

# LEARNING FROM HISTORY ?

## THE SINDE STORY, 1970-2019.

### A CASE STUDY OF GERMAN-MYANMAR DEVELOPMENT COOPERATION

Hans-Bernd Zöllner



INDUSTRIAL TRAINING CENTER SINDE • LAYOUT PLAN



# Table of Content

page

	<b>FOREWORD</b>	4
	<b>EXECUTIVE SUMMARY: LESSONS TO BE LEARNT</b>	7
	<b>INTRODUCTION</b>	8
	✦ Aims, Methodology and Sources	9
	✦ Outline	10
<b>1</b>	<b>CHAPTER 1: HISTORICAL BACKGROUND - BURMA AND GERMANY UNTIL THE 1970s</b>	11
	✦ The Genesis of a special Business Partnership	12
	✦ A Series of Visits Documenting Friendly Relations	14
	✦ Burmese Needs And German Offers	17
	✦ Summary	18
<b>2</b>	<b>CHAPTER 2: THE LONG DETOUR TO SINDE (1970-1979)</b>	19
	✦ The Initial Period: Planning A Technical High School In Rangoon	19
	✦ The Kidnapping Of A Model Project	20
	✦ Summary	24
<b>3</b>	<b>CHAPTER 3: THE IMPLEMENTATION OF THE ITC SINDE 1979-1985 (1988)</b>	26
	✦ The First Training of Teachers	26
	✦ The Opening Ceremony	28
	✦ The Structure Of The School	29
	✦ Merging Different Cultures Of Organisation And Education	32
	✦ The Environment: The Military and a Monastery	33
	✦ Interlude - Phasing Out, The ITC Thanlyin And A Sudden Revolution: 1985-1988	35
	✦ Sinde	35
	✦ Thanlyin	36
<b>4</b>	<b>CHAPTER 4: DOING IT ALONE - 1988-2013 (2019)</b>	40
	✦ 4.1 Developments At And Around the ITC Sinde	40
	✦ I) 1988-1998	41
	✦ The Administrative And Political Context	41
	✦ Training Conditions	41
	✦ Job Placement	42
	✦ II) 1998-2008	43
	✦ The Administrative And Political Context	43
	✦ Training Conditions	43
	✦ Job Placement	43
	✦ III) 2008-2017	44
	✦ The Administrative And Political Context	44
	✦ Training Conditions	44
	✦ Job Placement	44
	✦ Conclusion	44
	✦ 4.2 Two Spin-Offs	45
	✦ I) Five New ITCS	46
	✦ II) The Alumni Organisation	47
	✦ History	48

	✦ Aims And Organisation	50
	✦ Organisation And Communication	52
	✦ Special Activities	52
	✦ Summary	54
<b>5</b>	<b>CHAPTER 5: AN ALMOST NEW BEGINNING (2012-2019)</b>	<b>55</b>
	✦ Concluding Remarks	60
<b>6</b>	<b>CHAPTER 6: SUMMARY AND OUTLOOK</b>	<b>63</b>
<b>i</b>	<b>BIBLOGRAPHY</b>	<b>65</b>
<b>i</b>	<b>ANNEXES</b>	<b>68</b>

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## Foreword

### THE STORY BEHIND THE STORY

On Friday April 12th 1985, during the week of Thingyan, I first learned that a place named "Sinde" existed in Burma. On a visit to Rangoon, I had attended a small party of German experts. I was posted in Bangkok at that time to serve the German speaking Protestant community as a pastor. Part of my assignment was to travel to the neighbouring countryside twice a year to look after the many specialists from the Federal Republic of Germany who were helping the people of socialist Burma to develop the country - besides keeping in contact with the country's churches. One of them – the Lutheran Bethlehem Church in Thein-byu Street - had been established with the assistance of German missionaries at the end of the 19th century.

One of the guests at the party told me that he and a number of other teachers from Germany worked at a vocational training school located in the middle of nowhere, some hours away from the capital to the north. The training provided by the German staff was successful, I learned, and the school was proud of its football team. I noted these details in my diary and forgot them.

Almost exactly 28 years later, I encountered the name "Sinde" again. Due to the lack of German scholars doing research on the country that is now called Myanmar, I had become some kind of a "Myanmar expert" in the meantime. As a result, I was asked from time to time to introduce German nationals assigned to work in the country to its history, culture, politics and lifestyle. One of the participants of such a course, I learned from his application form, was assigned to work in "Sinde (Pyay)". During this three-day course in April 2013, I learned that the German government had decided to resume development aid to Myanmar, and the experienced development worker was the first German to resume assisting the Industrial Training Centre (ITC) "Sinde" after a quarter of a century absence. He had already visited the place and found a well-maintained and functioning "technological museum" from the 1980s that urgently needed to be upgraded both technologically and in terms of training material. The old textbooks and some papers from before 1988 were still preserved and had been proudly presented to him.

This information gave me the idea of investigating the history of the school that obviously had survived since 1988, when West Germany had withdrawn its development assistance to Burma as a reaction to the suppression of the "democracy movement" by the Burmese military. A further strong motive to write the "Sinde Story" was my previous research on German-Burmese relations. My first publication, in 1993, had covered the relationship between the two very dissimilar partners of the democratic-capitalist Federal Republic of Germany, and socialist Burma (governed under a one-party-system after World War II), concentrating on the activities of the famous/infamous German company "Fritz Werner", whose founder had helped build up the Burmese armament industry.

I found out that such co-operation had begun by 1955, and had been initiated by Colonel Maung Maung as a special kind of development project. It was intended that arms needed to defend Burma against the Chinese Kuomintang forces should not just be imported, but produced within the country. For that reason, Burmese soldiers were sent to the German company that had been recommended to the aide of the head of the army, General Ne Win, during one of his trips to Europe. These soldiers received training at the company in Germany, and after their return were instrumental in managing the factories built in Rangoon and in central Burma. Later, this special connection was broadened, so that with the assistance of the German company a number of industrial plants – both for military and civilian products – were constructed. This helped West Germany to become the second most important of Burma's bilateral partners in terms of economic co-operation (after Japan) up until 1988.

I realised that the name "Sinde" was mentioned once in my booklet on the German company, in a list of factories that had been built with the assistance of the company. It denoted the place of a plant producing electro-motors and pumps, "No. (16) Heavy Industry (Sinde)," built in 1965. Later I discovered that a second factory producing cartridge cases had been established in Sinde as well, from 1958 on. This small town could, therefore, be regarded as a focal point of German-Burmese co-operation.

It could be fascinating, I thought, to use the “Sinde Story” as a case study of German development activities in Burma/Myanmar spanning four decades and taking place under three very different political systems in that country – the “Burmese Way of Socialism” (until 1988), direct military rule (1988-2011) and a constitutional democracy, albeit of a special kind (2011 until today). This could help to illustrate the nature and interrelationship of development work and its political context in Myanmar.

For details about the genesis of the projects as a component of the relations between Burma and the two German states after 1945, the German archives provided considerable material on the early period of the school, and some fortuitous events helped me to obtain some useful “insider information”. By accident, I met the team leader who had worked in Burma between 1979 and 1986. He gave me his final report on the project and introduced me to other German experts (including the one I had met in 1985) as well as to Burmese teachers and students. They helped me to reconstruct what might have happened it and around the ITC Sinde in the more than two decades in which the Burmese authorities managed the school without foreign consultation. I was surprised to learn that an alumni organisation of the school had been formed comprising some 1500 members, and decided to finish the study in time for the 40th “birthday” of the school in December 2019.

## ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

It is not possible to give a detailed account of all the people who helped me to write this story. Most of them have directly experienced the impact of the ITC Sinde on their own lives as teachers or students. It was a real pleasure to talk to them and obtain information about school life and thus get a feeling for what the time spent at the training centre meant to them. I very much hope that facets of this “meaning” might shimmer through in the following account, and that the small insights gained with regard to the web of relations forming the microcosm of the ITC Sinde whet the appetite for more detailed studies. Here, the alumni association would offer opportunities to learn more about the working of informal networks in Myanmar society.

My sincere thanks go to the officials responsible for the school. The Principal as well as those working in the Human Resources Department in Building No. 30 in Naypyidaw were extremely helpful and friendly – and I hope that this study will not disappoint them.

The German teachers who assisted in the crucial time of establishing the training centre provided information and insights on a variety of aspects that helped provide an understanding about the school that the files kept in the archives could not. Conversations with them revived my own memories of “socialist Burma” and provided vivid impressions of the ambience of life in a camp-like situation at a remote place in a country that was alien in many regards. They generously furnished pictures from the “old days”. Talks with the development workers sent to Sinde after 2013, as well as with the staff of the Ministry responsible for development work and the implementing agency (GIZ), were very useful to assess the role of the ITC Sinde in a context that in many regards differs from the school’s early period.

Furthermore, the staff of the archives in the German Foreign Office in Berlin and the Federal Archive located in Koblenz deserve my thanks for assisting with access to the relevant files.

My ability to conduct this study however was severely limited by two factors. I had to organise it in Germany, and could travel to Myanmar only occasionally from early 2016 for doing in-country research work. Furthermore, my Burmese language skills are almost non-existent. I am therefore grateful that capable research assistants carried out interviews, evaluated questionnaires and provided answers for questions that I forwarded to them from my home in Hamburg. Additionally, friends in Germany helped with translations.

Last, but absolutely not least, my sincere thanks go to the staff of Covenant Institute for the courage to publish a study written by an outsider of Myanmar’s large development scene, a study that takes a very different approach from their previous publications to the processes occurring in the country.

## THE QUESTION MARK

This study looks at the processes of development in Burma/ Myanmar from an historical perspective. It describes a number of unforeseen twists and turns that characterise the establishment of the ITC from the beginning, and that are closely connected to the vicissitude of the country’s politics. One may say that Myanmar’s history alongside the history of the ITC Sinde form a continuous series of discontinuities.

With this background, it is questionable what can be learned from the two interconnected histories that are presented in the following narration - except to be aware of the Buddhist principle of impermanence. The question mark in the title of this booklet, however, is not meant as a grammatical sign of resignation, but as a commendation to discuss the question among "developers" on the Myanmar and the foreign side. The material introduced in the following pages points to the existence of different perceptions on the understanding of "development" on all sides involved in such a process, and a lack of communication about such differences.

I have tried to avoid drawing conclusions from the Sinde Story and its context told here. Collecting information from a great variety of sources that represent quite different perspectives was really enjoyable. The work of assembling the collected material in a fair and objective manner was not so easy. I look forward to any comments on the results of this small work, and would enjoy participating in discussions concerning what can be learned from the history of the ITC Sinde.



## Executive Summary: Lessons to be Learnt

### POLITICS

- › Politics matter – the political context of any development project should be seriously analysed. Government involvement is often mistrusted.
- › It might be useful to aim at interim instead of comprehensive solutions. The direct benefits of a project for individuals or particular target groups should be made known to the people at the grass-roots level.
- › Don't expect too much straight progress – developments in Myanmar are difficult to predict both by outsiders and insiders.
- › Development interventions and projects can be very successful – but such progress/achievements might be due just to unintended side effects.

### ATTITUDES

- › The development of individual and inter-personal positive attitudes towards a project is crucial. Technical skills have to be passed on together with matching values.
- › The achievement of project goals that can be measured in terms of quantitative and qualitative output might be less important than the formation of a sense of pride in contributing to a common goal.
- › A long-term commitment of a foreign development agency and its experts is a crucial element for the sustainable impact of any project.
- › Foreign experts should try to learn as much as possible from their Myanmar partners about traditions in Myanmar society including those based on religious customs like dana, the notion of giving.

### VOCATIONAL TRAINING

- › The success of the ITC Sinda cannot be copied. But the school's story can help in learning about the nature of undertaking development work in Myanmar.
- › The German dual system of vocational training - putting practical skills before theoretical knowledge - is a good

model for Myanmar, but it can only be used in a piece-meal way.

- › The core element of a successful vocational training is the role model provided by the trainer. Trainees should be seen as apprentices not as students.
- › Informal networks play a central role in the job placement of trainees. It cannot be expected that a labour market based on the principle of competition exists.

## Introduction

This booklet outlines the story of the Industrial Training Center (ITC) Sinda, a development project in the field of what today is known under the acronym TVET (Technical and Vocational Education and Training). The school located on the west bank of the Ayeyawadi opposite of the old city of Pyay in Bago Region was established with the support of West Germany some 40 years ago and until today is regarded as a success by Myanmar government officials, former teachers and alumni alike. A short overview over the ITC Sinda's history conveys an idea about what makes the school a valuable object of what could be learnt about doing development work in Burma and Myanmar<sup>1</sup>— past and present:

The ITC Sinda goes back to plans of a Burmese education minister Dr. Nyi Nyi in December 1970 to establish a model school of vocational training. The first training course however started only nine years later under the supervision of the Ministry of Industry (2) headed by Col. Maung Cho who had received vocational training in West Germany in the 1950s. The courses offered by the school were modelled after the German "dual system" of vocational training over a period of three years focussing on practical training.<sup>2</sup> The school was opened in December 1979 and handed over to the Burmese side in 1985. Following the mass demonstrations in 1988 ended by a military coup, all German development aid was terminated. The school continued to operate albeit with a number of changes.

In 1998 and 2008, the courses were reduced to two and one year respectively. On the other hand, five more ITCs supervised by the Industry Ministry were established from 2008 onwards with the assistance of Asian countries. In February 2012 the German government decided to resume development aid to Myanmar. The Industry Minister at that time asked his German counterpart to restart assistance to the ITC Sinda as the first measure of the renewed co-operation. The German government complied. Both new material and development workers were provided and some retired Burmese teachers were recalled. Recently, the German agencies implementing the government's aid began planning to terminate further direct assistance to the school and instead concentrate on supporting countrywide TVET programs. In 2009, on the occasion of the 30th anniversary of the school, an alumni organisation was founded that now has more than 1,400 members from a total of 5,000 trainees taken in from batch 1 to batch 37. In December 2014, on the occasion of the school's 35th anniversary ("Jade Jubilee") some 2,000 persons celebrated the event. For December 2019, an even greater festivity is planned to commemorate the ITC's Ruby Jubilee.

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1 The country is called "Myanmar" from when the ruling junta in 1989 issued an order to use this name in official English texts to denote the whole country. Before 1989, the term "Burma" was used, based on the name of the country's largest ethnic group. The same applies to the terms "Yangon" and "Rangoon".

2 For a short assessment of the system see <https://www.bmbf.de/en/the-german-vocational-training-system-2129.html> (accessed 16.5.2019). The "dual system" is practised in the German speaking countries of Germany, Switzerland and Austria. A Swiss based International Non-Government Organisation (INGO), the Centre for Vocational Training (CVT) commenced working in Myanmar in 2002. Its programs are based on the "dual system". 656 trainees had graduated by 2016, the majority as commercial assistants and hotel & gastronomic assistants. In the technical fields, cabinet makers, metalworkers and electricians were trained (<https://www.cvt-myanmar.com/about-cvt/>). The Associations offered three-month courses for "Certified Instructors" as well. For historical background and current developments in Switzerland, see Gonon, 2005.

**IMAGE 1: THE JADE JUBILEE IN SINDE, 20 DECEMBER 2014**



*PHOTO: ITC SINDE*

Here are some questions that a detailed exploration of this unique project and its various contexts might help to answer:

1. What can be learnt about the impact of Burma's/Myanmar's political history on development projects established with foreign assistance?
2. What can be learnt about the motifs and instruments of foreign countries in providing development aid to Myanmar?
3. How are Burma's/Myanmar's internal affairs and its acceptance of foreign aid related?
4. What reasons can be identified for the positive assessment of the school by the Burmese government and the people who taught and were trained there?
5. What factors can be identified that might contribute to successful aid to upgrade the Myanmar TVET sector?
6. What factors can be identified that hinder development aid to achieve positive results?

The story of the ITC Sinde can help to answer such questions because it is the oldest development project in the field of vocational training undertaken in Burma. Before 1988, the western state of divided Germany, the Bundesrepublik Deutschland (BRD)<sup>3</sup> was the only country that provided assistance in this field.<sup>4</sup> After a nominally civilian government

(at least partly legitimised by elections) had taken over the government in 2011, the Federal Republic of Germany (FRG) was the first western country that signed an agreement with Myanmar for government-to-government development aid.

## **AIMS, METHODOLOGY AND SOURCES**

The history of the ITC Sinde therefore provides information about the impact of development aid based on bilateral agreements between two countries, as well as the effects of terminating such aid due to the phasing out of a project as well as political reasons. Providing development aid to Myanmar by various foreign agencies is a rather recent phenomenon. In contrast, the "Sinde Story" started some 50 years back in Burma's socialist period under one-party rule and spans the long and on-going political transformation to some form of

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3 The German acronym BRD (for Bundesrepublik Deutschland) will be used to designate the western German state. The eastern state, the German Democratic Republic will be referred to as DDR (Deutsche Demokratische Republik).

4 In terms of economic co-operation and development aid, the Federal Republic of Germany (FRG) was the second biggest partner of socialist Burma. Japanese ODA did not concentrate on vocational training at that time.

democratic and market orientated political system, the outcome of which cannot yet be foreseen. With this background, this case study aims at providing some material to better assess the influence of those aspects of Myanmar's political, societal and economic environment that have not fundamentally changed over the decades, and can thus assist in existing development projects or in designing new ones.

The following account is the result of detailed research into the story of the ITC Sinda in the interface of development studies and international relations by using methods of text interpretation, interviews and evaluation of questionnaires from a variety of stakeholders in the project. This abridged version concentrates on the focal points emphasised in the executive summary and omits a number of details concerning the various levels of co-operation between agents and agencies of the two countries involved. The essential factor of the asymmetric relation between the providers/givers of aid and the recipients can therefore not be covered adequately.<sup>5</sup>

One of the many asymmetries involved in development aid is related to the sources on which such a study can be based. For the time until 1988, the German archives were consulted. They contained a lot of documents concerning the emergence of the ITC Sinda as a part of the many facets of German-Burmese relations up until the peak of the mass demonstrations in 1988 that resulted in the end of the socialist one-party government by a military coup.<sup>6</sup> The documents found were extremely helpful in providing a fair and balanced picture of the interesting genesis of the school and its political context until the crucial year of 1988. The recollections of teachers – German as well as Burmese - and former trainees helped to gain a vivid picture of the ITC Sinda's initial period after the first German experts arrived in Burma in 1977.

For the time after 1988, almost no archival material is available. The information provided for the time between 1988 and 2012 mainly rests on interviews and questionnaires, mostly acquired with the help of the alumni association and with the support of the present principal of the ITC and the responsible Ministry for

Industry. For the time after 2012, much information is available again, mainly from the internet. Most of the material is about the new contexts of the ITC Sinda as an element of creating a comprehensive TVET system in Myanmar in connection with supporting the sector of small and middle sized enterprises (SMEs). The information provided by such sources is complemented by interviews with German and Myanmar persons in which the ITC Sinda plays a role.

## OUTLINE

The story of the ITC Sinda will be presented in chronological order. Part 1 gives an outline of German-Burmese relations with a focus on development issues from the end of World War II until 1970, the time when the first plans of what would become the ITC Sinda in 1970 were drafted followed by an outline of the twist and turns until the opening ceremony of the school (Part 2). Next comes an overview about the period between 1979 and 1988 including some information about the attempt to build a second training centre in Thanlyin (Part3).

Part 4 spans the time between 1988 and the end of the State Law and Order Restoration Council (SLORC)/ State Peace and Development Council (SPDC) governments in 2011, first giving some information about the three phases of the school under sole Burmese supervision (4.1); followed by an outline of side effects that can attributed to the ITC Sinda (4.2); the establishment of five new ITCs after 2008 (4.2.1), and the emergence of the alumni organisation (4.2.2). Part 5 deals with the resumption of German development aid after 2011 to Myanmar and the special role of the ITC Sinda in this process. Finally, some short final considerations on the significance of the school will be considered.

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5 For a detailed discussion of this issue see Baaz 2005, an empirical study of the situation in Tanzania.

6 After the unification of Germany, the archives contain material collected from both sides of the former state boundary that was formally abolished on October 3, 1990. According to "30-year-rule" archival material is accessible to the public 30 years after its creation. Most sources used here come from West German sources.

## ① Chapter 1: Historical Background – Burma and Germany until the 1970s

The end of World War II signified new beginnings for both for the “two Germanys” and for Burma that had something in common. Burma became independent from British rule on January 4, 1948, followed by an immediate outbreak of civil war that caused a number of divisions due to ideological fissures and ethnic conflicts (that still trouble the country today). In 1949, two German states came into being under two constitutions that reflected the antithetical ideologies of “communism” and “democracy” determining the politics of the Eastern and Western Blocs during the period of the Cold War.<sup>7</sup> The two German governments in their respective convictions to represent the “true Germany” started a competition to win friends among the new nations that emerged in the process of decolonisation.

Burma after the achievement of independence on pursued a strict neutral course and successfully established good relations with both the Federal Republic of Germany (BRD) in the west as well as the eastern German Democratic Republic (DDR). German-Burmese relations after the great war flourished in the shadows of the frosty international climate of the Cold War. West Germany from the beginning emphasised economic co-operation.<sup>8</sup> East Germany concentrated on the fields of education and culture on the basis of an - alleged - ideological common ground. In this context West Germany’s Social-Democratic Party (SPD), the largest opposition party in the FRG’s post-war parliament, was active as well, for example by supporting the Asian Socialist Conference headquarters which were located in Rangoon.<sup>9</sup>

**IMAGE 2: THE GUARDIAN, 29 NOVEMBER 1956**



*PHOTO: POLITICAL ARCHIVE, BERLIN*

<sup>7</sup> The Basis Law (Grundgesetz) of the BRD was adopted May 23, 1949 followed by elections in August of the same year.

<sup>8</sup> For details see Zöllner 1993; Revel 2007

<sup>9</sup> The West-German Social-Democratic Party (SPD), forming the opposition in the FRG’s parliament for many years after the war, was also active in the field of ideological co-operation by establishing close ties with socialist politicians in Burma and other parts of Asia in the effort to build up a community of Asian socialist parties. The first Asian Socialist Conference took place in Rangoon in January 1953. U Ba Swe, leader of the country’s Socialist party, was elected chairman. The SPD supported the movement.

This ideological contest allowed Burma to maintain good relations with both German states and accept assistance beneficial to the country's development without endangering its neutrality and independence.<sup>10</sup> The establishment of the Industrial Training Centre at Sinda was indirectly related to this competition, as well as West Germany's assistance in developing a Burmese arms industry, which Burma wanted to ensure preservation of its newly won sovereignty and to manage internal armed conflict.

### THE GENESIS OF A SPECIAL BUSINESS PARTNERSHIP

From 1950 on, Kuomintang troops that had been defeated by Mao Tse Tung's communist party entered eastern Burma and took control of great parts of the Shan State during the following years. This intrusion caused the armed forces, the Tatmadaw, to change its profile from a troops specialised in guerilla fighting against internal rebels to an army able to repel external aggression.<sup>11</sup> For this purpose, the military assistance provided by India in the first years after independence had to be minimised both for military and political reasons. Special equipment was needed and a dependency on the great western neighbour had to be avoided. This task was undertaken by Aung Gyi and Maung Maung, two young colonels working under the supervision of Lt. General Ne Win, the head of the Burmese armed forces. On one of their "shopping trips", Col. Maung Maung in mid 1955 visited West Germany after having been in Yugoslavia and France. Here, he made arrangements for co-operation with the Fritz Werner company, specialised on ammunition manufacturing,<sup>12</sup> to train Burmese soldiers in Germany as part of a scheme to build up the military capacity and arms industry in Burma.<sup>13</sup>

Ten years later, the company was integrated into a syndicate of West Berlin companies suffering from the isolated location of the city. The new consortium was owned to 90% by the BRD's government and supervised by the Ministry of Economics

after 1969. It was headed by Dr. Rudolf Meyer who had before successfully reorganised the Fritz Werner company. Maung Maung's plan aimed at building up an indigenous arms industry in Burma. Together with the managers of the company, a scheme was developed to train soldiers and some civilians in West Germany to make them capable of supervising the factories of the Burmese Defence Services. The scheme started in 1956 - one year later a contract was signed to build the first factory to produce ammunition shells in Rangoon.<sup>14</sup>

One of the first trainees sent as an apprentice to the BRD was a talented and ambitious soldier coming from a renowned family named Maung Cho, born 1931.<sup>15</sup> He had already studied in England for some time and then for two years underwent training at the two branches of the company in West-Berlin and Geisenheim, the latter town located near Wiesbaden on the banks of the river Rhine. After his return, he headed the industrial enterprises of the military and became a member of a newly created industry Ministry (1975) that concentrated on promoting the heavy industry sector.

The co-operation of the Burmese military and the Fritz Werner Company resulted in the establishment of a number of plants for military and civil purposes.<sup>16</sup> Some of these plants were constructed on the west bank of the Ayeyawady River. In 1962, a plant for hand grenades was built in Sinda followed by another factory producing ammunition for grenade launchers in 1976.<sup>17</sup> The entrance to the compound of the Defence Industries is located on the way from the village of Sinda to the ITC. In Nyaung Chi Daung and Htonbo, situated south of Sinda, other factories, both for military and civil goods, were built with the assistance of the German company.<sup>18</sup>

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10 Two German diplomatic missions of different status were established first by the DDR in 1954 and one year later by the BRD. They competed for the favour of the government as well as public opinion.

11 For details see Callahan 1996: 409-456.

12 For a recent profile of the company and its history see <http://www.fritz-werner.com/index.php?id=55> and <http://www.fritz-werner.com/index.php?id=9> (accessed 27.3.2016).

13 Interview with Maung Maung in Yangon, March 9, 1996. Maung Maung and his delegation had been in Yugoslavia before but found the weapons produced there not suitable for the Burmese terrain. And France was regarded to be too closely connected to Great Britain, which still had a military mission in Rangoon.

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14 The factory is still located opposite the Inya Lake Hotel between Kaba Aye Pagoda Road and the lake. According to East German observers, some 250 persons had undergone training in the FRG between 1956 and 1967. After that, the number was increased to more than 50 per year. It was stated that West Germany's position in the field of such training held a top position comparable only to Japan (Thomas 1972: 254-255). The rival observers however did not relate the activities to the Fritz Werner company that was only mentioned in connection with the construction of an arms factory.

15 One of his brothers was U Lwin who served as Minister of Finance in one of Ne Win's governments and after 1988 became spokesman of the NLD. His daughter is the wife of Htin Kyaw who became President after the elections of 2015.

16 According to a list submitted by the company to the German government, the company between 1958 and 1982 was directly involved in 23 industrial projects in Burma, 10 of each for military and civilian products, and three projects producing explosives that could be used for either purpose. It further had worked as a consultant for 4 further civilian plants. 5 more projects (3 military and 2 civilian) were planned in 1983. (AA PA B 37 127278.)

**IMAGE 3: ENTRANCE TO THE ARMS FACTORY IN SINDE, OCTOBER 2017**



PHOTO: H.-B. ZÖLLNER

Furthermore and most importantly, Fritz Werner chairman Dr. Meyer established good personal contacts with Ne Win that resulted in private visits of the Burmese leader to Germany in the course of his yearly trips to Europe between 1962 and 1988. These trips were classified as private and never aroused interest of the German media despite the lack of secrecy.<sup>17</sup>

In one of the documents of the West German Foreign Office connected to Ne Win's first planned visit to the FRG, Fritz Werner is called the "DSI Continental Branch".<sup>18</sup> DSI stands for "Defence Services Institute", a business consortium established by the military in 1950 to serve the needs of military personnel

and their families under the management of Aung Gyi. In 1960, the DSI was registered as a company not expected to earn profits. It comprised "banks, shipping lines and the largest import-export operation in the country."<sup>19</sup> One year later it was renamed "Burma Economic Development Corporation" (BEDC). Supported by the West German government, the military had started to build up an economic empire. The BEDC can be seen as the forerunner of the many companies that still today exist in Myanmar with military involvement. The contacts established between the Burmese military and Fritz Werner in the early years before the military coup of 1962 paved the way for the close state-to-state co-operation of socialist Burma

17 Other military related factories were built in Rangoon. The contract to build the factory there was signed August 11, 1958 still under the premiership of U Nu who handed over power in October of that year to a "Caretaker Government" headed by General Ne Win. The production of G3 rifles (estimated production of 10,000 per year) and ammunition was finished in 1962.

18 See Zöllner 1993: 78. The list depends on information given by the company to the author in 1992. It contains more plants producing civilian goods than the list submitted to the government in 1983 and does not contain information about the plants built for the Defence Industries.

19 Near the location of the factory in West Germany, a Burmese pavilion was erected in 1971 as a thank-you gift from Ne Win to the company. For details of the coverage in the German media see Zöllner 1993: 54-61. The DDR was well aware of the special connections and worried about the influence of the capitalist rival in the west, but trusted that in Burma as well as in Germany, socialism would prevail (Thomas 1972).

20 Ibid.: 35.

21 Callahan 1996: 440. For an overview on the activities of the DSI until 1960 see Director of Information 1960: 223-250.

under military supervision and the government of the BRD that owned the company. Before the war, the company specialised in military equipment, later the business was broadened to produce machine tools of any kind and build up industrial facilities.

### **A SERIES OF VISITS DOCUMENTING FRIENDLY RELATIONS**

On this background, it is not surprising that the coup of March 1962 did not badly effect the good relations between the two countries. On the contrary, the West German embassy in Rangoon regarded the military government as more reliable than that of capricious Buddhist politician Nu. The holding of elections in 1960 by the Caretaker Government headed by Ne Win and the following transfer of political power to Nu's winning party convinced the West German diplomats in Rangoon that the leader of the army acted in the interest of the country and not because of personal ambitions.

The close relations between the BRD and Burma manifested in a series of visits of high-ranking officials to each other's countries. Furthermore, West German agencies were eager to invite Burmese delegations to encourage them to appreciate the benefits of the West German way of organising society.

At the top political level, the father of the West German economic miracle, Ludwig Erhard, displayed a special interest in Burma. After having signed the first trade agreement between the two countries on the occasion of a visit of Burmese trade minister U Tin in 1956, he came to Burma in October 1958 on the invitation he had received two years before. The visit happened shortly after U Nu had handed over power to Ne Win as head of the Caretaker Government. He met the new Prime Minister at a garden party given by the German ambassador. In July 1959, he received a Burmese delegation in Bonn. Later that year, Burma for the first time participated in the trade fair in Frankfurt.

**IMAGE 4: LUDWIG ERHARD IN BURMA IN OCTOBER 1958**



**German Economics Minister Professor Erhard has a taste of Burmese rice and curry at the European Trade Fair**

*PHOTO: POLITICAL ARCHIVE, BERLIN*

In February 1959 Willy Brandt, then mayor of West Berlin and a future chancellor, paid a two day visit to Burma in order to counter East Germany's efforts in establishing full diplomatic relations in the neutral countries of Asia. Besides these visits, cultural exchanges occurred. In 1961, the monk U Narada heading a delegation of Burmese monks was received by the FRG's first Chancellor, Konrad Adenauer, who later sent a typewriter with Burmese fonts to his guest as a sign of appreciation of Buddhist-Christian understanding.

All German visitors were charmed by the splendour of Shwedagon Pagoda and by the friendliness and appeal of the Burmese people they met. Political interests thus were embedded in an atmosphere of harmony and mutual understanding. With regard to politics towards Burma, the BRD's German parties that opposed each other in West Germany's parliamentary politics formed an informal "great coalition".

