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Encountering internationalisation: higher education

and social justice in Myanmar

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STATEMENT

I hereby declare that this thesis has not been and will not be, submitted in whole or in part to another University for the award of any other degree.

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Signature: _____

Acknowledgements

**Encountering internationalisation: higher education and
social justice in Myanmar**

Summary

As Myanmar emerges from over half a century of military-backed authoritarian rule and
international isolation, this study examines the international encounters of Myanmar's higher
education institutions (HEIs) from a social justice perspective.

Social justice and peacebuilding are central to Myanmar's development aims and are critical
areas in which higher education has important roles and influences. Universities can be forces
for progressive social change, promoting equity and long-term peace through their research,
teaching and contributions to society. Conversely, they can also work against social justice as
institutions that entrench or exacerbate social inequalities and exclusion. This study explores
the way that the internationalisation of HE relates to aspects of social justice, firstly, in the
arrangements and relationships between Myanmar HEIs and their international partners; and
secondly, from an 'outward-facing' perspective in the contribution of their international
activities towards social justice, peacebuilding and development, in response to Myanmar's
conflict-affected context and social inequalities.

In-depth interviews were conducted with leaders and senior managers in four Myanmar HEIs,
the Myanmar Ministry of Education and three UK HEIs. The rationales and motivations for
engaging in international interactions in Myanmar were explored, and through Nancy Fraser's
theory of social justice based on parity of participation, the economic, cultural, political and
peacebuilding dimensions of social justice of international interactions were analysed.

The study's findings show that the HE sector in Myanmar has been largely neglected by
international development agencies, implying that the roles, functions and purposes of HE in
social justice and peacebuilding are unrecognised, unacknowledged or ignored. In their
encounters with internationalisation, Myanmar HEIs are experiencing social injustice in their
HE partnerships. The findings reveal stark asymmetries in the motivations and rationales for
Myanmar and UK HEIs to engage in their international interactions, driven predominantly by
commercial interests in UK HEIs and by academic needs, which mostly remain unmet, in
Myanmar public HEIs. In the absence of international development support, the ideologies of

market liberalisation and international commercialisation of HE remain unchallenged by policy-makers, are impeding ethical HE interactions, and usurping the good will of international HEIs to contribute to Myanmar HEIs and wider social justice issues in Myanmar society.

Through their activities and arrangements, some international interactions appear to be manifesting features of re-colonisation. In the Myanmar HEIs in this study, these were found to further entrench inequalities in the global circulation of knowledge production, perpetuate the epistemological subordination of Myanmar researchers, and create or maintain economic, cultural and political hegemonies in resources and power, reproducing the dependencies of Myanmar public HEIs and privileging Northern HEI partners.

Although some international collaboration in HE supporting peacebuilding was present in Myanmar HEIs, the role of HE within a wider narrative of peace and social justice was not well understood by HEIs and education policy makers. While international HE partnerships were shown to have the potential leverage and opportunities to contribute to social justice and peacebuilding, only few were engaged in research topics that lead to a deeper understanding of the causes of grievances, discrimination and injustice, and supporting activities that foster citizenship, critical thinking, social cohesion and democratic processes within and beyond the university. Although the Myanmar government recognised the importance of university students in peacebuilding, the role of HE and internationalisation were situated firmly within a human capital logic, reflecting liberal peace ideology premised on social stability through economic growth and increasing privatisation, overshadowing other vital functions of HE and internationalisation in societal transformation and long-term peace.

By critiquing international interactions through a social justice lens and by deepening the understanding of the processes that drive international HE, structural, cultural and epistemic injustices were identified and thereby make possible the dismantling of the barriers to parity of participation. In doing so, it may be feasible to develop more equitable international HE engagement in Myanmar's low-income, conflict-affected context, steer international HE collaboration towards responding more effectively to the needs of Myanmar's universities and contribute further to wider social justice and peacebuilding.

Key words: higher education, social justice, internationalisation, peacebuilding, conflict, partnerships, Myanmar

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List of Abbreviations

ASEAN	Association of South-East Asian Nations
AUN	ASEAN University Network
BC	British Council
DAAD	Deutscher Akademischer Austauschdienst
DDR	Demobilisation, demilitarisation and reintegration
DFID	Department for International Development (UK)
DIT	Department for International Trade (UK)
CESR	Comprehensive Education Sector Review
CSO	Civil Society Organisation
EAO	Ethnic Armed Organisation
EU	European Union
FCO	Foreign and Commonwealth Office (UK)
FHI	Family Health International
GATS	General Agreement on Trade in Services
GCPEA	Global Coalition for the Protection of Education from Attack
GER	Gross Enrolment Ratio
HE	Higher Education
HEI	Higher Education Institution
HND	Higher National Diploma
IIE	Institute of International Education (US)
IMF	International Monetary Fund
IPR	Intellectual Property Rights
JICA	Japan International Cooperation Agency
KOICA	Korean International Cooperation Agency

MoE	Ministry of Education
MOU	Memorandum of Understanding
NESP	National Education Strategic Plan
NGO	Non-Governmental Organisation
NLD	National League for Democracy
NNER	National Network for Education Reform
NPM	New Public Management
OCHA	United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Assistance
ODA	Official Development Assistance
OECD	Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development
OSF	Open Society Foundation
SDG	Sustainable Development Goal
SEAMEO - RIHED	Southeast Asian Ministers of Education Organisation - Regional Centre for Higher Education and Development
SHARE	Support to Higher Education in the ASEAN Region
SPDC	State Peace and Development Council
SPHEIR	Strategic Partnerships for Higher Education Innovation and Reform
SLORC	State Law and Order Restoration Council
TNE	Transnational Education
TVET	Technical and Vocational Education and Training
UN	United Nations
UNDP	United Nations Development Programme
UNESCO	United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organisation
WTO	World Trade Organisation

1   Introduction

This research examines social justice in the international interactions of higher education institutions in Myanmar. In this chapter, I introduce the research context and rationales, explaining the problems identified and why the research was undertaken. I then introduce my research questions, followed by an outline of the structure of the thesis.

1.1   Research context

Higher education has important roles in social justice, development and peacebuilding. Higher education institutions (HEIs) can be a force for progressive social change, serving as transformative institutions that promote social justice and equity in societies, but they can also work against social justice by entrenching existing inequalities in societies and legitimising the power of dominant elites (Castells, 2001; Brennan and Naidoo, 2008; Hall, 2012; Feuer, Hornidge and Schetter, 2015). With the rise of the knowledge economy, for low-income countries such as Myanmar, an effective higher education system is considered essential in escaping their peripheral position in the global economy and enabling them to move towards a more equal status from which they can effectively compete and benefit (Castells, 2001; World Bank, 2003; Salmi, 2017b). In a context of increasing social and economic pressures and demands, but faced with the realities of low resources and inadequate facilities, internationalisation can be seen as an effective way to improve HE systems in low-income countries and support their functions in progressive social change, peacebuilding and development (Naidoo, 2007).

The internationalisation of universities is reported to have many benefits, including enabling students to gain a wider understanding of the world, preparing them for employment in a globalised economy, strengthening institutional capacity, increasing the relevance and impact of research in addressing global, national and local development needs, and providing high quality courses in places where provision is limited or of poor quality (Altbach and Knight, 2007; Henard, Diamond and Roseveare, 2012). Some, however, view internationalisation in less positive terms: an homogenising process that weakens the social, political and cultural role of universities (Altbach, 2004; Robertson, 2010a) and, driven by a global neoliberal regime that elicits a managerialist and market-based approach to internationalisation, eroding the role of the university in contributing to social justice and equity (Naidoo, 2010). Wider

influences and incentives, in the form of political and economic interests, colonial and post-colonial legacies, and the unequal terrain of the global knowledge economy may also affect the framing and focus of international HE interactions. These sometimes contradictory, competing and intertwined forces coalesce at the level of the internationalising higher education institution with complex effects on social justice and development across institutional, local, national, regional and global domains.

My research context is Myanmar, a country emerging from 54 years of military-backed authoritarian rule and faced with acute social justice challenges. It is amongst the least developed countries in the world, ranked 150 out of 187 countries on the Human Development Index (UNDP, 2016), with significant horizontal and vertical inequalities across ethnic, religious, gender and geographical domains (Burke *et al.*, 2017; Government of Myanmar and World Bank, 2017; Independent Fact-Finding Mission, 2018a). It has some of the longest civil conflicts in the world, some persisting for nearly seven decades (Egreteau and Mangan, 2018), dating from the country's independence from British colonial rule after World War Two. Until recently, under successive isolationist socialist military regimes, Myanmar has been disconnected from the influences and impact of globalisation and, to a large extent, the global structures and agencies governing international development assistance.

Myanmar has a higher education system shaped by its long and complex relationship with colonialism, conflict and social activism, its universities for many years having been the centre of opposition to successive authoritarian regimes. As these universities now emerge into the global domain of international higher education, they will become increasingly subject to the powerful currents and structures that frame and drive global higher education. Since the cautious beginnings of liberalisation from 2011 under the previous military-backed government, and more rapidly since the democratic elections of November 2015, Myanmar's universities are beginning to encounter internationalisation through the approaches of higher education institutions (HEIs) from other countries, including those from the UK, looking for opportunities to collaborate. These may bring substantial gains to Myanmar's universities and wider society, but may also bring change to the institutions and the HE system that have less clear advantages.

1.2   Aims and rationales for this research

This study explores social justice in the international interactions of Myanmar higher education institutions (HEIs) from two perspectives: firstly, in the relationships and arrangements

between Myanmar HEIs and their international partners; and secondly, in the 'outward-facing' activities of the international interactions, in their contribution to social justice issues in Myanmar in response to Myanmar's context of conflict and inequalities.

Through the study's findings, I aim to contribute to a growing body of work critiquing internationalisation in higher education by deepening an understanding of the emerging global and national influences on international HE collaboration in the low-income, conflict-affected context of Myanmar. The research findings are intended to inform future international collaboration in HE and policy discourse in Myanmar on higher education reform, and to further the debate on the role of international collaboration in higher education towards social justice and peacebuilding in Myanmar.

