

Curriculum as a Tool for Transitional Justice and Social Cohesion for Myanmar: Learning from Regional and Global Experiences

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Abstract

Education is one of the most powerful strategies for connecting divided societies after a civil war. Addressing the conflict requires more than political reform; it also demands a Justice-Sensitive Curriculum for symbolic reparation and a foundation for federalism. Education recovery is not just restoring schools but about building trust and inclusive nation-building. However, the narrative in the state or central curriculum at the basic education level in Myanmar has historically marginalized other minor ethnic identities in Myanmar. It has disrupted social cohesion among the community's diverse ethnic groups. Since the 2021 military coup in Myanmar, curricula across the country also became decentralized with the revolutionary government (NUG), various Ethnic Revolutionary Organizations (EROs), and community-led education organizations. Different regions adopted different curricula to counter the state-sponsored curriculum and to boycott the military regime's politicized state education. However, they were not publicly accessible for studying their contents, inclusion, and trust-building. Moreover, there are many foreseen and unforeseen challenges to implementing the education reform as a tool for transitional justice in Myanmar. Therefore, this study aims to draw the post-conflict experiences of Indonesia and South Africa to explore how education recovery can help rebuild a harmonized society, the institutional barriers to education reform in a state with a long history of centralized, military-led education and how these states successfully overcame them. This study utilizes case study analysis, particularly on Indonesia and South Africa with an in-depth and holistic investigation of two national contexts to identify the common structures, distinct histories and divergent outcomes in how transitional or post-conflict societies handle controversial pasts within their education systems.