After some attempts to realise an official visit from Ne Win to the BRD before the coup of 1962, he came to West Germany for the first time in August 1962 at the end of a private

journey to Europe, five months after he had taken over the responsibilities for Burma's politics as head of the Revolutionary Council formed following the putsch of March 2. The West German leg of the trip was organised by the Fritz Werner staff. The party headed by Burma's new top politician came from Vienna where he had received medical treatment from his favourite neurologist. After that, Ne Win visited the country together with his entourage almost every year, and received many German visitors at the residence provided to him by the company. Never in his life he travelled to East Germany.

The first official exchange of the two country's top leaders happened in 1967 and 1968. German Chancellor Kurt Kiesinger who had taken over from Ludwig Erhard as head of a Great Coalition of the conservative Christian Democratic Union (CDU) and the leftist Social Democratic Party (SPD) led by Willy Brandt came to Burma in November 1967 for two days in connection with a ten-day journey to Asia that included India, Pakistan and Ceylon.

**IMAGE 5: KIESINGER AND NE WIN AT THE EVENING RECEPTION, 22.11.1967**



PHOTO: BUNDESBILDSTELLE: ENGELBERT REINEKE

In his conversation with Ne Win, the chancellor informed his counterpart about the intentions of the new government of a more flexible foreign policy aimed at easing tensions between the western and eastern bloc, whereas Ne Win in his opening remarks stressed German assistance in industrialising Burma. The Burmese press commentaries emphasised this subject besides underscoring the need for friendly relations based on respect for the Burmese wish to continue a strictly neutralist policy.<sup>22</sup>

One year later, the first official visit of Ne Win to the BRD<sup>23</sup> occurred in October 1968. Germany's President Heinrich Lübke had invited the Burmese Head of State through Chancellor Kiesinger. This visit highlights Ne Win's special interest in asking for West Germany's assistance in developing Burma's economy.

Before leaving for his first official visit to Germany, Ne Win had met the German ambassador. He told him that he would appreciate a "light program" and informed the diplomat that

**IMAGE 6: RECEPTION GIVEN BY FEDERAL PRESIDENT LÜBKE FOR NE WIN ON OCTOBER 17, 1968**



PHOTO: BUNDESBILDSTELLE: DETLEF GRÄFINGHOLT

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<sup>22</sup> In contrast to these statements supporting the official stance of the government, the leftist "Vanguard" magazine published an article by the famous writer and former member of the Communist Party of Burma Thein Pe Myint noted the rise of "neo-Nazism" in West Germany highlighted by the rise of a right wing party whereas the communist party was banned. The article prompted the FRG's ambassador to write a lengthy reply to the author and a short note to the editor of the paper.

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<sup>23</sup> For his former unofficial visits that started in 1962 after earlier plans had failed (Taylor 2015: 244) see Zöllner 1993: 34-37.

he had just visited some industrial projects that had been implemented with German assistance in Burma. Among them were a number of projects conducted with the assistance of the Fritz Werner company, among them a factory in Sinda, as disclosed in an article in a Burmese newspaper. However, the name of the German company was not mentioned in the ambassador's note on his meeting with Ne Win that took place before the visit. The chairman of the Revolutionary Council further stated that his country lacked indigenous skilled personnel and economic and commercial experience due to the fact that previously these segments had been controlled by foreigners from Britain, India and China.<sup>24</sup>

### BURMESE NEEDS AND GERMAN OFFERS

These remarks show that the efforts of Nu's governments to meet the Burmese need to reconstruct the country after the war were not regarded as wholly satisfactory by the military led government that took over power in 1962. Nu in 1952 had introduced a comprehensive program of reconstruction called *pyi-daw-tha* ("happy land") that was to mobilise the people "for rehabilitation and development through self-help" and thus building "a prosperous and happy nation".<sup>25</sup> A new kind of education was necessary called "technical education" by the Prime Minister, different from the "slave education" of the British that had served just the economic interests of the British.<sup>26</sup> Such education was intended to create a "new era," and to include the teaching of moral qualities in addition to the communication of knowledge and skills.<sup>27</sup>

Furthermore, the *pyi-daw-tha* program included plans to industrialise the country. A steel mill built by a West German company was part of the program, but due to internal political struggles within the Burmese government and different views of the German and Burmese personnel responsible for the plant, it did not produce the expected results. Aung Gyi, the economic expert of the Revolutionary Council under Ne Win solved the problem. The German company provided some further equipment and sent a surveyor to help in ironing out the problems.

The new government extended the program of nationalisation

24 AA PA Neues Amt Bd: 2.188; Note von Keiser dated 14.10.1968.

25 Maung Maung 1953: 117.

26 Nu 1953: 62.

27 *ibid.*: 91.

commenced by its predecessor and during the government of the Caretaker Government between 1958 and 1960. In order to achieve a self-sufficient economic system, the relationship of improving the economy and changing attitudes already proclaimed by U Nu was reiterated. In his speech on the occasion of the first anniversary of the coup, Ne Win said:

The economic deterioration shall be corrected economically, and the moral degeneration among the people shall be similarly checked by a revival of our traditional observance of moral and social rules of conduct. I would therefore appeal to you all to play your part in bringing about a general rejuvenation in the moral and cultural life of the nation and thereby help the country in the march forward to national prosperity.<sup>28</sup>

The tone of the statements issued by the state leaders of Burma over the years emphasising the need to combine technical knowledge and moral standards concurred with experiences in the BRD. The country had experienced the "help for self-help-principle" through the material aid provided by the Marshall Plan for Europe. From this experience, the moral obligation to assist others in the same way was derived.<sup>29</sup>

The emergence of conceptualising a policy for assisting developing countries in a systematic way can be traced back to the year 1956, the year of the signing of the first economic agreement between the two countries. A paper drafted by the Foreign Office stated that: "the focus of utilisation of financial means in the beginning should lie on educational measures in the economic and technical sector and in the economic planning and acting in the widest sense. The stimulus for "development" has to come from the people."<sup>30</sup>

However, one factor hindering the noble aims formulated in the 1950s was the difficulty of coordinating development activities between the great number of agencies involved. The situation of a badly integrated development policy did not fully change

28 Taylor 2015: 276

29 The first money provided for some kind of development aid in 1953 was taken from money provided by the Marshall Plan. The money from the plan was managed by a public bank, the Kreditanstalt for Wiederaufbau (KfW). After the end of the Marshall Plan, the bank helped finance development projects in Germany and - through a subsidiary - in developing countries as well. The equipment for the ITC Sinda acquired after 2012 is financed by the KfW.

30 Dumke 1997: 22.

after in November 1961 when a Ministry for Economic Co-operation (BMZ) was added to the West German government. The BMZ was mainly responsible for technical co-operation e.g. the posting of experts in developing countries to build up institutions providing vocational training following the "dual system" practised in West Germany. This field of development aid undoubtedly could and can be regarded as a successful West German export model. According to a book published in 1977 by the GTZ<sup>31</sup> (the agency created in 1975 to implement the BRD's development aid worldwide in a systematic way) 51 vocational training projects in Africa, Asia and Latin America existed – among them the project in Sinde being the only one located in Burma, with technical assistance provided by GTZ staff and financial assistance given by a state owned bank according to guidelines shaped by the Ministry.<sup>32</sup>

## SUMMARY

At the end of 1970, when the first plans to establish a new way of vocational training in Burma were proposed by minister Dr. Nyi Nyi, Burma and Germany were rather unequal partners that had, however, developed a successful complementary relationship benefiting both sides. West Germany's assistance to Burma helped to prevent the existence of a fully fledged diplomatic mission of the eastern German state.<sup>33</sup> At the same time, giving development aid served the political aim of selflessly assisting poor nations of what was then still called the "Third World" as a consequence of the aid given to West Germany to recover from the disastrous economic consequences of the war. Economic interests of the FRG's did not have a dominant role.<sup>34</sup>

Burma needed such selflessly given aid from a country with a strong industrial capacity, a sound economy and a long-standing tradition of training young people successfully. Furthermore, in contrast to Britain, Japan - and recently the United States - the relationship had not been tarnished by the experiences

of colonial rule or the support of forces endangering Burma's sovereignty as happened with US assistance to the Kuomintang.

The societies of both countries were, however, moving in different directions at that time. The BRD was on the way to ending the period of a conservative restoration after the great war as shown in the student-led "cultural revolution" of 1968 that politically tried to overcome the strong antagonism between the two dominating Blocs in Europe and the rest of the world. Burma, on the other hand, was ruled by a military Revolutionary Council that tried to legitimise its rule by adopting a new constitution under one-party rule, similar to the East German socialist state.

A cornerstone of the close relations between both countries was the assistance of Fritz Werner in helping to build up both the armament and civil industry of Burma in which the training of Burmese soldiers in West Germany played a crucial role. The public in both countries did not take notice of this fact albeit for different reasons. In Burma as in the DDR, no public sphere existed, in the BRD the German-Burmese relations were not controversially discussed by politicians and did not catch the attention of journalists despite the close relations illustrated by the regular visits of General Ne Win in Bavaria and the Rheingau. The West German administration respected Ne Win's wish to keep a low profile during his visits and had no reasons to disclose the involvement of the company under state supervision in the establishment of the Burmese armament industry. An article in a German newspaper published in 1970 was entitled: "Ne Win, the Big Unknown."

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31 Gesellschaft für Technische Zusammenarbeit (Association for Technical co-operation).

32 [GTZ 1977]

33 Until the end of the so-called "Hallstein-Doctrine" in 1970 that tried to limit the diplomatic recognition of the DDR, the diplomatic mission of the eastern German state in Burma had a lower rank than the embassy of the BRD. The legation DDR was upgraded to an embassy in 1973.

34 Fritz Werner, the company that helped to establish the close relations, had been rescued by the government from going bankrupt.

## ② Chapter 2: The Long Detour to Sinde (1970-1979)

Nine years lay between the first recorded initiative of asking West Germany for assistance in the field of vocational training in December 1970 to the opening ceremony of the ITC Sinde in December 1979. This long period was due to careful planning and delays caused by the bureaucracies on both sides as well as political changes in Burma.

### THE INITIAL PERIOD: PLANNING A TECHNICAL HIGH SCHOOL IN RANGOON

According to the archives, the Deputy Minister of Education, Dr. Nyi Nyi invited two officials of the German embassy to his office in late 1970 and asked for assistance in the “training of skilled workers and technicians” by providing “teaching material and teaching”. The report of the ambassador on this issue resulted in opening a file on “industrial vocational training” in Burma at the Ministry for Economic co-operation.

The embassy connected the request to the first visit of a high-ranking official of the German Ministry for Economic Co-operation and Development Aid, undersecretary Professor Karl-Heinz Sohn, to Burma in September of the same year. On the occasion of his visit, two agreements between the governments on technical and economic co-operation and financial assistance had been signed. Shortly after the visit, a very successful German contribution to a fair exhibiting teaching material in Rangoon’s “biggest exhibition hall” in late November of that year had taken place.<sup>35</sup>

Dr. Nyi Nyi, born 1930, was one of the few civilians in the Burmese government at that time. He had studied geology in London, taught at Rangoon University and joined the Ministry of Education after the coup of 1962 on the request of a friend to help develop the Burmese educational system.<sup>36</sup> He travelled widely to many countries, among them East and West Germany - on separate journeys in order not to cause diplomatic problems. His inquiries

### IMAGE 7: NYI NYI AROUND 1974; DR. NYI NYI MEETING AUNG SAN SUU KYI IN SEPTEMBER 2012 AT THE UN, NEW YORK



PHOTOS: TIME MAGAZINE; FROM A BOOK ON HIS LIFE)

35 BA Koblenz B 213/24196, Letter Ambassador Ramisch to Foreign Office, 17.12.1970.

36 Officially, he held the post of deputy minister, but in the 1970s, he was “factually acting education minister above whom as the nominal minister a political personality of the military government is posted.” as a West German educational expert stated. BA Koblenz B 213/24196. Draft expertise in German: p. 3.

in the field of vocational education resulted in the conviction that the West German system of dual vocational education was superior to all others, including the British, after which the whole Burmese educational system had been modelled. He was however aware that it had to be amended to suit conditions in Burma. On his initiative, the embassy in February 1971 received a report about the existing Burmese institutions dealing with non-academic technical training, and the ambitious plans of the Revolutionary Council to extend this branch of education. The report listed a number of industrial plants established with financial aid coming from the BRD – some of them established with the assistance of the Fritz Werner company as a consultant hired by the Industrial Development Corporation.<sup>37</sup> The new plants however needed technical aid as well as teaching material. The embassy supported the request and asked for an expertise of German professionals.

For this purpose, two experts came to Burma in July and August 1971 and stayed there for one month each. No specialists dealing with the industrial sector were living in Burma at that time, it was noted, except those employed by Fritz Werner. Since the business of the company included the engagement in the arms industry that was regarded as “widely secret”, it was decided that any semblance of a co-operation with the company should be avoided. Dr Nyi Nyi received the two experts twice.

One of the reports, written by Erhard Rathenberg who would become the first team leader of the new project, favoured the establishment of a vocational training centre in Rangoon serving the needs of the country's industry. He proposed one year training in eight trades from electricians and auto mechanics to carpenters and concrete workers for 225 students, 150 of them to be housed in a boarding school. The trainees should have completed two-years education at one of the country's technical high schools.<sup>38</sup> In his final remarks, Rathenberg – almost prophetically – foresaw some problems concerning the location of the school because the Ministry wanted to create Technical High Schools in all parts of the country.

The proposals were discussed in West Germany's then capital Bonn by a small group of government officials. They voted for a “multi-purpose-project” consisting of an inter-company training workshop for medium and small enterprises, and

recommended the sending of another expert to Burma.<sup>39</sup> In January 1972, BMZ Undersecretary Professor Sohn and other Ministry officials discussed the establishment of the school with Dr. Nyi Nyi, and pledged German support for a vocational training centre that followed the “German model” known as the “dual system,” combining practical training and theoretical instruction over the course of three years.<sup>40</sup>

The draft of an agreement on the project was prepared after two other German experts had visited Burma for one month in April and May 1972. They submitted a detailed report in German in September 1972 and an English version to be handed over to the Burmese side in March 1973. It recommended sending up 20 Burmese nationals to Germany to receive training there.

In February 1974, a German delegation visited Burma again to speed up the project. The report shows that it was difficult to place the special “experimental character” of the school into the context of the system of the responsible Ministry and the Burmese educational system, but were impressed by the qualifications of the Burmese staff they met.

The German government gave a green light for the project, a budget was allocated to the GTZ that had just been created at the beginning of 1975 by merging two institutions dealing with development assistance. Erhard Rathenberg, who had been selected as head for the German team to implement the project, came to Burma in February 1975 to develop initial plans for the future training centre that was envisaged to be constructed in South Okkalapa, a new quarter of Rangoon that had been built after the coup of 1962. He took up his duties on August 1, 1975. In his first letters to the official of the BMZ, he mentioned that the agreement to establish the new school had not yet been signed.

## THE KIDNAPPING OF A MODEL PROJECT

The plans drafted for a model school in Rangoon were never realised. In the words of the GTZ handbook published in 1977: “After the German project manager had already left for Rangoon in mid 1975 to do some preparatory work, a decision taken at a high Burmese level surprisingly stated that a further concentration of educational institutions in the capital was not desirable. A

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37 The corporation was replaced by the Heavy Industries Corporation after the coup of 1962, and was headed by Maung Cho from 1972 on.  
38 Bundearchiv Koblenz B 213/8729

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39 Ibid.: Minutes of a meeting held 22.12.1971 in Bonn.  
40 Bundearchiv Koblenz BA ....., Records of the talks with Dr. Nyi Nyi on January 21 and 26, 1972.

cabinet resolution taken on January 27, 1975 assigned the project to the Ministry of Industry as the new lead partner. The Ministry planned to build up a model educational establishment ("Industrial Training Centre") in Sinde, some 300 km north of Rangoon, in connection with a greater industrial settlement. A delay of implementing of the project was foreseen.<sup>41</sup>

This transfer of the project site was due to the political changes happening in Burma. In March 1974 a constitution defining rules and regulations for a socialist one-party-system had come into force. As a consequence, a new cabinet had to be formed that had to be endorsed by the one-party-parliament whose members had been elected in January and February of that year. In the new cabinet, Dr. Nyi Nyi was promoted to take over the economically important Ministry of Mines.<sup>42</sup> As a consequence, the driving force behind the project aiming at restructuring the country's vocational education was no longer responsible for this project. The director of the Ministry's Department for Technical and Vocational Education retained his position but he was a bureaucrat without any political say. Furthermore, Nyi Nyi's transfer happened at a time before the agreement between the two governments had been finalised.<sup>43</sup>

In December 1974, student led protests started on the occasion of the funeral of U Thant, the late Secretary of the UN who had died in New York on November 26, 1974. Students and monks had seized the coffin and taken it to the place at the university campus where the Student Union Building had been destroyed by the military in July 1962.<sup>44</sup> The unrest resulted in the imposition of a curfew and the closure of universities and schools.<sup>45</sup>

On March 16, 1975, the first government under the new constitution was reshuffled. Dr. Nyi Nyi was kicked out, most likely as a consequence of cabinet intrigue. Ne Win had to dismiss him because civilian Nyi Nyi obviously was disliked by military members of the cabinet.<sup>46</sup> He was replaced by Maung

Maung Kha, the former Minister for Industry, who would become the country's Prime Minister from 1977 to 1988.<sup>47</sup> Maung Cho who had been Maung Maung Kha's deputy in the government formed in March 1974, was promoted to a newly created Ministry responsible for heavy industry, named "Ministry of Industry (2)". As mentioned earlier, he had been trained at the Fritz Werner company in the 1950s. He had been married to a German wife then and became Ne Win's trusted liaison for Burma's relations with Germany.

All this was not known to Rathenberg when he started his work on August 1, 1975. In a letter to the GTZ dated September 1, 1975, he informed his superior that he had "confidentially" been informed by his counterpart in the Ministry of Education that the government did not want any more schools to be established in Rangoon and that the location was to be transferred from Rangoon to Prome (Pyay). This information was the beginning of rather turbulent activities for the German personnel and agencies involved in the project starting with attempts of the newly arrived project chief to reverse the change of the project site.

In his letter to the GTZ, Rathenberg voiced some sympathy for the Burmese wish because there was not yet any Technical High School in Prome, but strongly advocated against the proposed location. His core argument was that the new site would not offer any "liveability" for foreign experts. One week after this letter was written, Rathenberg met with the new education minister and the official responsible for the project. The German expert voiced his concerns, the minister expressed his sympathy but reiterated that for political reasons no more Technical High Schools could be established in Rangoon. A compromise was proposed that would not increase the number of schools in Rangoon numerically. The German embassy forwarded Rathenberg's notes of the meeting to the Foreign Office and promised the team leader to send a note to the Burmese side in which the objections to the new place were stated. In a letter to the Foreign Office, the ambassador provided the information that the student unrest in December 1974 had been a main reason for the shift of the school's location.<sup>48</sup>

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41 [GTZ 1977]: 125.

42 [https://wikileaks.org/plusd/cables/1974RANGOO00606\\_b.html](https://wikileaks.org/plusd/cables/1974RANGOO00606_b.html) (accessed 6.5.2016).

43 One reason for the delay of the signing of the agreement was a special clause in a framework agreement on technical assistance concerning the exemption of German staff being taken into custody by Burmese authorities. According to the report of a German official visiting Burma in December 1975, Ne Win himself objected to the clause on the reason that it limited Burma's sovereignty. Most likely, this strict attitude was connected to a new self-assured attitude of the Burmese government after the enactment of the new constitution.

44 For details see Taylor 2015: 432-436.

45 For more information on the role of students in Burma's politics see Zöllner 2008.

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46 [https://www.wikileaks.org/plusd/cables/1975RANGOO00572\\_b.html](https://www.wikileaks.org/plusd/cables/1975RANGOO00572_b.html) (accessed 6.5.2016); Nyi Nyi was appointed ambassador to Australia and later worked with the UNESCO. He now lives in New York as an American citizen.

47 Maung Maung Kha had been a soldier before and was one of the Burmese who had been sent to Germany to be trained at the Fritz Werner company.

48 BA Koblenz 213/24184; letter ambassador to Foreign Office dated 8.1.1976. - The events after the student-led demonstrations in 1988 display the same pattern. A number of new university campuses were constructed far away from the centres of political power.

Rathenberg supported his rejection of the proposed site of Prome with the argument that according to his inquiries only some industry existed, producing consumer goods and supplies for the arms industry. The handwritten comments on this letter by the official in the Ministry responsible for the project that is preserved in the German archives show that he knew better. His note mentions that in Sinde pumps, electric appliances, machine tools, and car parts were produced. These notes show that the concerned high-ranking civil servant of the German Ministry had well acquainted himself with the situation of Burma's industrialisation.

In early December, Rathenberg in a letter to the responsible GTZ staff outlined a rather dramatic scenario by identifying his own views with those of others from the "German side" involved:

Our efforts are targeted to deprive the project from his [Maung Cho's] control in any case. Otherwise, a constant interference of the Industry Ministry and an outside influence on the project is to be expected. Furthermore it could not be excluded that in the end only army personnel would be trained at the centre.<sup>49</sup>

The hopes invested by Rathenberg in the visit of the Ministry official did not materialise. His arguments were never seriously discussed but simply dismissed by the official in charge of development work performed in South-East Asia. The responsible official visited Burma at the end of a journey to three South-East Asian countries in December 1975. In his detailed report about his visit, he noted that the government seemed to be in control again after the protests of workers and students. Measures had been taken to prevent further unrest and at the same time easing the "too centralised economic system", part of it being the relocation of educational institutions to the provinces.

The decision of the Burmese government was accepted as a matter of fact and even regarded as being in line with the ideas of the German Ministry official. After a visit to the Pyay region and together with Maung Cho, details of the establishment of a vocational training centre serving the needs of the new Ministry were drafted. With regard to the objections of the German team leader, a compromise was found. The family of the team leader was allowed to continue to live in Rangoon whereas for the German instructors, a "closed camp" with at least ten houses was to be constructed in Sinde.

**IMAGE 8: THE "GERMAN VILLAGE" IN SINDE**



PHOTO: ERICH PETERS

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49 BA Koblenz 213/24184; Letter Rathenberg to Hammerschmidt dated 3.12.1975.

**IMAGE 9: THE DEPUTY HEAD OF MISSION OF THE GERMAN EMBASSY, KLAUS WILDE (IN STRIPED SHIRT), AND MEMBERS OF THE PROJECT ON A VISIT TO SINDE INSPECTING THE CONSTRUCTION GOING ON THERE (EARLY 1979)**



PHOTO: FRANK MANN

This scheme for the new school outlined in early 1976 was modelled after the German system of dual vocational training. The German government official expected that the new institution responsible for the project on the Burmese side would care for a “swift implementation” of the project because it was conducted with “military discipline”. After the Burmese decision to transfer the responsibility for the school to the new Ministry and after German consent, it however took some time until the work to build the school could be realised. A lot of obstacles had to be removed.

First of all, the process of handing over the responsibility from one Burmese Ministry to the other took some time. The responsible staff of the GTZ who visited Burma in February 1976 stated that the transfer had not yet been finished. The partner organisation of the GTZ, the Heavy Industries Corporation (HIC), had not yet “any ideas” about the scheme, it was noted.<sup>50</sup> Second, a new agreement about the project

had to be drafted. This task was finished rather quickly and the signing of the agreement took place on April 19, 1977 in Rangoon.

The agreement stated that the ITC Sinde was to be implemented under the supervision of the Ministry of Industry (2) and had “the status of a pilot project in order to achieve maximum effectiveness for the future national technical vocational training system.” (Article 3). Seven trades were mentioned to be taught: machine tool operator, plant fitter, tool and die maker, motor mechanic, electrician, electrical machine maker, and foundry pattern maker. Some time after the opening of the school, draughting was added as the eighth trade.

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<sup>50</sup> BA Koblenz B213/24184 - Preliminary report of Mr. Hammerschmidt (GTZ) dated 3.3.1976.

Three year training courses were to be organised including a “supervised in-plant training period of up to 12 months.” 300 full-time training places were to be established and approximately 120 trainees per year admitted. They had to have passed grade 8 of the Middle School and an examination testing their aptitude for the school’s program. The agreement further regulated the responsibilities of both sides and details of the German funding.

Based on this agreement, the GTZ submitted an offer to the Ministry on June 1, 1978 that amounted to 23,215,240 Deutsche Marks.<sup>51</sup> The offer was accepted three months later. The construction work at the site in Sinde for which Burma was responsible started immediately after the signing of the agreement, based on some proposals submitted by a German civil engineer who had come to Burma together with the responsible person for the project from the GTZ.

Parallel to the beginning of the construction work, the training of the Burmese teachers started in Rangoon in December 1977 (see below in Section 3). The first students to be trained had already been selected in December 1978 but had to wait until schooling was expected to start - first in September, but finally commencing in December 1979.

## SUMMARY

The preceding account clearly shows that a number of very different factors contributed to the genesis of the training centre in Sinde. Basically, it was a shift within Burmese internal policies that caused the establishment of an Industrial Training Centre under the supervision of a newly created Ministry instead of the Ministry of Education. Furthermore, deliberations about the establishment of an efficient vocational training system in Burma played a role. Any provisions however on how the “model school” was to be propagated were missing.

Personal ambitions and assessments on both sides were involved, partly contrasting each other, partly corresponding. On the Burmese as well as on the German side, decision-

making was done according to the respective hierarchies, but the modes of decision taking were different. The decision of the German Ministry official to overrule the arguments of the team leader was based on factual reasons and influenced a particular reading of Burma’s politics that contrasted with that of the team leader.

The decision to create a new Ministry for Maung Cho that opened the opportunity to establish the training centre in Sinde, was the result of a personalisation of Burmese politics under Ne Win’s supremacy. Maung Cho’s German contacts based on his time as an apprentice in German factories contributed to the establishment of the ITC as well. Rathenberg’s arguments that the school would just serve the purposes of the military were not based on evidence but on speculations to prevent the school being moved to the Pyay region. They however reached a sensible point in German-Burmese relations that has not been publicly discussed until today.

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<sup>51</sup> According to a presentation on the 35<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the project, the total project cost amounted to 35,735 million DM, 10,241 million contributed by Burma and 25,542 million by Germany, and more than 20 million DM spent for salaries of the German experts and the training of Burmese staff members in Germany.

**IMAGE 10: AERIAL VIEW OF THE SINDE COMPLEX IN EAST-SOUTHEAST DIRECTION. ON THE HORIZON, THE ARAKAN YOMA ARE TO BE SEEN. ON THE RIGHT SIDE, THERE IS THE MOGAUNG MONASTERY.**



*PHOTO: HERMANN MAIER*

## ③ Chapter 3: The Implementation of the ITC Sinde 1979 - 1985 (1988)

The following section outlines core aspects of the implementation of the ITC that started shortly after the signing of the agreement in April 1977. (For a personal account of one of the Burmese teachers who served as school principal between 2003 and 2008 see Annex 1)

### THE FIRST TRAINING OF TEACHERS

According to the GTZ publication of September 1977, 10 German trainers for the Burmese teachers plus two German local staff members were to be employed. It was intended that there would be 24 Burmese teachers and eight domestic staff working in the administration, plus twenty supporting staff. For six Burmese professionals, scholarships for advanced training in Germany were envisaged and 24 Burmese staff were to receive teachers' training in Burma. These numbers were in the upper end of all projects documented in the publication.<sup>52</sup> According to the final report, the numbers of the Burmese staff receiving teachers' training in Germany was even higher.<sup>53</sup>

In December 1977, the first training of Burmese teachers started on the compound of the Central Research Organization<sup>54</sup> located on Kaba Aye Pagoda Rd., close to the Inya Lake Hotel and the armament factory of the Defence Services. Team leader Rathenberg was joined by four more German trainers. Two of them continued to work at the ITC Sinde, two did not. In April 1979, Herman Maier came to Burma to become the new head of the German training staff. Contrary to the prediction of his predecessor, the GTZ had no difficulties in finding experts who

were interested in broadening their horizons by working for some time at a remote place in a far-away place in an exotic country.

The training measures for the future Burmese staff aimed at bridging the wide gap between the mode of teaching practised in the two countries in terms of the different standards of technology, teaching methodology and the teacher-student relationship. The latter factor related to the transfer of attitudes is illustrated by an anecdote remembered by one of the first German experts teaching in Rangoon. One day, he taught his "teacher students" about the German dual system of vocational training. At the end of his instruction, he asked if the class had understood what he had been talking about. Immediately, the class speaker got to his feet and responded in a snappy way: "Yes Sir, everything understood". The German teacher wondered how the speaker could have known what had been happening in the minds of his classmates. He learnt that this answer had been given to show respect to the teacher. Any doubt about the success of the instruction would have meant that he had expressed himself not clearly enough. He then encouraged the class to ask questions.

Some time later, one participant in the training came to him after the lesson was over and all other students had already left the class. He remarked that he had not quite understood one of the calculations written on the blackboard. It turned out that the expert had made a mistake. The trainer noted with satisfaction that his effort to change the attitude of the class had not been in vain. The future Burmese teacher had comprehended the need of critical thinking and at the same time tried to save the face of the foreign teacher by not openly exposing his fault to his class-mates.<sup>55</sup>

The selection of the candidates for the teaching jobs at the new training centre was a mix of planning and coincidence.<sup>56</sup> Almost all of them had passed at one of the Technical High Schools situated in different towns of Burma after eleven

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52 [GTZ 1977]: 124-125.

53 The report states that 33 Burmese teachers - 27 for the workshops, 6 for theoretical instruction - were scheduled to be instructed by German experts to teach the Burmese students in Sinde in their native language [Final Report 1988]: 4.

54 The organisation had been established on the initiative of Maung Cho as a branch of the HIC, the partner organisation of the ITC Sinde, in order to search for innovations in Burma's industries. The compound was given to a construction company after a major project to build a high rise building near Shwedagon Pagoda was stopped in 2015 following public protests because the building would bar seeing the Shwedagon Pagoda from some parts of the city.

55 Interview with Helmar Bischoff, 11.2.2017.

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56 The following information is based on interviews with former Burmese teachers mainly conducted in October 2017.

years of schooling. After that, some of them had worked in factories of different types, and some had attended a Government Technical Institute. From rather different sources they learnt about the variety of jobs offered by the HIC. After application, they had to do a written test on one day at the HIC headquarters in Yangon. Later, they were informed that they had been chosen to teach at the ITC Sinde, without getting any information about the reasons. One of them when informed what he had to do objected that he thought himself not qualified as a teacher. The military officer who informed him about his assignment answered that he himself had been trained as a soldier but had to do an office job now. All of the teachers-to-be were rather young.

One Burmese teacher remembers that he was personally called by Maung Cho to go to Sinde. Another recalled that the HIC was mainly attractive because it was rumoured that working there offered the chance to go abroad. A third who was chosen to attend the training in Rangoon given by the

German experts did not speak English at that time and could not even answer the "Good morning" greeting of the German teacher. He later learnt the language through self-study. One of the teachers was a son of one of Maung Cho's brother Lwin who served as Finance Minister in the Cabinet and after 1988 became spokesman of the National League for Democracy (NLD). Supposedly, he had been spared to pass the test. All teachers were obliged to teach for ten years as compensation for the cost of the training they had received.