My interest in conducting this research arose from my experience of working with universities in several conflict-affected low-income countries over the last twenty years, particularly and most recently in Myanmar. I observed that the roles of higher education in social transformation, peacebuilding and development appeared to be unacknowledged or absent in the international development discourse in these countries. In Myanmar, HE remains critically underfunded and largely excluded from education development strategies and programming, its potential contribution to greater social justice underutilised. Yet, through my work with the British Council, I observed an increasing interest in HEIs from the UK and other countries to collaborate with Myanmar HEIs and wondered how these international interactions were responding to the needs of Myanmar's HEIs and Myanmar's context of development, conflict and social inequality.

Four main rationales and aims underlie this thesis. Firstly, although the role of higher education is recognised to be important in strengthening social justice, it remains understudied (Brennan and Naidoo, 2008; Patton, Shahjahan and Osei-Kofi, 2010). There is growing recognition that the role of education is "inherently connected to and embedded within processes of social justice and societal transformation" (Novelli, Lopes Cardozo and Smith, 2015, p.10), and that, in conflict-affected societies, building sustainable peace requires longer term, transformational approaches which lead towards what Galtung has termed 'positive peace' (Galtung, 1975b; Novelli and Smith, 2011). However, much of this nascent but growing body of research focuses on basic education, including most studies in Myanmar; considerably less is known about the role of higher education in these contexts (Johnson, 2013; Novelli and Selenica, 2014; Feuer, Hornidge and Schetter, 2015), and where studies do exist, they are unevenly distributed, with some conflict-affected countries, such as Myanmar,

receiving limited, or no research attention at all. Furthermore, there appear to be very few studies on the internationalisation of HE in conflict-affected contexts and how it relates to social justice. This research, therefore, attempts to contribute to the under-researched area of higher education and social justice in conflict-affected contexts, and is driven by a need to deepen the understanding of how HE and their international partners can contribute to social justice and peacebuilding.

Secondly, by analysing HE in Myanmar from the perspective of social justice, a more holistic view of HE in development and social transformation in Myanmar may be advanced, that goes beyond the economic benefits and human capital production that have dominated HE development discourse over the last twenty years, and which has failed to include HE's contribution towards wider public good, societal transformation and peacebuilding, areas central to Myanmar's development goals. By contributing to the evidence and analysis of these roles of HE, this research seeks to increase the understanding and awareness in international development agencies, policy makers, institutions, and those that influence them, of HE in social justice, development and peacebuilding.

Thirdly, while it is widely acknowledged that the internationalisation of higher education institutions is the most significant change in the global higher education sector over recent decades (Altbach and Knight, 2007; Altbach, 2008; Maringe and Woodfield, 2013), little attention has been given to the impact and influences of internationalisation in low-income countries (Naidoo, 2007; McNamara Economic Research, 2014), nor in contexts affected by conflict. The internationalisation of HEIs, their roles in the global knowledge economy, the increasing privatisation and commodification of HE, and the impacts and consequences of global and institutional inequalities and hegemonies, both present and past, on international interactions in low-income countries are complex, intertwined and under-researched (Altbach, 2004; Maringe, 2009; Naidoo, 2010; Robertson, 2010a). In terms of international collaboration, although power imbalances and inequalities in North-South HE partnerships have been noted, there is only limited research that traces the logic behind these, how they are manifested within and between collaborating HEIs and the impact and influence they have on the topics, types and forms of collaboration in low-income countries (Gutierrez, 2008; Robertson and Verger, 2008; Naidoo, 2010; Koehn, 2012; Maringe, Foskett and Woodfield, 2013). More research is needed to explore ways to steer international HE towards developmental goals, examine how policy can be used to shape HE internationalisation to benefit low-income countries and institutions, and protect them from some of the more detrimental effects of

global HE (Naidoo, 2007). This study seeks to contribute to this area by examining the international interactions of Myanmar HEIs and their Northern international partners through a social justice lens, linking Myanmar's local context of conflict, social inequality and development needs to the wider forces and structures shaping the globalisation of HE. By doing so, I aim to highlight areas that international HE partnerships can contribute to social justice, but also to examine practices and arrangements that support or hinder social justice in international HE interactions.

Finally, and importantly, the timing of this study is significant for two main reasons: firstly, my research coincides with a policy reform window in Myanmar that will shape its HE system and how it engages with internationalisation over the next few years, including the development of policies on the role of the private sector, the provision of transnational education (TNE), and how internationalisation may be leveraged for national social and economic development. It is intended that these research findings may be used to inform these policy considerations. Secondly, Myanmar HEIs are now at an early, pivotal stage in their encounters with internationalisation, and as some institutions gain more autonomy, this study aims to support leaders and senior managers of HEIs in their decision-making and arrangements with their international HE partners to better meet the priorities and interests of all HE partners and to strengthen the contribution of international HE to social justice.

1.3   Research questions

The central question of this research is:

"*In what ways do emerging international interactions in Myanmar higher education institutions relate to social justice?*"

The three research sub-questions (RQs) underlying this are:

RQ1:   *What are the activities and foci of international interactions in Myanmar higher education institutions?*

RQ2:   *What are the rationales and motivations of HEIs in Myanmar to collaborate internationally, and of UK HEIs to collaborate with HEIs in Myanmar, as perceived by senior managers and policy makers?*

RQ3:   *What are the implications for social justice within, between and beyond the HEIs?*

The research attempts to trace the logic of the decisions, perceptions and actions behind the answers to these questions through an examination of the underlying global, national and local contexts and through the drivers and incentives influencing international collaboration

between HEIs in Myanmar and the UK. The RQs are sequenced in a way that progressively build towards answering the central research question: RQs 1 and 2 establish a detailed picture of what international activities are taking place and why, followed by a social justice analysis and discussion which bring the findings together in answer to RQ3.

To address the research questions, I used a critical realist approach and a qualitative research methodology to conduct a multiple case study, gathering data through 14 semi-structured, in-depth interviews with leaders and senior managers in four Myanmar HEIs (three public and one private), senior officials in the Myanmar Ministry of Education, and with senior managers in three public UK HEIs that had connections with Myanmar. Other data were obtained through a wide range of formal and non-formal sources, including Myanmar government policy documents, international development coordination group meeting minutes and reports, higher education policy dialogues and policy briefings, and British Council documents and commissioned reports.

1.4   Organisation of the thesis

This thesis is divided into nine chapters. Following this introductory chapter, Chapter Two presents a literature review of the theoretical and empirical studies that have contributed to the substantive areas of my research topic, encompassing the roles of higher education in social justice, development, conflict and peacebuilding, the internationalisation of higher education and the literature on North-South HEI interactions.

Chapter Three is devoted to an explanation of the theoretical and analytical frameworks used in the study, in which I present an analytical approach to examining social justice in international interactions in higher education based on Fraser's (2007) theoretical concept of social justice and adapted for education in conflict-affected contexts by Novelli, Lopes Cardozo and Smith (2015).

In Chapter Four, I provide the contextual background to the study, giving a brief introduction to Myanmar and describing the history of HE, the current HE structure, policies and reforms, social justice issues and links to internationalisation. This leads to a detailed description of my research design and methodology in Chapter Five, which includes a discussion on the ethical considerations and challenges of conducting this research in HEIs in Myanmar.

The sixth, seventh and eighth chapters are devoted to an analysis of the data and discussion of the findings: Chapter Six examines the activities and foci of the international interactions of Myanmar HEIs, Chapter Seven explores the rationales and motivations behind these

interactions, and Chapter Eight focusses on the social justice aspects of the international interactions.

Finally, in Chapter Nine I draw together the main conclusions of the study, present the theoretical, methodological and practical contributions that this study has made to knowledge and understanding in the field, propose key recommendations from the findings and highlight future areas of research revealed by the study. I conclude the thesis with a reflection on my own research journey and learning.

2 Higher education, social justice and internationalisation

The purpose of this chapter is to review the key theoretical and empirical studies that contribute to the understanding of the roles of higher education in social justice, peacebuilding and development and how these intersect with internationalisation.

I first examine the roles of HE in social justice, development, conflict and peacebuilding, and the discourses and research on how and to what extent HE has contributed to these areas. I then turn my attention to the internationalisation of higher education and the literature on North-South HE interactions. Finally, I discuss the substantive and conceptual gaps in the literature in terms of the roles of international collaboration in higher education in low-income and conflict-affected countries related to social justice and reflect on the implications of the literature on my research study. I describe my search strategy and approach to the literature review in Appendix 1.

I begin, therefore, with an examination of the role of higher education in societal transformation.

2.1 Higher education in social transformation

My point of departure for the literature review is to examine the conceptual understandings of the roles, functions and purposes of HEIs and their impact, relevance, intersections and relationships with social transformation and development.

This study adopts the broad definition of higher education (HE) specified by the OECD as "all universities, colleges of technology and other institutions of post-secondary education", which also includes "all research institutions, experimental stations and clinics operating under the direct control of or administered by or associated with higher education institutions" (OECD, 2015, p.260). Universities are a large subset of a wide range of higher education institutions (HEIs) where students study for a degree.

The term 'tertiary education' (TE) is generally less well defined and covers a wider category of post-secondary courses and institutions. Where tertiary education is referred to in this study, the UNESCO definition is used, which defines it as a phase of education that builds upon secondary education and includes short cycle diploma courses, post-secondary vocational and technical education, as well as higher education through to PhD level (UNESCO, 2011, p.42). I provide a more contextually-specific definition of the term 'higher education institution' as it is understood in Myanmar in Chapter 4 on the research context.

The roles, functions and purposes of higher education institutions

Higher education institutions have important social, political, economic and cultural functions in societies (World Bank, 2000; Brennan, King and Lebeau, 2004). While their main functions, in the simplest terms, are generally recognised to be threefold: contribution to knowledge, teaching and service (or third mission), activities that are often interrelated (Bourner, 2008), in an era of globalisation and the massification of HE, decreasing public funding and increasing commercialisation, commodification and privatisation, universities are under pressure to fulfil an expanding number of roles, functions and purposes, which are multi-faceted, evolving and contested (Altbach, 2008; Robertson, 2010a; de Sousa Santos, 2012).

