and Education*, 18(2), 109-124. doi:10.1080/14767724.2019.1689488
- Lane, A., Gregson, J., 2019. Fostering innovations in pedagogical practices: transforming distance education through a professional development programme using OERs. in: Pan-Commonwealth Forum 9 (PCF9). Presented at the Pan-Commonwealth Forum 9 (PCF9), Edinburgh. UK.
- Lane, A., Fawsett, S., 2019. Building employability into a traditional curriculum: partnerships and frameworks to help transform distance education curricula in Myanmar. in: Pan-Commonwealth Forum 9 (PCF9). Presented at the Pan-Commonwealth Forum 9 (PCF9), Edinburgh. UK. Lane, A., Moore G, Audrey S, Barker M, Bond L, Bonell C, Hardeman, W., Moore L, O’Cathain, A., Tinati T, Wight D, Baird J., 2014. *Process evaluation of complex interventions: Medical Research Council guidance*. London: MRC Population Health Science Research Network.
- Obi, C., 2019. TIDE MEL Report February - September 2019.
- Paskevicius, M., Irvine, V. (Practicalities of implementing open pedagogy in higher education. *Smart Learn. Environ.* 6, 23 (2019). <https://doi.org/10.1186/s40561-019-0110-5>
- Servis, D. and Obi, C. (2020) TIDE MEL Report October 2019 - September 2020.
- Technopolis Group (2019) Political Economy Analysis of Higher Education in Myanmar, Annex 8 of SPHEIR Evaluation Baseline Report, IPE Global, December 2019.
- TIDE 2017, 2. TIDE Theory of Change and Learning Questions - Revised 4.12.2017

Appendix 1 Acronyms and abbreviations

CEO	Chief Executive Officer
Covid-19	Coronavirus Disease-19
DHE	Department for Higher Education, Myanmar
EfESD	Education for Environment and Sustainable Development
FCDO	Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office, UK
HE	Higher Education
ICT	Information and Communication Technologies
IPE	Irrawaddy Policy Exchange, Myanmar
KPI	Key Performance Indicator
MDEP	Myanmar Digital Education Platform
MEL	Monitoring Evaluation and Learning
MUPE	Myanmar-UK Partnership for Education
MOE	Ministry of Education, Myanmar
NESP II	National Education Strategic Plan, Stage Two, Myanmar
OECD-DAC	The Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development - Development Assistance Committee
OER	Open Educational Resource
OU	The Open University, UK
PEA	Political Economy Analysis
SPHEIR	Strategic Partnerships for Higher Education Innovation and Reform
TIDE	Transformation by Innovation in Distance Education
ToC	Theory of Change
TREE	Towards Results In Education and English
YUDE	Yangon University of Distance Education

Appendix 2 Survey questions for TIDE staff and consultants

Section 1 - for everyone to respond

Your work on TIDE

1. What TIDE activities were you involved in, and when? Please select any that apply.

	Before 2018	2018	2019	2020	2021
Residential school in Myanmar					
Online contact or webinar with Myanmar staff (between residential schools or as a substitute)					
Developing materials for or with Myanmar staff					
Developing materials for Myanmar students					
Producing policy, strategy or other key documents					
Managing the project and/or project staff					
Other, please state below					

Other activities [text box]

2. Please select the outputs relevant to your work on TIDE, from the following list.

Select any that apply.

[List with multiple responses]

Academic professional development: Environment and Sustainable Development knowledge base

Academic staff capacity: teaching and assessment skills, pedagogy

ICT, library and academic support staff capacity building

Programme enhancement: competency framework

Co-designed educational resources, OER

Enhancing media production and delivery platforms

Student learning skills, online learning, employability

Strategy and policy for strengthening open and distance education

Digital strategy

Change management capacity development

University or college-level institutional development

Project management

MEL Monitoring evaluation and learning

Action learning and research

3. How much difference did TIDE make in the following areas, from your perspective?

[sliders from low impact to high impact]

- Academic professional development: Environment and Sustainable Development knowledge base
- Academic staff capacity: teaching and assessment skills, pedagogy
- ICT, library and academic support staff capacity building
- Student learning skills, online learning, employability
- National educational policy or strategy
- Change management capacity development
- University or college-level institutional development

4. To what extent do you think the benefits will last in each of these areas?

[sliders from low sustainability to high sustainability with a don't know option]

- Academic professional development: Environment and Sustainable Development knowledge base
- Academic staff capacity: teaching and assessment skills, pedagogy
- ICT, library and academic support staff capacity building
- Student learning skills, online learning, employability
- National educational policy or strategy
- Change management capacity development
- University or college-level institutional development

If you have any comments regarding the areas above please share them with us [text box]

Your experience of TIDE

5. From your perspective, please indicate the extent to which you agree or disagree with the following statements

	Strongly agree	Agree	Neither agree nor disagree	Disagree	Strongly disagree
Communication within the TIDE team was timely and effective					
I understood the objectives of the TIDE project					
I had sufficient time to carry out my work for TIDE					
I had the relevant support of colleagues to carry out my role					
The project was managed effectively					

UK staff time was used efficiently on this project					
Involvement in this project has contributed to an enhancement of my other work					
The project has met its initially stated objectives					

Please use the space below for anything else you would like to tell us about TIDE and your work on the project [text box]

Section 2: This section is optional and only relevant to colleagues who taught at residential school, in workshops or in online sessions for Myanmar staff.

Personal reflections on your TIDE teaching experiences

We are asking all TIDE tutors to write up their personal reflections on their teaching experiences while engaging in this project. There is no obligation to do so but whatever you can say will be useful as we write our final reports on the project and capture learning gained. If we do quote or refer to what you say this will be anonymised. We have provided a basic template to guide your reflections, but please feel free to add additional information if needed.

Name of the activity/activities taught [text box]

1. How well prepared were you for teaching your activity? [text box]
2. What challenges did you face while teaching in country? [text box]
3. Were there rewarding moments for you as a teacher? [text box]
4. How well do you think participants were able to learn what you were trying to teach them? [text box]
5. How well do you think participants will be able to use what you taught them? [text box]
6. What were the lessons learned and what changes would you make in your teaching approaches if you were to run this activity/these activities again? [text box]
7. Please use the space below for any other reflections you would like to share about your experience of teaching on the TIDE project [text box]