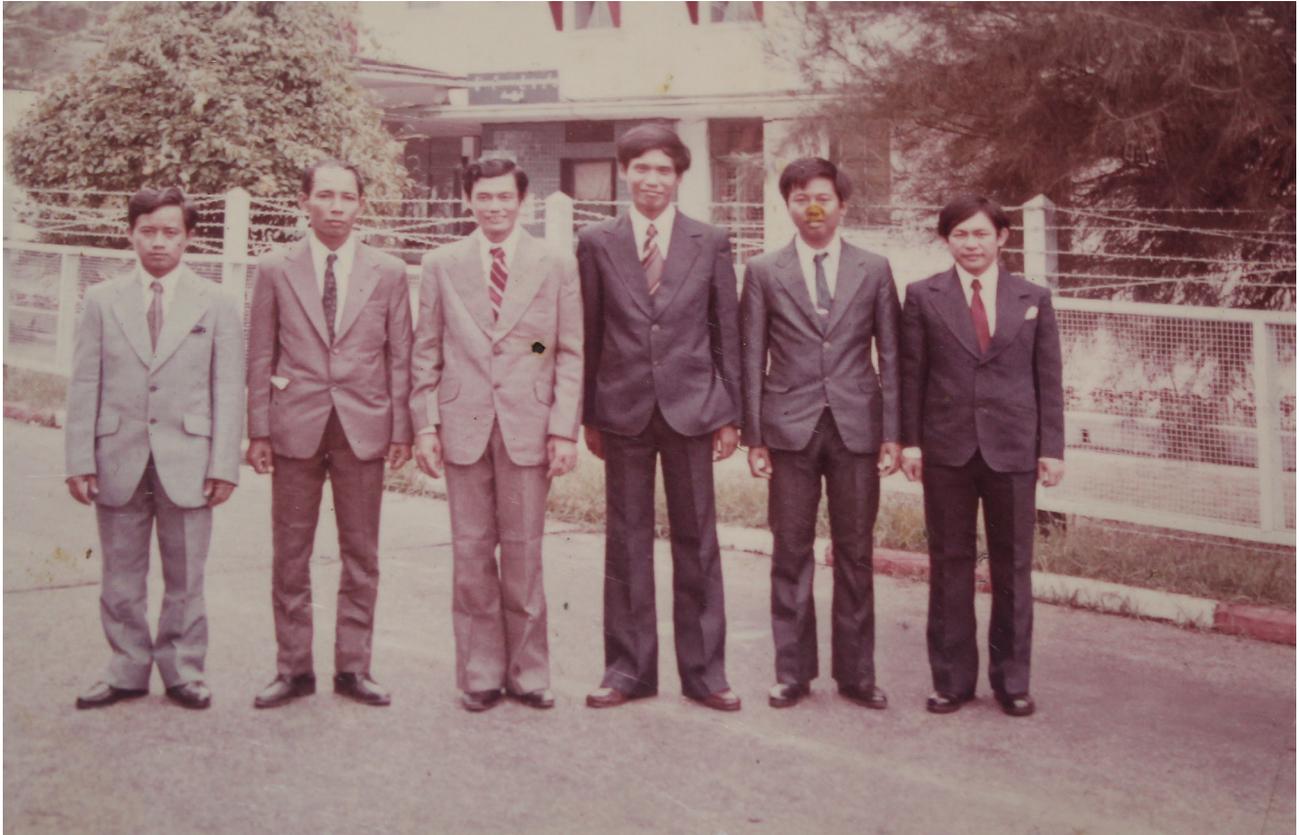
The first batch of six Burmese teachers left Rangoon in June 1978 for the Federal Republic of Germany. They first went to Mannheim located on the river Rhine for four months to get acquainted with the country, learn some German and acquire the basics of vocational teaching skills. They stayed there together with many other teacher-trainees coming from different countries thus having the chance to broaden their minds in many ways.

**IMAGE 11: THE FIRST GERMAN EXPERTS FROM LEFT TO RIGHT: RATHENBERG, KÜPPERS, LEGER, MAIER, BISCHOFF, BRAUS**



PHOTO: HELMAR BISCHOFF

**IMAGE 12: THE FIRST BATCH OF BURMESE TEACHERS AT RANGOON AIRPORT IN 1978**



*PHOTO: COURTESY OF ASHIN PYINGÁRSAME*

After the basic instruction was finished, the vocational teachers-to-be were separated and sent to different places in Germany to see and learn how the German dual system of vocational training worked in practice in their specific field of training. The length of their stay depended on the subject. Most stayed almost two years in Germany. The teachers assigned for the pattern-making workshop however stayed three years because this profession was not known in Burma as yet. The whole process of introducing the Burmese teaching staff was handled rather individually and flexibly.

### **THE OPENING CEREMONY**

The opening ceremony of the ITC Sinde was held on December 1, 1979, with the initial batch of 108 trainees. Maung Cho organised a plane to bring some German participants – the German ambassador and two other staff members of the embassy and representatives of the German institutions involved in the project - to Pyay. He himself however was not present. In his report on the ceremony, the German

ambassador emphasised the invitation of the German guest as an unusual gesture of appreciation for the project and the trusting co-operation between the two countries. He further mentioned that the Burmese director generals of the HIC were impressed by the new concept of the school and the machine park imported from Germany.

The Burmese press provided extensive detail about the many participants in the ceremony. The training scheme and the costs were mentioned, and the Deputy Minister of the responsible Ministry was quoted at some length. He said that the school served the aim of transforming the country from a purely agricultural one into an agriculture-based industrial country according to the guidelines of the Burma Socialist Programme Party and “to train skilled technicians needed in the long-term project for the co-operative and private sectors.”<sup>57</sup>

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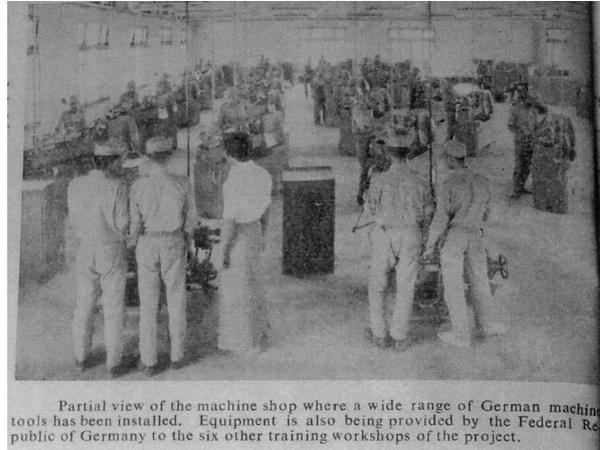
<sup>57</sup> Working People's Daily 2.12.1979.

**IMAGE 13: THE OPENING CEREMONY**



PHOTO: HELMAR BISCHOFF

**IMAGE 14: PICTURE FROM THE SCHOOL OPENING**



Partial view of the machine shop where a wide range of German machine tools has been installed. Equipment is also being provided by the Federal Republic of Germany to the six other training workshops of the project.

PHOTO: THE NEWSLETTER OF THE GERMAN EMBASSY

**THE STRUCTURE OF THE SCHOOL**

When the first German experts moved from Rangoon to Sinda in the second quarter of 1979 to live in the houses built for them and to meet their Burmese counterparts to jointly prepare for the first intake of students, they entered virgin territory in several aspects. The school had to be developed from scratch in a remote part of Burma. It was designated to become a model for other undertakings of the Heavy Industries Corporation one day and “ultimately contribute to the formation of a homogeneous training vocational system in the country” as the GTZ worded it.<sup>58</sup>

The new and unknown territory was pre-structured by the layout of the school that was designed to represent the model of German vocational training as much as possible under the conditions of the new place. In Germany, the three year apprenticeship is divided in a practical training at a small craft business or a big factory and attendance at classes of a vocational school teaching general subjects as well as those relevant for their chosen profession. The basic model stipulated a weekly rhythm of four days at a relevant work place and one day at school.

In Sinda, workplaces and theory rooms were located side by side as the layout plan of the school shows. Seven workshops equipped with machinery - mostly imported from Germany - served the purpose of training students in the skills of their respective vocations after undergoing four or six months of

“basic training”. During this time, the 130 trainees admitted during the first years (among them over 20 girls<sup>59</sup> after the third year,) had to acquire a set of broad-based knowledge and basic skills like measuring, filing, drilling, grinding etc - processing metal by hand according to the old German maxim “iron educates”. Theory classes took place once a week concentrating on transmitting basic knowledge of mechanical and electrical subjects. In the third year of training, the trainees had to broaden their practical skills by twice working in plants of the HIC for five months - separated by a block seminar at Sinda. This way, the German model was adapted to the realities of Sinda.

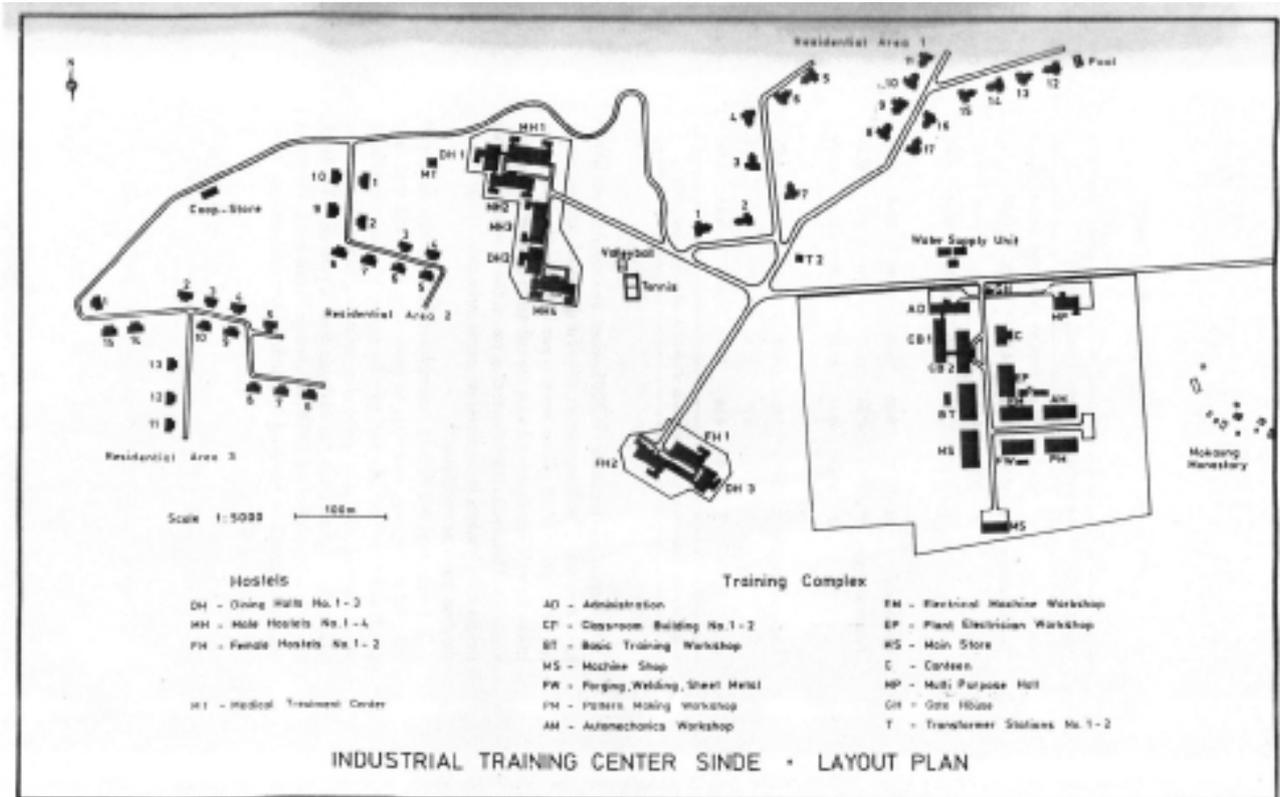
Due to the initiative of the German side, the selection process of the trainees was based on aptitude not on connections to the Ministry that supervised the school.<sup>60</sup> The ITC was organised as a boarding school sponsored by the state training an elite of skilled workers.

The school was composed of four sections each headed by a department chief supervising the particular units of training: theory, mechanical I (basic training, machine shop, tool and die making, drafting), mechanical II (motor mechanics, forging,

58 (GTZ 1977): 123.

59 Female teachers had been working at Sinda from the beginning, both in the workshops and the theory department.

60 Maung Cho first had proposed that only members of families related to the HIC could apply. According to interviews with students and teachers, no discrimination on grounds of ethnicity occurred. However, political activities were not allowed. When in 1987 more than 100 trainees of the ITC were dismissed from the school, it was for lack of discipline after a fight with trainees from the nearby factory over who was more popular with girls.



**IMAGE 15-16: BOYS AND GIRLS PERFORMING BASIC TRAINING TASKS**



PHOTO: HERBERT RUTKOWSKI

welding and sheet metal, pattern making) and electrical (electrical fitter and electrical mechanic). In each of the classes and shops, besides the Burmese head of the respective workshop and his German counterpart a number of teachers worked. In total, around 35 teachers worked in the various shops and eight taught theory. The numbers of the Burmese teaching staff was equal the "German ratio" of 4:1 in favour of practical instruction. The scheme was implemented in a flexible

way during the first years after the opening ceremony, and the requirements of each trade were taken into consideration. Furthermore, the German experts did not arrive at the same time and the Burmese staff were sent to Germany at different dates. The school thus developed slowly and organically.<sup>61</sup>

61 [Final Report 1988]: 4-10.

Three phases can be discerned: setting up (1979 to 1981), consolidation (1981-1984) and handing over to the Burmese. The last phase was completed end of June 1985.

Another important task was to produce and duplicate teaching material. This task clearly confirmed that pioneer work had to be done. It meant "inventing" a mixture of Burmese and English terminology, together with the Burmese counterparts, that could be used in the theory classes and in the workshops for the next generations of trainees. Much of this teaching material was seen by former German teachers who visited the school later and it was still present in 2012 when German officials visited the school again in connection with the resumption of development assistance.

The benefits of the training were to some extent put into practice in the workshops. The equipment of the school could be used for manufacturing goods and maintenance work. The

trainees developed an idea of how industrial production and the processing of used and damaged items could be performed by skilled craftsmen. In addition to this way of motivating students, running costs of the school were reduced.<sup>62</sup> Some workshops, firstly the pattern making shop, received orders from factories located far away.

It was however quickly recognised that the goal-driven manner of working taught at the school caused trouble in the HIC factories, where the accumulation of overtime was one of the strategies used by the employees.<sup>63</sup> At the same time, the German experts had the chance to witness the conditions within the Burmese state enterprises, which did not meet the standards of their home country. The students trained at the ITC Sinde were clearly better qualified than many of the staff in the state enterprises. More importantly, many of them had adapted an attitude of self-confidence and were eager

**THE OVERALL SCHEDULE**

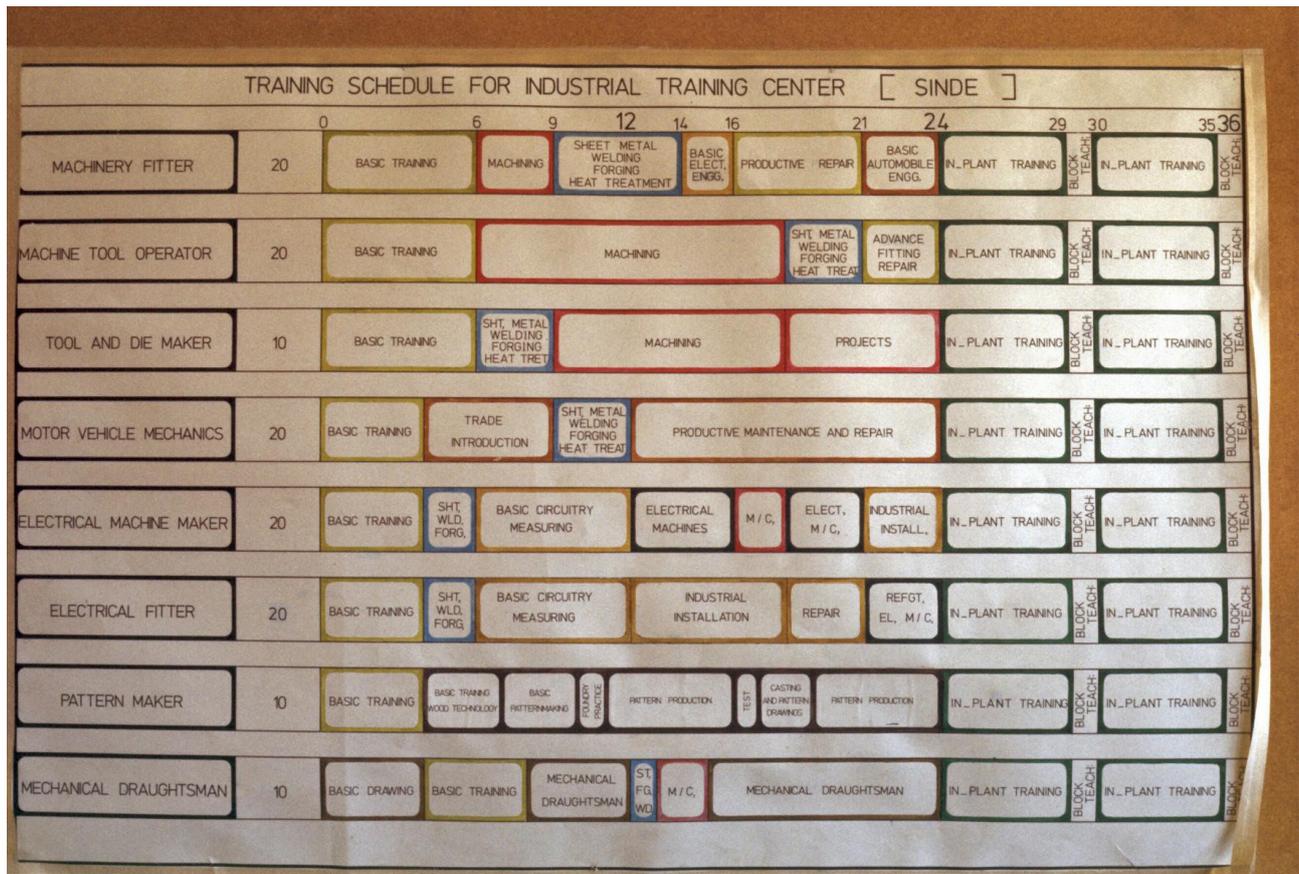


PHOTO: HERBERT RUTTKOWSKI

62 The information is taken from a brochure on the GTZ activities published in 1985 entitled "Vocational training in the Third World".

63 [Final Report 1988]: 6.

to display their individual skills. The ITC Sinde can thus be described as an educational laboratory designed to test new forms of education in the field of vocational training.

### **MERGING DIFFERENT CULTURES OF ORGANISATION AND EDUCATION**

The experiences of some trainees in the factories during their third year show that this pedagogic experiment caused tension with existing work environments in the state enterprises of the HIC. The structure of the project was expected to be in line with the philosophy of Burmese politics after independence, concentrating on economic self-reliance while assisted by a selfless partner like Germany. On the other hand, the German model of vocational training aimed at preparing trainees for workplaces in which the individual skills they had acquired were valued. The realities in the plants of the HIC that the students encountered during their in-plant training did not meet this goal. Here, the worker was regarded to be a member of a corporate unit in the service of his country, not as somebody contributing his abilities to produce goods as a member of a functionally organised team in competition with other teams. To put it in a simplified way: The German model of production serving a market oriented society concentrated on individual skills to reach common societal goals through functional means; the Burmese way put the common goal first and subordinated the individual to this task, supervised by officials acting in a hierarchically organised system. Within a system of socialist planning, Burma's economy was supply-orientated,

not demand-driven. This applied for the labour market as well. The ITC Sinde until 1998 trained students for a job market that did not exist at that time.

The ITC Sinde had the privilege of being a model school. As a result, the school enjoyed much more freedom than others although it was part of hierarchical structured system. The General Manager of the HIC visited Sinde twice a month and supervised the school on behalf of Maung Cho. The Principals of the school (until 1987 a civil engineer and his deputy, a soldier) administered daily business assisted by the heads of departments in co-operation with the German experts. These latter could freely try to put their ideas into practice in cooperation with their Burmese counterparts, some of whom had experienced the "German way" of training young people during their stay in Germany. This individual freedom contrasted with the hierarchical structure of the Burmese educational institutions and was seen as a positive role model for Burmese teachers and students by the German staff members. Particularly in the workshops they could act "like little kings" as one expert expressed it. The task of co-ordinating the different styles of organising the training was left to the Principal and the German team leader whose relationship was very good.

When Minister Maung Cho from time to time paid a visit to the school – one time accompanied by Ne Win (see Annex 2) – the Germans could witness the effects of the Burmese hierarchical structures. Regular work stopped for some time to make preparations for the high guests and the school for a short time was transformed in a spotless place.

**IMAGE 19: NE WIN AND MAUNG CHO (LEFT) AT THE ITC IN AUGUST 1983**



*PHOTO: PHOTO COURTESY OF DAW THI NWE CHO*

**IMAGE 17 & 18: MORNING ROLL CALL (1982); MARCHING OUT AT NOONTIME (2018)**



*PHOTOS: HELMUT MOSER; H.-B. ZÖLLNER*

The procedure of formally admitting the students to the school is an interesting example of the special impact of Burmese traditions on everyday life. The male students had their hair cut and were handed the school uniform. This ritual not only resembled procedures of becoming a member of the army but also the ordination of a novice, the shin-byu ceremony, a procedure all Buddhist male youths know from their own experience. The procedures have softened over the years but some elements of a military-style discipline can still be witnessed.

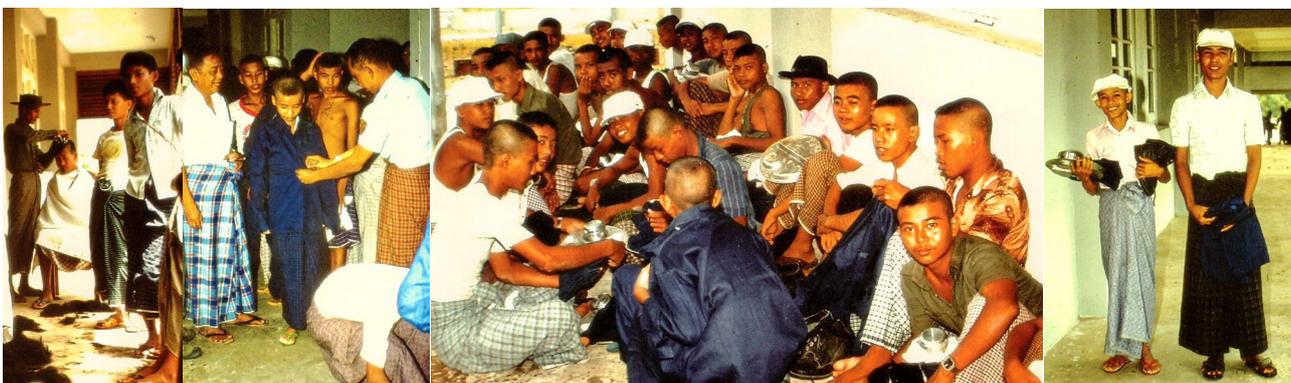
The two systems of organising a vocational school were rather different, but not completely contradictory. Compromises could be found and the structure of the ITC Sinde could be regarded as such a compromise. The organisation of the teaching operations followed the German model of vocational education as far as it was possible in the Burmese context. Most of all, it was the practical instruction in the workshop that counteracted the

Burmese tradition of teaching characterised by a great distance between teacher and student. The great respect for the teachers and the knowledge represented by them remained however, as the examples of the unchanged preservation of the teaching material produced in the first years of the school shows. A report of a German expert on the school's concept highlight "its role as a functioning model of vocational training" in Burma. (see Annex 3)

### **THE ENVIRONMENT: THE MILITARY AND A MONASTERY**

The environment of the educational laboratory was shaped by two vastly different core elements of Burmese society - the military and Buddhism. These were represented by the compounds located close to the school - the factory of the defence services on one side, and the Mogaung monastery on the other.

**IMAGES 19: GETTING SHAVED AND ROBED**



*PHOTOS: ERICH PETERS*

As in all other parts of Burma, the presence of the military could never be overseen. The German experts met military officers on different occasions and were welcomed as tennis and golf partners as well as party guests. On journeys through the country during their holidays, they were accompanied by soldiers. But despite some rumours and the arguments of the first German team leader, there is no indication that the ITC Sinde directly served the country's armament industry, although some former students and teachers may have worked in such plants for some time. But the history of the ITC Sinde is of course part of the emergence of a society heavily influenced by the military, that after 1962 took over the government of the country.

The Mokaung (Mogaung) monastery located close to the ITC had been there before the school was constructed and was not part of the training centre. But it played an important role in some regards. Its function for the majority of the Buddhist people working and living on the school compound was that

of a church in traditional village in a predominantly Christian country. It provided some kind of spiritual security regardless of its services being used or not. The close relationship between the school and the monastery is illustrated by the records of donations coming from the ITC that document the merit gained by the donors.

The central role of the monastery was underlined by the return of a former teacher in the foundry pattern making workshop who came back to Sinde as a monk in 2013 and established his own small "monastery within the monastery" that is technologically well equipped and supported by his former students. The present head of the pattern shop, a student from batch 3, came to him when a problem had to be solved.<sup>64</sup>

The ITC Sinde in many ways was an experiment in which German and Burmese elements came together. The basic structure modelled after the dual vocational system practised

**IMAGE 20: THE MONK TOGETHER WITH SOME FORMER COLLEAGUES IN 2017**



PHOTO: H.-B. ZÖLLNER

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<sup>64</sup> The teacher-monk died in May 2019.

in German speaking countries was adopted as the guiding principle that had to be adapted to Burmese realities. From the beginning, the mode of teaching was the main challenge because of the different educational traditions. The issue was addressed in a double way. The training of the Burmese teachers who were sent to Germany was very intensive. The structure of the teachers' training in Germany followed the principle of "practise first" that was to guide the training of the students in Sinde as well. The Burmese teachers who had been trained abroad served as multipliers both for their colleagues who had not had this opportunity and for the trainees. The role of their German counterparts was first and foremost to supervise and inspire the new methods of training in the respective trades and to develop curricula together with their Burmese counterparts. It was intended to instruct the trainees in a way that resembled the German apprenticeship as far as possible.

The "educational experiment" happened in a traditional Burmese environment characterised by stressing discipline and a sense of togetherness in terms of human relations and by the dominance of the military controlling the political and societal environment. Buddhism, represented by the monastery next door, served as a link to traditional Burmese values of upholding some kind of harmony even in situations of conflict.

### **INTERLUDE - PHASING OUT, THE ITC THANLYIN AND A SUDDEN REVOLUTION: 1985-1988**

July 1, 1985 marked the official end of the German responsibility for the ITC Sinde. The handing over took place unceremoniously. Maung Cho had already lost influence, it was said, because he was made responsible for the country's economic failures. He was however still part of Ne Win's entourage on his annual visits to other countries and continued to act as the government's specialist for Burmese-German relations.<sup>65</sup>

The last German experts left the "German Village" in the second half of 1985. Their houses were taken over by Burmese teachers. Four Germans had volunteered to be transferred to help building up another ITC in Thanlyin (Thanlyin) launched by the Ministry of Industry (1). In this connection, it was intended

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65 The state newspaper Working People's Daily reported that he hosted a dinner when Wolfgang Schäuble, then Minister of the German Chancery, visited Burma in August 1987 for six days, and accompanied the Minister on various occasions both in Rangoon and upcountry.

that some supervision of the school in Sinde would continue as a side effect of the BRD's continued assistance to Burma in general and Thanlyin in particular – including the supply of equipment and material for training purposes not available in Burma. It was intended that the German experts working in Thanlyin would come to Sinde from time to time to make arrangements and help to solve problems, ensuring continuing co-operation in the field of vocational training.

However, due to the events of 1988 things did not evolve as anticipated. The coup that put an end to the "Burmese Way of Socialism" on September 18, 1988 resulted in the termination of German development co-operation with Burma, although a few experts remained in the country until 1993. This withdrawal of co-operation affected the "pilot project" in Sinde and the new training centre in Thanlyin<sup>66</sup> in different ways.

### **SINDE**

Based on the obvious good results of the training performed at the ITC Sinde, the GTZ planned to extend the training program successfully by adding a new course of instruction for "electronics specialists located in the Rangoon municipal district" that aimed at including "training in the maintenance and repair of electronic equipment."<sup>67</sup> A four year course of training was envisaged with an intake of 24 students per year. On the Burmese side, the Ministry of Industry (2) was to be in charge again. According to the project proposal drafted by the German development agency, the new project was planned to be connected to ITC Thanlyin, the railway workshop near Mandalay, and a mine project in Namtu. This project idea shows that the GTZ aimed at developing a network of vocational training institutions supervised by different ministries. One can only guess if this could have been realised if the West German support had not been terminated due to the events of 1988.

Despite its remote location, the events of 1988 effected the school in Sinde as well, albeit only marginally. The teachers were asked by the principal to closely look after the students

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66 The English name of the town will be used throughout this chapter instead of the Burmese "Thanlyin" because this name was used in the German archives that hold most of the information utilised here.

67 AA PA B 37 Bd. 137.0000; note of acknowledgement of U Nyunt Maung, Deputy Minister of Planning to the German Ambassador dated December 22, 1987 as a reply to the German proposal submitted before.

IMAGE 21: ZOZAM'S CARTOON



and control their activities. One day, one teacher recalls, all of them did not march to the school but to the bank of the Ayeyawadi, took the ferry boat across the river and joined the demonstrations in Pyay, the urban centre of this area. The students carried flags and posters with them with the information to what institution they belonged and shouted the slogan of the demonstrators "do-ayei" (our cause). The teachers linked up with them and thus participated in the demonstrations as a special kind of fellow travellers by following the orders of the principal. One of the teachers, a hobby-cartoonist at that time, drew a cartoon that was posted at Pyay's town hall. It showed an angry Burmese cracking a rifle of the model G3 that had been produced in Burma with the assistance of the Fritz Werner company.

Due to the protection of the principal, the teacher was not punished. The ITC was closed later for three months and in 1989 no intake of new trainees took place.

#### THANLYIN

The project to establish a second ITC in Burma was suggested by Maung Cho's "sister" headed by Brigadier General Tint Swe. Born in 1925, he had served in the army for some time, was later appointed Minister in the Prime Minister's office and had taken his new post in March 1976.<sup>68</sup> The German Embassy

<sup>68</sup> Civilian U Hla Aye had been appointed to the post after the Industry Ministry had been split into two in March 1975. Tint Swe took over one year later.

characterised him as a man different in character from Maung Cho: "He is quiet and reserved and thus is in line with the Burmese national character."<sup>69</sup>

Tint Swe visited Germany for the first time in April 1981 and on this occasion proposed to establish another ITC in Thanlyin. A project description was handed over that aimed at training up to 550 students each year in up to ten segments of the light industry. The German side reacted cautiously. The proposal would be studied and examined, but Germany would like to prefer a co-operation in the field of agriculture. The German ambassador noted that it had to be seen if the new project besides "our costly project ITC Sinde was reasonable and could even be realised."<sup>70</sup>

The project proposal submitted by the Ministry did not refer to the Sinde project and mentions the "sister ministry" only once by stressing that at the time of the division of the two ministries "the Training Centre was kept under the Ministry of Industry (1)."<sup>71</sup> One may safely conclude from this remark that some rivalry existed between the two Ministries created in 1974.