Not all functions have equal priority in every institution or society, and one or more of these key functions may be missing completely (Altbach, 2009). Many universities have become predominantly focused on the teaching function, particularly in low-income countries, but also in advanced economies (Ibid., 2009). Service, or the 'third mission', concerned with the engagement of the university with society, is also undergoing change and is variously interpreted, covering a range of functions such as developing social capital in the community, cultural engagement, links with business and commercialising intellectual property, contribution to policy-making and supporting public debate, and as such, is largely context-driven (Laredo, 2007).

While interest in the economic contribution of HE has risen over the past two decades with the emergence of the knowledge economy (World Bank, 2003; Altbach, Reisberg and Rumbley, 2009; Castells, 2009), the broader societal benefits of higher education beyond the economic are also widely acknowledged. The World Bank, in its influential report 'Higher education in developing countries: peril and promise' (2000), categorises these into four key areas related to public interest: HE's ability to unlock the potential of people from all backgrounds; build a national resource of highly skilled individuals; contribute to subjects that have benefits beyond the individual; and enable the discussion of ideas and values (World Bank, 2000, p.38). Definitions used by UNESCO also emphasise the societal benefits of HE, linking HE to social justice, human rights, democracy and peace (UNESCO, 1998). These conceptions of HE situate HEIs firmly within the arena of social transformation and social justice, on which there is a rich discourse. HEIs are also accorded with providing important spaces where academics and students as social critics can freely and independently engage in discussion and debates on societal and political issues (Whitehead, 1967; UNESCO, 1998; Hornblow, 2007; Altbach, 2008). UNESCO underlines the importance of this role in enabling people to "be able to speak out on

ethical, cultural and social problems completely independently and in full awareness of their responsibilities, exercising a kind of intellectual authority that society needs to help it to reflect, understand and act." (UNESCO, 1998, p.2).

The political and social functions of HEIs are argued to be particularly important in low-income, conflict-affected contexts (Millican, 2017). Altbach suggests that the academic communities in universities located in developing countries are unique in their capacity to participate in political, cultural and social dialogue in society by not only having the motivation, knowledge and commitment, but also access to the necessary technical skills (Altbach, 2013). Davies invokes a crucial role for HEIs in countries affected by conflict, arguing that in order to transition out of conflict, HEIs are important in their contribution to "new ways of learning and living which is not to reproduce the same causes of conflict" (Davies, 2004, p.182).

However, empirical evidence on the wider benefits of higher education to society is scarce (McMahon, 2004; Brennan, Durazzi and Sene, 2013). While it has been argued that separating the social and economic functions of higher education is misconceived (McArthur, 2011), an examination of associated research reveals a divided literature. A recent review of academic studies dating from 2003 to 2009 on the benefits of HE found that "research evidence is unevenly distributed across higher education's different functions and contexts" (Brennan, Durazzi and Sene, 2013, p.4), with more literature focussing on the benefits to the individual (including health and earnings) than those to wider society (Ibid., 2013). This finding is corroborated by the work of McMahon (2004), who revealed that very little attention has been paid by scholars to those aspects of societal benefit that are not able to be monetised. Nevertheless, of the few studies that do exist, significant benefits to wider society have been found (Brennan and Naidoo, 2008). In one such study, Brennan, Durazzia and Sene (2013) conclude that "higher education attainment favours more racial tolerance, voter participation, trust between citizens" (Brennan, Durazzi and Sene, 2013, p.36).

The different conceptualisations of HEIs described above are not new, but have their roots in the evolution of HEIs, which are still strong influences on the functions and development of HEIs as socially- and economically-engaged institutions. From the early professional schools, to the broader concept of an institution with wider societal purpose promulgated in 19th Century Europe by Newman (1852), and the Humboldtian model based on autonomy, academic freedom and the importance of linking research and teaching (Altbach, 2007; Boulton and Lucas, 2008), evolved the 'Western' model of the university. Although there are wide variations, this has become an almost universal model for universities globally (Altbach, 2007).

It is argued that, with the exception of Al-Ashar University in Cairo, all universities in the world have the same historical roots in the medieval European universities , imposed on colonised countries and adopted by the rest (Selvaratnam, 1988; Altbach, 2004, 2007). These origins have important consequences in the hegemonic structures of knowledge and power relations at global and institutional levels, which I discuss later in this chapter.

It is also recognised that universities have distinct identities within their own society. Sabic-El-Rayess, in one of the few studies of universities in the post-conflict phase, emphasises the importance of considering the contextual nature of the university and how it relates to the society within which it is embedded, arguing that this is particularly important in contexts where societal divisions and ethnic conflicts are present and highlighting the danger of subordinating the local context to the global through policy borrowing (Sabic-El-Rayess, 2009). These contextual considerations have particular resonance in Myanmar.

Higher education and social change

> "Universities and their practices have a key role to play. But this role is, and long has been, ambiguous. Universities serve both as gatekeepers for established orders of inequality, and as transformative institutions that enable social justice through inter-generational changes in circumstances" (Hall, 2012, p.3).

Hall's statement encapsulates the two main opposing concepts which dominate the literature relating to higher education's influence on societal structure: elite reproduction theorists argue that education systems perpetuate, legitimise and reinforce the position of dominant elites in a society, thereby promoting social injustice, while liberal theorists see education as a force for progressive social change and creating a more open society through enabling social mobility, based on access, inclusion and meritocracy (Bourdieu, 1996; Moore, 2004; Brennan and Naidoo, 2008). These two roles are summarised in the following figure:

Liberal (re-allocative) theorists	Elite reproduction theorists
Developing a meritocratic system which provides access to education based on ability, not birth; producing an 'open' system which enables social mobility	Privileging access to education by the dominant social class and therefore social status and jobs; restricting access to others
Promoting liberal democracy and civic values, based on social equality	Preserving and reinforcing the ideologies that support the high social status of ruling elites; preventing any challenges to current ideologies
Producing the human capital for high skilled jobs needed for economic growth	Producing differentiated human capital to take their appropriate ascribed place in the economic and social hierarchy

Enabling progressive social change	Maintaining social dominance of an elite class

Figure 1: The roles of HE in social structure
Source: adapted from Moore (2004)

Brennan and Naidoo (2008) point out, however, that these two theories are not necessarily binary, implying that there are middle grounds. They also suggest that reproduction theories have limitations when applied to contexts affected by conflict and social change, where there are complex political and social factors at play, as well as in the current context of the massification of higher education in developing and emerging economies, where the definitions of 'an elite' are not so easily described. The issue of access is particularly pertinent to low-income and conflict-affected countries, and there is growing evidence that inequality in access and participation in higher education can be a significant factor in conflict causation (Buckland, 2005; Stewart, 2005).

From these social theories and typologies, other systems, which specifically categorise the functions of universities, have arisen which are also linked to concepts of social justice. One of the most widely applied is Castells' 'dynamic system of contradictory functions', according four main functions to a university, which he argues is broadly applicable in all societies:

- *As an ideological apparatus in the generation and transmission of ideology*
- *The selection, formation and socialisation of dominant elites*
- *The production and application of knowledge, and*
- *Training the skilled labour force* (Castells, 2009)

Each university tries to simultaneously combine these four, sometimes contradictory, functions within their specific contexts (Castells, 2009). These functions can have important relational associations in specific contexts of social and political transformation and development agendas.

The role of universities in societal transformation has been studied. Brennan, King and Lebeau (2004) suggest that in times of radical social and political change, characteristic of many post-conflict states, including Myanmar, universities have a significant role in society, not only in training a highly skilled workforce and conducting research necessary for economic growth, but in "helping to build new institutions in civil society, in encouraging and facilitating new cultural values and in training and socializing members of new social elites" (Brennan, King and Lebeau, 2004, p.7). Their report, being one of very few specifically related to conflict environments, is useful to expand on here.

The authors examine societal change through four dimensions: economic, political, social and cultural transformation. The results, drawn from the work of 25 researchers in 15 transitional countries, describe a complex and sometimes contradictory role of universities in societal transformation, summarised below.

The evidence for universities driving economic transformation in these contexts is weak, although longer term impact may be important, which they were not able to measure. In terms of political transformation, HEIs could be seen to exhibit 'two faces' (see Bush and Salterelli, 2000); some case studies showed that HEIs supported the 'old' regime, while in others, they played an important role in providing space for critical debate and contribution to change. There were many instances of politically transformative actions, including political activism, resistance to military regimes and implementing curricula associated with peace and conflict studies. A similar dual and contradictory role was seen in the social dimension: HEIs were just as likely to support social reproduction as they were to social transformation. Finally, HEIs were seen to have had a significant role in cultural transformation, acting as repositories for, and protectors of, cultural knowledge and assets, and enabling the flow of ideas and knowledge from outside into what had been a comparatively closed society. Significantly, the authors noted the lack of research on the role of HEIs in countries affected by conflict, and where it existed, tended to focus on the normative, that is, what the university should or could be doing, but little about their reality and what it is they actually do (Brennan, King and Lebeau, 2004).

2.2   Higher education and development

In recent years, the positive impact and potential role of higher education on social and economic development in low-income countries and in conflict-affected contexts has gained increasing interest (Brennan and Naidoo, 2008; Oketch, McCowan and Schendel, 2014). As we have seen, growing evidence suggests that universities in these contexts serve important functions, not only in producing essential highly skilled people needed for sustainable development, but also in contributing significantly towards wider social agendas, including democratisation, social cohesion, gender equality and poverty reduction (Brennan and Naidoo, 2008; Tierney, 2011; Oketch, McCowan and Schendel, 2014).

Furthermore, with the emergence of the knowledge economy and the economic importance of knowledge creation and innovation, it is widely acknowledged that a high quality higher education system is essential for developing countries to move from the periphery of the global economy towards a more equal terrain in which they can more effectively compete and benefit (World Bank, 2003; Naidoo, 2007; Altbach, Reisberg and Rumbley, 2009; Castells, 2009).

A recent rigorous review of the literature showed that the impact of tertiary education on development has been underestimated, not only in economic returns, but also on broader benefits to individuals and society (Oketch, McCowan and Schendel, 2014). The report found that tertiary education has positive impact in developing countries on health, nutrition, gender equality, democratisation and the environment. However, the review also identified a critical lack of research on the impact of tertiary education on development, and that past research on the economic benefit of tertiary education has far outweighed research that addresses broader, longer term development goals, which has resulted in gaps in the evidence base in how HE contributes to sustainable development (Ibid., 2014).

