

The Statement Issued by NNER

In response to the National Education Law approved by the Parliament

NNER has done on education reform about 28 seminars, several meetings and discussions over the years 2012 and 2013. It collected advice, opinions and suggestions from various groups – students, teachers, monks, National's Literature & Cultural associations, political parties, persons-with-disabilities organizations and educationalists. In June 2013, the national convention on education was held and principles were agreed upon. These principles on educational reform were presented to the Parliament both Upper (Pyithu Hluttaw) and Lower House (Amyotha Hluttaw), the Government and the People.

It was known that National Education Law has been approved by the Parliament on 31 July 2014. But there are still some disagreements and so hereby this statement is issued.

(1) "National Education Commission" as stated in Chapter IV of National Education Law is not necessary. "Higher Education Co-ordination Committee" as stated in Chapter V, Section 27 is not also necessary. Apart from military and religious academies, all the educational institutions vis-a-vis Basic Education, Higher Education and Vocational Education should be under The Ministry of Education. Universities and colleges must be autonomous and on necessity, they may cooperate on democratic principles. For academic quality assurance, assessments must be done by a team of independent specialists.

(2) In the National Education Law, Inclusive Education should be defined clearly, and the rights of the children including the children-with-disabilities must be prescribed. NNER seriously opposes what appears to be the discrimination of the children-with-disabilities: the principles as shown in Section 2, Sub-section (p), Section 4, Sub-section (c), Section 37 and Section 41, Sub-section (b) are found to be against the principles of Inclusive Education.

On 7 December 2011, The Government had signed the agreement of United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (UN-CRPD), but it is absolutely neglected and the National Education Law is drafted on the concept of Special Needs Education which still allows the discrimination. Hence the law must be revised.

(3) For the minorities, NNER's principle is Mother tongue-based Multilingual Education – Mother tongue, Burmese and English should be taught. The individual school boards itself has to decide which Mother tongue they are going to teach.

(4) NNER aims at the democratic education which guarantees the Right to Association, the Right to Assembly, the Right to Free Speech and the Right to Choice. NNER seriously opposes the law as shown in Section 4, Sub-section (m) which states the decentralization will be applied on condition that the teachers are moral, responsible and able to make decisions is rather insulting; it appears to erode the personal prestige of teachers.

(5) NNER does not agree with the law as shown in Chapter XI. Section 57, Sub-section (a), which states that the Basic Education schools must be managed by the Ministry of Education: the ministry rather should play the role of facilitator; the school management should be done by the respective school boards, which constitute the school principal, the teachers, parents and the respectable citizens.

(6) The National Education Law should state distinctly that curriculum should be flexible and school-based vis-a-vis Basic Education Curriculum as shown in Section 39, Sub-section (f) and (g). For standardization requirement, "minimum learning capacities" should be used.

(7) NNER does not agree with the law as shown in Section 21, Sub-section (a), which states that student-centered approach will be the only pedagogical way: rather the learning-centered approach which encompasses all the pedagogy.

As to the assessment, formative assessment, rather than summative must be used: the summative assessment encourages the rote. NNER rejects the examinations to be held at the end of Primary and Secondary Education on the same reason that these examinations are testing the summative.

(8) Instead of compulsory and free Primary Education as shown in Section 17, it should be compulsory and free Secondary Education: the reason is to safeguard the children's Rights; the respective ministries, state authorities, parents & guardians, schools, international organizations and civil society are responsible for that.

(9) Regarding the finance of Education sector, the Muscat Agreement, UNESCO, 2014 advises to use 4-6% of GDP or 15-20% of National Budget: National Education Law must declare that amount is to be used without fail.

Education Reform Working Group,
The National Network for Education Reform

Dated: August 19, 2014.