The site chosen by the Burmese side to realise the project was located on the other side of the Bago and Rangoon rivers opposite Yangon, not far from a glass factory that had been established with German assistance<sup>72</sup> and some other factories that produced consumer goods. It was to be built in an agricultural environment some 12 km outside Thanlyin on the road leading to Kyauktan on an area of 779 acres (some 315 hectares).<sup>73</sup> Cars and all supplies had to be transported by ferries because, similar to Sinde, there was no bridge connecting the two banks of the respective rivers. Such a bridge was, however, planned at that time using Chinese assistance.<sup>74</sup>

The project was finally endorsed by the German government in May 1984. After that, the Burmese side was eager to start the project as soon as possible. The buildings were completed in time for the state visit of President von Weizsäcker in February

1986.<sup>75</sup> However, the school was not fully equipped at that time. Obviously, considerations of prestige played an important role in building up the new school. While the training at the new institution started officially on January 1, 1986, the German President's later visit can be regarded as the more important opening ceremony. On this occasion, the school was displayed as the flagship of German-Burmese co-operation in the field of vocational training.

It was planned to deploy six German specialists including the team head<sup>76</sup> and 35 Burmese teachers,<sup>77</sup> 15 of them to be trained in Germany after a 12 month course at the ITC Sinde. The transfer of knowledge with regard to vocational training from Sinde to the new place was intended to be performed by the three Germans experts - one theory teacher and two workshop teachers for mechanical and electrical training - plus the team leader.

The two German experts responsible for the metal workshops drew up plans to modify the training according to their experiences in Sinde and the different requirements at the new site. A "light version" of vocational training could be regarded as appropriate to fit the needs of the light industries of the supervising ministry responsible for providing consumer goods for a still underdeveloped country.

According to the memories of German staff members who had worked both in Sinde and Thanlyin, the difference between the projects was a continuing interference from the Ministry and even the Minister responsible for the new school. The Burmese counterparts there were anxious not to make any mistakes and asked for guidance from above even in such small technical matters as the proper fixing of switch boxes. On the other hand, the co-operation with the counterparts was as smooth as in Sinde where the practical training of the new Burmese teachers had started. Furthermore, new technology like Computer Numerical Control (CNC) was introduced at the new training centre.

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69 AA PA B. 36, Bd. 137.023.

70 PA Zwischenarchiv 137.023. Letter ambassador Türk to Foreign Office, dated 15.6.1981.

71 PA Zwischenarchiv 137.023. Project Proposal attached to the above mentioned letter embassy letter dated 3.6.1981.

72 The Thanlyin Glass Factory was often visited by German delegations.

73 Another school was planned to be established in Meiktila in central Burma where some textile factories were located. Interview Maier 2.6.2016

74 The Yangon-Thanlyin Bridge was finally finished with Chinese assistance in July 1993.

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75 Interview Hermann Maier 16.1.2018.

76 The five others were specified in the final agreement as "one teacher of metalworking theory, one teacher of electrical engineering theory, one workshop instructor of electric engineering, two workshop instructors in metalworks. (PA Zwischenarchiv 137.023, no date: "Record of Discussion of Financial and Technical co-operation of 10 February 1984: 4).

77 Besides the director and his deputy, 7 theory teachers (4 mechanical, 3 electrical) and 26 workshop instructors were provided for (ibid.: 5).

At the time of handing over the full responsibility for the ITC Sinde to the Burmese authorities and the construction of the new ITC termination, the contract of the German team leader was suddenly terminated. On May 17, 1985 the German embassy was informed by the Burmese Foreign Office that the Ministry of Industry (1) had limited the term of Mr. Maier's assignment to only one more year, whereas it was agreed that the other three experts could stay "till the completion of the assignment in connection with the [Thanlyin] project."<sup>78</sup> The embassy was not informed about any reasons for this "graded decision" and promised to find out what lay behind it.

The decision came as a surprise because Hermann Maier had closely cooperated with the Ministry in the establishment of the new school. He had been approached to act as German team leader for the new project by the Ministry as well as by the GTZ and had finally, if reluctantly, agreed to accept the new assignment although he originally had wanted to leave Burma after the many years he had already spent there.

In a long memorandum<sup>79</sup> written shortly after the resolution of the Burmese side to cut short his term of working in the country had been communicated, Mr. Maier analysed the context of this move as a result of his attempts to overstep the boundaries set by the Burmese government for any foreign assistance to Burma. As a consequence of a "xenophobic notion" resulting from the colonial trauma on the Burmese side, foreign aid was limited to "mere technological tasks."<sup>80</sup> After the end of the start-up phase of the ITC Sinde, he as the leader of the project "had seen himself forced to get engaged in fields that according to the Burmese conception lay totally beyond the responsibility of a foreign expert, but from a German perspective were an inextricable component of our contribution if the aspiration shall be met to trigger system-shaping (systembildend) effects."<sup>81</sup>

The memorandum further mentioned that the position of the team leader was undermined by his good contacts with a number of his counterparts and his marriage to a Burmese lady. He thus had access to information channels usually not accessible to foreigners and became a "suspect" in the eyes of the leading

Burmese personalities. He later learnt from one Burmese source that it had been Maung Cho who had been behind the cabinet decision to terminate his work for the Thanlyin project because of an alleged interference in Burma's internal affairs. One may therefore state that at the beginning and the end of the German engagement in Sinde a cabinet intrigue occurred.

#### IMAGE 22: POSTER ILLUSTRATING THE HISTORY OF THE TECHNICAL UNIVERSITY THANLYIN<sup>82</sup>



PHOTO: H.-B: ZÖLLNER

The further history of the schools in Sinde and Thanlyin illustrate the special quality of what had been achieved in Sinde. There, the school continued to exist whereas the training centre near Yangon did never take off and did not continue as a vocational training school after the last German experts had left the country in 1993. After some transformations, it became a Technological University in 2007. Compared to what was intended to be established in Sinde, this development can be regarded as a return to the traditional Burmese way of thinking about education, which the introduction of a vocational training using the German "dual system" had wanted to reverse. In Thanlyin, the school training

78 Letter from German embassy (Schröder) to GTZ Eschborn, dated 17.5.1985 (copy in the possession of the author).

79 Memorandum "Zur Frage meiner weiteren Tätigkeit in Birma" written June, 1, 1985 in Eschborn, the headquarters of the GTZ. The text is in the possession of the author. (Quoted as Maier, Memorandum).

80 Ibid.: 1.

81 Ibid.: 3.

82 The acronyms designate the steps of upgrading the school from the Industrial Training Centre (1986), to a Government Technical Institute in 1995, a Government Technical College in 1999 and the Thanlyin Technical University in 2007.

of skilled workers was upgraded to a university. The ITC Sinde had aimed at laying the foundation for a countrywide system of vocational schools in its own right.

This shows that the creation of a new system in Burma allowing for “the organisational structure for training activities beyond individual enterprises and ministries” as hoped for by the German team leader in 1988 did not materialise then. In his final report he expresses the hope that this may happen later – preferably with German assistance.

Hermann Maier’s very critical assessment of the socio-political situation in Burma under the military-dominated socialist regime was expressed in his final report on the project that was submitted in late August 1988 as well. This insider’s view sharply contrasts the official assertions of the good and friendly German-Burmese relations pronounced by President von Weizsäcker some two years ago on the occasion of his state visit just in February 1986. This contrast is particularly interesting since the German team leader had explained the ITC Thanlyin to the President. (See Annexes 4 to 6).

## 4 Chapter 4: Doing It Alone - 1988 – 2013 (2019)

The following sections of the Sinde Story deal with the time between 1988 and today. This long period can be subdivided in different ways although all of them are open ended. Looking just at the developments at the ITC, the interval can conveniently be divided into three time intervals all spanning a period of roughly ten years, plus a short addendum using the criterion of the duration of the training: Between 1988-1998 training lasted three years, was shortened to two years from 1998 to 2008 and to one year from 2008 to 2017. After that, the training returned to a period of two years. With regard to the political context and its effects on the relations between the two countries, some other milestones must be noted. General elections held in November 2011 - according to the provisions of a new constitution enacted in May 2008 - led to a transfer of power from the military junta to a nominally civilian government under President Thein Sein. His reform agenda with a focus on national reconciliation resulted in the participation of Aung San Suu Kyi and her party in the by-elections of April 2012. These developments were welcomed by the international community and led to the suspension of western sanctions and the resumption of economic co-operation. In this context, the Federal Republic of Germany resumed offering development work to Myanmar – including the ITC Sinde.

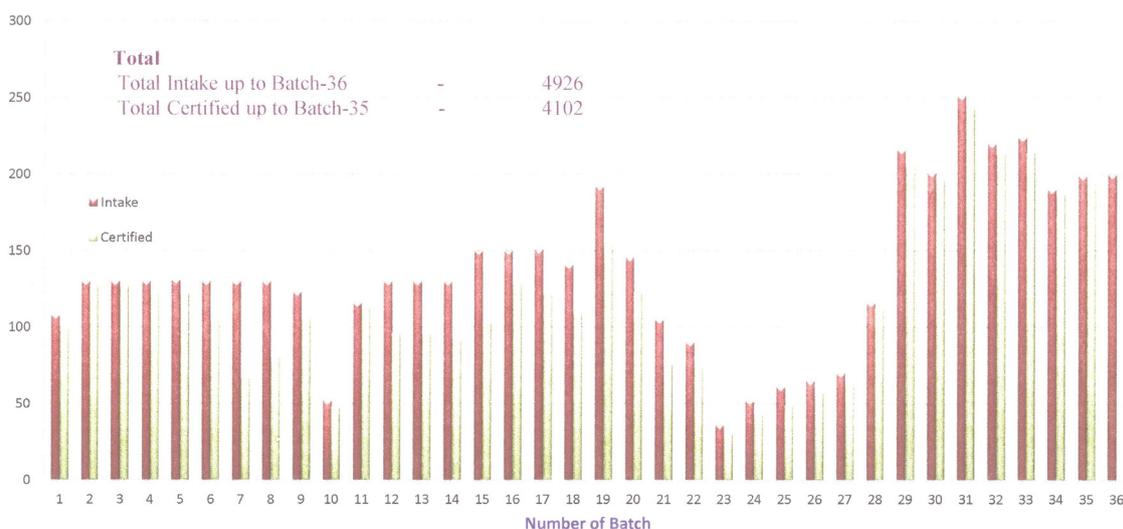
This chapter concentrates on the developments in Myanmar by first considering the developments at the ITC during the different periods characterised by the shortening the duration of training (4.1). The effects of these changes on the teaching conditions and the job placement of the alumni are outlined, preceded by some remarks on the administrative context of the school.

Section 4.2 highlights developments that can be regarded as “side effects” of the school that provide insight into the impact of the school on both state agencies and the country’s civil society - the establishment of five new ITC and the genesis of an alumni association of the ITC Sinde. Some aspects of the impact of the resumption of German aid to the school will be presented in chapter 5.

### 4.1 DEVELOPMENTS AT AND AROUND THE ITC SINDE

The chart shown below provides some information about the input and output of students of the ITC Sinde during the years of its existence.

#### NUMBER OF INTAKES UNTIL BATCH 37



*BATCH 11 CORRESPONDS TO THE BEGINNING OF THE TRAINING IN THE YEAR 1990 BATCH 21 TO 2001, BATCH 31 TO 2011. THE INTAKE OF BATCH 2 WAS HAPPENED IN 1981; IN 1990 NO INTRANEES WERE ADMITTED*

The number of students remained almost the same until the first reduction of the time of training in 1997, with the exception of 1989 (batch 10) which can be explained by the disturbances affecting the whole country in 1988. From then on, the numbers vary considerably. Between 1998 and 2002, the figures decreased from almost 200 to less than 50, then rose again slightly until 2006 and climbed to around 200 after the second reduction, reaching a peak of almost 250 in 2010. At first glance, the developments in Sinde after 1988 seem to be as volatile as the course of politics in Myanmar during the SLORC/SPDC period and after the transfer of government to a nominally civilian government in 2011. The interviews with principals, teachers and students on which this narration of this period is mainly based show, however, that to a great extent continuity can be observed as well. The Burmese teachers of the ITC Sinde interviewed generally tend to depict the development of the school after the cessation of German aid as a decline from the early “golden years”. On the other side, the school until today has survived and “produced” people for the Myanmar labour market – and for the international market as well.

## I) 1988-1998

### THE ADMINISTRATIVE AND POLITICAL CONTEXT

The events of 1988 had some impact on the school. Training was suspended for some months and in 1989 no intake took place. Principal U Han Sein who had taken over from U Win Kyaing in 1987 managed to prevent actions of the authorities against students and teachers who had participated in the demonstrations in Pyay. The sympathies of teachers towards Aung San Suu Kyi and the NLD were mostly tolerated as well.<sup>83</sup>

Principal Han Sein was - obviously on his own volition – transferred to a post at the headquarters of the HIC in April 1992. After him, a number of principals with a military background were appointed until May 2003.<sup>84</sup> At the top of the responsible ministry a number of changes happened as

83 Only one case of a dismissal of a person for political grounds after 1988 is known. It happened in 1991. In the aftermath of the 1990 elections that resulted in a landslide victory of the National League for Democracy (NLD) the military government ordered government servants to answer a list of 33 questions to get information about their political attitude. The local authorities responsible for the school were recommended to give “safe answers”. One teacher did not heed the advice but answered that he had voted for the NLD. As a consequence, his contract was terminated. (Interviews with U San Htun, 16.3.2017 (May San Oo) and 13.8.2018 (Hans-Bernd Zöllner)).

well after the whole cabinet of the last government under the one party system under the Burmese Way of Socialism was replaced by the junta.<sup>85</sup>

In terms of economics, the military junta from the beginning had initiated a policy of liberalising the socialist economy and attracting foreign investment. By the measure of western wisdom, the results of this attempt were regarded as pure “chaos” as noted in a paper written in 2000.<sup>86</sup> These changes however had no great impact on the HIC plants except for a name change.<sup>87</sup> The beginning of a boycott from western countries against Myanmar after 1996 (that was supported by Aung San Suu Kyi) and the Asian Financial crisis beginning in early March 1997 had negative effects on any new stimuli for Myanmar’s economy.

### TRAINING CONDITIONS

After the school had been handed over to the Burmese side in 1985, the Burmese staff of the school was capable of carrying on by following the principles established with German assistance. After 1988, material assistance and supervision of the teaching provided by Germany decreased and finally ceased. More dramatic were some factors that resulted in an exodus of teachers after 1990, when the obligation to work for the HIC for a certain period of time was virtually abolished. Furthermore, low payment and the location of the school were reasons to leave the school. For many teachers, the years after 1988 offered new opportunities including to make use of their talents abroad.

The effects of the exodus of teachers were noticed by the former head of the German team when he returned to Myanmar for a visit in 1996. Almost all teachers who had received some

84 Major Kyaw Win served only shortly from April to October 1992 followed by Major Tin Aung. Both had the degree of a Bachelor of Science (BSc) from the Defence Services Academy in Pyin-Oo-Lwin. In 1984, U Win Thein who had been trained at the Officers Training School headed the school until 2003.

85 Maj. Gen. Sein Aung served as head of the two industry ministries until January 1992 when the old division was restored. U Than Shwe who had been working at the HIC before, became head of the Industry Ministry (2). He was replaced by Maj. Gen Kyaw Than, in June 1995. In November 1997 Maj. Gen Hla Myint Swe took over in the course of cabinet changes in connection with the name and policy changes from SLORC to SPDC.

86 Stephen McCarthy 2000 Ten Years of Chaos in Burma: Foreign Investment and Economic Liberalization under the SLORC-SPDC, 1988 to 1998. Pacific Affairs 73, 2 : 233-262.

87 The HIC became the Myanmar Heavy Industries in 1989.

training in Germany had left the school by then. They used the new opportunities to benefit from what they had learnt and experienced during their training for their assignment in Sinde and teaching there, as well as from their contacts with the outside world - in particular with Germany.<sup>88</sup>

The teachers who left were replaced by colleagues who had not received the same training as the pioneers. They came from technical schools where the focus lay on theoretical instruction. This did not matter very much in the ITC's theory department where the fluctuation was not quite so great. The new workshop teachers however had to undergo some practical training to make proper use of the equipment assembled in the halls. As a consequence, it was necessary to teach the new teachers how to make use of the equipment of the workshops.

For this reason, some alumni were called back. One of them was Htay Lwin who had been a member of batch one. He had applied to be trained at Sinde because his elder brother, U Kyi Nyunt, worked at the school as a teacher.<sup>89</sup> In the last year of his training he worked at the HIC factory located close to the school.<sup>90</sup> After finishing training and receiving his certificate in December 1982, he worked in the same factory for nine years, four more than he was obliged to do according to the training contract all trainees had to sign. In 1993, he was transferred to the ITC. He helped producing machine parts, some of which were sent to Rangoon to be assembled there. He is still working there.

The former HIC factory No. 3 under which the ITC was placed was now solely responsible for the supply of material to be used in the workshop. The factory however could not provide such things as iron bars of a given format. In the machine workshop, teachers and trainees had to improvise with small ones and sometimes had to take wood to be used in the lathe.<sup>91</sup> In other

shops, other ways were found to cope with the shortage. On the other hand, the handbooks and worksheets produced together with the German experts or by the Burmese teachers were used to continue teaching according to the curricula developed earlier.

## JOB PLACEMENT

In 1988, the students of batch one who had left the school in 1982, had terminated their five year obligation to work in one of the HIC factories. The economic changes introduced by SLORC after the coup of September opened up choices that had not existed before under the socialist regime. Alumni could continue working for a state enterprise, work in a private enterprise or go abroad for some time or permanently.

A survey conducted in early 2017 among 95 members of the alumni association who attended the three year courses of the ITC Sinde shows that a third of them still work for the government, almost all of them in senior and some in leading positions. The others moved to private companies. 22 respondents had some experience of working abroad. Quite a number stayed abroad permanently, many of them in Australia. One paper signed by the German team leader certifying that the students had been trained to a German standard was particularly helpful to get work permission for Australia. (For some details see Annex 7) Some of them who had joined the rebels fighting the junta were granted refugee status by western countries. A few became managers or managing directors after later founding their own companies.

The opening up of the country for the Myanmar workforce can be regarded as a crucial factor for many alumni of the ITC to make use of what they had learnt at the school. It benefited the country as well since much of the money earned in other countries was transferred to Myanmar. Furthermore, among the former trainees working abroad a particular sense of fellowship developed that resulted in the desire to celebrate the Silver Jubilee of the school in 2004. (see Annex 8 and below section 2.4, b).

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88 A number of former teachers used their German language skills acquired in Germany to work for a German shipping line for some time.

89 He had been among the teachers who had been trained from 1977 onwards at the Central Research Organisation in Rangoon's Kaba Aye Pagoda Road. As a result, the brother learnt about the school and took the examination to become a Sinde trainee. While the brother taught in the electrical fitter shop, Htay Lwin learnt the trade of a tool and die maker. U Kyi Nyunt died in 2015.

90 die maker. U Kyi Nyunt died in 2015.

At that time, the factory employed some 2,300 people. After the dissolution of the HIC, the factory was renamed No. 16 Heavy Industry (Sinde). According to the current website of the Ministry, the factory now employs just some 1,000 people (<http://moi.industry.gov.mm/en/content/no-16-heavy-industry-sinde>; 4.2.2017).

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91 Interview Maung Maung Aye, 11.10.2017.

## II) 1998-2008

### THE ADMINISTRATIVE AND POLITICAL CONTEXT

No document is available that precisely informs about the reasons why the time of training was reduced from batch 18 onwards. Most likely, general political trends played a major role. In 1999 the duration of studies at Myanmar medical and technological institutions was reduced by one year. Financial resources might have played a role as well. The three-year education at Sinde was rather costly and no more German funds were available. Some time after 1998, the subsidies for the trainees were cancelled.<sup>92</sup> This might be a reason for the decline of trainees taken in after 1999 reaching an all-time low of 36 in 2003, the year when Captain Win Thein handed over the post of principal to U Kyaw Lwin, his deputy since 1992. The latter had been given an almost free hand to manage training affairs.

On top of the ministry, Major Gen Hla Myint Swe served only a short time from November 1997 to November 1998 to in charge of the transport ministry. His successor, Major General Saw Lwin held the post for ten years until 2008. The reports of the Myanmar state press available on the internet show that he came from time to time to Sinde to visit the agricultural factory but no visits to the ITC are mentioned. Principal Kyaw Lwin, however, remembers that he was interested in the that resulted.

Another event affecting the school was the completion of the Nawaday Bridge linking Pyay with the west bank of the Ayayawady in 1997. From now on, Pyay could be reached much easier than before.

### TRAINING CONDITIONS

The abridgement of the training was compensated for by reducing the basic training a bit and the in-plant training to just three months. Such measures can be regarded as a logical consequence of the lack of practical experience on the side of the new teachers and of the policy of liberalising the economy by strengthening the private sector. According to the assessment of one of the teachers who worked in Sinde

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<sup>92</sup> According to one student from batch 22, during the first year he paid 4200 Kyats a month for the food and 5200 kyats a month in the second year.

until 2011, these reductions resulted in a shift of the ratio of practical and theoretical training It had been 80:20 in favour of practice until 1998, changed to 50:50 from 1998 to 2008, and finally to 20:80. To make up for the lack of industrial training, this teacher started to give English lessons to her students.<sup>93</sup> According to the memories of principal U Kyaw Lwin and some former trainees, trainees and teachers were often idle because of the lack of raw material and poor condition of machines.

### JOB PLACEMENT

The effect of the new economic policies implemented after 1988 can be seen in a statistic provided by the ITC Sinde showing the employment status of the alumni. According to the chart, until batch 17 all alumni were employed either by companies supervised by the Ministry of Industry (2) or – to a lesser extent – of other ministries. From batch 18 on new categories are introduced: “Employment in companies”, “own/self employment” and “job hunt”. For the last category, there are no entries, as all graduates obtained employment as before. It is unclear how the data for the chart were collected. Furthermore, the categories denoting employment in non-state plants are not explained, some data are contradictory and most likely just stand for a snapshot taken shortly after graduation. Appropriate job opportunities for graduate trainees were slim according to the memories of U Kyaw Lwin.<sup>94</sup>

Some former students who had filled in the questionnaires voiced their regret on the reduction of the training. They however agreed with their predecessors that they had been technically well skilled, that the teaching system was good and that the training they had received was well recognised by others.

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<sup>93</sup> Interview with Daw Amah Cho, 16.7.2017.

<sup>94</sup> One interviewed student from batch 22 after graduation worked occasionally in Yangon as a daily labourer and later migrated to Malaysia. Here, he worked in a furniture factory in the field of mechanics. After the two years training, his experience enabled him to learn faster and earn much more money compared to others who did not have his training. After getting connected with friends from the training centre, and through the information sharing of trainees and friends he got a job the factory of a former ITC trainee.

### III) 2008-2017

#### THE ADMINISTRATIVE AND POLITICAL CONTEXT

The period under review here spans a time of great political transition from direct military rule to a nominally civilian government ruling the country under a constitution adopted in 2008 that was designed by the military. The transformation opened the way to the direct participation of Aung San Suu Kyi and her party, the National League for Democracy (NLD) in Myanmar politics. The party won the next elections in November 2015 by a large majority and took over the government in co-operation with the military, who retained strong political influence.

In contrast to the rather smooth political transition from direct military rule to a democratically elected government, developments in Sinde were less so at the beginning of this period, as shown by the fact that 5 different principals headed the school between 2008 and 2013 when the first German development worker came to Sinde again.<sup>95</sup>

As in the case of the first reduction of training in 1998, it is not quite clear who ordered the second reduction from two to one year. Probably the decision was connected to plans of establishing more ITCs under the Ministry of Industry (2). Like the school established in Mandalay (see below 4.2. a), all offered just one year courses and aimed at increasing Myanmar's workforce in the industrial sector. In any event, the new order reducing the time in training at the ITC Sinde had the effect of standardising the vocational training under the supervision of the Ministry of Industry (2) in the following years.

#### TRAINING CONDITIONS

After 2008, the conditions of teaching further declined. Many trainees interviewed voiced the opinion that the one year training was very basic, and not adequate. Some teaching aids and training materials were old and in poor condition, and teaching tools like visual aids were missing. One of them remembers<sup>96</sup> that he spent more time cleaning the campus than receiving proper training. In addition, a number of teachers were inexperienced in teaching.

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95 U Kyaw Lwin had to implement the cut from the two years training to only one year on the order of Minister Saw Lwin, who left the school in 2008 after reaching his retirement age. Among the four principals following him was a female, Daw Ye Ye Kyaw, who served from 2009 to 2010 as head of the school.

96 The interview was conducted by Saw Zarni Htay in August 2018.

Various efforts were made to restructure and renovate the school despite such handicaps. Daw Yi Yi Kyaw, the first female principal, in her short tenure<sup>97</sup> initiated a number of measures such as the addition of two new water tanks and the planting of trees on the campus with the assistance of nearby factories. Furthermore, a number of committees were formed headed by teachers to improve the infrastructure of the school, and a talent show at the graduation ceremony of batch 28 was introduced. These measures were aimed at upholding the special significance of the school as a model institution. (See Annex 9)

#### JOB PLACEMENT

Alumni still had good opportunities in the labour market both in the state and in the private sector. Officials from former HIC companies came to the ITC Sinde for recruitment and held interviews with trainees. The reputation of the school still helped students to gain self-esteem that might have been lost because their grades were not good enough to get access to other higher education institutions. Furthermore, the "Sinde network" helped graduates to get jobs. According to the statistics provided by the school, from the 243 graduates of batch 31, 126 were employed by state enterprises, 105 by private enterprises and 33 were self-employed. For batch 35 the numbers were 21, 144 and 9 respectively. The numbers point to an increase of qualified labour by the private sector of Myanmar's economy.

#### CONCLUSION

With the economic changes in Myanmar after September 1988 and the opening up of the country, the alumni could make use of what they had learnt at the ITC Sinde in various ways without the restrictions imposed by the socialist system. The quality of the training established with German assistance during the time of the "Burmese Way to Socialism" bore fruits for the trainees and some teachers after the military junta changed economic policy towards more of a market economy from September 1988 onwards.

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97 She served from October 2008 to September 2009 as headmistress.

At the same time, Germany – in line with other western countries – cancelled their economic engagement in Myanmar. This is a rather ironic coincidence. The training received at the ITC Sinda bore fruit for many trainees after the country that had significantly contributed to establishing an effective vocational training withdrew from that country. Before the coup, only a few workplaces had existed in Burma where the skills of the alumni could be fully utilised. The careers of students trained at the ITC Sinda before 1988 further show that the general assessment both inside and outside the country, that the SLORC/SPDC rule between 1988 and 2011 was a completely “dark age” of the country’s recent history, has to be modified.

On the other hand, the German withdrawal contributed to a decline of the quality of the teaching in Sinda. This was only partly due to the lack of material support in terms of teaching aids but mainly due to the end of communication about school affairs. A continuing offer of giving advice in the crucial field of teachers’ training and updating the curricula in line with new technological developments could have been very beneficial for both teachers and trainees. One of the teachers who had stayed at the ITC all the time until German development workers had returned to Sinda, then for the first time participated in the task of curriculum development. Before, he had thought that this task was reserved for the foreign experts.<sup>98</sup>

Furthermore, the ways in which the cuts to the training time were managed by the school show that some basics of the “character” of the school were preserved. The ITC Sinda was able to partly adapt to the new economic environment as well as to cope with the orders coming from above. The school was able to recruit teaching staff from former students. In 2018, 23 teachers were alumni.

Finally, it can be seen that despite the many changes happening after 1988, the school had a special reputation as the ITC No. 1 not just in terms of its early origin, but also as an expression of the quality of technical education provided there over decades. Many of those administering, teaching or learning there shared some kind of pride to be part of the “Sinda family.”

## 4.2 TWO SPIN-OFFS

Twenty years after 1988, an industrial training school was opened on October 27, 2008 in Aung Myae Thar Zan Township in the northern part of Mandalay that is now named No. (2) Industrial Training Center (Mandalay).<sup>99</sup> The school was established with Chinese assistance. Most likely, no high ranking persons participated because the event was not mentioned in the state newspaper of the next day. The opening of four more industrial training centres in the following years until 2014 (established with the assistance of South Korea and India) attracted some more public attention as well. All of them are now listed on a government website together with the ITC Sinda.

One year after the start of the training in Mandalay, in late December 2009, a large party was held in Sinda to commemorate the 30th anniversary, the “ Pearl Jubilee”, of the country’s ITC No. (1). Some 1,200 people – alumni, relatives and teachers – participated, and on December 27, an alumni organisation was founded. Since then, members have met regularly at different places in Myanmar and formed a network that includes former students now living in many parts of the world. Five years earlier, in December 2004, the Silver Jubilee had brought together alumni and teachers for the first time. The forming of the organisation happened in the private sphere as part of the emerging civil society organisations that sprung up in Myanmar after cyclone Nargis in 2008. Differently from many NGOs however, the association (aiming to “promote the well being of the members in the field of health care (and the education of the young generation”).was not officially registered with the state authorities until 2018.

The five new ITCS and the alumni association are both consequences of the ITC Sinda, one established by a Ministry of the State, the other by a number of citizens who share a close connection to the training centre in Sinda. The different organisations are very different in kind and not directly related to each other. But they illustrate two important and interrelated aspects of the “model school” established in the 1970s. These aspects can be roughly characterised as “technical-quantitative” and “social-qualitative”.

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98 This assessment might not be representative for all workshops before 1988.

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99 <http://www.industry.gov.mm/en/content/industrial-training-centers> (accessed 12.2.2019).

The school aimed at training a great number of technically well-equipped and skilled workers, mainly for the country's government enterprises under the Industry Ministry (2). The number of people who could be trained at a single school was however limited. To spread the experiences gained here, more training centres had to be established. As shown above, the attempt to establish a second ITC under the supervision of another Ministry failed in the end. After 1988, other attempts could not any more be tried with German assistance. It was therefore logical to build up more centres under the Industry Ministry (2) with the help of other partners. The failure of the project in Thanlyin and the lengthy time that passed between the establishment of the ITC (1) at Sinde and the training centre in Mandalay shows that the "German model" could not simply be copied for internal and external reasons. Burmese politics and international developments played a role.

On the other hand, it took some time as well for former students and teachers of the ITC Sinde who shared special experiences to create a special sense of a common bond. This community was rooted in the technical training taught and performed there but exceeded the technical sphere. A community came into being that is now busily planning the next major anniversary in December 2019, and for the first time in coordination with the Ministry.

The fact that both the 5 new ITCs and the alumni organisation were established at a time when the German state had still not resumed co-operation with Myanmar in the field of

development work clearly shows that the events described in the following sections can be characterised as shaped by particular "Burmese traits" of different kinds that might escape the attention of foreign observers - and even some Myanmar people engaged in development work.