Conceptualisations of higher education and development

As development theory has evolved over time, so has the conceptualisation of HE within the development discourse. After World War II, HE was considered a central pillar of development (World Bank, 2000; Pieterse, 2010). At that time, modernisation theory dominated development approaches and was conceived as a linear development process from 'traditional' to 'advanced' societies (Pieterse, 2010). Within this model, the notion of an advanced society was based upon a Western conception, characterised as organised, complex and technological (Rostow, 1960). HE, and its production of a highly skilled workforce, was viewed as essential to the process of development (Coleman, 1986).

Further emphasis on HE came with decolonisation, as many newly independent countries, including Myanmar, embarked on the project of national development and state-building (Cloete, Maassen and Bailey, 2015). However, as Veltmeyer has argued, and Novelli has explored through the lens of education development aid, the imaginary of international development after World War II contained within it conflicting ideas of Western-led emancipatory ideals modelled on Western priorities and interests, while at the same time purposefully setting out to reinforce the status quo of global inequality and Western dominance (Veltmeyer 2005; Novelli 2016). This notion, conceptualised as dependency theory (Gunder Frank, 1992) with roots in neo-Marxist ideas, was seen as a form of neo-colonialism (Cardoso, 1977; Pieterse, 2010) and has been used to describe a framework of inequitable power relations between nations (Collins and Rhoads, 2009). As I discuss later in this chapter, dependency theory has been studied in the context of HE internationalisation and the privileging of Western knowledge structures (Selvaratnam, 1988; Mazrui, 1992; O'Connell 2016; de Sousa Santos 2014).

The eclipse of higher education in development

Attitudes towards higher education and development shifted in the 1990s with the rise of human capital theory. Human capital theory holds that investment in education drives economic growth (Schultz, 1961; Becker, 1964), an economic model adopted by multilateral development agencies, notably the World Bank (Klees, 2002), and which spurred the use of return-on-investment analyses to measure the potential effectiveness of education aid. In an oft-cited World Bank report, estimates of the social rate of return, defined as the increase in national income as a result of each additional year of education, was calculated to be, on average, 13% lower for higher education than basic education (Psacharopoulos, Tan and Jimenez, 1986). Low-income countries were told that they would reap a greater return on their limited funding if they focussed on basic education (Psacharopoulos and Patrinos, 2004; World Bank, 2000) and international aid investments were redirected accordingly (Oketch, 2016). Universities were seen as expensive, catering to elites and having little relevance to the social and economic development of their nations (World Bank, 2000; Oketch, McCowan and Schendel, 2014).

The following decade saw the continuing marginalisation of higher education in mainstream development agendas. Structural adjustment policies, started in the early 1980s and promoted by the World Bank and the IMF, exacerbated the decline of higher education (Lebeau, 2008; Robertson, 2009). This led to a further stagnation in state/public-funded HE and a move away

from the developmental role of universities as a public good, towards the marketisation and privatisation of HE, re-conceived as a private good (Brennan, King and Lebeau, 2004; Lebeau, 2008; Oketch, McCowan and Schendel, 2014).

The resulting neglect of higher education in development agendas led to the chronic underfunding of the HE sector and the rapid deterioration of universities in many developing countries (World Bank, 2000; Bloom, Canning and Chan, 2006). It also left critical skills and knowledge gaps in development assistance, noted by Buckland in post-conflict recovery contexts, with the result that "[HE] system recovery has in some instances been out of balance in ways that will directly affect economic and social development in the longer term" (Buckland, 2005, pp.63-64).

The deprioritisation of HE in development occurred at the same time as the rise in the importance of peacebuilding, which may explain its absence in peacebuilding agendas, which I discuss later in this chapter.

Higher education and the SGDs: promise and limitations

In the 2000s, the switch to knowledge economy considerations revived interest in higher education in development and poverty alleviation strategies. Recognition of the importance of knowledge creation, innovation and research to economic growth placed higher education centrally in many governments' prosperity agendas (Bloom, Canning and Chan, 2006; Cloete *et al.*, 2011; Altbach, 2013).

The publication in 2000 of the World Bank's influential report 'Higher education in developing countries: peril and promise' marked a turning point in re-situating post-secondary education within the development discourse (World Bank, 2000). The report de-emphasised rate of return analyses and argued instead for the central position of higher education as both a private and public good, claiming that "higher education is no longer a luxury: it is essential to national social and economic development" (World Bank, 2000, p.14). While the report was important in starting to change donor attitudes towards HE and development, the response from the development community was, and has remained, slow. In a recent study of HE development aid, Feuer, Hornidge and Schetter found that:

> "…many donors to post-conflict countries continue to prioritize only primary and secondary education, despite research suggesting that important passive benefits of higher education highlighted in the Bologna Declaration, such as peace-building and political stability, are reinforced through tertiary education" (Feuer, Hornidge and Schetter, 2013, p.2).

In the discussions leading towards the post-2015 development agendas, the role of HE resurfaced, resulting in its inclusion in the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development. HE is specifically mentioned in two of the ten targets in Goal 4 of the SDGs: Quality Education.

Goal 4.3:	By 2030, ensure equal access for all women and men to affordable and quality technical, vocational and tertiary education, including university
Goal 4b:	By 2020, substantially expand globally the number of scholarships available to developing countries, in particular least developed countries, small island developing States and African countries, for enrolment in higher education, including vocational training and information and communications technology, technical, engineering and scientific programmes, in developed countries and other developing countries

Figure 2: Sustainable Development Goal 4: targets for HE (Source: UN, 2016)

The marginal appearance of HE in the SDGs has been criticised as limited and confining (Boni, Lopez-Fogues and Walker, 2016; Salmi, 2017b; Selenica, 2018). The emphasis on international scholarships has been particularly contested as a restrictive and regressive form of aid (UNESCO, 2016; Selenica, 2018). Salmi argues that "it is doubtful that any low-income country can achieve the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) without a strong tertiary education system" (Salmi, 2017a, p.1) and that HE is, while not mentioned explicitly in this context, a cross-cutting necessity underpinning all 17 SDGs (UNESCO, 2016; Owens, 2017; Selenica, 2018) from climate change (Goal 13) to decent work and economic growth (Goal 8); and from peace, justice and strong institutions (Goal 16) to reducing inequalities (Goal 10). The weak and unfocussed presence of HE across the SDGs means that the importance of higher education in providing knowledge and research, advanced training and its impact on societal structures and transformation remains unacknowledged, and therefore neglected by the development community (Salmi, 2017b). It has been suggested that this exclusion results from the continued, purposeful distancing of HE as a public good, a concept which does not sit well with the prevailing neoliberal notion of HE as a private good, the rapid expansion of the private HE sector in low-income countries, and its positioning as a tradeable service in a globalised HE sector driven by market demand (Bengtsson and Barakat, 2017; Selenica, 2018).

A further concern raised by scholars on the role of HE in the SDGs is the emphasis on technical and scientific subjects to the omission of the social sciences and humanities (Boni, Lopez-Fogues and Walker, 2016). The imbalance between technical and humanities-based disciplines in development has been noted in several studies (O'Brien, St. Claire, Asuncion and Kristoffersen, 2010; Nussbaum, 2011). A British Council commissioned study found that knowledge in a range of humanities disciplines and the skills developed through a humanities-based education were vital in even the most highly technical development projects (British Council, 2014).

The persistent narrow view of HE by development agencies and donors, therefore, continues to constrain its role in development in fundamental ways, not only to within technical and scientific knowledge and skills domains, but also theoretically, viewed as it is through an economic lens based on market-responsive human capital theory. In both cases, HE is distanced from social justice considerations and political, class-driven and cultural inequalities (Robertson, 2016). The near absence of HE in the development discourse in Myanmar provides a further example of this continued marginalisation.

I now turn my attention to the role of HE in conflict and peacebuilding, providing an overview of the literature, examining the ways in which HE can become caught up in conflict and their roles in building long term peace, laying the groundwork for understanding the Myanmar HE context, described in Chapter 4. I identify key contextual considerations for international collaboration and potential areas to contribute towards social justice, which I draw on in the development of my analytical framework for international collaboration in Myanmar in Chapter 3.

2.3   Higher education, conflict and peacebuilding

HEIs are impacted by conflict (Buckland, 2005; UNESCO, 2011b; GCPEA, 2014; Novelli and Selenica, 2014). In many countries affected by conflict or under authoritarian regimes, students, teachers, academics, officials and people associated with education institutions suffer violence and oppression (UNESCO, 2011b). While there is growing awareness of how schools are affected by conflict, until recently, little has been documented about the impact of conflict on HE, or on HE's role in the causation of conflict. The surprising paucity of published information or research on Myanmar's HEIs in this regard is a case in point.

Definition of conflict

In this study I adopt a broad definition, which includes violent conflict, but also encompasses forms of intellectual and cultural violence. Thus, the definition used by the World Health Organisation and adopted by the Violence Prevention Alliance is used:

> "The intentional use of physical force or power, threatened or actual, against oneself, another person, or against a group or community, that either results in or has a high likelihood of resulting in injury, death, psychological harm, maldevelopment, or deprivation." (Krug *et al.*, 2002)*.*

The inclusion of power in this definition incorporates violent acts and conflict-affected relations between state, individuals and other authorities, and more accurately takes into account the socio-political position of HEIs as institutions located not only within the architecture and hierarchy of an authoritarian state, but also in contestation of it through a social justice role, as Myanmar HEIs have been throughout much of their history.

Attacks on higher education

Attacks on education are prevalent (UNESCO, 2011b; GCPEA, 2014). It has been known for some time that the HE sector is greatly affected by conflict, experiences faster deterioration during conflict, compared to basic education, and takes longer to recover (Buckland, 2005). Buckland notes that "while enrolment rates in primary schooling normally decline as a result of conflict, enrolment in secondary and tertiary levels tend to collapse" (Ibid., 2005, p.18). He attributes this to three main reasons: firstly, students at this age may be conscripted into military service; secondly, at tertiary level, students may become involved in political struggles and HEIs are therefore targeted by authorities, and thirdly, that secondary and tertiary institutions are more expensive to run and unlikely to be supported by communities when government funding is withdrawn (Ibid., 2005).

The UNESCO report 'Education under attack' (2014) documented known attacks on education that occurred from 2009–13. Of the 30 countries examined, 28, including Myanmar, experienced attacks on universities, students, academics and other university employees, which included killings, abduction, torture, arrest and intimidation (GCPEA, 2014). The report stated that the motivations for attacks on universities were, in many cases, quite different from those on schools:

> "Many attacks on higher education were connected to a government's desire to prevent the growth of opposition movements, restrict political debate or criticism of policies, and prevent alternative points of view from being expressed or gaining

support. Others related to government authorities' wish to restrict education trade union activity, silence student protests, prevent certain subjects being researched by academics (ranging from human rights issues to concerns about HIV/AIDS) or limit the influence of, or exposure to, foreign ideas." (GCPEA, 2014, p.58)

This encapsulates the experience of Myanmar's universities of violence perpetrated by a succession of military juntas against them, which I describe in more detail in Chapter 4.

There is a significant research gap on HE and conflict. Compared to other education sectors, there is a worrying lack of information or research on attacks on higher education, the long-term effects of such attacks and the responses of universities (GCPEA, 2014). A study on the impact of the Iraq war on universities stated that attacks on higher education tended to be overlooked by international agencies (De Cauter *et al.*, 2012). Novelli and Selenica also find that little attention has been paid to protecting HE from attack and argue that this is a "serious omission on the part of the international community" (Novelli and Selenica, 2014, p.99).

There is a small body of literature on past wars and conflict zones related to the impacts on higher education, which report extensive damage to infrastructure and a chronic depletion of human capacity within universities. In one study on Afghanistan, universities were described as "devastated" after decades of war (UNESCO, 2002, p.19). Another study reported that across HEIs in Afghanistan, less than 6% had doctorates, over 50% were educated only up to Bachelor's level and only 12% were female (Tierney, 2005)[1]. Reports emerging from Syria paint an increasingly desperate situation, one stating the murder of 53 academics and extensive destruction of HE facilities (Zaatari, 2013).

Consequences of the use of universities and schools by military forces not only include depletion of human and physical capacity, but also have significant negative impact on student access and teaching conditions, including lower enrolment rates and transition into higher education, higher dropout rates, overcrowding and reduced instruction time (GCPEA, 2015). The post-conflict reconstruction phase is also reported to be negatively affected, where the lack of staff, the low levels of training and development opportunities, and low salaries can be obstacles in rebuilding a functioning HE system (IIEP, 2010).

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[1] During my work with the Ministry of Higher Education in Afghanistan in 2007-11, I learned from Ministry officials that this situation had worsened even further by 2011, with only 4.8% of faculty holding PhDs, which they attributed to brain drain.

University facilities, sometimes with the cooperation of HEI staff, sometimes by force, have been used to support conflict. There are various studies outlining how knowledge located in HEIs and the capacity of universities to conduct research has been utilised to support the war effort. Instances include chemistry and physics departments in Germany producing chemicals for use in warfare during WW1 (Fitzgerald, 2008), and HE in the USA used for weapons development, design of propaganda and other functions supporting war (Gruber, 1975). Military forces have used HEIs as "barracks, logistic bases, operational headquarters, weapons and ammunition caches, detention and interrogation centers, firing and observation positions, and recruitment grounds" (GCPEA, 2015, pp.6-7).

The role of HE as ideological apparatuses in conflicts

As described previously, HEIs can be seen as performing a function of ideological formation and struggle in societies (Brennan, King and Lebeau, 2004; Castells, 2009; Hall, 2012). Academics and students can contest or challenge the status quo or established orthodoxy through their opinions and ideas which may not be welcomed by ruling authorities; students, through their expression of social critique, manifest this through protest and have often been instrumental in the toppling of regimes, including in Myanmar. This function has also been associated with conflict causation; numerous cases exist of staff and students of HEIs acting as agents of conflict aggravation, as well as being victims of ideological violence (Altbach, 2008; Kapur and Crowley, 2008; Sabic-El-Rayess, 2009).

There is evidence that shows HEIs, students and faculty have been caught up in ethnic ideological movements and struggles, in some cases as victims in ethnic and identity conflicts, but in other cases, acting as 'ethnic entrepreneurs' "who exploit intercommunal distrust as a means of building political support in ethnically divided societies" (Paris, 2004, p.161). Research has shown that in some instances, HEIs have had roles in fomenting ethnic division and fuelling conflict (Lebeau, 2008). Cases where faculty have mobilised and divided students along ethnic grounds have been documented in several countries, including Rwanda (Walker-Keleher, 2006), Burundi (Buckland, 2005) and Serbia (Sabic-El-Rayess, 2009). Ethnic entrepreneurism, which has been identified as a growing cause of conflict (Duffield, 2001), has also been used by political and military parties to attack universities (Buckland, 2005; GCPEA, 2014).

Ethnic discrimination and educational inequalities related to access to HE, features present in Myanmar, have also been cited as causes of conflict and a source of student grievance (Thyne, 2006; Dupuy, 2008). Documented examples include Sri Lanka (Stewart, 2005) and Rwanda

(McLean Hilker, 2011). Unequal access to education along ethnic lines was seen to be a critical factor in the outbreak of civil war in Burundi; Buckland notes that "disparity at the tertiary level was a particular source of resentment" (Buckland, 2005, p.10). Here, there are connections with aspects of the theorisation of conflict causation in terms of greed or grievance (Collier and Hoeffler, 2004).

Studies have shown that key areas associated with conflict in education relate to curricula and textbooks, including languages and the medium of instruction, curriculum bias and distortion, and standardised, stereotyped content depicting cultural identities (Bush and Salterelli, 2000; Davies, 2004). These issues have been documented in Myanmar (Maber, 2019, p.59). While there are several studies on school curriculum and textbooks and their relation, positive and negative, to conflict, there appears to be less research on HE curriculum change in fuelling or reducing conflict. The literature on curriculum and HE has tended to focus on the post-conflict phase, particularly with respect to peace studies, conflict resolution and a limited amount on citizenship (Quaynor, 2012).

Links between conflict and educational attainment

There have been various studies on the relation between educational attainment and the onset of conflict. Several suggest that there is a reduced risk of violent conflict in countries with higher levels of education (Barakat and Urdal, 2009; Collier, 2000). However, other studies indicate there is not a simple causal relationship between higher levels of educational attainment and low incidence of conflict, but is dependent on specific socio-economic contexts. In some situations, it is argued that higher education levels signal an increased risk of political conflict, civil disobedience and unrest (Thyne, 2006; Barakat and Urdal, 2009) particularly where there is a lack of employment prospects for graduates (World Bank, 2000; Urdal, 2012). Certainly in Myanmar, it was the educated elite from within the universities that led the country's largest national protest movements and pro-democracy demonstrations.

On a final point, studies on links between education and terrorism also reveal a non-linear, complex relationship. While it is held that in societies with large numbers of young men with low education attainment living in poverty, recruitment to violent political causes is higher (Azam and Thelen, 2008) there appears to be little evidence that indicates higher education attainment reduces a person's involvement in terrorism. In fact, some studies show a positive correlation between individuals attending higher education, particularly in technology and engineering courses, and their engagement in transnational terrorist activities (Benmelech and Berrebi, 2007; Gambetta and Hertog, 2007).

Implications for international interactions in higher education

The literature review on the relationship between conflict and higher education has implications for international HE collaboration in these contexts, the focus of this study. Four main points can be identified:

Firstly, the political economy in which HEIs are situated is likely to be complex, with ramifications beyond the institutional level; studies indicate that students, academics and the institutions themselves have complex associations with authority, perhaps with existing or residual, explicit or implicit, structures of control and influence. These experiences and connections may affect the shape, modality and power relationships between and beyond HEI partners. Hidden hierarchies of power may still operate during phases of transition, as is the case in Myanmar.

Secondly, HEIs located in conflict-affected societies may have significant roles in wider political and social justice domains related to present and past conflicts and grievances, particularly in access and inclusion of marginalised groups, and therefore may be used as a positive or negative force by the authorities, either for increasing equity or entrenching privilege and domination. The utilisation of HE for different political rationales, for example in national unity projects, ethnic assimilation or division, or for peacebuilding through access and inclusion, is confirmed by previous studies and is certainly present in Myanmar. International HE collaboration can be co-opted into these rationales and their foci, forms and models of collaboration, choice of partner, geographical asymmetries and absences, have the potential to impact social (in)justice.

Thirdly, the literature documents a chronic depletion of human and physical resources of HEIs during times of conflict. Regarding international collaboration, this may place considerable obstacles in the way of teaching and research capacity, and may, therefore, create significant asymmetries in the power, roles and activities of HEIs in North/South interactions.

Fourthly, the impact and roles of HEIs in contexts affected by conflict have been understudied and the literature is exceedingly sparse on the internationalisation of HEIs in these contexts. Protracted periods of isolation from the global HE community, however, will surely be an important factor in the ways that HEIs in these contexts, including Myanmar, engage with foreign HEIs and intersect with globalised higher education.

I provide an historical account of Myanmar's HEIs and how they have been caught up in conflict in Chapter 4, relating Myanmar's case to the findings of the literature review above. I

now turn my attention to examining the literature on the roles of HE in peacebuilding, a critical function in contributing to transformative social justice and long-term peace.

Higher education and peacebuilding

Peacebuilding is central to the main development aid agendas in Myanmar, a country with persisting, multi-dimensional conflicts related to ethnicity and religion, democracy and governance, and the control over valuable natural resources. Myanmar's National Education Strategic Plan (2016-21), in recognising the role of education in peacebuilding, states that "the government has identified education and poverty alleviation as two key drivers that support the democratic and peace-building process" (Myanmar Ministry of Education, 2016, p.32).

In order to explore the contribution of Myanmar HEIs to peacebuilding through their international collaborations, it is necessary to first consider the meanings and conceptual bases of peacebuilding and review the studies on how these relate to the roles of higher education in conflict-affected and divided societies.

What is peacebuilding?