### I) FIVE NEW ITCs

Between 2008 and 2014, the Industry Ministry established five new Industrial Training Centres in Mandalay (2008), Thagaya (near Naypyidaw; 2009), Pakokku (2010), Magway (2011), and Myingyan (2014) with the assistance of China (Mandalay), South Korea (Thagaya and Magway), and India (Pakokku and Myingyan). At all sites, one year courses are offered close to industrial zones of different kinds. This follows the pattern of Sinde, which was established close to industrial plants on the west bank of the Ayeyawadi. The new training centres aimed at providing workforce for new factories under both state and private management.

The training centre in Magway can serve as an illustration. It was opened in 2011 one year after the Industry Ministry (2) had opened No (13) Heavy Industry factory producing two models of Tata trucks.<sup>100</sup> Here just two trades are taught - automobile mechanic and computer aided techniques useful to facilitate the process of car manufacture.

Differently from the original conception of the "model ITC" in Sinde however, the neighbouring factories were not used for in-

**စက်မှုသင်တန်းကျောင်းများ**

ကျွမ်းကျင်၊ ရိုးသား၊ စွမ်းရည်မြင့်မား၊ စက်မှုသင်တန်းသား

**SKILL HONOUR ABILITY**

တည်နေရာနှင့် သင်ကြားပေးသည့် ဘာသာရပ်များ

Center Name	Machine tools Operator	Machinery Fitter	Tools & Die Maker	Technical Designer	Pattern Maker	Automobile Mechanic	Electrician	Electronics Mechanic	CAD/CAM	CNC Operator	Welder	Foundry Man
Sinde	●	●	●	●	●	●	●					
Mandalay	●						●			●	●	
Thagaya	●						●	●	●			●
Pakokku	●					●	●	●		●	●	
Magway						●			●			
Myingyan	●		●				●	●		●	●	●

plant training based on the model of the German dual system. This feature had been abandoned in Sinda as well by 2008, at the time of introducing the one-year courses. The chart of the Ministry thus depicts a situation in which the trainings at all ITCs were formally levelled. This has however changed with the intake of batch 37 at ITC Sinda, that returned to a two-years course, albeit of course under various different conditions from between 1998 and 2018.

This scheme is in line with the policies introduced by SLORC after 1988 to develop the infrastructure of Myanmar, starting with the construction of bridges, dams and the introduction of industrial zones. In this context, the top leadership of the junta was closely monitoring the industrial development. The planning of the ITC Mandalay can be traced back to a visit of junta leader Than Shwe to Mandalay in April 2000.<sup>101</sup> For some time, however, the new institution - and the training institutions that followed - were called "Technical Training Schools". It appears that the term designating the prestigious ITC No. 1 in Sinda established before 1988 was later transferred to the other vocational training schools set up by the Industry Ministry.

Today's ITC (3) is situated in Thagaya, some 70 km south of Naypyidaw, near an industrial zone established in 2006 shortly after the shift of the capital from Yangon to Naypyidaw. The first factories built there produced diesel engines and bulldozers that could be used to complete the great plans of constructing the ambitious new capital. Three years later, the new ITC was opened offering training for 30 persons for each of the five professions taught there. The school was established with the assistance of South Korea International Co-operation Agency (KOICA) that can be compared to the GTZ/GIZ.<sup>102</sup> Parallel to what happened in Sinda in the 1970s and 1980s, KOICA provided the equipment as well as training programs for the Burmese teachers who went to South Korea for four months. After that, some trainers from Korea came to Myanmar for half a year to assist the teaching staff in implementing what they had learnt. The curricula followed the ratio of 7:3 in favor of practical training. The school is proud of the electrical training offered there.

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100 <http://www.industry.gov.mm/en/content/no-13-heavy-industry-magway>. Interestingly, the ITC was built with Korean assistance whereas Tata Motors is an Indian company.

101 New Light of Myanmar 7.4.2000 (<http://www.burmalibrary.org/NLM/archives/2000-04/msg00006.html> (accessed 12.2.2019)).

102 It is interesting that South Korea recently has adopted some features from the dual system practised in Europe.

With regard to job placement, all trainees who are looking for a job are supposed to be employed by state or private companies. A special team visits Yangon and Pegu industrial zones and factories inquiring about job opportunities for trainees. About 10-15 companies currently are in close contact with the training centre. Some trainees are offered opportunities to go to Japan, as well as Malaysia, Thailand and Korea. Here, a three months training has to be done before a transfer to the other country, and costs at least 450,000 Kyat,.

For all ITCs, teachers' training seminars are held from time to time. Short capacity-building workshops are organised by the Human Development Department of the Ministry of Industry.

The "new ITCs" were part of a double strategy adopted by the Burmese government from 2008 on to combine new attempts to develop the industrialisation of the country and get development aid from various foreign partners in order to reduce the dependency on the great eastern neighbour China. It took a rather long time to establish the first new Industrial Training School in Mandalay in 2008. The other schools followed swiftly in an annual order between 2009 and 2014.

It is evident that Minister Soe Thein orchestrated the whole scheme after having taken over the post of Industry Minister (2) in late 2008. Before his appointment to the post, he had served as Commander-in-Chief of the Burmese Navy. During the Nargis crisis, he acted as spokesman for the government defining its stance in accepting goods from abroad but without opening the country to foreign aid workers.<sup>103</sup> He was a confidante of Prime Minister Thein Sein, who acted as Prime Minister from May 2017 onward, and was appointed Minister of Industry (2) in June 2008. (For more information see below chapter 5).

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103 <https://pleasehelpburma.wordpress.com/2008/05/13/we-dont-need-your-skills-burma/> (accessed 17.2.2019).

## II) THE ALUMNI ORGANISATION

On December 26, 2009, on the occasion of celebrating the ITC's 30th anniversary – the Pearl Jubilee - of the ITC Sinde, alumni and teachers of the school established a "Health Care Association" (Burmese: kjan:-ma-ku athin) also known by the acronyms KMK Association. The following section gives an overview about the history of the association, its aims and modes of implementation, and organisation. After an overview on "special activities" performed by members of the organisation, an assessment of the association is provided). The information is based on documents kept by the organisation and on information provided by members.

## HISTORY

The origins of the association can be traced back to a meeting of some alumni in Bangkok in July 1997,<sup>104</sup> where the matter of celebrating the Silver Jubilee of the ITC Sinde was discussed. Since the alumni of the school now lived in 3 continents in different regions of the world, it was proposed to set up some regional organisations of Sinde alumni. One letter written after the meeting calls the 25th anniversary a "golden anniversary" and speaks of a "golden opportunity for our children". The idea was soon realised in Malaysia and Thailand as the prints of two rubber-stamps made in Malaysia show.

**IMAGE 23: SCULPTURE DISPLAYED AT THE ITC PAKOKKU**



PHOTO: FACEBOOK

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<sup>104</sup> According to a letter written by Tun Than from batch 1 who had settled down in San Francisco at that time, he met with Ye Htoot, San Myint, Myint Swe and Kyi Htay.

In Malaysia, 28 alumni formed a temporary committee to prepare for honouring the 25th anniversary of establishing the school. In Thailand, an alumni organisation was founded on June 6, 1999, with the second meeting attended by six former trainees. According to the minutes of the gathering, the forming of similar associations was to be encouraged. The practical aim was to organise a celebration of the 25th anniversary of the school because:

All ex-students need to uplift the school's good characteristics and the students' tradition of mutual friendship, unity and cooperation among themselves. This Alumni Association is formed with such aim in mind and also to celebrate a ceremony so our good tradition will be remembered and preserved in history. (See Annex 8)

To achieve the aim, each student was expected to regularly make an "equal and voluntary" financial contribution, depending on their income. The "organisation" of the association was outlined in 15 points: All ex-students with an ITC number could apply for voluntary membership. The membership fee was set at 150 Baht (equivalent to a bit over 3 US\$ at that time); a representative of the association was to be elected at meetings to be held every six months; his/her responsibility was to manage money matters carefully and to keep contacts with other alumni organisations of the ITC Sinde. The last two points summarised the duties of all members:

Each member is responsible to strive for the progress of the association and the realization of its objectives.

Each member must help each other like brothers and sisters.

From a receipt dated 18.6.1999 for the amount of 1,800 Thai Baht, one can conclude that the association had 12 members at that time. At the next meeting on 19th June of the same year, the monthly membership fee was raised to 500 Baht (more than US\$10). At that time one member also noted his contacts with ex-students living in Singapore.

One of the participants of the first meeting, Ye Htoot, had lived and worked in Malaysia, Singapore and Thailand and was just opening his factory in Yangon, (For Ye Htoot's career, see Annex 12) He was thus an apt connection between the Sinde alumni living abroad and those who had remained in Myanmar. Most importantly, he could establish direct contacts with the ITC Sinde where the anticipated Silver Jubilee was to be celebrated. To organise a meeting of alumni in Myanmar was a rather risky business because

of political reasons. Students of all kinds were likely to be regarded as opponents of the military government.<sup>105</sup> It was therefore not easy to get the permission to celebrate the 25th anniversary of the school. However, Headmaster U Kyaw Lwin supported the idea as did his superior in the nearby HIC plant.

The celebrations finally took place on Saturday, December 5, 2004. 800 persons attended and former students from seven countries contributed more than 11 million Kyat (about US\$13,000 at the unofficial free market rate of that time)<sup>106</sup> to cover expenses. Most of the money (almost 5 million Kyat) came from the alumni living in Australia, followed by contributions from Myanmar (2.67 million), Singapore (1.6 million), Malaysia (1 million) and smaller amounts from the USA, Thailand and Canada. Most of the money was used for honouring the teachers, printing t-shirts,, food, transportation costs, technical equipment and presents for the teachers.<sup>107</sup> The balance showed a surplus of more than 1.3 million Kyat. (For a report on the celebration, see Annex 1)

The successful Silver Jubilee gave a great boost to the "Sinde family" that had convened for the first time after leaving the place where they had received their education. The seven years of planning the event in a difficult political climate – many students had participated in the strikes of 1988 – and the participation of alumni living in various countries as well as the participation of family members proved the high value attached to school and the social cohesion that had emerged from having been trained there.

However, it was still not easy to establish an officially recognised ITC Sinde alumni organisation in Myanmar. The alumni then concentrated on preparing the school's Pearl Jubilee in connection with deliberating over options for founding an alumni association in Myanmar. To discuss these matters, regular meetings took place at a private vocational training school opened by former teacher U Mya Oo who had been very popular in the early days of the school as the leader of the ITC's band.

<sup>105</sup> Since the ban of student unions in 1962 and the suppression of the student led unrest in 1988, students' organisations were generally regarded as anti-government orientated.

<sup>106</sup> Officially, the rate was fixed at US\$1 : 6.3 Kyat.

<sup>107</sup> The accounting comprised 11 items: 1 - Paying respect to the teachers one day before: 141,170 Ky.; 2 – Mohingya: 352,120 Ky.; 3 – Biryani: 974,220 Ky.; 4 – Chinese Food: 466,855 Ky.; dishes, spoons etc.: 414,775 Ky.; 6 – Transportation: 1,490,000 Ky.; 7 – Entertainment: 125,000; 8 – Video and Photo; 9 - T-Shirt, Computer and Satellite: 2,570,700; 10 – Present for Teachers: 3,138,000, 11. Others: 1,000,000.

Finally, it was decided to form an organisation to help each other by providing financial assistance to help in cases of severe health problems and to cover costs of funerals<sup>108</sup> and health care assistance. The statute was modelled after that of the Kyauktan Township Association. Kyauktan, located 25 km south of Thanlyin, is the home town of U Ye Htoot. The township organisation that promoted social services for the people was recognised by the government. A variety of names for the association were considered that could be acceptable for the government and sounded somehow “poetic”. The proposal to name the association “An Old Students’ Organisation” had to be abandoned due to the suspicion of the military government towards any body set up by students. The name “graduates of the ITC Sinde” used in the statutes was however acceptable. The idea of the aim to cover funeral expenses was discarded in the name of the association, but was included in the rules of regulations. In a meeting in early 2009, the decision to form the KMK was taken.

In June 2009, a committee was formed to prepare for the Pearl Jubilee. It was easier than five years before to get permission to celebrate in Sinde. It might have helped that the students helped to improve the water supply for the school and build new water tanks, pumps and pipes for the hostels. The funds to finance the celebrations contributed by alumni in Myanmar and from overseas amounted to 24 million Kyat (around 25,000 US \$ at that time).

The celebration of the ITC’s Pearl Jubilee in Sinde was held on Saturday, December 26, 2009 and attended by some 1,300 people. Most of them stayed two days and one night at the place, which undoubtedly contributed to increasing the corporate feeling of mutual understanding.

The statutes of the association were adopted on that occasion and an executive committee consisting of 17 members was elected. The first chairman was – and still is - U Ye Htoot. The next day, a ceremony of feeding the monks at the Mogaung Monastery took place in which deceased family members were remembered.

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108 From the beginning of the 21th century on, a number of associations were founded in Myanmar that combined funeral and medical services for needy people. One of the first was association founded by the famous Burmese actor Kyaw Thu (see <https://www.myanmore.com/2017/10/u-kyaw-thu-man-harmony/>). To provide such services is not restricted to Buddhist communities. The Christian missionaries opened hospitals and in 1938 a hospital providing free health care was opened by the Muslim community in Barr (today: Maha Bandoola Garden) Street.

The number of members of the association was gradually increasing [details] Communication between the members in various countries was improving through the use of new technologies. Viber was used for the exchange of news, and a website of the ITC family was set up in Australia ([www.itcfamily.com](http://www.itcfamily.com)) but abandoned when other means such as instant messaging by Viber allowed for ready communication in social networks..

From then on the executive committee of the KMK met regularly on the first Sunday of a month at 1 p.m. at the office of the Kyauk Tan Association in Tamwe township. Furthermore, a general meeting of ITC alumni took place, the first one on December 11, 2010 at the Eagle Garden Restaurant in Yangon celebrating the first anniversary of the association. A music band under the direction of U Mya Oo played and the KMK’s executive committee for the years 2011 to 2013 was elected. After that, the Annual General Meeting was held every year. On December 20, 2014 the Jade Jubilee was celebrated. This time, 1,800 people participated.

After the foundation in 2009, the registration of the organisation with the Ministry of Interior was initiated. A temporary recognition was achieved already in 2016 and the official document was signed on January 19, 2019 when the association was registered as the “Health-help association of former trainees of the Industrial Training Centre (Sinde)”.

On July 1, 2018, the organisation committee for the 40th anniversary (the Ruby Jubilee of the school that will take place on December 28th 2019) was selected. It is expected that the celebrations will surpass the previous ones and further strengthen the connection between the members.

## AIMS AND ORGANISATION

The Rules and Regulations – lastly amended on May 28, 2016 – consist of ten sections and two annexes,<sup>109</sup> one dealing with the organisation of the association, the other concerning benefits for the members. The preamble to the rules and regulations gives two reasons for the foundation of the association: The distant places where the alumni live, and the problems of daily life. As a consequence, the organisation was founded to provide a) easy

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109 The translation of the rules and regulations was done by May Soung.

**IMAGE 24: HANDING OVER AN AWARD TO A STUDENT ON JANUARY 8, 2016**



PHOTO: H.-B: ZÖLLNER

access of information among alumni, b) health care expenses, and c) funeral service expenses. The practical services provided by the KMK is therefore a means to preserve the connection established by having spent some time together at the ITC. Although the task of providing health and funeral services for people in need has a long tradition in Myanmar, the combination of such services with an alumni organisation is singular.<sup>110</sup>

The paragraph on “purposes” of the association without mentioning the material aim of connecting former students and teachers adds two more objectives: To annually give awards to the children of members who pass matriculation exams, and; scholarships to the children of members who are in trouble with school fees even though they are outstanding students. These aims follow the *raison d’être* of the ITC in providing an excellent education.

The benefits of the KMK are given to the members who have to apply for membership, their children, spouses and parents. Each member gets a registration card a copy of which has to be attached to any request for financial assistance. The membership fee is 5,000 Kyat per year, or 30,000 Kyat for life membership. Besides the membership fees, donations are welcome. Amounts under 20,000 Kyat are called “general” and above 20,000 Kyat “sustainable” donations. Persons who donate 1,000,000 Kyat and more receive a special certificate presented at the annual general meeting.

This elaborate system of contributions is firmly rooted in the Buddhist tradition of *dana* (giving) as the most noble virtue of any layperson. The practice of the KMK shows that *dana* is not restricted to giving alms to monks, but can be found in various networks of Myanmar society as well.

<sup>110</sup> Alumni of many educational institutions in Myanmar help old teachers financially, but a scheme like the KMK has not been set up until now elsewhere.

## ORGANISATION AND COMMUNICATION

From 1988 onwards, the ITC Sinde alumni lived in different countries as well as different regions of Myanmar, with many of them in the Sinde region because of the former HIC factories located there. As a consequence, the statutes of the organisation contain the option to form regional organisations without going into details. At the annual general meetings, reports are presented about activities in specific regional alumni organisations.

The main instrument of communication between the members of the association is Viber, a software application for free telephone calls and messages. Images and video clips can also be communicated. Like other means of communication of its kind, Viber can be used to exchange news within groups. This way, members of particular batches or alumni who are participating in special projects can communicate messages that are not interesting for others.

## SPECIAL ACTIVITIES

Assistance given however is not restricted to members of the association. Donations of different kinds are channelled to people and institutions outside the KMK. After the great flood in 2015 that affected Sinde village, alumni helped personally and through donations to ease the plight of the villagers. In addition, the monastery located besides the school received donations. A concrete road was built with money and personal commitment of KMK members and a well was drilled to provide the monastery and some nearby households with fresh water.

As part of this assistance, in January 2017 an amount of 50 Lakh (5 million Kyat) was handed over to the abbot of the monastery by the treasurer of the KMK. A new drilling of the well was necessary because the level of the groundwater had changed over time. Before handing over the money a small religious ceremony was attended by members of the association and

**IMAGE 25: 50 LAKH (FIVE MILLION KYAT) WAS HANDED OVER TO THE ABBOT OF THE MONASTERY BY THE TREASURER OF THE KMK IN JANUARY 2017 FOR DRILLING OF THE WELL PROVIDING WATER FOR THE MONASTERY AND SOME HOUSEHOLDS.**



PHOTO: H.-B: ZÖLLNER

local people, and photos of this were sent immediately to other members of the association via Viber, thus, distant donors were informed instantly that their gift had reached its proper destination and that they could participate in the merit gained by the act. The episode illustrates that the alumni association is deeply integrated in the Buddhist-Burmese belief system.

The same applies to actions of individuals. The head of the electrical fitter workshop (who had been the co-trainer of the football team as well) left the ITC 1991 after his bond of 10 years had expired. As did some of his colleagues, he worked on a German ship for 14 months. In 1992 he moved to Singapore with a former colleague from Sinde who had done the same job as a translator/steward on banana freighters. He lived and worked there until 2008, for 5 of those years together with his wife, who had taken over a shop established in Pyay selling electrical goods in 1998.<sup>111</sup> In addition to this business, he obtained a licence to

do electrical installations and repair work. He provided training to workers to perform such work, and who then after the training worked on his licence. In 2014, he opened a training school named "Saytanar" (Good Intention) to convey practical knowledge to students of the Technical University in Pyay.<sup>112</sup> He thus passed the knowledge he had gained by working for the ITC Sinde to others in a two-fold way.

One additional note - , the "Sinde band" was not only active at the jubilees of the school. In April 2018, a concert was given in Yangon that was attended by 600 people. Tickets were sold for the event and the money earned was used for donations.

**IMAGE 26: THE MOTTO OF THE ITC "SKILL-HONOUR-ABILITY"**



PHOTO: H.-B: ZÖLLNER

111 The shop is named "Bo German" ("German Comrade" because the owner got this name from some friends after his return from Germany).

112 Interview with U Khin Htwe on 7.10.2017. - He died in December 2017.

## SUMMARY

The first celebration of the school's foundation in 2004 was the beginning of setting up a civil society organisation that is not limited to organising the school's jubilees every five years. Since the foundation of the Kjan-ma-ku athin in 2009, a stable network has emerged that connects alumni and teachers of the school living in various countries. The people connected through the organisation perform a variety of activities benefiting the members as well as outsiders. All these activities are rooted in the appreciation both by alumni and teachers of what had been established with German help decades ago and has now developed into an association deeply rooted in Burmese traditions. A great number of the roughly 5,000 students who were trained there and the more than 250 teachers who were employed by the ITC over the years form an extended "family" with many branches, some of them located in other countries like Malaysia, Singapore and Australia. The skills taught and practised during the training have been added to by a community spirit that could not be planned. The ITC Sinda is still the "No. 1" in more than one regard, and not just in the eyes of many alumni and teachers,.

Over time a common sense of pride developed in within the community of former trainees that was transformed into action outside of their home country. Here, they realised that they shared something special that was worth to be remembered and celebrated beyond the traditional task of paying respect to teachers. The alumni association formed in Thailand aiming at coming together in Sinda again on the occasion of the Silver Jubilee led to the foundation of the a permanent institution five years later. The feeling of a shared pride of being a Sinda alumni gave rise to the establishment of a kind of "brotherhood" aiming at preserving the common memories and helping each other.

Such sense of pride can be connected the ITC's present motto placing the word "honour" denoting the value of an "underdog-education" in a rather hierarchical society between "skill" and "ability" referring to the quantifiable effects of the training. The central term between the word describing the good technical competence acquired at the school is usually translated "honesty", "straight" but "simple" as well.<sup>113</sup> The

motto introduced around [year?] replaced an old one that was coined in the mid 1990s and read "Try to learn technology and technical know-how – Serve the country". Here, the skills acquired at the school are meant to be used in the service of the country. The new motto emphasises the effect of the education for the individual students make use their of the skills and abilities in an honest and straightforward way for their own benefit and that of their "brothers and sisters".

The new motto was later transferred to designate the activities of all six ITCs under the supervision of the Ministry of Industry (see above p.33). This is an indication of the role of the ITC Sinda as a model for other vocational institutions and the intention of the government to create a "modern developed nation" and to bring the country back into the family of nations. In comparison to the new ITCs, Sinda has taken the role of an older and somewhat still privileged sibling.

With regard to the factor of sustainability that is very much emphasised in development work, one may argue that the KMK as a network and its special mode of combining the promotion of technical knowledge and social action might be more persistent and stronger than the cluster of ITCs that have given rise to their own networks.

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113 U Khin Tint commented that "honest" was a good thing but one should not overdue it, otherwise it could designate "dumb" and "dull".

## ⑤ Chapter 5: An Almost New Beginning (2012 - 2019)

As in the 1970s, the initiative to make use of German experience in the field of vocational training was taken by a Burmese minister, former Vice-Admiral Soe Thein<sup>114</sup> who had been appointed Minister of Industry (2) in 2008 under Prime Minister Thein Sein in the last SPDC government headed by the future president. Soe Thein retained his post after the transfer of government to an elected government at the end of March 2011, and organised the merger of the two Industry Ministries effective from December 2011. He was a close confidante of Thein Sein and a promoter of re-establishing contacts with the outside world.<sup>115</sup> With regard to Germany, Soe Thein approached the German embassy as well as the representative of the Fritz Werner company in Yangon to resume development aid and particularly referred to the ITC Sinda as a project that was suited to link the present to the co-operation that existed between the two countries before 1988.

After the election of November 7, 2010 and the release of Aung San Suu Kyi one week later, the initiative for the recommencement of German aid was welcomed by the German Foreign Office. The embassy had never been happy with the strict boycott policy of the European Union,<sup>116</sup> an opinion that was shared by the foreign minister, Guido Westerwelle, and the minister responsible for development, Dirk Niebel,<sup>117</sup> both members of the German Liberal Party (FDP) that had formed the government as a junior partner together with the Christian Democratic Union (CDU) since 2009. Backed by the consent of the ministry heads, officials of the Ministry of Economic Co-operation and Development (BMZ) looked for ways to document the German good will towards Myanmar by supporting civil society organisations in Myanmar. The still existing EU sanctions ruled out an immediate resumption of government-to-government co-operation.

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114 Other spelling preferred by him: Soe Thane.

115 For his assessment of the transition period under Thein Sein see his book "Myanmar's Transformation & U Thein Sein. An Insider's Account" published in 2017.

116 Talks with German ambassadors Luy and Weber-Lortsch between 2009 and 2012.

117 Interview with Dirk Niebel on 18.7.2018.

In early November 2011, state minister Werner Hoyer in the German Foreign Office was the first high ranking German official to visit Myanmar after 1988, together with a delegation in which high ranking government servants from the BMZ participated. On this occasion, Aung San Suu Kyi and other members of the opposition against the previous military government were met following meetings with the Burmese Foreign Minister and the Speaker of the Parliament. Talks were held also with representatives of German NGOs who had been working in Myanmar for some time already, and with the local agent of the Fritz Werner company in Yangon.<sup>118</sup> In Germany, further consultations were held with members of NGOs and political foundations. As a result, a visit of Minister Niebel to Myanmar was planned to take place in February 2012 as a show of Germany's good intentions.

The BMZ hoped that investing in Myanmar's development would be a useful contribution to a peace dividend by reducing the expenses for the military in favour of supporting civil projects as well as the process towards strengthening democracy and the economy in conjunction with a reduction of the military's influence. The political reform process in Myanmar was closely monitored in Germany as in other western countries, particularly with regard to the participation of Aung San Suu Kyi and her party in the by-elections scheduled for April 2012. Minister Niebel's visit took place as scheduled after the NLD had been registered and the party leader had announced the intention to contest the elections.

The minister and his delegation visited Naypyidaw and met with President Thein Sein and other members of the government, including Soe Thein. In Yangon they were received by Aung San Suu Kyi. Shortly after the April elections that resulted in an overwhelming victory for the NLD candidates, the EU sanctions were suspended and economic co-operation between the two governments resumed.

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118 The German section of Malteser International and the Welthungerhilfe were active in the field of humanitarian aid and the Sparkassenstiftung worked in the field of micro finance.

**IMAGE 27 & 28: MINISTER NIEBEL WITH PRESIDENT THEIN SEIN; MINISTER NIEBEL WITH AUNG SAN SUU KYI**



PHOTOS: PHOTOTHEK.NE

At his meeting with the German delegation, Soe Thein had submitted a draft to his colleague to renew the German support for Sinde, a proposal that was accepted by the German side.<sup>119</sup> The German partners acknowledged Soe Thein's role as a reformer in the cabinet<sup>120</sup> and particularly as being "pro-German".<sup>121</sup> He tried to establish good contacts with the German business community and in March 2013 was invited to participate in a prestigious meeting in Hamburg<sup>122</sup> organised by the German Asia-Pacific Business Association.<sup>123</sup> Soe Thein regarded himself as a promoter of Myanmar business and especially of small and medium enterprises.<sup>124</sup>

Sinde was thus a door-opener and link for a new beginning based on the good will of both sides that had been developed in the past. According to the memories of German participants

there was a friendly and trustful atmosphere, and Burmese officials were eager to contribute to a swift completion of the agreements that had to be drafted. The renewal of assistance to Sinde was integrated into other measures of promoting Myanmar's economy, such as the support of the banking system and small and medium enterprises (SMEs), that now took the place of the HIC plants to employ the trainees. This focus on economic issues was regarded as appropriate for a country that had been shunned for political reasons for some time and was in line with the German minister's political agenda.<sup>125</sup> On the Myanmar side, the close co-operation between the two countries during the Ne Win era and particularly the "educational assistance"<sup>126</sup> given then was well remembered and in line with the Thein Sein administration aim of building trust in international relations.<sup>127</sup>

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119 Brunhilde Vest, 3.7.2018.

120 Interview Oliver Bientzle, 22.11.2018.

121 This was noted in report on a German business delegation visiting Myanmar in November 2011 shortly after the group headed by the German state minister. (ministerhttps://www.oav.de/fileadmin/user\_upload/1\_Meldungen/3\_Dateien\_fuer\_aktuelle\_Meldungen/111222\_OAV\_Myanmar-Artikel.pdf).

122 Soe Thein in his book mentions having met Minister Niebel in Hamburg then (Soe Thein 2017: 114).

123 The "Ostasiatisches Liebesmahl" invites business people from Germany and Eastern Asia annually since 1901 to exchange views and strengthen business co-operation. The meeting, which is attended by 300 to 400 guests, takes place in the Town Hall of Hamburg. In May of the same year he was flown to Berlin on the initiative of the GIZ to deepen contacts with the German business community.

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124 In an internet statement before the 2015 elections he claimed: "He established the Small and Medium Industrial Development Bank as a Chairman. He is a leading Person of Department of the Development of Small and Medium Enterprise. He supports continually the development of these Enterprise. He is now responsible for coordination of all economic Ministries as the Union Minister of Ministry of President Office" (3).

125 Brunhilde Vest, 3.7.2018. - The German readiness to quickly get engaged in development activities in Myanmar is underlined by the fact that the problem of lacking budget funds for Myanmar was solved by taking money from a budget designated for Thailand but not as yet spent. (Interview Dirk Niebel 18.7.2018).

126 Soe Thein 2017: 114.

127 Ibid: 86-126.

### IMAGE 29: MINISTER SOE THEIN



PHOTO: IRRAWADDY

The high symbolic value of the ITC Sinde is illustrated by a remark of minister Soe Thein: He had “reserved” Sinde for the Germans in the course of inviting other countries like South Korea to help Myanmar establish more ITCs after 2008.<sup>128</sup>

After the political decision to resume development aid, the practical implementation of the projects swiftly began. In March 2012, a delegation consisting of three experts of vocational training from the GIZ and private organisations came to Myanmar on the invitation of the Industry Ministry. The GIZ had been established on January 1, 2011 on the initiative of minister Niebel through the merger of three German development organisations, one of them being the GTZ.<sup>129</sup>

The task of the experts was to explore ways of assisting the Myanmar TVET sector in connection with promoting the Myanmar’s economic private sector. The delegation visited Naypyidaw and was taken from there on a rather tough journey by mini-bus to Sinde. The participants flown in from Germany were accompanied by a staff member of the German

embassy and officials from the Ministry of Industry and the Ministry of Planning, the latter being responsible for concluding agreements with foreign governments. In Sinde, they received a warm welcome and were much impressed by being introduced to a well-maintained and functioning “technological museum” from the 1980s (that however needed to be upgraded both technologically and in terms of training material). It was noticed that the old textbooks and some papers worked out before 1988 were still preserved and proudly presented.

Because working out details of co-operation between the concerned ministries would take some time, the German experts as a sign of German good will promised to provide immediate assistance to the Comprehensive Education Sector Review (CESR) undertaken by the Ministry of Education in February 2012 that aimed at raising the overall level of social and economic development.

After the sanctions of the European Union had been suspended in May 2012, Minister Niebel offered a sum of 12.5 million Euro as a “seed capital” for development work in Myanmar. After a series of negotiations with the Myanmar administration, representatives of the BMZ and the Ministry of Planning signed a letter of intent on July 26 that outlined basics of the co-operation. After that, the GIZ made plans for opening an office in Yangon and began looking for suitable staff. In September 2012, Irina Scheffmann started her work in an improvised office located in her apartment and started to work on the implementation of the various programs. Later a proper office was provided by the Ministry of Industry in one of its buildings located in New University Avenue. Among the western countries that had boycotted Myanmar during the rule of the military junta, Germany was the first in establishing state-to-state relations with Myanmar in the field of development work and started to implement projects in a well coordinated and systematic way.