Peacebuilding is a contested term. It is understood differently by actors with multiple roles and agendas across a wide variety of conflict-affected contexts, and includes different types of activity implemented at different phases along the pre-, mid- and post-conflict continuum (Novelli, Lopes Cardozo and Smith, 2015). The term peacebuilding first entered the mainstream of international development discourse in 1992 with the publication of the report 'An agenda for peace' by the UN Secretary General. In the report, peacebuilding was defined as:

> "an action to identify and support structures, which will tend to strengthen and solidify peace in order to avoid a relapse into conflict" (UN, 1992, p.5).

Peacebuilding interventions can encompass (or omit) activities or actions such as maintaining security, achieving post-conflict stabilisation, reconstruction of damaged infrastructure, systems or institutions, or enabling societal transformation, such as social cohesion and economic growth (Novelli and Smith, 2011; McCandless, 2011). Peacebuilding through education, including HE, can fall into several of these categories, but tend to be longer-term and transformational (Novelli, Lopes Cardozo and Smith, 2015).

The inclusion and integration of education-related interventions within peacebuilding has been studied. In their analysis of 520 articles on education programming in conflict-affected

countries, Novelli and Smith showed that most education projects in these contexts are not planned with peacebuilding in mind, implying a strategic deficit in the potential peacebuilding outcomes of education programmes (Novelli and Smith, 2011). This observation is reflected in the higher education sector, where an analysis by Feuer, Hornidge and Schetter (2016) indicates that although studies showed that aid flows to higher education started to increase in some countries affected by conflict, this was not followed by support from the international development community in assisting countries to leverage higher education towards peacebuilding goals, even in cases where this need had been articulated by local stakeholders. They concluded that "the progress that has been made in identifying ways to leverage higher education for peace-building has mostly been by transition countries facing the task of education reform on their own" (Feuer, Hornidge and Schetter, 2015, p.2). Milton argues that higher education remains a "neglected pillar of recovery" in post-war contexts (Milton, 2013, p.1).

Conceptual frameworks for peacebuilding

That higher education has played such a marginal role in peacebuilding is linked to the conceptual foundations of peacebuilding. The UN's approach to peacebuilding is based on what has become known as the liberal peace thesis, driven by notions of democracy, economic growth and interdependence between states, and founded upon a 'security first' approach (Paris, 2004; Novelli and Smith, 2011; Smith, 2011), which holds that security is an essential pre-condition for effective development. This approach, which has been widely critiqued, explains how the social services, including education, has been weakly positioned within the dominant peacebuilding agendas (Novelli, Lopes Cardozo and Smith, 2015).

The concept of liberal peace, which has its roots in the work of Immanuel Kant (1795), resurfaced and evolved as the dominant model for the post-Cold war world. Kant reasoned that democracy and interdependence between states make it less likely for states to engage in conflict as they have a common, shared destiny (Paris, 2004). Building liberal peace in the political sense involves activities such as holding free elections and respect for civil liberties, including freedom of speech. In the economic sense, liberalisation is built upon neoliberal principles: increasing marketisation, reducing government control of markets and enabling the market entry of the private sector (Paris, 2004; Pugh, 2012). It is on this understanding of the world that the dominant peacebuilding approaches, particularly those adopted by the UN, are based.

There are many critiques of the liberal peace thesis in the literature. A key criticism relates to its promotion of a neoliberal market economy in countries affected by conflict (Pugh, 2012, p.410). In education, this is illustrated by the emphasis on the privatisation of the sector, particularly in higher education. One of the main criticisms is that the causality of the theory – that the conditions of democracy, interdependence between states and economic liberalisation leads to long-term peace - has not been sufficiently proven (Paris, 2004, p.45). Furthermore, Paris suggests that attempting rapid liberal peace creates a destabilising effect in conflict-affected states. He suggests that peacebuilders consider the approach of "institutionalisation before liberalisation", enabling key institutions to function effectively before promoting marketisation and democratisation to minimise the risk of instability (and thereby a return to war) caused by the 'shock therapy' of imposing open political and economic competition, and that liberalisation should be a long-term incremental, gradual and carefully managed process (Paris, 2004, p7). This argument is particularly relevant to public universities as key social institutions, exposed as they are to the forces of global trade in HE, privatisation and market liberalisation.

Research into the long-term impact of peacebuilding interventions based on 'security first' linked to the liberal peace thesis has revealed limitations in this approach. Novelli and Smith argue that while the cessation of violence and the establishment of security is important, these conditions alone are not sufficient to bring about sustainable peace, but longer term, more transformational interventions, including those through education, are needed (Novelli and Smith, 2011). This approach is more aligned with the concepts and theories of Galtung and Lederach.

The term 'peacebuilding' was first introduced by Johan Galtung in 1975 in his essay 'Three approaches to peace: peace-making, peace-keeping and peacebuilding" (Galtung, 1975a). Galtung drew a distinction between negative peace (the absence, or cessation of violence) and positive peace (that which addresses social injustices through structural changes). 'Positive peace' requires a more transformative approach, which addresses the causes of conflict, and creates conditions for sustainable long-term peace, based on the principles of social justice. This is where education is seen to have a role (Novelli, Lopes Cardozo and Smith, 2015).

Galtung also argued that an understanding of 'conflict formation', defined as how geopolitics and the major centres of power create the conditions for conflict in the world, i.e. teaching the political setting for conflicts, is critical for peacebuilding to succeed (Galtung, 1975a). This view is supported by the work of Paulo Friere (Friere, 1993), and is useful in identifying

approaches and activities that could build, or sustain, peace, including roles for education. Lederach, who defined peacebuilding as "a comprehensive concept that encompasses, generates, and sustains the full array of processes, approaches, and stages needed to transform conflict toward more sustainable, peaceful relationships" (Lederach, 1997, p.35), proposed an important role in the peacebuilding process for intellectuals and academics in supporting post-conflict recovery through the re-establishment of social institutions and reconciliation among conflicting parties (Lederach, 1995, 1997).

The role of higher education in peacebuilding and post-conflict recovery

There is a paucity of research on the role of higher education in peacebuilding and post-conflict recovery (Feuer, Hornidge and Schetter, 2015; Johnson, 2013; Milton and Barakat, 2016), reflecting, unsurprisingly, a similar lack of studies on the broader area of the role of HE and development, as discussed previously. In the last decade, however, a few studies have emerged on the role of HE in peacebuilding in specific conflict-affected contexts.   Johnson (2013) describes the role of universities in Kenya after the 2007-08 conflict, drawing on Lederach's conflict analysis and peacebuilding framework to examine university activities in peacebuilding, which included providing psycho-social support, conflict resolution training, re-integration of student soldiers, and aid outreach to conflict-affected communities (Johnson, 2013). Similar activities were reported in a case study of Colombian universities (Pacheco and Johnson, 2014). Other studies focus on policies and reforms in HE in post-conflict contexts, including Rwanda after the genocide (Hayman, 2007), HE reforms during and after conflict in Sudan (Babyesiza, 2012) and restructuring the HE sector in Kosovo (den Boer and van der Borgh, 2011).   A synthesis of the literature on the role of education and higher education, both normative and actual, in development, peacebuilding and social justice in the context of conflict is summarised in Appendix 2, which I draw on to construct themes in my analytical framework for peacebuilding in the next chapter.

Milton and Barakat, in one of the few studies that provide a wider, comparative view of the role of HE in peacebuilding and reconstruction across different conflict-related contexts (see also Feuer, Hornidge and Schetter 2013; Tierney 2011) argue that the HE sector has complex, direct and indirect roles in exacerbating conflict or promoting peacebuilding, yet continues to be neglected by international development agencies and scholars (Milton and Barakat, 2016). The authors also note that the potential of HE to contribute to the development of knowledge economies in conflict-affected contexts and in aspects of justice is understudied (Ibid., 2016).

In synthesizing the widely scattered literature on higher education's role in peacebuilding, four broad contributions can be identified:

Firstly, HE has contributed towards conflict prevention and societal stabilisation. It is argued that delays in increasing the capacity and expansion of universities can lead to societal instability caused by frustrated and unemployed youth, who might be otherwise drawn into further violence or crime. Buckland argues that this also has deeper, systemic dangers: "In addition to its impact on security and social stability, this situation hampers economic development and, in the longer term, weakens the entire educational system" (Buckland, 2005, p.25). Universities have absorbed large numbers of young people after conflict, as part of demobilisation, demilitarisation and reintegration (DDR) strategies. Examples include the GI Bill in the USA, used for the re-integration of military personnel after World War II (Rose and Greeley, 2006). However, as noted in the last section, there is also evidence to suggest that if jobs are not available for graduates, increased HE access can pose a further risk of social instability (Ibid., 2006).

Secondly, HE has supported reconciliation and conflict resolution. Universities have developed curricula and activities designed to support reconciliation, social cohesion and tolerance through several mechanisms and services. These include peace studies courses in a range of conflict and post-conflict countries, for example in Nigeria, Sri Lanka, Colombia and South Africa (Brennan, King and Lebeau, 2004; Lebeau, 2008; Omeje, 2015).

Thirdly, HE has a role in developing citizenship in post-conflict societies. There is a recognition by both policy makers and scholars that education plays an important part in enabling youth to recognise challenges and problems in their society and to contribute to solving these, and that citizenship education is vital in reconstruction after conflict (Davies, 2004). There are more examples of peace education activities in higher education than those connected with citizenship, where there appears to be little research specifically related to higher education. Quaynor, in her review of citizenship education in post-conflict societies, finds that while extensive research has been conducted on citizenship education internationally, this is not the case in conflict-affected contexts, despite the vital importance in these contexts of promoting democracy, social cohesion and future social justice (Quaynor, 2012).

Fourthly, McCandless (2011) finds that higher education makes a significant contribution to peacebuilding by playing a vital role in administration and social services provision in addressing the critical shortage of highly skilled human capital in post-conflict countries.

There are evidently gaps in the literature on the role of higher education in post conflict recovery. As noted by Brennan, King and Lebeau (2004), "Much of the recent literature on the roles of universities in processes of transformation and modernisation has tended to be normative: focusing on what universities ought to be doing and what is planned for them to be doing" (Ibid., p.7). There is little research about what universities are actually doing.

Summary and implications for international HE collaboration in peacebuilding

A complex picture is emerging on the relationship of higher education to conflict, reflecting the 'two faces' of higher education. Universities can support or aggravate conflict through promotion of divisive ideologies, surfacing ethnic difference, causing grievance through unfair admissions policies and through the use of their research and knowledge for war. There is much less evidence on how universities have contributed to peacebuilding, but a synthesis of the literature identifies activities relating to conflict resolution and reconciliation, providing much needed highly skilled human capital for post-conflict recovery and delivery of social services, and developing citizens as independent and critical thinkers with skills and capabilities which enable them to play a role towards positive peace in society.

In countries affected by conflict, the dominant development model based on the liberal peace thesis raises two main issues of concern regarding the role of HE in peacebuilding. Firstly, the security-first approach ignores the functions of education, including HE, in peacebuilding during the conflict phase. In Myanmar, with ongoing conflicts, this approach marginalises the contribution HE may make and ignores the harms that it may be supporting. Secondly, in prioritising market liberalisation and the privatisation of key institutions, HEIs (nearly all of which belong to the public sector in Myanmar) may be at risk of further destabilisation and worsening conditions, unable to deal with rapidly imposed competition under global rules. As I discuss in the section on the global commodification of HE, this may distance Myanmar HE from its public good functions and diminish the ability of HEs to respond to wider society needs through peacebuilding.

These issues offer both opportunities and obstacles for international collaboration with Myanmar HEIs. The weak positioning of HEIs within peacebuilding agendas in international development excludes HEIs from peacebuilding strategies and, importantly, the associated funding to enable them to engage in this area. Furthermore, a focus on the privatisation of HE, which is still at a very early stage in Myanmar, but embedded in the ideology of the liberal peace thesis, could privilege profit-seeking internationalisation of HE, through market-driven

transnational education (TNE) arrangements, for example, which I discuss further later in this chapter.

In conflict-affected contexts, peacebuilding is an important contributor towards social justice, and education is "inherently connected to and embedded within processes of social justice and societal transformation" (Novelli, Lopes Cardozo and Smith, 2015, p.10). In the next section, I examine the main conceptualisations, discourses, research and issues related to the role of HE in social justice, from which I will be able to address my research questions on the ways that international partnerships contribute towards social justice in Myanmar.

2.4   Social justice and higher education

The role of HEIs in social justice, associated with notions of human rights, social inclusion and equity, is complex (Marginson, 2011; Singh, 2011; Zajda, Majhanovich and Rust, 2014). A useful place to start an analysis of this relationship is to review the dominant concepts of social justice and if, and how, HE has agency within them. In providing this review, I recognise that the literature on social justice is complex and wide-ranging, spanning interconnected disciplines, including philosophy, politics and law, and encompassing a considerable breadth of scholastic work. This study does not attempt to engage with this breadth, nor provide a comprehensive discussion of the multiple facets and philosophical discourses in the field of social justice, but will confine itself to the key discourses, debates and issues that have been specifically applied to higher education.

Firstly, it has been noted that social justice in relation to higher education is a concept that has not been clearly defined, and that very few social justice researchers locate their work within the study of higher education (Brennan and Naidoo, 2008; Patton, Shahjahan and Osei-Kofi, 2010):

> "While there is an extensive research literature on social justice and equity in the social sciences, in general this is not fully engaged with by higher education researchers. For their part, social scientists have tended not to give much attention to universities and other higher education establishments in their investigations of equity and social justice" (Brennan and Naidoo, 2008, p.298).

A global understanding of social justice is most often linked to the Universal Declaration of Human Rights (1948) (Zajda, Majhanovich and Rust, 2014). However, the definition of social justice is highly contested and there are significant differences in how social justice is conceptualised (Singh, 2011; McArthur, 2011; Zajda, Majhanovich and Rust, 2014).

Singh locates social justice in relation to the political and cultural economy, arguing that "the idea of social justice has its roots in theological, political, philosophical, ethical and jurisprudential conceptions about the nature of a fair and just society" (Singh, 2011, p.482), emphasising the importance of contextuality. This has particular resonance in contexts such as Myanmar, affected by conflict all along the peacebuilding continuum, where the political, religious, ethical, and cultural conceptions of what constitutes a fair and just society can be particularly strongly contested and tangled in issues relating to identity, conflict causation and past inequalities.

Concepts of social justice

Among a rich body of scholarly work on social justice, the literature presents three main conceptual foundations for analysis of social justice in relation to education, based on the work of John Rawls, Amartya Sen's capabilities approach, developed further by Martha Nussbaum and Melanie Walker, and the work of Nancy Fraser.

The notion of social justice has been associated with the thinking of John Rawls in his 'Theory of Social Justice' (1971). He relates the meaning of justice to 'fairness', arguing broadly that justice to the individual is inviolable, and cannot be subordinated to the common good (Rawls, 1971). Rawls adopts a social contract-based, utopian approach to justice, proposing that by establishing the foundations, processes and conditions for social justice, a just society will emerge (Marginson, 2011; McArthur, 2011; Zajda, Majhanovich and Rust, 2014). This notion underpins the World Bank's approach to higher education, which has been criticised for its "minimalist approach to social justice" (Lebeau, Ridley and Lane, 2011, p.446), which, it is argued, does not adequately address human rights issues related to cultural, economic and social contexts (Ibid., 2011). Marginson, relating Rawl's concept to the role of HE, describes this notion of social justice as 'negative justice', based as it is on the apparatus (procedures and processes) around justice, rather than the agency of people to achieve justice (Marginson, 2011).

Sen categorises a second tradition in approach to social justice as 'realisation-focussed comparison', which is concerned with comparing relative social justice and injustices in different societies and contexts, rather than a contractarian approach described by thinkers such as Rawls (Sen, 2009). This approach attempts to arrive at a more just society by identifying through "comparisons of societies that already existed, or could feasibly emerge, rather than confining their analyses to transcendental searches for a perfectly just society" (Sen, 2009, p.7). His is a more realist stance, which recognises the role of human agency,

interests and capabilities. With reference to higher education, Sen advocates an engaged approach to improving social justice: "We have to seek institutions that promote justice, rather than treating the institutions as themselves manifestations of justice" (Sen, 2009, p.82). His ideas posit social justice in the domain of the university.

Sen developed the notion of social justice based on capabilities in the 1980s and '90s, an approach founded on an individual's capability to function, that is, what a person can do and can be, to lead a life that s/he values (Sen, 1999). He viewed access to education as an important social good which provides opportunities for individuals to achieve this life aim (Hall, 2012). His capabilities approach was the basis for Martha Nussbaum's influential work in social justice, in which she conceived of ten core capabilities: the right to a life of 'normal' length; good health and shelter; bodily integrity, being able to use the senses, imagination and thought; the right to emotions; the opportunity to exercise practical reason; the right of affiliation with others; concern for other species; the right to play and laughter, and control over one's environment (Nussbaum, 2011).

There has been a range of scholastic work linking the capabilities approach to education (see Walker, 2003; Unterhalter, 2009; Tikly and Barrett, 2011; Keddie, 2012; Wilson-Strydom, 2012, 2014; Walker & Unterhalter, 2007; Gewirtz, 1998). In higher education, the work of Melanie Walker in developing Nussbaum and Sen's theories on justice and capability and linking these to agency (Walker, 2003, 2010), has been prominent, broadening and deepening the debate in higher education of social justice and inequalities, not only in widening access to HE, but also considering aspirations and social conditioning through which choices are made. In another study on social justice in HE, Wilsom-Strydom applies the capabilities theory as a device for an analysis of access to HE, an approach which foregrounds the agency of people to convert opportunities and choice to achievements or 'functionings' (Sen, 1999; Wilson-Strydom, 2014).

The work of Nancy Fraser on social justice has been applied to education (Tikly and Barrett, 2011; Keddie, 2012b, 2012a; Novelli, Lopes Cardozo and Smith, 2015). Fraser theorises social justice as a complex concept based on the principle of 'parity of participation' in the three distinct, but interrelated, dimensions of the economic, cultural and political. She reasons that participatory justice is only achievable with the dismantling of structural and institutional barriers that prevent people from being full and equal partners in society (Fraser, 2007). Economic justice, or redistribution, is achieved through the absence of inequalities related to the maldistribution of resources and related societal goods, including money and assets, education, health and employment. Cultural justice, or recognition, requires the absence of

cultural or status inequality between social groups; and political, or representational, justice relates to governance and decision-making and requires the absence of structures and processes that render particular social groups voiceless or misrepresents them (Fraser, 2007).

Fraser's work has been used by Novelli, Cardoso and Smith (2015) to develop a framework to analyse the contribution of basic education to peacebuilding in countries affected by conflict , and has been applied to the role of teachers in peacebuilding (Sayed and Novelli, 2016). Building on this work, I discuss and analyse Fraser's conceptual framework for social justice as it applies to higher education in more depth in Chapter 3.

A further aspect of social justice particularly relevant to higher education lies in the work of Power and Gerwirtz, who introduce another form of justice: associational justice, which they define as:

> "the absence of patterns of association amongst individuals and amongst groups which prevents some people from participating fully in decisions which affect the conditions in which they live and act" (Power and Gewirtz: 2001:41 cited in Cribb and Gerwirtz, 2003).

They argue that while associational justice is important as an end in itself, it is also a powerful means to achieve economic and cultural justice. Given the structured social selection inherent in most higher education systems (see Lebeau, 2008; Brennan, Durazzi and Sene, 2013), the role of universities that enable individuals to build political, social and cultural relationships and networks, depending on the type of university and the individual, is important to take into account. These associations can either lead to equal opportunities and agency in society, or further entrench existing inequalities and monopolisation of power. Politics is one domain where this is evident. In the UK, for instance, in 2014, 59% of the government cabinet were found to have associations with each other through attending the universities of Oxford and Cambridge (Ridley, 2014; Social Mobility & Child Poverty Child Commission, 2014). Associational justice could also be applied at institution level to international networks of HEIs, affecting the power balances between those HEIs that are embedded within these associations and those on the periphery, a situation that may be present in many North-South HE partnerships, including those between UK and Myanmar HEIs.