The Germans who took part in the process of re-establishing the co-operation were impressed by the friendliness of their counterparts as well as by the energy and thoroughness invested by the Burmese officials in helping to draft workable agreements. The Burmese sympathy was expressed in a variety of ways. One member of the German team was told that the “German English” was more liked by the Burmese than the British and American English. On the other hand it was noted that the German initiatives were regarded as a chance to help developing a “better Myanmar”.

128 Interview with Irina Scheffmann 18.7.2018.

129 The two other organisations were the DED (Deutscher Entwicklungsdienst – German Development Service) modelled after the US Peace Corps in 1963. The organisation sent out development workers that had completed a vocational training and some work experience for periods between two and six years. They received a maintenance allowance of 900 Euro plus additional benefits. - The other organisation – InWent – concentrated on personnel development including the preparation of development workers and other experts before they were to start to work abroad. One predecessor of InWent, formed in 2002, had been the DSE in Mannheim where the future teachers of Sinde had received their initial training in Germany. The merger resulted in a difference of the remuneration between the “employees inside and outside Germany” and “development workers” both continuing the salaries paid by the GTZ and the DED respectively.

Such attitudes reflect the notion of a special German-Burmese relationship based in a particular Burmese reading of history. From World War I onwards, Germany was regarded as a co-victim that had suffered from Britain like Burma.<sup>130</sup> The German involvement in the ITC Sinde - proving German efficiency - thus served as a suitable starting point to refresh the long Burmese sympathy for Germany.

All in all, a spirit of optimism and enthusiasm was in the air on both sides during the first phase of resuming German development assistance after the government under Thein Sein had started a reform process in April 2011. On this basis, the number of GIZ offices and supported projects increased considerably during the following years.

Soon after the provisional office of the GIZ had been established, a job announcement was published for a project manager of the TVET program. The chosen candidate had a long working experience in the field of vocational training and started to work in Myanmar on March 1, 2013 with a two years contract. He travelled regularly to Sinde. Shortly afterwards, the post of a development worker<sup>131</sup> to start the practical work in Sinde was advertised. The job was given to a veteran German automobile craftsman who had previously worked for the GTZ and other development agencies in a variety of countries in Africa and Asia.<sup>132</sup> He paid a visit to Myanmar in March 2013 to get a first impression about what to do there and commenced his work in April 2013.

What the new man on the spot found in Sinde was a functioning school, with expectations of fully reviving the fame of the training centre and the readiness of the Sinde staff as well as their superiors in the Ministry<sup>133</sup> to contribute to such a revival. He realised that many of the teachers had been trained in Sinde before. On visits to some other ITCs, he recognised that they were technically better equipped than Sinde, but that the quality of teaching did not match the standards of professional vocational training.

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130 See Zöllner 2000: 221-222; 332.

131 For the difference between the status of the project manager and the development worker, see footnote 128.

132 The narration of the commencement of the German activities in Sinde is based on interviews with Erich Lochow 12.4. and 16.6.2016, 11.8. and 1.10.2018 and interviews with Konrad de Bortoli on 26.4.2016 and 9.10.2018.

133 The support from the Myanmar side to the mission materialised in the extent of care for his and his wife's well being in their temporary home that he never had experienced before in his long career working abroad.

In a sense, pioneer work had to be performed again in a mix of office work, procuring new material and revising the curricula of the various trades taught. To cope with these challenging tasks more German personnel were needed - and provided by the GIZ. Together with the head of the program manager for the TVET program based in Yangon, a very close and fruitful co-operation with the responsible officer in the Ministry developed. This "golden triangle" established between Sinde, Yangon and Naypyidaw was based on good personal relations and helped to revive the ITC with the assistance of some further development workers sent to Sinde, one of whom had worked in the TVET sector for almost five years in Vietnam previously. He took over part of the office work and co-ordination with other agencies.

A major step forward to refresh the training happened when six retired Burmese teachers from the first generation were called back and employed as "consultants" in the workshops by the GIZ. According to the German informal team leader, this measure had a "rejuvenating effect" on the whole school and helped to strengthen the "spirit" created in the school's past that was still alive. Furthermore, with the financial support provided by the KfW (the German state owned development bank) financially supporting development projects, new equipment was procured.<sup>134</sup> Furthermore, a number of Burmese teachers were sent to Germany for some months to receive some training in the field of pedagogics. (see Annex 10)

The German development worker who had started the practical German aid to the ITC finished his contract in April 2015. His role as a coordinator of the German assistance to the school was taken over by a younger colleague who had come to Myanmar in October 2013.<sup>135</sup> All in all, five more development workers were sent to Sinde on two year contracts. Two of them were later transferred to Mandalay to work at the railway workshop in Ywataung and the Government Technical Institute.<sup>136</sup>

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134 [https://www.kfw-entwicklungsbank.de/PDF/Entwicklungsfinanzierung/L%C3%A4nder-und-Programme/Asien/Myanmar\\_Info\\_-Sinde\\_2016\\_EN.pdf](https://www.kfw-entwicklungsbank.de/PDF/Entwicklungsfinanzierung/L%C3%A4nder-und-Programme/Asien/Myanmar_Info_-Sinde_2016_EN.pdf) (accessed 23.2.2019).

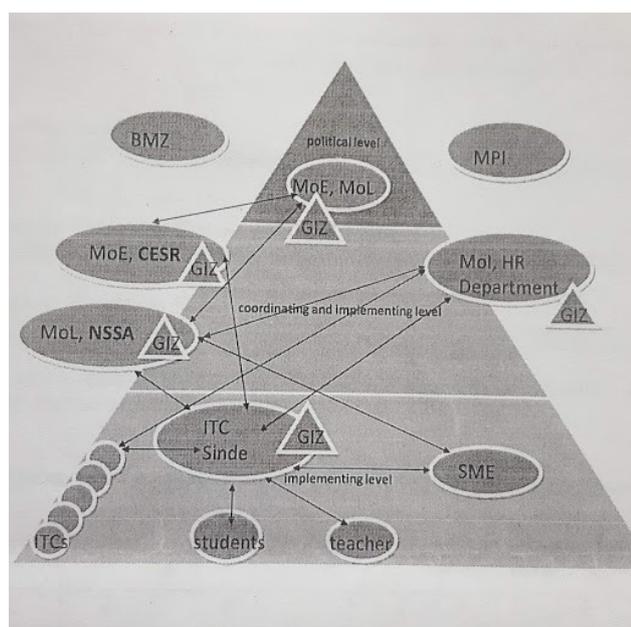
135 His position was changed later from development worker to an "integrated expert" under the scheme of the Centre of International Migration (CIM) jointly run by Deutsche Gesellschaft für Internationale Zusammenarbeit (GIZ) and the German Federal Employment Agency.

136 The latter visited Sinde regularly to continue his assistance in updating the curricula.

The highlight of the consolidation period of the school was the return to a two years training that started in 2017 with batch 37. It aimed at qualifying the trainees to the standards of level 3 of the NSSA. To achieve this goal, the curricula of the various trades had to be redesigned. These standards aimed at linking Myanmar's vocational training to the international level, particularly to ASEAN countries in view of the ASEAN Economic Community established in 2015.<sup>137</sup>

From the beginning, the role of the ITC Sinda within the whole concept of uplifting Myanmar's TVET scheme was rather vague for obvious reasons. Both the German and the Myanmar agencies involved were entering unknown territory in finding common ground of implementing a scheme of vocational training that was rather differently practised on both sides.

The scheme drawn up in 2014 by the GIZ illustrates the difficulties of coordinating the various stakeholders as perceived with German eyes. The ITC Sinda represents the main institution on the implementing level. The five other ITCs established with the assistance other countries are depicted as small entities compared to the "big brother" ITC Sinda and its German partner GIZ. The categories of students, teachers and the crucial category of small and medium enterprises (SMEs) are not clearly defined.



137 Millio et. al. 2014: ixi.

In this chart, the GIZ is represented five times on all three levels. The intermediate level shows that three Ministries are involved in coordinating the TVET related activities. For the German side, a major agent is missing – the KfW and the contractors employed by the bank. On both sides, a number of actors with a variety of interests were involved. No single body to coordinate the TVET scheme was established. Instead, steering committees met from time to time, and other meetings of stakeholders took place. They aimed at supporting “the responsible Ministries in Myanmar in improving the strategic, conceptual and regulatory framework for vocational education. [...] Locally, the project supports selected vocational training institutes in developing and implementing training and professional development programmes geared to the labour market” as a the GIZ explained in a statement on the internet introducing the second phase of the German TVET project (2017-2019).<sup>138</sup>

The report mentioned six “vocational training centres to develop and implement employment-oriented vocational training and professional development programmes” supported by the GIZ program. They were located in “four pilot regions of Yangon, Mandalay, Taunggyi (Shan State) and Sinda (Bago Region)” and - except the school in Sinda - supervised by the Ministry of Education.<sup>139</sup> This development shows that the Ministry of Education had taken the place of the Ministry of Industry as the main co-operation partner of the GIZ, and that on the “implementation level” the ITC Sinda is the only one left over from the six ITC established under Soe Thein’s time as head of the Industry Ministry.

This development was in line with the aims of both sides to initiate a comprehensive TVET system in Myanmar within the ASEAN and global context. The big aims were highlighted at a conference in June 2017 in Naypyidaw jointly organised by the Myanmar Ministry of Education, the German Ministry for Economic Cooperation and Development (BMZ) and the Asian Development Bank (ADB).<sup>140</sup>

138 <https://www.giz.de/en/worldwide/17777.html>.

139 Three Government Technical Institutes are supported in Yangon (Insein and Swe Pyi Thar) and Mandalay, one Government Technical High School in Yangon (Ywama) and the Technical Promotion Training Centre (TPTC) in Baelin near Mandalay.

140 <https://www.regional-tvet-conference-myanmar.org/en/topic/26.news.html>; <https://www.bibb.de/govet/en/62897.php> (accessed 24.2.2019). Previous regional conferences had been organised in Vietnam (2012), Indonesia (2014) and Laos (2015).

As a result of this tendency to strengthen and expand the “formal” TVET education in Myanmar, the focus was on a “holistic TVET system” as the head of the GIZ’s TVET-program in Myanmar explained in early 2017.<sup>141</sup> As a consequence, the ITC Sinde – as well as the other schools under the MoI – were sidelined. In November 2016 a data collection done by JICA<sup>142</sup> called the school “the most superior TVET institution in Myanmar”. All ITCs listed were assessed as being “well-planned” and “well equipped in terms of workshop space” in comparison with the countries formal TVET institutions and called the “most developed” in Myanmar.<sup>143</sup> They were listed under “non-formal TVET organizations” In contrast, the TVET country profile Myanmar published by UNESCO-UNEVOC<sup>144</sup> two years later concentrates on institutions supervised by the “formal” and “non-formal” organisations under the MoE and then mentions the majority of “other” TVET institutions of other ministries and private organisations.<sup>145</sup> A presentation of the director of the Ministry’s TVET department informing about the strategy in this field between 2016 and 2021 does not refer to these institutions at all.<sup>146</sup>

Such observations and the policy of the GIZ to concentrate on a government advisory role logically led to withdrawal from assisting Sinde. An evaluation paper of the GIZ on the first phase of engagement in Myanmar’s TVET program (2012-2016) stated that “an exit strategy will be drawn up for ITC Sinde [...] in the next phase” lasting from 2017-2019.<sup>147</sup> In February 2018, the work done until then was celebrated with an inauguration ceremony in the presence of the German ambassador and representatives of various German agencies and Myanmar Ministries involved.<sup>148</sup> This could be seen as a farewell ceremony for substantial German aid to the ITC Sinde.

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141 <https://www.mmmtimes.com/special-features/231-educentre/24510-in-demand-skilled-myanmar-workers.html> (accessed 20.5.2019).

142 The Japan International Cooperation Agency (JICA) is a governmental agency that coordinates the country’s development assistance worldwide. JICA opened its Myanmar office in 1981.

143 JICA 2016: 2-54.

144 The International Centre for Technical and Vocational Education and Training is a UN organisation with its headquarters in Bonn, Germany (accessed 20.5.2019).

145 [https://unevoc.unesco.org/wtdb/worldtvtdatabase\\_mmr\\_en.pdf](https://unevoc.unesco.org/wtdb/worldtvtdatabase_mmr_en.pdf) (accessed 20.5.2019). - The report states that the six ITCs established with the help of development partners are “important” without giving any details.

146 C:\Users\User\AppData\Local\Temp\Dr.-Nyan-Win-Thun.pdf

147 GIZ 2017: 7. - The number of development workers decreased from 4 in 2016 to zero in August 2018. However, in January 2019 a new one was posted there again. [details about the GIZ’s strategy]

148 <https://www.gopa-infra.de/news/inauguration-industrial-training-centre-sinde-myanmar> (accessed 28.2.2019).

On the other hand, it can be noted that the outlook on the future of a countrywide TVET system is not very promising. A German study done in 2015 including some ITCs (one being Sinde) published in 2017 that focussed on teacher training, didactics and methodology concluded that the research done might “open up a new chapter in a book which has yet to be written.”<sup>149</sup> (for more details see Annex11) On the other hand, the anticipated connection of TVET activities to the private SME economic sector has not yet been achieved. The contacts between the two realms are mostly informal. This is not surprising since the Myanmar economy is still as fragmented as the TVET sector. The Union of Myanmar Federation of Chambers of Commerce and Industry (UMFCCI) has some 30.000 members, among them more than 100 organisations and a majority of single firms. The Private TVET Association had 550 members in 2016,<sup>150</sup> the number of TVET activities of the 14 line ministries except the Industry Ministry is not known. These figures give an idea of the fragmentation in the sectors of vocational training and the economy as well as other relevant sectors of Myanmar society.

## CONCLUDING REMARKS

Some months before the ITC Sinde’s Pearl Jubilee it seems that the ITC Sinde has lost importance for the future of Myanmar’s efforts to promote vocational training, and in Germany’s role in this endeavour. However, given the uncertain nature of Myanmar politics and its effects on development activities highlighted in this study, this sober assessment might be not the last word. A retrospective view on the significance of the school therefore might also provide a view to the future as well. Looking at the story of the ITC, a number of parallels between the past and the present are apparent.

A remark of Aung San Suu Kyi on vocational training serves as a first illustration. On a visit to Great Britain in July 2016, she noted the need to change the attitude toward vocational training thus: “Vocational education is viewed as a second-class education for citizens. It will be difficult if all parents want to send their children to university and vocational education becomes a secondary priority.”<sup>151</sup> A placard exhibiting this quote can be seen at many places in Myanmar related to TVET activities these days.

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149 Bünning/Schmidt 2017: 19-20. For the full conclusion the Annex NN  
150 JICA 2016: E 2.

IMAGE 30: POSTER WITH AUNG SAN SUU KYI'S WORDS ON VOCATIONAL TRAINING

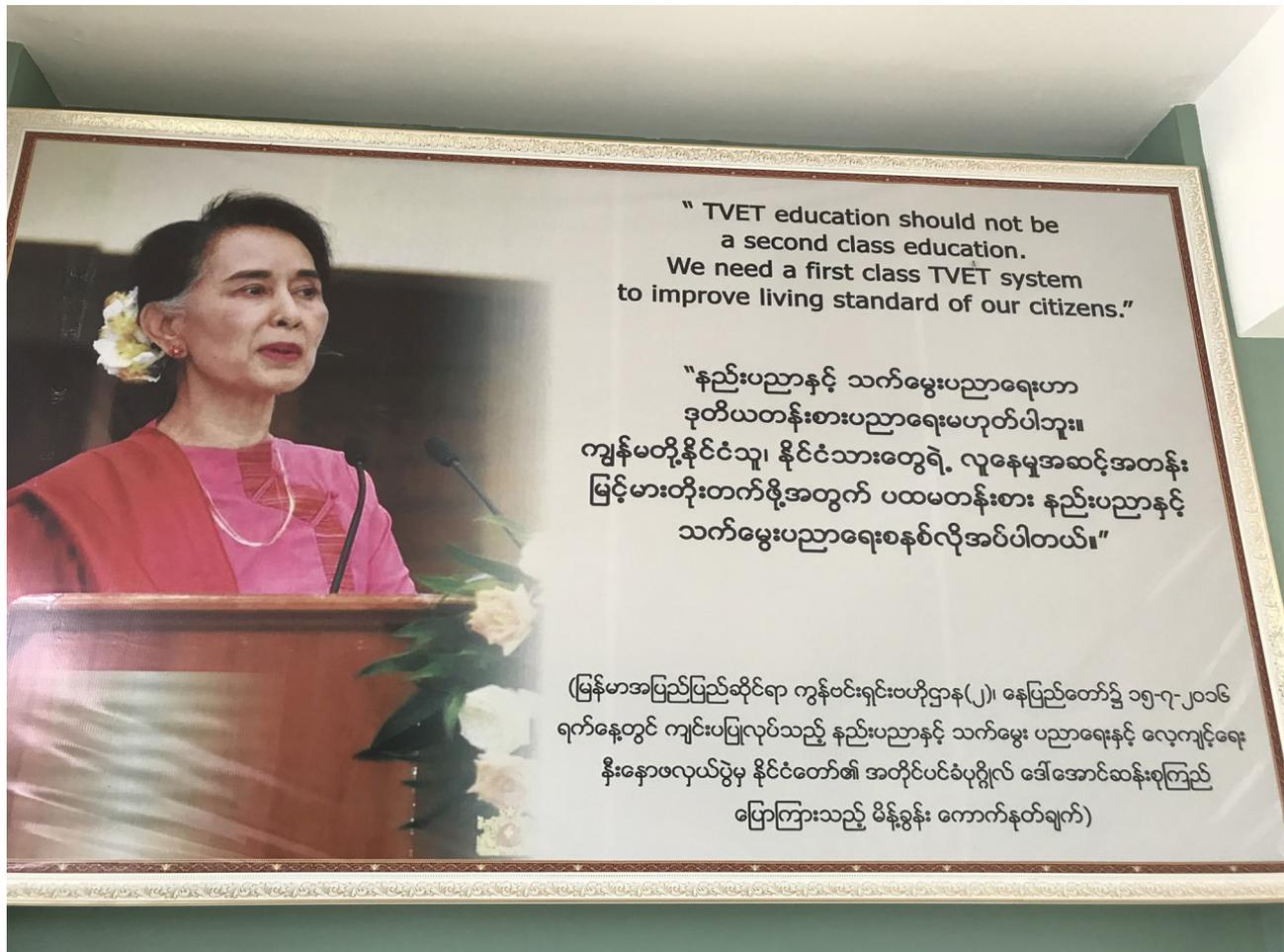


PHOTO: MICHAEL SZEWCZYK

The high assessment of the ITC Sinde both by observers and the people who taught and were trained there indicates that the training practised there was, and is, regarded a "first class education" - or even better a "class of its own" training. A particular blend of skills and attitudes was created that can best be measured by the emergence and the activities of the alumni association. The essential element of "attitude" was spontaneous. "A spark leapt over in the initial cooperation between the German and Burmese partners" (as a former German trainer worded it) and the special spirit thus created could still be felt by

the first development worker who returned to Sinde in 2013. The particular blend characterising the ITC Sinde's success therefore cannot be copied. As a consequence, the view of "the people" cannot be changed through organisational schemes undertaken by a department of the Education Ministry, even if the endeavours are supported by the country's present charismatic leader.

The ITC Sinde goes back to the idea of Dr. Nyi Nyi to create a "model school" for vocational training with German assistance under the Education Ministry in which he worked. Success appeared however after the project was kidnapped by the Industry Ministry with the consent of the German officials, because only this way could the mandatory element of practical training that characterised the dual vocational training practised in Germany be guaranteed. The attempt however to build up a second model school under another Ministry failed and the history of the former ITC Thanlyin underlines Aung San Suu Kyi's remark about the prevailing views of the population concerning education.

151(<https://www.mmtimes.com/national-news/21434-state-counsellor-encourages-vocational-training-path.html>; accessed 24.2.2019) On a visit to a conference in Oxford in 2016, she further stated: "Students who want to go to a vocational school must consider: Do students or the culture view them as second-class students?" the state counsellor said. "The way we answer this question can determine whether or not vocational education is a success in this country. Parents and communities do not perceive vocational education students as second-class in countries where it is succeeding."

These observations raise the question - in what sense the ITC Sinde can still be regarded as a “model”? For an answer to this, one should look at the variety of initiatives focussing on practical training performed by other ministries and non-state actors that could not be included in this study. One could start with the initiatives with a Swiss background that, like Sinde, attempt to include elements of the dual system. The Centre for Vocational Training Myanmar (CVT) is an INGO founded in 2002 by a Swiss national<sup>152</sup> and offers training courses in a number of trades in cooperation with companies active in Myanmar<sup>153</sup> as well as three-month-courses for instructors.<sup>154</sup> The government sponsored agency Swiss-contact in 2014 started a Vocational Skills Development Project (VSDP) that aims at “improved livelihood opportunities for women and men in targeted areas and occupations in Myanmar” in co-operation with the private and public sector.<sup>155</sup> Such initiatives are not formally connected to the “model school” in Sinde but might be regarded as continuing the success story of the ITC Sinde in their own way.

The future of the ITC Sinde, its five “sister enterprises” as well as the attempts to create a comprehensive TVET system for Myanmar are open. The history of the school can be helpful to better assess the relationship between state agencies and the engagement of private actors in the field of development work as well as the interrelationship between internal and external politics on the state-to-state co-operation in this field. One main lesson to be learnt from the Sinde story is that what was achieved there benefited many individuals economically and socially, but did not lead to the establishment of a countrywide system of vocational training. However, the unintended side effects might have been far more important than what was originally imagined.

The prospect of unpredictable after effects of development projects that grow out of the minds and traditions of the Myanmar people can serve as motivator for foreigners engaged in development work to give their best and deal with the vicissitudes of Myanmar life and politics.

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152C:\Users\User\AppData\Local\Temp\Max-O.-Wey-Biography-1.pdf (accessed 21.5.2019).

153<https://www.cvt-myanmar.com/> (accessed 21.5.2019).

154<https://www.cvt-myanmar.com/post-graduate-programs/cvt-certified-instructor/> (accessed 21.5.2019).

155<https://www.swisscontact.org/nc/en/projects-and-countries/search-projects/project-finder/project/-/show/vocational-skills-development-project.html> (accessed 21.5.2019).

## ⑥ Chapter 6: Summary and Outlook

The role of the ITC Sinda in the resumption of German development aid to Myanmar illustrates some different as well as overlapping perceptions of the “almost new beginning” happening after 2011. Myanmar Minister and ex-Admiral Soe Thein used the “flagship” of the German-Burmese cooperation established during the military-dominated Socialist period that was still functioning, to revive a liaison with the most powerful member of the European Union, after more than two decades of having been shunned by the Western world. The German agents of development aid were not aware of the extent and details of the help given to Burma’s Socialist Government by both German states before 1988. They welcomed the offer, as a means of support for Myanmar’s transition to some kind of Democracy and Market Economy. The developments in Myanmar could be seen as a late and modified remake of what had happened in Germany some 20 years earlier, the victory of democracy and market economy over authoritarian rule and a guided economy.

Seven years after the ITC Sinda played an at least symbolic role in reviving the German-Burmese relations in terms of development aid, the school has lost its practical significance as a German-Myanmar joint venture. The main reason was the discrepancy between the original concept of Sinda, of training young people according to the modified model of the German “dual system”, and the need to follow today’s international standards that require the establishment of a comprehensive vocational training system in Myanmar meeting TVET standards.

A still bigger handicap of the training centre today is its singularity as the ITC No. 1 in Myanmar, in light of the prevailing idea, both of the reform-minded Myanmar Government and the Western partners supporting the transition of implementing comprehensive political and economic schemes following international standards like the TVET scheme. The ITC Sinda - as well as the other ITCs - are on the way to being disconnected from the mainstream efforts to establish a countrywide system of vocational training in Myanmar. Or, to put it the other way round, the efforts of the government allocating the main responsibility for the VET sector to the Ministry of Education might contribute to a scholastic regimentation of vocational

training that neglects the priority of practice, a main element of for the success story of many alumni from Sinda. However, the ITC Sinda and its “sister schools” are still training skilled workers who have a good chance to earn their living. Furthermore, it can be noted that on the medium levels of the Myanmar administration, an exchange of views and experiences between departments from different ministries exist.

But it is difficult to foresee that the existing – and maybe forthcoming - ITCs will be integrated into a TVET scheme under the Ministry of Education. This is mainly due to the lack of coordination of the various line-ministries responsible for the TVET sector that is paralleled by the same deficiency on the side of the international agencies that are engaged in this field.<sup>156</sup>

The assessments of the Myanmar TVET scenario further states that the – emerging – TVET sector is almost not connected numerically to the SME sector dominating Myanmar’s economy. The contacts between the two realms are mostly informal. This is not surprising since the Myanmar economy is still more fragmented than the TVET sector. The UMFCCI, the Myanmar chamber of commerce, has some 30.000 members, among them more than 100 organisations and a majority of single firms.

The prospects for the establishment of a successful TVET system in Myanmar therefore are not very promising. The idea to create a comprehensive system of vocational training that was connected to the establishment of the ITC Sinda, is still very far from being implemented. Interestingly, like in the socialist period, the future of assistance to promoting a functional vocational training system in Myanmar is tied to the fate of the government of the receiving country. In a way, the ITC Sinda thus represents both the opportunities of establishing a vocational training that benefits the people and its limitations.

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<sup>156</sup> A presentation of the head of the Department for Vocational Training of the Ministry of Education lists 17 cooperation partners from different countries and international organisations (Myan Win Than 2017). The GIZ and the KfW represent the German partners. Both agencies often act rather independently.

The school however has good chances to retain its reputation as the most prominent and effective institution of vocational training in Myanmar. It will further receive German support that will help to main its role as the country's "No. 1" vocational school. Most likely however, it will play no great role in a comprehensive system of vocational training. One reason for this prediction is the fact that one of the reasons for the success of the training, the rather remote location, has now turned into a severe handicap.

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# Annexes

- No.1: 1978–2008 – U Kyaw Lwin, Memories
- No. 2: 1983 - NN, Ne Win's visit at the ITC Sinda (diary entry of a German expert, translation from German – not yet finished)
- No. 3: 1985 – Siegfried Schultz, Assessment of the ITC Sinda (Excerpt from a book on the explanation of development success in three countries; translation from German)
- No. 4: 1986 – President Richard von Weizsäcker and team leader Hermann Maier at the ITC Thanlwin
- No. 5: 1986 - Richard von Weizsäcker, speech given at the state visit of the German President to Burma
- No. 6: 1988 – Hermann Maier, Final remarks of the final report on the ITC (translation from German)
- No. 7: 1995 – Memories of a Sinda alumni about his way to Australia
- No. 8: 1999 – Documents related to the foundation of the ITC Sinda's alumni association in Thailand
- No. 9: 2008 – Daw Yi Yi Kyaw, Memories
- No. 10: 2014 – Interview with Nan Tint Tint Khaing
- No. 11: 2017 – Frank Bünning and Ulrike Schmidt, Recent Framework of TVET Teacher Education in a Country on the Path to Reform: An Analyses of Myanmar's Critical Challenges (Conclusion).
- No. 12: 2019 – Rodion Ebbighausen, Sinda — A Myanmar-German Success Story.

## NO. 1 U KYAW LWIN, BIOGRAPHY<sup>1</sup>

After my graduation from R.I.T (Rangoon Institute of Technology) in 1975, I joined the service of Ministry of Industry 2, in 1978, which is three years after my graduation. Firstly I worked as installation and service engineer at No.4 Defense Industry for about 4 months. During that time U Win Kyaing was trying to fill a vacant teaching staff position in ITC, because a teacher has quitted the job, so he pleaded the authorities to transfer me to ITC.

Note; as you might have known, the Ministry of Industry 2 was intertwined with Defense Industries on financial ground. Some of defense Budgets are shown as the Industrial expenses of ministry of industry 2, to the parliament (actually not a true parliament but just a rubber stamp in socialistic age).

My co-teacher was Daw Khin Thet Shay, an electronics engineer. Both of us were trained as Electrical Theory teachers under Mr. Helmar Bischoff. Training site was Central Research Organization building-Rangoon (which is also a department of Ministry of industry 2). During our training, some other teachers were already in West Germany, taking advanced training in both theory and practice. In socialistic age of Burma, going to a Western country, (a Promised Land) was a great privilege for many citizens; therefore we had tried our best to gain a big score under German teachers. Anyway, we all became German trained teachers.

In 1979 all teachers and staffs were moved to Sinda, trainees were recruited and 1st batch training program started. At first, most of us were in doubt such young stupid naughty boys could become good skilled technicians, but thanks to German pedagogy and teaching aids, at the end of three years course, I would say about 95% of them became excellent workers. Our colleges from HIC factories said "Your boys know almost everything", of such a remark, naturally we all were proud. But as you have seen, after German teachers left, raw materials dwindled, some teachers quitted the job, and consequently the quality of trainees from 10th batch onwards declined.

Reason for desertion of teachers is mainly due to selfishness of Col. Maung Cho, who recruited as teachers from colleagues

of his nephew Kyaw San Lwin, the upper class youths, being uninterested in teaching profession with a mood very reluctant to stay in a remote place like Sinda. Their only ambition is not to lose an opportunity to go abroad (Germany a western country). But I won't blame them all. Even if a teacher decided to stay in Sinda his or her salary is scant, barely covering the cost of living, lacking many other necessities like medical care, shopping, children's education etc.

For my part I was determined to stick the job because I am fond of teaching career with the help of so many sophisticated teaching aids and machines, then so happy was I, though my living is poor. In short I became a prominent teacher that U Win Kyaing ordered me to take charge of the whole electrical branch. Around 1982 Daw Khin Thet Shay was nominated to go to Germany but the cabinet rejected her nomination. Their reason- -a young Burmese lady shall not be sent to West without accompany! The cabinet decided that the reserved person U Kyaw Lwin must go. My journey to the west started.

My training in F.R.G-(April 1983 to August 1984)

- > German language 4 ½ months ( Munich)
- > Vocational Pedagogies 8 months ( Karlsruhe University and many other institutes)
- > Practical Training 3 ½ months ( HAMEG GmbH; Philips GmbH; BBC Metrawatt GmbH;)
- > Other Seminars 1 month;

During my stay in Germany, German counterpart Mr. Dieter Kaiser was already back home from ITC and I did visit him and enjoyed an overnight. Moreover I got chances to visit Mr. Bischoff several times.

I returned from Germany in August 1984. Four years went by in ITC without any significant events except my marriage. About in 1987 U Win Kyaing was moved to HI 5 factory ( Nyaung Chi Tauk) as a result of twist and turn by U Win Kyaing's enemies. U Han Sein took charge of the training center and I.T.C project was at an end, only Mr. Braus was left. U Kyaw Kyaw, my friend committed suicide. Daw Khin Thet Shay and U Aung Gyaw went to Germany.

The most unpleasant event was that some of ITC boys raided the living quarters of TS Training school which is a rival of ITC, injuring many TS trainees and certainly U Han Sein was blamed and 101 ITC trainees were dismissed. Unbelievably dismissed trainees found good jobs in private sectors because

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1 Kyaw Lwin is a former principal of the ITC Sinda.

the employers only see 'they were German trained'.

Burma's 1988 political crisis was very famous because it happened even before the world known Berlin wall crush and fall of Soviet .ITC was temporally closed for about 8 months. Principal U Han Sein transferred to Rangoon head office and Maj. Kyaw Win, Maj. Tin Aung took charge of ITC successively. Then Maj. Tin Aung made me deputy principal by the order of Deputy Minister ex Maj. Saw Htun in 1992. I was sent to Malaysia in 1995 to attend a seminar on 'Productivity in Training Institution'.

During my term as Deputy Principal, a general education reform was endorsed for the whole country. Study years of every University, college, institute is reduced 1 year, such as-

- > Medical college – From 7years to 6 years
- > R.I.T-From 6 years to 5 years.
- > Accordingly ITC term is reduced from 3 yrs. to 2yrs. Moreover Government subsidy for the trainees is stopped.

Around 2000, I was sent to Mandalay where I became a leading figure to establish a new ITC which was urgently realized by the order of Senior General Than Shwe, who expected an assistance from China. (Later the Chinese government actually contributed some amount for Mandalay ITC). At the same time Japan A.O.T.S was planning to assist in Human Recourse Development in 10 ASEAN countries forming a program named Center of Excellence-C.O.E. Consequently ITC Sinda became one of COEs of Burma among R.I.T, Rangoon University, University of Economics and some other institutes. According to this scheme I was sent to Japan to participate in the program and a short term electronics course was opened in ITC in October in 2001, with financial assistance of Japan. In 2002, I was promoted Principal for ITC. Two years later, the 25th jubilee of the school was celebrated.

I, U Kyaw Lwin -the Principal of I.T.C and wife have been hospitalized in Prome General hospital due to a motor accident around mid-2004. Khin Maung Htay, Thar Kyaw Phyu and some students from Australia came and reported their wish of celebrating 25th anniversary of the school. Certainly there was no precedence of such kind of gathering. As all well known, the military government –especially the military intelligence –is very timid and fears every gathering of any kind of people including monks. The students told that they wish to realize it during my time in office or else other principal may not approve the idea. I promised to realize it though I was sure the authorities would

turn down if I apply for permission to the ministry officially. My idea is to take a risk and hold the festival without informing to any superior authority. But U Win Kyaing ( the foremost principal) objected this idea and told the students jokingly " Ko Kyaw Lwin is trying to be fired out. He seems to be tired of his service as principal! A lowly paid palace flea! "

U Win Kyaing and his wife advised us to report the matter at least to Managing Director and even if this is not feasible, they will inform the deputy minister Col. Khing Maung Kyaw who was their classmate in R.I.T. So I wrote a short application letter to Managing Director Col. Myo Tint describing the wish of the ex-trainees paying homage to teachers. Permission is granted without delay. Ye Htut, the leading student also went to the office of Managing Director and explained everything about the ceremony. Managing Director only warned to beware of affray with local village youths during evening music play. Minister General Saw Lwin (who adored me dearly) might too have known in advance of festival but did not mention or ask me, for I think he had pretended not knowing anything about this.

Anyway we held the festival at the school. I evacuated the present trainees from their hostels and let them stay at the workshops for a night. They too were very joyous. Their bedrooms were taken by women and children of guest trainees.

The occasion was not a well-planned one. I.T.C music band started playing at about 7 PM. Almost all men didn't take rest at night making a pandemonium, drinking, singing and yelling like sailors. I also roamed round the school complex on my crutch till midnight. But I take it for a successful party. Only a problem of insufficient food occurred because the exact no. of attendants was difficult to estimate. I called Ye Htut ( the leader in Yangon) from time to time to give the no.of attendants, but he said 300, then 400 and 500 so on. When they actually arrived on the ceremony day, it amounts to nearly 900. The trainee-attendants had taken along their wives and children. At that emergency food problem, meal shops of Sinda and Pyay were sold out. Anyway, anybody don't mind or complain about food for they seem greatly content with the event which was a special one never dreamed in their life.

Finally after the ceremony, as anticipated, the military intelligence of Padaung branch came and inquired, but not seriously. In fact the branch just inquired in accordance with their formality. U Khin Tint on behalf of the principal made

a short description about the festival and gave the written address of the Principal. Besides Padaung intelligence branch is personally friendly with I.T.C, DI, and H.I.C. and the matter didn't trouble. Financially some money was left over. I think it was used in establishing Alumni Association in the name of "Health care body of I.T.C" the KMK.

During my time in office, ITC was overwhelmed under general deteriorations.

- › Without government subsidy, there were no free meals for trainees that annual enrollment declined, barely more than 80.
- › Because of the lack of raw material and poor condition of machines, trainees and teachers were mostly idle.
- › Appropriate job opportunities for graduated trainees were slim. (In socialistic age all were appointed in Government Industries and even it was also a must, though salary is scant.)
- › The Minister ordered me to prepare a 1 year course instead of 2 years.

Besides these inconveniences, the Principal and Factory GM were very busy coping for national referendum to approve that nasty military imposed constitution because the Minister said he won't accept even a single negative ballot, in factory and school areas, the commanding persons ( factory GM and ITC Principal) would be dealt severely, if they failed. The factory GM, being a wise man, had managed and cooperated with ballot commission, that there was no negative. During which time, the factory was in earnest production day by day, making farm tools and machines to support the farmers of Nagis storm inflicted areas. After these events around 2008, our admiral was disposed from his position, transferring to ministry 2 as new Minister. He ordered, the Principal shall move to factory and new principal was appointed. Actually my service was very near to the end that Factory GM (my friend) let me rest at home for about 3 months before retirement. So I retired in 2008, at the age of full pension. In fact the new Minister General Soe Thein (the ex-admiral) has tried to persuade the German embassy not to abandon ITC. He also invited the Ambassador to ITC and pleaded for further support. That is the beginning of German aid continuation nowadays.

Future challenge; In Germany I saw a notice-[ Without our Dual training system, the logo Made in Germany won't be so famous in the World ]. As far as I could perceive, in Dual System, Private sector and government jointly and harmonically cooperate to

raise an apprentice. But in Burma there is a little big private Industry while government Industries are collapsing. Where will these trainees go for In-Plant practice? The government alone will not bear all training expenses. The private companies have no wish to foster a youth and send to ITC on their own expense. We have to wait and see future developments.

## NO. 2

### DIARY ENTRY 31.8.1983 – U NE WIN'S VISIT IN AUGUST 1983<sup>2</sup>

U Ne Win, Chairman of the Burma Socialist Programme Party, retired President of the State, grand old man, Number-One-Uncle, one of the thirty comrades, still the country's most powerful man has announced his visit at the ITC – but his name should not be mentioned. Nevertheless, it was obvious for everybody who was to be expected. One week was available to make preparations and feverish activities evolved. Abruptly, hammer, file, welding torch fell out of our trainees' hands, the machines were switched off and the great cleaning started. All workshops, classrooms, offices were flooded by diligent boys and girls – and I ran away because it was not possible any more to work in the office. Furthermore, the grass on the school compound was plucked, the green areas were freed from proliferating weeds, stones chalked, new paths created, entrances unauthorisedly painted and on the next day by order of principal U Win Kyaing liberated again from the fresh paint. Where do we go when each and every one takes the initiative. Of course, the hostels were beautified, too – over the weekend – and even the toilets were given due attention. – The man visits the loos as well, you see, and is inclined to blow off his anger by way of slaps in the face. Next, the great show was staged in the workshops. Tools and work pieces were displayed, placards lettered, machines cleansed. They clearly ere not allowed to be used for the time being. The administration heftily worked as well, an otherwise unfamiliar state of affairs. The staff focussed on the meeting room, commonly used as the breakfast room of the German experts. Chairs and small tables were placed in hierarchical order and a "throne" was magically recovered from somewhere, insignia of the Big Chairman – this official title really fits very well. The Germans were entitled to come out with their best crockery and supply the tea. Finally, curtains were fitted and white covers for the throne organised. Furious work was performed outside of the project compound as well. Since the beginning of the rainy season, that is for four months now, the road leading to the project is bituminised. 75% of one roadway had been finished, the remaining 25% were accomplished within one week during day and night shifts. The other roadway was raised with sand on the last day to prevent the danger of driving off the concrete track. Naturally, the sand

will have to be removed soon again. In other plants of the HIC somersaults were done as well.

Yesterday was the great day. It however remained open if U Ne Win actually would arrive. U Win Kyaing wandered around dressed in a white shirt and dark-blue trousers, his deputy Capt. Ko Gyi listened to his walkie-talkie, the teachers – like the principal – had changed the longyi with dark trousers. The team leader had dressed himself accordingly as well, only me and another teacher were dressed deviantly. Almost nobody worked any more. At 10 o'clock, security personnel arrived, at 3 p.m. a television crew came as a vanguard and minutes later around 12 land rovers and jeeps rolled in. A lot of military men infiltrated the project, four ministers and U Ne Win, bent by the burden of years – allegedly he is 79 years old. The higher ranks of the the entourage filled the meeting room, the lower remained outside, the team leader and I slipped in as well, U Ne Win ascended his throne, his feet hanging 8 cm above the floor. The managing director of the HIC "reported" about the development of the ITC fluidly reading from a paper, U Win Kyaing assisted somewhat tormented and the great chairman read along. Then, haltingly and in a low voice, he asked questions that were answered first by the managing director and then by our responsible minister U Maung Cho. – Nothing extraordinary happened and the assembly left. U Ne Win talked to the few Germans present. Where in Germany we came from, if we could live in Sinde, small jokes and in the end: Thank you for your assistance." He as well displayed Burmese politeness. He then disappeared in his land rover, attached a mask on his face and drove away – with a wave like his ministers. Very heavy burdens fell from the hearts of U Win Kyaing and U Ko Gyi and they were able to laugh again. Then, they consumed the prepared snacks themselves. The workshop teachers and the trainees were less content. Their labours had not been appreciated with even a view.

Side note: at the arrival of U Ne Win four military men stood by for the guests holding towels for the guests – two of them wore white gloves.

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<sup>2</sup> The text was taken from the diary of a German expert. Translation into English: Hans-Bernd Zöllner

### NO. 3 FROM A GERMAN STUDY ON BURMA'S DEVELOPMENT PUBLISHED IN 1985<sup>3</sup>

In September 1983, a German scholar visited Burma for two weeks to do research as one of three case studies to explore the success of various development strategies in different countries.<sup>4</sup> The study paints a positive picture of Burma's development:

Burma displays a number of conditions that favour successful development. It is relatively well endowed with natural resources. The contrast between rural and urban life is less marked than elsewhere. The development path is clearly formulated and consistently followed. Political independence and cultural identity are important principles. Burma has made considerable efforts of its own to advance its inward-facing development. This applies to progress in literacy as well as to social and economic reforms. Where external borrowing has been unavoidable, Burma has always proved a good debtor. On the other hand, the marked hierarchical mentality is an impediment.<sup>5</sup>

The yardstick for assessing Burma's development policy is taken from the list of internationally used standards of that time.<sup>6</sup>

The Burmese-German cooperation in the field of vocational training is outlined on almost four pages. Besides the school in Sinde, the training centre for the Burmese railway in Mandalay is introduced and favourably commented upon. The stages of the emergence of the ITC Sinde are reported and it is noted that the two consecutive vintages have finished the training. It is however emphasised that "the main significance of the project is its role as a functioning model of vocational training."<sup>7</sup>

In view of both development projects, the report lists a number of preconditions that – if fulfilled – lead on to success:

The project aim should be defined by the developing country. The training centre has benefited from the fact that it is part of the domain of a strong-willed minister.

The local sponsor must have the will and the ability to take over the project as agreed. This condition is fulfilled in Sinde.

It is reasonable pedagogically and politically to transfer the knowledge directly through indigenous teachers.

This requires a preceding training of the teachers. This phase was specially distinct in Sinde. The 'detour' however has proved to be successful because it will bear fruit in the long run.

The teaching material was adjusted to the prior knowledge of the trainees and translated in the vernacular. Here, creativity had to be applied because there are no Burmese words for a number of technical terms. This was an important contribution to the reduction of the gap of knowledge in the technological-scientific field.

The training has an integrative effect once the trainees come from various ethnic groups.

Through the orientation of the training on quality and capacity and the promotion and self-initiative the traditional hierarchical thinking is breached.

The rates of "drop-outs" during the training and of changes to other professions after graduation is insignificant or low. This is due to the screening and the loyalty towards the employer, albeit secured through a five-years bond.<sup>8</sup>

The "hierarchical mentality" noticed in Burma is seen as one of a number of handicaps but not regarded as a factor severely impeding the country's development. The study summarises the prospects for bilateral cooperation with Burma thus: "Confidence-building measures pay off for reliable partners will be invited again. If the external contribution to the development is of good quality, and no regulatory pressure is exerted, an excellent foundation for enduring relations is laid."<sup>9</sup>

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3 Siegfried Schultz 1985, Birma. Birma in: Herbert Wilkens (ed.) 1985 *Wirtschaftliche, soziale und politische Bedingungen der Entwicklung. Ein Beitrag zur Erklärung von Entwicklungserfolgen in Ländern der Dritten Welt. Querschnittsvergleich für 84 Länder mit Fallstudien für Birma, Bolivien und Kenia. Forschungsberichte des BMZ, Bd. 71. München/Köln/London, Weltforum Verlag: 151-182.*

4 The other two were Bolivia and Kenya.

5 Wilkens et. al. 1986: 93.

6 Only a few years before the admission of Burma to the group of Least Developed Countries (LDCs), the study states that Burma "disqualifies" to join the group because of its high literacy rate (Schultz 1985: 174)

7 Schultz 1985: 179.

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8 Ibid.: 180-181.

9 Ibid.: 192.

NO. 4



The text explaining this photo found in the German archives reads: "With decently lowered head, the previous team leader [Hermann Maier] tries to fulfill his role as information source for the state guest [President von Weizsäcker]. - To the left: Industry Minister No. 1 U Tint Swe, to the right, the General Director of the Industrial Planning Department, U Aye Kyin.

## **NO. 5 HERMANN MAIER, FINAL REMARKS OF THE FINAL PROJECT REPORT ON THE INDUSTRIAL TRAINING CENTER SINDE<sup>10</sup>**

Experience shows that the crucial aspects of a project can only be profoundly assessed after some time has passed since its handover to the sole responsibility of the partner. Therefore, this version of the final project report was only compiled in summer 1988.<sup>11</sup>

The editorial deadline thereby takes place at a time in which Burma's political-economic crisis reached a preliminary climax that had been noticed throughout the whole period of support.<sup>12</sup>

The German staff at the ITC Sinda was able to observe the depressing process of degeneration of a regime. During the 60s and 70s, its leaders had not quite unjustly surrounded themselves with the aura of successful "saviours of the homeland". In the end, it became a neo-feudal military caste that closed its mind to rational economic and political actions and consequently deprived itself of any base of legitimacy.

In the course of time the self-privileging of the highest office holders became more and more obvious. Arbitrary and amateurish interventions in the economic life combined with increasing repression, perversion of justice and corruption together with a dramatical decline of the standard of living severely tested the extreme capacity of tolerance of even those parts of the people which principally had reason to be linked to the ruling class through an ethnically shaped alliance of interest.

As early as in the first half of the 1980s, the local project staff in line with the whole population was marked by increasing frustration, resignation and essential anxiety about their livelihood. Thus, the initial high level of motivation of the Burmese colleagues steadily decreased over the period of German assistance.

In the course of time, the regime lost its privilege, which was only granted to this generation of leaders, to continue a relatively functional colonial heritage in technical-organisational regard. Instead of preserving these vital structures, the leadership wasted the limited societal resources for industrial prestige projects and a hopeless confrontation with ethnic marginal groups which reacted with the formation of relatively stable territories reigned by means of guerrilla warfare. The efforts to consolidate the country towards a socio-political unit – overemphasised in verbal avowals – became more and more hopeless by the time.

In view of these developments, the German experts at the ITC Sinda - like critical observers in similar situations worldwide - couldn't help asking if by furthering the project it would be justified to make a contribution to sustaining a regime characterised by incompetence and abuse of power and completely discredited in the eyes of the people and thereby contributing to the continuation or even strengthening of the vain planned-economy experiments.

The project staff however – in accordance with all German authorities – spoke for a continuation and even extension of the cooperation. This happened in view of the very long time-frame that has to be considered in the implementation of measures of education and training. Here a considerable delay in unfolding the full effect of communicated knowledge and ability on the Burmese society has to be taken into account. The dependence of such measures on current and temporary political-economic situations was therefore out of the question.

In concrete terms, the German strategy aimed at using the matchless opportunities that arose in the technical field by the cooperation with the state enterprises for a systematic build-up of a profound and widespread professional competence. Such competence would serve as a hardly destructible prerequisite for a new beginning hoped-for after the anticipated breakdown of the military dictatorship.

From this point of view, the programs of the ITC-Sinda were designed in a way that the imparted qualifications were not tailored for the narrow industrial production of the partner enterprises but rather prepared the alumni properly for a freer labour market demanding flexibility and mobility.

The author of this report is however not optimistic enough to assume that the events happening during the last weeks will

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10 (Final Report: 60-63) – Translated by

11 The handover of the ITC Sinda to the HIC took already place in July 1985.

12 The report was submitted on August 31, 1988, five days after the first great speech of Daw Aung San Suu Kyi at the Shwedagon Pagoda attended by half a million people. In course of the demonstrations against the socialist one-party regime that had intensified after Ne Win's resignation on July 23, the administration of the country had almost come to a stillstand. On September 18, the military ended the demonstrations by a coup.

lead to a swift recovery of state, economy and society in Burma.

Each alteration however is to be preferred over a continuation of the prior conditions. In view of the still existing resources and the country's development potential, it bears the hope of a change for the better.

Whatever path Burma will tread in the nearest future, the era of statistic development planning, to which a great part of the industry owes its existence will inevitably come to an end and has to give way to a denationalisation of the languishing national economy.

Such a reshaping will be very difficult and risky for a special reason. After almost three decades of massive state interventions only few agents are visible within the Burmese majority that are capable of market orientated actions different from the numerically small non-Burmese ethnic groups featuring a higher potential of economic activity.

Furthermore, the political sphere is characterised by a complete lack of democratic traditions. A hundred years ago, the autocratic monarchy was seamlessly replaced by strict colonial rule followed by a short Japanese occupational regime, a pseudo-democratic chaotic interlude, and finally the military dictatorship.

These days, the state apparatus displays signs of complete disintegration and helplessness. Nevertheless, the author of this report has the conviction that the exponents of the military and the party will defend their positions, economic benefits and privileges by all available means. Thus, the country might be plunged into a still deeper abyss.

Regardless of the form of the future political scene, the modest sprouting of economic rationality that can be assumed behind the fall of minister Maung Cho will presumably continue and enforce radical changes of the state enterprises, first of all of the HIC. At least a drastic reassessment of the range of products seems unavoidable, if not a dramatic diminution or even break-up of the whole enterprise.

In any case, the willingness and capacity of the former partner organisation to bear responsibility for the Industrial Training Center Sinda will decrease to an extent that a continuation of the training operation is hardly conceivable. On the other hand, the increase of economic activities that is to be expected

will involve a demand for labour that will result in maintaining, if not intensifying, the training activities.

As a consequence, it can be expected that the key problem in the field of vocational training will be the creation of an organisational structure for the training facilities that is situated above particular institutions and line ministries.

Since the Federal Republic of Germany serves as the only relevant international partner in the field of vocational training up to now, the German authorities should be prepared to provide the assistance that will doubtlessly be necessary to fulfil this task. The planned seminar on vocational training that cannot be conducted in the foreseeable future, should be kept in sight as a first step on the direction of a qualified new orientation of the co-operation.

Burma does not know conscription but the military consists of professional soldiers. The state leadership therefore tries to discipline great parts of the individualistic youth that is potentially inclined to rebel in an alternative way than using the military service as the "school of the nation". Educational institutions and the preparation courses for the civil service serve this purpose. This tendency could be witnessed at the ITC-Sinda in form of the morning and evening roll calls that were part of the daily routine.

On the other hand, it is well known that a qualified training of citizens reduces the readiness to subordinate to a repressive inefficient regime without dissent. It seems that even at the ITC-Sinda this effect has more than compensated the effects of the para-military drill. According to recent news from Burma, the trainees of the ITC-Sinda significantly participated in the mass demonstrations in the closest larger city Prome. These demonstrations have decisively contributed to the unsettling of military and party rule.

**NO. 6  
SPEECH OF HIS EXCELLENCY RICHARD VON WEIZSAECKER, PRESIDENT OF THE FEDERAL REPUBLIC OF GERMANY, AT THE DINNER GIVEN BY HIS EXCELLENCY U SAN YU, PRESIDENT OF THE SOCIALIST REPUBLIC OF THE UNION OF BURMA, AND MRS. SAN YU, AT RANGOON ON 5 FEBRUARY 1986** <sup>13</sup>

MR PRESIDENT,  
MADAM,  
LADIES AND GENTLEMEN;

I WOULD LIKE TO THANK YOU VERY MUCH, MR PRESIDENT, BOT ON MY OWN BEHALF AND ON BEHALF OF MY WIFE AND THE MEMBERS OF MY DELEGATION FOR YOUR KIND WORDS OF WELCOME AND FOR THE RECEPTION THAT YOU AND YOUR GOVERNMENT HAVE GIVEN US. FROM THE VERY FIRST MOMENT OF OUR STAY IN YOUR COUNTRY WE FELT THAT WE WERE AMONG FRIENDS.

I DEEM IT A GREAT DISTINCTION TO BE THE FIRST PRESIDENT OF THE FEDERAL REPUBLIC OF GERMANY TO VISIT THE SOCIALIST REPUBLIC OF THE UNION OF BURMA. YOUR KIND INVITATION PERMITS ME TO RETURN THE STATE VISIT PAID BY PRESIDENT U NE WIN IN 1968. SINCE THEN HE HAS TO OUR DELIGHT SOJOURNED IN OUR COUNTRY SFVERAL TIMES IN A PRIVATE CAPACITY.

A GOOD, CLOSE AND INDEED CORDIAL RELATIONSHIP HAS EVOLVED BETWEEN OUR COUNTRIES SINCE DIPLOMATIC RELATIONS WERE ESTABLISHED IN 1955. HOWEVER; RELATIONS BETWEEN GERMANY AND BURMA EXTEND FAR BEYOND THE LAST 30 YEARS : THROUGH THE FAMOUS ACCOUNTS BY THE VENETIAN TRAVELLER MARCO POLO, EUROPE AND HENCE OUR COUNTRY LEARNED OF THE TRAGIC END OF THE KINGDOM OF PAGAN. AT THAT TIME, EUROPE AND ASIA SHARED A COMMON POLITIC FATE.

THE MONGOLS, WHO TOPPLED YOUR KINGDOM IN 1287, HAD ALSO ADVANCED AS FAR AS EUROPE BEFORE WITHDRAWING TO ASIA. CLOSER RELATIONS BETWEEN GERMANY AND BURMA DEVELOPED – AS SO OFTEN

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<sup>13</sup> The text is reproduced from a telex dated 3.2.1986 archived in the Political Archive of the German Foreign Office. Some typos are corrected.

IN HISTORY – AS A RESULT OF GOOD PERSONAL AND COMMERCIAL CONTACTS. FOR INSTANCE, BURMESE EXPORTERS MADE CONSIDERABLE USE OF THE SERVICES OF GERMAN MERCHANTS, THE GERMANS WERE NOTED THEN FOR THEIR FLEXIBILITY AND WILLINGNESS TO ACCOMMODATE TO THE WISHES AND NEEDS OF THEIR BURMESE TRADING PARTNERS.

OVER THE LAST 30 YEARS, GERMAN COMPANIES HAVE MADE IMPORTANT CONTRIBUTIONS TO BURMA'S ECONOMY. THEY HAVE EVIDENTLY BENEFITTED AGAIN FROM THE TRUST PLACED IN THEM BY BURMESE INDUSTRY IN THE LIGHT OF THE LONG-STANDING EXPERIENCE. WE ARE PLEASED THAT A GERMAN COMPANY WAS THE FIRST TO BE SELECTED BY THE GERMAN GOVERNMENT FOR A JOINT VENTURE SERVING THE CASE MUTUALLY BENEFICIAL ECONOMIC CO-OPERATION.<sup>14</sup>

MUTUALLY BENEFICIAL – THAT IS THE CRITERION OF OUR CO-OPERATION. WE NOTE WITH RESPECT AND UNDERSTANDING THAT BURMA DOES NOT SEEK A RUN-OF-THE-MILL KIND OF DEVELOPMENT, BUT CAREFULLY CHOOSES FROM THE INFINITE RANGE OF TECHNOLOGIES OFFERED BY THE INDUSTRIALIZED WORLD THOSE WHICH ARE LIKELY TO ENHANCE ITS ECONOMIC STRENGTH, WITHOUT DOING HARM TO ITS GREAT AND ANCIENT CULTURE AND ITS STRONG SENSE OF IDENTITY. FOR US THIS MEANS THAT WE SET GREAT STORE BY CO-OPERATION THAT IS IN CONFORMITY WITH THE NEEDS OF YOUR POPULATION AND THEIR CULTURAL IDENTITY.

WITH THIS IN MIND, WE SEEK TO BE A GOOD AND RELIABLE PARTNER FOR BURMA NOT LEAST IN THE SPHERE OF DEVELOPMENT CO-OPERATION. GERMAN EXPERTS ARE ENGAGED IN NUMEROUS PROJECTS IN YOUR COUNTRY. THE TRAIN PEOPLE TO BECOME SKILLED WORKERS, TECHNICIANS AND RAILWAYMEN. GEOLOGISTS ARE ASSISTING IN TAPPING YOUR COUNTRY'S WEALTH OF RAW MATERIALS. AGRICULTURAL EXPERTS ARE SUPPORTING YOU IN THE IMPROVEMENT OF PLANT PROTECTION. NUMEROUS

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<sup>14</sup> The President refers to the Myanmar-Fritz Werner Industries founded in 1985 between the German company Fritz Werner and the HIC and termed the first joint venture between a Burmese company and a foreign private company. Since Fritz Werner until 1990 was controlled by the government of the Federal Republic of Germany, the joint venture was a co-operation between two state enterprises.

GERMAN ENGINEERS ARE WORKING ON THE BUILDING SITES OF GERMAN COMPANIES. YOU HAVE SUMMONED THEM INTO YOUR COUNTRY WITHIN THE FRAMEWORK OF OUR FINANCIAL CO-OPERATION SO AS TO BUILD DAMS, FACTORIES AND OTHER INDUSTRIAL INSTALLATIONS.

IN THE PROGRAM OF OUR VISIT WHICH YOU HAVE SO KINDLY PREPARED, WE SHALL HAVE THE OPPORTUNITY TO ACQUAINT OURSELVES WITH SOME PROJECTS OF OUR CO-OPERATION, WHICH IS CONDUCTED IN A SPIRIT OF PARTNERSHIP. TOMORROW WE SHALL SEE ONE OF THE OLDEST PROJECTS, A GLASS FACTORY THAT IS CURRENTLY BEING MODERNIZED, AND A NEW TRADE SCHOOL FOR SKILLED WORKERS. IN THE FURTHER COURSE OF OUR TRIP, WE SHALL SEE THE KINDA DAM IN THE SHAN MOUNTAINS, WHICH WILL MAKE AN IMPORTANT CONTRIBUTION TO THE SUPPLY OF ENERGY AND THE IMPROVEMENT OF AGRICULTURAL AREAS.

THIS DIVERSE CO-OPERATION TAKES PLACE IN A CULTURAL ENVIRONMENT OF UNPARALLELED RELIGIOUS AND SPIRITUAL INTENSITY AND OUTSTANDING SOCIAL IDEALS THAT FOUND MANY ADMIRERS AND FASCINATED MANY SCHOLARS IN MY COUNTRY.

I NEED ONLY RECALL HERMANN OLDENBURG AND HIS CLASSICAL BOOK 'BUDDHA. HIS LIFE, HIS TEACHING, HIS COMMUNITY', WHICH WAS PUBLISHED IN BERLIN IN 1881, KARL EUGEN NEUMANN AND HIS TRANSLATIONS OF BUDDHA'S SPEECHES, ERNST BENZ'S STUDIES ON BUDDHA'S RETURN AND THE FUTURE OF ASIA, AND LAST BUT NOT LEAST, HERMANN HESSE, WHO DID SO MUCH TO MAKE EASTERN CULTURE BECOME KNOWN TO US, ESPECIALLY AMONG THE YOUNG GENERATION, AND TO SHOW WHAT IT IS ABLE TO SAY US IN EUROPE. THEY AND MANY OTHERS HAVE HELPED US TO UNDERSTAND BURMA BETTER.<sup>15</sup>

AGAINST THIS BACKGROUND, MR PRESIDENT, WE ATTACH PARTICULAR IMPORTANCE TO SCIENTIFIC AND CULTURAL INTERCHANGE BETWEEN OUR COUNTRIES. SINCE THE

FIRST SCHOLARSHIP-HOLDER OF THE GERMAN ACADEMIC EXCHANGE SERVICE, A STUDENT OF FORESTRY, CAME TO GERMANY IN 1959, OVER 450 SCHOLARSHIP-HOLDERS IN SCIENTIFIC AND TECHNICAL FIELDS HAVE DONE LIKEWISE. IN OUR COUNTRY THEY HAVE NOT JUST STUDIED THEIR SUBJECT, BUT ALSO COME INTO CONTACT WITH GERMAN CULTURE AND IMPARTED THEIR CULTURE TO US.

WE THUS HAVE A DESIRE TO BECOME ACQUAINTED WITH THE CULTURAL ASSETS OF YOUR COUNTRY'S PAST AND PRESENT. I WOULD THEREFORE FIND IT DESIRABLE IF GERMAN SCHOLARS COULD IN FUTURE BE GRANTED OPPORTUNITIES FOR WORKING AND RESEARCHING AT BURMESE UNIVERSITIES. WE WOULD LIKE TO SEE AN INTERCHANGE, A GIVE AND TAKE.

I, TOO, SHALL REGARD MYSELF AS A 'TAKER' WHEN TOMORROW I VISIT, AS THE FIRST ITEM OF MY PROGRAMME, THE SHWE DAGON PAGODA, THE CENTREPIECE OF YOUR COUNTRY, TO SET A VAGUE IDEA OF THE SPIRITUAL SOURCES OF BURMA'S CULTURE AND RELIGION. I ALSO LOOK FORWARD TO MY TRIP TO PAGAN, THE CENTRE OF THE FORMER EMPIRE THAT EXTENDED FAR BEYOND THE PRESENT-DAY FRONTIERS, AND TO MANDALAY, YOUR BEAUTIFUL FORMER CAPITAL.

SINCE WORLD WAR II, YOUR COUNTRY HAS BEEN SUCCESSFULLY STRIVING IN A WORLD OF DIVERSE FOREIGN INFLUENCES TO PROTECT ITS IDENTITY AND – THAT I CONSIDER PARTICULARLY IMPORTANT – TO PRESERVE ITS SOUL. YOUR POLICY OF NON-ALIGNMENT HAS CONVINCED THE WORLD. WE RESPECT YOUR POLICY OF 'POSITIVE NEUTRALITY' AND OF INDEPENDENCE IN FOREIGN AFFAIRS. THIS POLICY AS A PLEDGE OF OUR FRIENDLY RELATIONS AND I WOULD LIKE TO SUPPORT YOU IN THE PURSUIT OF IT AS FAR AS POSSIBLE.

OF COURSE, A DIFFERENCE IN POLITICAL SETTING EXISTS FOR MY COUNTRY, WHICH SUFFERS FROM THE CONSEQUENCES OF ITS DIVISION. BUT WE FEEL LINKED TO YOU IN THE DEFENCE OF THE PRINCIPLES ON WHICH THE CHARTER OF THE UNITED NATIONS IS BASED: THE SAFEGUARDING OF PEACE, THE NON-USE OF FORCE, HUMAN RIGHTS AND A FREE SELF-DETERMINATION, AND EQUITABLE DEVELOPMENT.

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<sup>15</sup> None of the mentioned persons has any direct relation to Burma. The President could have mentioned the travels of the German ethnologist Adolf Bastian (1826-1905) in Burma (1861-1862) including some time at the court of King Mindon in Mandalay. His travelogue was published in two volumes. Another German well known in Myanmar is Dietrich Brandis (1824-1907), a German botanist who in 1856 became superintendent of the teak forests of Lower Burma. In 1858, he became head of the imperial forest administration of all of British Burma.

// ANNEXES / NO.6. SPEECH OF HIS EXCELLENCY RICHARD VON WEIZSAECKER, PRESIDENT OF THE FEDERAL REPUBLIC OF GERMANY, AT THE DINNER GIVEN BY HIS EXCELLENCY U SAN YU, PRESIDENT OF THE SOCIALIST REPUBLIC OF THE UNION OF BURMA, AND MRS. SAN YU, AT RANGOON ON 5 FEBRUARY 1986

I LOOK FORWARD TO THE TALKS THAT I WILL HAVE WITH YOU, MR PRESIDENT, AND THE LEADING PERSONALITIES OF YOUR COUNTRY. I LOOK FORWARD TO BECOMING ACQUAINTED WITH YOUR COUNTRY IN ITS ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT, ITS SPIRITUAL WEALTH AND ITS SCENIC BEAUTY. BUT ABOVE ALL I HOPE THAT MY VISIT WILL HELP TO WIDEN THE BRIDGES EXISTING BETWEEN YOUR COUNTRY AND MINE AND TO STRENGTHEN THEIR FOUNDATIONS.

MAY I, AS YOU, LADIES AND GENTLEMEN, TO JOIN ME IN A TOAST TO THE PRESIDENT OF THE SOCIALIST REPUBLIC OF THE UNION OF BURMA AND TO MRS SAN YU, TO A PEACEFUL AND PROSPEROUS FUTURE FOR BURMA AND TO A FURTHER STRENGTHENING OF THE FRIENDSHIP EXISTING BETWEEN OUR COUNTRIES AND PEOPLE.

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is Dietrich Brandis (1824-1907), a German botanist who in 1856 became superintendent of the teak forests of Lower Burma. In 1858, he became head of the imperial forest administration of all of British Burma.

## **NO. 7 MEMORIES OF A FORMER ITC TRAINEE WHO LIVES IN AUSTRALIA.**

My name is Khin Maung Htay, ITC 073 first batch machine tool operator.

I am working as a CNC machinist in Sydney Australia.

I hope you can use this letter for your Sinte story .

My story will be similar to the others as an ITC ex- trainee who are working at oversea.

I lived in Pyay (other side of Sinte).Before I attend to ITC,I was attending year 10 high school .Some of my friends didn't want me to go to ITC because ITC can apply year 8 student and I could go to university after year 10.I had to decide what should I do, go to university and have a degree or go to ITC. I heard about ITC that will be first training school supported by Germany and The German teacher will teach the trainees with German curriculum. It would be a great chance to study German technology for me as a boy from a small town. I didn't want to miss this opportunity and I chose ITC.

I attended ITC in 1979 as a machine tool operator in first batch. I got the best student award for machine tool operator course. I work at Heavy Industry in Sinte after 3 years training at ITC.I also learned playing drum at ITC music band and I am still playing drum until now with our band in Sydney.

I got an information about Australia skill migrant application through a friend from Yangon while I was working at Sinte. The Australia government recognized our ITC certificate because they knew we had learn German technology. They don't even recognize medical and engineering degree from Myanmar university. I applied as a machinist, sat interview at the Embassy and I got the Australia visa as a first class machinist. I arrived to Sydney in 1995 as a first class machinist.I didn't get this visa easily,I have to study English language to explain what can I do as a machinist to the Embassy. Some of our friends failed at the interview.

When I arrived Australia, I couldn't speak English properly as I am not use to it.Writing and reading English is not a problem for me as I have learned before I came here.

Some of my friend already here before I arrived.Most of them couldn't find their trade job because of language problem. As a machine tool operator I want to work as a machinist. I bought

the newspaper and looked for job.I found some jobs and I knew I could do the job but I was worried for interview as my English skill is not good enough yet.I was learning at Australia migrant English school at that time. I couldn't wait until the English course is finish as I need to work and repay some money (travel expenses) to my family. I ask one of my friend to go together to my job interview as her English was much better than mine. The boss checked my certificates and English skills, but he said he will wait and see my work for a week and if he is satisfied I will get that job. I tried my best for that first week, there are some lathe and milling . I used to work with lathe machine since I finish from ITC training. I haven't work with milling for many years, But I could manage all the machines after a couple of days. This is because of ITC taught me all basic machining knowledge and it is a good platform for advance technology. That is my first job as a machinist in Australia.

I realized I have to upgrade my skills after changing 2-3 jobs as a machinist. Many factories were using CNC machines and I couldn't work with CNC. So I attended a CNC course at TAFE (Technical and Further Education) in 1997. After complete CNC course I got a job as a CNC machinist and I am working with CNC machines until now.

At present I am working at Baker and Proven Company. We make some parts for Navy ships, mining equipment and some other repair work. Our factory employed about 50 workers and all machines are CNC. I am happy at my work as the company cares for me. They increase the wages every year.

Soon after we arrived to Sydney, we established an organization with former ITC students in 1995.

We named our group as ITC group Australia and registered according to Australia regulations.We have 31 members of all trades and batches and total of more than 120 peoples with family members and it is getting bigger and bigger.We collect monthly fee of \$10. We do annual dinners, annual meeting, fund fairs, concerts, volunteering, Picnic and supporting financially to our ITC fellow from Myanmar. ITC group Australia participate in some activities in Sydney with other Myanmar organisations. We got a good name among Myanmar people in Sydney as we are united. We have met since last 40 years ago, so we know each other very well and we love, care and help each other. That is the different with other Myanmar group in Sydney.

We formed another fund group with interesting members. This group is called ITC Australia educational support group. We collect monthly fee and support financially to our ITC friends from Myanmar who have problem for their children's university education. Most of ITC are working at the government departments after finish training at Sinda. It is very hard for an ordinary government staff to support their child's university expenses. That's why we try to help our ITC fellows. However we can support only for medical students for part of their university expenses. There are two students already who complete university and are working as a doctor and we still supporting 4 medical students now.

We always keep in touch with ITC teachers and ITC former students. We visit to ITC and meet with teachers and friends every two or three years. It is a great chance for me that I attended to ITC in my life. I am working with the knowledge from ITC and able to support my family and friends.

I will never forget ITC and I will always thanks to ITC.

**NO. 8  
THE FOUNDATION OF THE ITC ALUMNI  
ASSOCIATION THAILAND<sup>16</sup>**

*Note: The following documents were sent to Ye Htoot in Yangon. All documents are stamped with the seal of the new association:*



**Document 1: Letter**

(Letter to)

Ex-students  
of the Industrial Training center Sinde  
Re: Informing about the foundation of the Alumni Association  
of the ITC Sinde, Thailand, and encouraging the formation  
of similar associations

The former students of the ITC living in Bangkok, Thailand  
successfully formed the Alumni Association of the Industrial  
Training center (Sinde) on 06.06.1999 on the second  
foundation meeting of the ex-students.

The foundation agreement (draft) is attached.

We believe that the striving together of all ex-students is  
mandatory for the successful realisation of the aim formulated  
therein.

For the need of preparing and holding the celebration of the  
35th anniversary (Silver Jubilee) we urge all ex-students to form  
similar associations in their localities and contact us.

signed. xxx  
Kyi Htay (ITC 197)

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<sup>16</sup> Translation from Myanmar language: Salai Kipp Ko Lian and Uta Gärtner

Responsible Representative  
Alumni Association of the Industrial Training Center (Sinde)  
Date: 30.6.1999

Contact address  
Kyi Htay  
Representative  
I.T.C Alumni  
P.O. Box 1017  
Ramkhamheang Post Office, 10241  
Thailand  
Te.: (662) 370-2722 (office)  
(662) 731-1923 Ext 404 (home)

**Document 2: Foundation agreement (draft)**

Industrial Training Center (Sinde)  
Foundation Agreement of the Alumni Association (Draft)  
Thailand

**Article 1**  
Preamble

We, the former students have the duty to not cause to vanish  
the school's noble characteristics and to preserve its tradition.  
During our training in the center, there was mutual friendship,  
unity and cooperation among the trainees. We form the alumni  
association to uphold this tradition and also to hold a ceremony  
that remembers and preserves the school's achievements in  
history.

**Aim**  
We strive at arranging a celebration on the occasion of the  
25th Silver Jubilee of the Industrial Training Center.

**Belief**  
We unanimously believe that all ex-students should strive for  
the successful materialisation of the above aim.

**Opinion**  
For the materialisation of the above aim all of us former  
students will equally and voluntarily contribute by providing  
funds. Naturally, not all of us may not be able to contribute  
as much as other due to their economic situation. This will  
be no reason of discord. However, funding is essential for the  
existence of such an organisation. Therefore, we seriously urge

all of you to try your best to contribute regularly.

### **Article (2)** Constitution

All former students of the Industrial Training center (Sinde) and have an ITC number are eligible to become a member.

To become a member, one needs to voluntarily apply for membership.

The members elect an accountable representative.

Meetings of the association will be held every six months.

That regular meeting will elect the representative.

The representative is responsible for collecting and keeping the funds.

The contribution of each member is set at Thai Baht 150.00.

The representative must issue receipts for the contributions received.

The representative is responsible for the raising and managing the funds until the time of celebrating the Silver Jubilee.

The representative must open a bank account for keeping the funds.

The representative must report about the financial balance and situation at the regular meeting.

Each member has the right to request information information about the association at any time.

The representative together with the alumni associations of the Industrial Training center (Sinde) in other countries implements the necessary measures.

Each member of the association is responsible to strive for the progress of the association and the realisation of its objectives.

Each member must help each other like brothers and sisters.

### **Article (3)** Definitions

*Here, the meaning of the terms "member of the association", "Silver Jubilee", "Representative", and "funds" are defined.*

#### **Document 3: Minutes of the meeting on 6.6.1999**

Industrial Training Center (Sinde)

Second meeting on the emergence of an Alumni Association Thailand, Bangkok

Date: 6.6.1999

Chairperson: Ko Thet Oo

Participants: Ko Tun Thein, Ko Myint Swe, Ko San Myint, Ko Kyi

Htay, Ko Than Lwin

Agenda:

- > Opening of the meeting;
- > Mutual introduction of the participants;
- > Reading discussion of the letter of Ko Myint Zaw and Ko Aung Pe from Malaysia on the proposal of cooperation;
- > Retrospect on the first meeting in 1998 and on what followed;
- > Discussion of participants;
- > Confirmation of the resolutions;
- > End of meeting.

The following nine decisions of the meeting were approved:

- > An Alumni Association (Thailand) of the Industrial Training Centre (Sinde) will be formed.
- > Currently, the only aim and objective of the Alumni Association (Thailand) of the Industrial Training Agreement on the membership fee of monthly 150 Baht.
- > All contributions collected are to be deposited at a bank account.
- > The representative must issue receipts for contributions received.
- > The meeting elects Ko Kyi Htay as responsible representative and delegates responsibility to him.
- > Ko Thet Oo and Ko Tun Thein are assigned to compile draft of an agreement that is a main concern.
- > Baht 2.000 collected during the first meeting are to be transferred from Ko Ye Htoot to Ko San Myint who is assigned to deposit the funds at a Thai bank.
- > The resolutions and video records of the meeting are to be distributed to Myanmar, Malaysia, Singapore, Australia, America, and Canada.

#### **Document 4: Minutes of the first meeting of the Alumni Association Thailand**

Industrial Training Center (Sinde)

Alumni Association Thailand

First Meeting

Minutes

Date: 19.6.1999

Chairperson: Ko Kyi Htay

Participants: Ko Tun Thein, Ko Myint Swe, Ko San Myint, Ko Than Lwin;

Minutes: Ko Thet Oo

Agenda:

- › Opening of the meeting
- › Report about the implementation of the resolutions of the last meeting;
  - › Draft agreement;
  - › Transfer of the account of 1998;
- › Endorsement of the above matters;
- › Report of Ko Tun Thein about his trip to Singapore and his meetings with other alumni regarding the association;
  - › Discussion on general relevant matters;
  - › Financial report;
  - › Confirmation and closing of the meeting.

Resolutions:

- › Amendments were made on the draft agreement and confirmed;
- › The agreement is to be distributed to all alumni;
- › Distribution of membership application forms;
- › Beginning of the monthly contribution of 150 Baht.

**Document 5: Application form (not translated)**

## NO. 9

### DAW YI YI KYAW, MEMORIES<sup>17</sup>

#### EARLY LIFE

I graduated from RIT in 1993 and work in Sinda farm Machinery Factory for 7 years. Since it was close to Sinda ITC I heard some of the news about it which gave me some feeling/ motivation to reconstruct the ITC as a principle. After that I was selected by U Soe Thein to study Master in Japan for 3 years.

Initially, I was selected (Japan Ph.D, Master and Korea MBA graduates are selected) and sent by U Soe Thein to Korea for 2 weeks and trained for management skills to serve in Thagaya ITC in 2008. After 4 days of my return to Myanmar, I was suddenly assigned to ITC Sinda as principle by Minister U Soe Thein. He urged me to rebuild and reconstruct the deteriorated Training center into a good shape. The ITC Sinda needs a lot of reformation in every aspects including facilities, teaching aids, discipline, teaching methods, team spirit and social cohesion.

The working duration started in ITC Sinda from 8.10.2008 to 23.3.2009. When I served as principle, U Soe Thein visited factories near Sinda ITC but never paid a visit but he invited me for lunch and said "I trusted you and heard you were doing well in ITC Sinda that is why I don't need to come and inspect what you are doing."

In the same year German expert inspected the ITC to resume German assistance and I was there to make sure (giving a survey tour by presentation, showing the training room and explaining the status and nature of the campus) to meet the expectation of German expert to get the support from Germany.

When in 2008 I met with batch 27 who were trained for 1 and half year and also the fresher who enrolled for 1 year training as Batch 28. I am not in the position to reduce the period of training from 1 and half year to 1 year but I think the senior official wanted to reshape the training curriculum and restructure the unorganized training center. Not only that, one of the factors of reduction could be that the ministry wants to have a uniform ITCs across the country.

#### IMPACTS ON THE TRAINING

During my time, I published training textbook for trainees to get reference during the training which is missing in the previous batches. Some of the students couldn't catch up with the lesson and failed the test. By looking at the qualities of students I started the study hall at night for the trainees to have more time to get familiar in their respective Trade. The 1 month's practical intake did not changed but practical time for some of the lessons were cut to catch up with the 1 year time (some of the lesson do not need much practical trainings to have the skills). The ITC focus on the main objectives and at least fulfill the needs and covered the important lessons for the certain trade within the time frame of 1 year.

I even gave computer training with 2 computers to the Teachers/ Trainers (who could catch up with the technology) who are interested. When I had time, I took the opportunities to teach in different trades. Then I saw two outstanding students (1 male and 1 female) were somehow good in their trade. When I inquired their background, 1 of them passed the 10th grade with 4 subjects in distinction and 1 of them hold a degree from the University. Then I realized that the name of Sinda is valued by the people and even these outstanding students came to ITC Sinda (under strict rules and living conditions) to get the skills.

#### SOCIAL OCCASIONS

In Sinda, there was some allowances for teachers including me but I didn't take any of the allowances instead used/contributed it for the social night. I focused on the empowering the social status and social cohesion activities in the campus by giving special dinner once a months with all the trainees including all the trainers. Some of the trainers did not join the dinner in the beginning (by saying, what is the difference of eating a meal at the party and at home?) but later everyone joined for the social gathering party. In the party we sang together and had special foods together. When the people know my intention for betterment of the ITC, everyone joined the activities we organized. The One year time as principle in ITC Sinda was the best time of my life.



<sup>17</sup> Daw Yi Yi was head of the school in 2008.

## **RESTRUCTURING AND RENOVATION**

Regarding to the infrastructure, together with the trainees/ITC staff and donation from nearby factories built 2 water tanks for the trainees and also plants trees in the campus. We renovated the building, furniture's for the students replaced and added addition facilities by the support for factories managers.

Not only that we formed 7/8 committee including ITC financial management committee, and ITC Disciplinary Committee by making the senior trainers head of the committees. It was somehow hard to organize the Committees without financial resources but later with our efforts and donations from nearby factories managers, we could accomplish many goals that benefited to ITC Sinda. The Factories managers were always ready to help me with the need of ITC.

The Friday campus cleaning session gave much changes to the look of the ITC. In addition, we used the trainings/ and resources of the ITC in renovating ITC's infrastructures accordingly.

## **IMPACTS ON THE JOBS,**

As always, ITC graduates were able to obtain employment easily. The batch 27 who had 1 and half year training from ITC got the job as usual and the same applied to batch 28 (1 year training). There is not much impacts on the job placement caused by the reduction since the name of ITC is a strong benchmark for the job market. During my time, the private companies and public factories came to sinda looking for the potential employees. It has been always that (at least in my present) 90 % of the students got the job.

## **SIGNIFICANCE**

I started the Talent show for the batch 28 at the graduation ceremony. The Batch 28 made (by different trade) unique items to display in the events. After that batch 29 came up with the innovative ideas to show their skills. I believe/ assume this talent show culture is still practice to this present days in ITC Sinda during graduation. We also celebrated religious festivals in Moe Kaung monastery.

I was moved from ITC Sinda for promotion and repositioned in Naypyidaw, office of ministry of industry. Even Trainer U Soe Win said "if you could stay in ITC sinda for just one more year, it would had been a great benefit for the development of the center." Nevertheless, I chose to move out rather than staying in Sinda. However, I had a great time at ITC with all the staff and trainees, together we achieved a remarkable results for ITC sinda.

**NO. 10  
2014 – INTERVIEW WITH NAN TINT TINT KHAING,  
VOCATIONAL SCHOOL TEACHER FROM MYANMAR  
AT NO (1) INDUSTRIAL TRAINING CENTER (SINDE)<sup>18</sup>**

Nan Tint Tint Khaing is an electrical-engineering instructor in Myanmar. Cut off from the outside world for many decades, the country is now slowly starting to open up, giving Khaing the opportunity to update her knowledge and so improve the training she gives her students. On behalf of the German Federal Ministry for Economic Cooperation and Development (BMZ) and building on its earlier efforts in the field of vocational training in Myanmar, GIZ has been helping to train vocational school teachers in the country since 2012. It also offers training courses in Germany.

**DID YOU ALWAYS WANT TO GO INTO TEACHING?**

Actually, when I was a child, I wanted to be an engineer. But instead of that I studied maths and went on to work in a state-owned company. I was then moved to a different position and started to work as a trainer. I've now been teaching electrical engineering at the vocational training centre in Sinde for 15 years. Even though it was often difficult, due to the fact that I did not have any teacher training at all, I have come to love my work.

**MYANMAR NOW HAS A CIVIL GOVERNMENT AGAIN. WHAT DOES THAT MEAN FOR YOU?**

In Myanmar we hardly had any dealings with the outside world. Now that our country has opened its doors to the world once more, the government is looking ahead and wants Myanmar to become competitive again. This means we need better qualified professionals and people who can train them. That's the reason we teachers were sent to Erfurt to undergo further training. I am really happy that I can help my country move forward in this way.

**WHAT DID THE EIGHT-WEEK COURSE AT THE VOCATIONAL TRAINING CENTRE IN ERFURT DO FOR YOU?**

My colleagues and I underwent intensive training in teaching methodology and didactics. We worked on a teaching concept with the trainers in Erfurt which we now use at our school. Before I had the feeling I had to teach myself everything. Now I believe that a lot will change.

**NAN TIN NAING (WEARING A BLUE BLOUSE)  
ATTENDING A CLASS IN ERFURT)**



**WHAT ARE YOU TAKING BACK TO MYANMAR WITH YOU FROM YOUR STAY IN GERMANY?**

I have seen the progress in Germany and I think it's really worth emulating. The streets are clean virtually everywhere and lovely flowers and plants grow in people's front gardens. For me that's a sign of people's gentleness. I'll gladly take home the high value Germany places on environmental protection and safety in the workplace.

**WHAT IS THE MOST IMPORTANT THING IN YOUR LIFE?**

Time: When I was young, schools and universities were often closed due to political unrest. This stopped me from continuing my studies and finding my dream job. You can't turn back time.

<sup>18</sup> <https://www.giz.de/en/worldwide/29148.html> (accessed 13.3.2019).

## NO. 11

### BUNNING/SCHMIDT 2017 FROM A STUDY OF TWO GERMAN SCHOLARS ON MYANMAR'S TVET SYSTEM <sup>19</sup>

## 5 CONCLUSION

### 5.1 PROBLEMS AT A GLANCE

When considering all the mentioned results from the foregoing analysis and descriptions the following emerging conclusions represent a comprehensive problem scenario with regard to TVET teacher training.

- 1) There is a low awareness for the relevance of TVET in general and with respect to its potential to develop a country's skilled and semi-skilled workers. In comparison to university degrees, graduating from training courses at vocational institutions is not perceived as a valuable career option.
- 2) Regarding careers, there is no appropriate pathway or development opportunity for the TVET teaching personnel since no pre-service training is available and university courses focusing on vocational teacher training do not exist. In addition, in-service training is mostly not in place either or only provided as technical training to few selected teachers.
- 3) This is creating difficulties for TVET teachers and leads to the conclusion that they have relatively heterogeneous qualification backgrounds in mostly technical fields which indicates a lack of pedagogical and didactical competencies.
- 4) Consequently, the limited pedagogical knowledge and skills of TVET teaching staff is used unsystematically. Didactics in theory and practice are unknown among the instructors and teachers. This is exactly the point where teacher training must start.
- 5) However, pedagogical skills are not considered relevant in the eyes of those who 'recruit' vocational teacher and instructors. Unexpectedly, TVET institutions are not quite involved in the

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19 Frank Bünning and Ulrike Schmidt, Recent Framework of TVET Teacher Education in a Country on the Path to Reform: An Analyses of Myanmar's Critical Challenges (Conclusion). ([https://www.researchgate.net/publication/313194074\\_Recent\\_Framework\\_of\\_TVET\\_Teacher\\_Education\\_in\\_a\\_Country\\_on\\_the\\_Path\\_to\\_Reform](https://www.researchgate.net/publication/313194074_Recent_Framework_of_TVET_Teacher_Education_in_a_Country_on_the_Path_to_Reform): 19-20; accessed 28.6.2019)..

opaque and unstandardised recruiting process. Recruitment means in these cases withdrawing staff from the industry (to become instructors) or appointing young graduates (to become a theory teacher). 6) It evidently shows that hierarchical barriers are high meanwhile the motivation and external support of the teaching personnel are rather low. This implies that teachers are not being involved in decisions and the necessary sphere of influence is not being attributed to them.

### 5.2 FINAL CONCLUSION

At the time being, Myanmar has already taken the opportunity to jump aboard the departing bandwagon of strengthening and upgrading TVET teacher education and so the vision for helping Myanmar achieving a transition in its TVET sector is bright. Although, there are evidently critical challenges lying ahead, Myanmar is not the only country where the "serious consideration of pedagogy is largely missing in vocational education" (Lucas, Spencer & Claxton, 2012, p.13).

[...]

In the nearer future, corresponding debates should become more detailed and take into consideration whether to profit from the experiences and proposals from international TVET stakeholders' on the implementation of standards for the development of a short-term and long-term solution. These could be in the form of a TVET university degree to establish possibilities for vocational teaching staff regarding their initial and consistent development. Anyhow, it will have to incorporate vocational didactics and pedagogy as well as subject specific applied didactics in order to enable TVET teaching staff to efficiently distribute their technical knowledge. More generally speaking, from the research emerge following recommendations, which are tailored to the Myanmar case but may be considered as orientation also for other developing countries:

- › Strengthening the quality in TVET
- › Designing an appropriate career path for TVET teachers
- › Developing and implementing Appropriate TVET teacher education
- › Incorporating vocational pedagogy for the development of transferable skills
- › Involving TVET teaching staff and institutions in the change process
- › Establishing public private partnerships in the TVET sector

As visible from the present findings, an enormous step towards the proper application of teaching methods still needs to be procured and corresponding institutional and staff resources still have to be created. This leads to open questions referring to the education of the trainers in TVET. As a consequence, the finalisation of this research work has opened up a new chapter in a book which has yet to be written. Notably, the individual efforts spent on the micro and meso level (by teachers, instructors, principles and development advisors) together with the support on the macro level (from the bilateral development cooperation with GIZ and other donors in Myanmar plus the expected improvements emerging from the ongoing political transformation processes) can lead to an integral quality improvement of teaching and learning in TVET.



## **NO. 12** **SINDE — A MYANMAR-GERMAN SUCCESS STORY<sup>20</sup>**

A vocational school set up in Myanmar with German help almost 40 years ago has survived all the country's political turmoil and upheavals over the past four decades.

When the former students of the Industrial Training Center Sinde (ITC Sinde) in Myanmar met for their reunion this year, the venue was filled with joyful faces, laughter and people eager to talk. The participants of this year's gathering dressed up: Almost all of them wore traditional Longyi (wrap skirts), complemented by white shirts for men and colorful blouses for women.

Shortly after 10 AM, the moderator urges the alumni, who are assembled in small groups, to start on time, although he appears empathetic that some are overwhelmed to see old friends again after many years.

The participants of the alumni meeting (about 350, including family members), near Yangon's famous Shwedagon Pagoda, also celebrate in a way one of the most successful projects of German development cooperation in Myanmar.

Kyaw Lwin, a former teacher and school principal from Sinde, who came to Germany in 1977 for one and a half years and was trained near Mannheim, among other places, says at the event: "It was and is a wonderful project which, with German help, has produced many very well-trained students." In total, more than 4,000 vocational students have so far graduated in Sinde.

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<sup>20</sup><https://www.dw.com/en/sinde-a-german-myanmar-success-story/a-47093178> (Accessed 13.3.2019).

### THE IMAGE SHOWS THE TRAINING CENTER'S INAUGURATION CEREMONY IN DECEMBER 1979



### AN AERIAL VIEW OF THE ITC SINDE'S SITE



### THE BEGINNINGS

At the end of 1970, the education minister of the socialist government of Burma asked the German embassy in Yangon to examine whether a model project for vocational training could be launched there with German assistance. He said his research had shown that the dual education system with a focus on practical training was the best in the world. The German federal government agreed.

However, the project was not implemented until years later. Only after Maung Cho, a military official who was trained by the German company Fritz Werner, took charge of the newly created ministry of heavy industry in 1975, were the plans put into practice.

He chose Sinde, 300 kilometers north of Yangon on the Irrawaddy, as the location for the school. By then, there was already a factory for agricultural machinery in Sinde built with the help of Fritz Werner. With support from German teachers, 24 Myanmar teachers taught 108 vocational school students in the first year. Some of these teachers, like Kyaw Lwin, had undergone training in Germany. The vocational training lasted three years.

### SETBACKS AND NEW OPPORTUNITIES

"The vocational school developed slowly and organically," Myanmar expert Hans-Bernd Zöllner wrote in a study on ITC Sinde. By the end of 1985, the Germans had completely transferred the responsibility for the institution to the Myanmar government, although they continued to provide financial support and help with the procurement of teaching materials.

This ended abruptly in 1988, when the German government stopped development cooperation after the military took power in Myanmar. Still, the school continued to exist, even though the "golden years" were over. Gradually the training was shortened, initially to two years and then finally to one year.

The machines and the teaching material became visibly obsolete. In the end, the training was forced to be scaled back to include just the theoretical part, which had previously accounted for only a fifth of the entire course.

At the same time, however, the military government opened the country to foreign investment and allowed graduates from Sinde to go abroad or become active in the private sector, which was not possible before. Abroad, many of the Sinde students developed their full potential, as most were overqualified for the domestic labor market.

### 'SKILL — HONOR — ABILITY' HAS BEEN THE MOTTO OF THE INSTITUTE SINCE ITS FOUNDING



### A NEW START

The school's fortunes went uphill again in 2012, after the military handed over power to a nominally civilian government and a by-election brought Aung San Suu Kyi to parliament for the first time. After the lifting of the EU sanctions, the ITC Sinde was the first point of contact for the resumption of German-Myanmar development cooperation.

In fact, Germany was the first Western country to become active again in Myanmar after the end of the sanctions — partly because of its good ties to ITC Sinde.

How lastingly effective the project has been to this day is evident not only by the rapid resumption of cooperation with Germany, but also by the meetings of alumni. At the ceremony, donors who have made a special contribution to the organization of the alumni or through donations are honored. The life of the entrepreneur and chairman of the alumni association, Ye Htoot, is a good example for the success of the school.

### YE HTOOT (LEFT) AT THE ALUMNI GATHERING IN YANGON



### LAUNCHING A CAREER

Ye Htoot was part of the first batch of the ITC Sinde. After completing his education, he was transferred to a state-owned enterprise in Yangon in 1982 as a junior engineer. After a popular uprising brought an end to the socialist era in 1988, Ye Htoot joined the protesters and founded a union with his colleagues.

Following the suppression of the demonstrations, the new military regime gave him a choice: give up unionism or lose your job. Ye Htoot, like many other educated men and women who participated in the uprising, decided to leave the country. But as the company was commissioned to install equipment in several hospitals, Ye Htoot finished that task first.

Ye Htoot left for Singapore, where he worked for six years and graduated as an industrial engineer. In 1999, he returned to Myanmar to start his own business. "I wanted to contribute to the development of my country," he told DW. He launched the Multi Power Engineering Company (MPEC), which specializes in the manufacture of electrical circuit boards and panels for large-scale projects. Starting with only seven employees, the MPEC now employs around 120 people, including 23 former Sinde students.

"Everything I've achieved so far is based on the Sinde work," Ye Htoot said. "There were many who knew more than me, but I was able to apply what I had learned," he added.

Ye Htoot is of the view that many university graduates in Myanmar are knowledgeable but they cannot put that knowledge to work. "Talking is not enough; it is important to practice and gain practical experience," he said.

### YE HTOOT IN SINGAPORE DURING THE 1990S



## THE NEXT GENERATION

Ye Htoot's company is a permanent training center for students from Sinde. The students, who wear the same blue uniform as they did 39 years ago, look to the future with great confidence, as the reputation of the vocational school continues to be outstanding.

A student from the Shan state says that she wants to continue learning even after the completion of her studies. Ye Htoot believes that this spirit and enthusiasm have a lot to do with curiosity and discipline.

Zoellner, who is researching Sinde, believes the success of the project is multifaceted. "Motivation is key for these students. Also, it is a combination of the German knowhow and Burmese traditions and ideas."

The vocational school will be celebrating its 40th anniversary next year. Ye Htoot believes that even if Sinde's success cannot be copied, it will continue to inspire people for a long time.

## A GROUP PHOTO WITH THE SCHOOL'S TRAINEES, INSTRUCTORS AND YE HTOOT





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