Key issues and debates in higher education and social justice

Most studies in the area of HE and social justice have been framed within the two main opposing concepts of the role of universities in social structure, as described earlier in this chapter, namely elite reproduction, which perpetuates or secures the dominance of elites in

society, therefore promoting social injustice, and the liberal (re-allocative) theory, which views HE as a force for progressive social change through social mobility, based on increased access, inclusion and meritocracy (Brennan and Naidoo, 2008; Hall, 2012; Singh, 2010). Most of the literature has tended to focus on expanding access and widening participation, linked to Fraser's redistributive justice, and the extent to which this provides fair access and opportunities for people from poor and marginalised groups in society (Morley, Leach and Lugg, 2009; Marginson, 2011; Singh, 2011).

It has been argued that the evolution of HE from an elite into a mass system in many countries has resulted in several advances in social justice. These include improved opportunities for social mobility, increased income levels, improved access and inclusion of women and other previously disenfranchised groups, even though inequalities continue to exist (Altbach, 2000). However, other research suggests that the expansion of HE does not necessarily reduce inequalities nor improve social justice in HE (Morley, Leach and Lugg, 2009; Yao, Wu and Su, 2008; Salmi, 2018). Available data show that participation in higher education continues to be unequal and is related to social background. A study commissioned by UNESCO involving 76 mainly low-income countries showed that only 1% of 25-29 year olds from the lowest economic group had completed four years of HE study, compared to 20% of the wealthiest (UNESCO, 2016 cited in Salmi, 2018) . Morley, Leach and Lugg (2009) in their study on HE enrolment in Ghana and Tanzania found that "enrolment in higher education is rising—but participation rates from a range of social groups are not necessarily increasing" (Morley, Leach and Lugg, 2009, p.62). The authors relate this to a wide range of persisting social inequalities, including privileged access to schools from which most university entrants are drawn. This supports the work of scholars, including Delanty and Singh, who argue that higher education cannot achieve equality simply through expansion of numbers driven by market forces and managerial approaches (Delanty, 2003; Singh, 2011). The capabilities approach is also important in participation equity, particularly with first generation university students, in which empowerment to participate fully requires building the confidence, aspirations and educational capabilities of students (Marginson, 2011).

Other studies have focussed on the broader impacts of higher education in contributing to social justice in wider society, or what has been termed the 'export' role of higher education in social justice (Brennan, King and Lebeau, 2004; Calhoun, 2006). However, as the previous discussion on the contribution of higher education to development agendas concluded, while there are clear indications that higher education has an impact on economic growth, there is

much less empirical evidence of the benefit of HE to wider society (Brennan and Naidoo, 2008).

At the policy level, the evidence shows a lack of practical measures to address equity imbalances across social groups. Salmi (2018) found in his study across 71 countries that while equity in HE is stated as a priority by many governments, only 11% had formulated a comprehensive equity strategy at policy level. Furthermore, Singh, reflecting on the discourse of policy in higher education in developed and developing countries, found that neoliberal-driven reforms in HE are emphasising economic social justice functions and eliding wider social equity issues:

> "… in the higher education policy world, social justice considerations, especially inclusion strategies, have been incorporated into frameworks which strongly emphasize economic growth, human capital development and competitiveness imperatives, often over many other social goals relating to rights-based claims to fair access, public good aspirations, etc." (Singh, 2011, p.491).

These studies indicate that some national level policies are limiting HE in its broader contribution to social justice.

Ideas about the wider social benefits of HE related to access to knowledge are important to include here. Calhoun, for instance, argues that HE contributes to the wider public good in the form of knowledge, particularly, in social justice terms, public (open) knowledge, enabling access to 'authoritative knowledge' (Calhoun, 2006). This may have particular relevance in contexts such as Myanmar, where access to information and ideas have been restricted through isolationism. I discuss the issue of knowledge equity in a global frame in more detail in the next section on internationalisation.

Summary and implications for the study

While HE is claimed to have important roles in social justice, the links between them are understudied. I highlight three key points from the review. Firstly, studies emphasise that issues of HE related to social (in)justice are contextually driven and complex, influenced by a range of factors encompassing cultural, ethical, political, religious, historical and other societal concepts and beliefs, and, as discussed earlier, there are additional complexities in conflict-affected contexts. This contextual complexity and multi-dimensionality is an important consideration in the conceptual framework and research design of this study.

Secondly, different conceptual stances in social justice have been utilised to analyse HE, prioritising various perspectives and dimensions, ranging from human capabilities and agency

(Sen), structural and political (Fraser) to more abstract, ideological notions (Rawls). However, there appear to be a limited number of theoretical frameworks applied to HE's role in social justice, even less in analysing international HE interactions. I reflect and discuss the conceptual aspects of social justice in relation to my research in Chapter 3.

Thirdly, while studies are more prevalent in issues relating to access and participation, some areas are less well represented in the literature, particularly research on the benefits of HE to wider society. There also appears to be emerging a logic of discourse at policy level, framing social justice goals in terms of economic growth within a neoliberal imaginary that elides the wider social justice benefits of HE. The neoliberal prioritisation of economic growth has also been noted in the liberal peace thesis approach to peacebuilding, and reflected in the dominance of research into the economic benefits of HE in the field of HE in development. These have implications for identifying, examining and categorising the extent of the contribution of the international interactions of Myanmar HEIs, driven at least in part by an external neo-liberal paradigm, towards social justice.

The section above attempted to provide an overview of HE's role in social justice, with an emphasis on conceptual approaches and national level studies. In the next section, I deal with wider aspects of HE and social justice: the globalisation of HE, privatisation, the colonisation of knowledge, and inequalities in North-South international HE partnerships.

2.5 The internationalisation of higher education

As I described previously in the section on higher education and development, there is renewed interest in higher education for socio-economic development. There are, however, substantial obstacles in developing high quality and equitable higher education systems, which, in many low-income countries, particularly those affected by conflict, have been chronically under-resourced for decades, as a result of multiple pressures and policies that have weakened their systems, including colonial and post-colonial structures and influences, structural adjustment policies of multinational development organisations and the impacts of neoliberal pressures towards market competition, privatisation and shrinking state support (Samoff and Carrol, 2004; Sawyerr, 2004; Naidoo, 2007; Cossa, 2013; Feuer, Hornidge and Schetter, 2015). These HE systems are characterised by a lack of physical resources, equipment and facilities, low levels of trained and experienced academics and university staff, lack of academic resources, such as access to research journals and quality teaching materials, and growing demand for higher education (World Bank, 2000).

Under these conditions, internationalisation can be seen as a useful approach to improving HE systems, particularly where there is little government funding and infrastructure is weak (Naidoo, 2007; Burke and Millican, 2017). However, the internationalisation of HEIs is complex and the motivations and drivers of different geographically, socially, economically and politically-situated HEIs to collaborate needs to be understood in the context of globalisation and commercialisation.

I begin this section of the literature review with an examination of the conceptual notions and theoretical constructs associated with the internationalisation of higher education. I then present the main characteristics, trends and issues in the key discourses on HE internationalisation and HE partnerships, including aspects associated with social justice and inequality.

It is important at this point to clarify the terms 'international partnership' and 'international interaction' in higher education used in this study. The varied forms of international partnership have produced a range of definitions proposed by several scholars (see, for instance, Bullough and Kauchak, 1997; Wit, 2002; Knight, 2008; Sutton, 2010; Hudzik, 2015). However, the term 'partnership' in the field of internationalisation is not the only term used to describe the relationships and arrangements between two or more HE entities. Commonly in use are terms such as linkage, collaboration and cooperation and may describe arrangements that are symmetric or asymmetric, where there are imbalances in resources, power and influence (de Wit, 2015; Jooste, 2015). In this study, these terms are used interchangeably, and, to be as inclusive as possible, the usage generally reflects the terminology preference of those involved as participants in this study and common usage in the literature.

There is, nevertheless, the sense of a 'partnership' describing longer term, strategic and "higher order" (Jooste, 2015, p.14) arrangements between higher education institutions, those participating within a defined project or programme, or under the formal arrangements of a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU). However, many of the international relationships between Myanmar universities and their foreign counterparts in this study are at an early stage of development and do not always reflect the more sustainable structure implied by the term partnership. Therefore, I use the overarching term 'international interaction' to describe two or more higher education entities, which may include universities and other higher education institutions, departments, researchers, Ministries and HE agencies (for example, national quality assurance bodies) working together, informally or formally, encompassing the full range of international relationships between HE entities, from long-term partnerships and

formal bilateral HE cooperation agreements to single activity collaborations and smaller scale exploratory activities.

Conceptualisations of the internationalisation of higher education

Internationalisation has been one of the most significant changes in HE over the last few decades (Altbach and Knight, 2007; Altbach, 2008; Maringe, Foskett and Woodfield, 2013). While HEIs have always engaged internationally to some extent (Altbach, 2008; Altbach and de Wit, 2015), at least since the 6th Century AD when Nalanda University in India attracted Buddhist scholars from around the world (Altbach and de Wit, 2015), the term has come to incorporate a wide range of internationally-related activities that HEIs engage in, including research collaboration, curriculum development, transnational education (TNE), student and academic staff exchange programmes, conferences and networking, overseas talent and student recruitment, and the inclusion of an international dimension in teaching and learning (see, for instance, Knight, 2004; Henard, Diamond and Roseveare, 2012; Maringe, Foskett and Woodfield, 2013). Scholars have noted, however, that the internationalisation of higher education as a concept is variously interpreted and largely misunderstood (Knight, 2004; Mwangi *et al.*, 2018).

The most commonly cited and used definition for the internationalisation of HEIs is that by Jane Knight (de Wit, 2010), who, in 1994 described it as "the process of integrating an international, intercultural or global dimension into the purpose, functions or delivery of higher education at the institutional and national levels" (Knight, 2008, p.21). This definition focusses on internationalisation as a continuous process and builds on previous definitions (e.g. Arum and van de Water, 1992; Ellingboe, 1998; Soderqvist, 2002; Wit, 2002; Knight, 2004), which have covered multiple facets of internationalisation from global, institutional, educational and organisational perspectives to varying degrees.

Early definitions of the internationalisation of HE tended to focus on the level of the institution. Arum and van de Water (1992), for example, defined it as "the multiple activities, programs and services that fall within international studies, international educational exchange and technical cooperation" (Ibid., p.202). Ellingboe (1998), while also concerned with internationalisation at institution-level, invoked a more holistic, ongoing change process in response to increasing globalisation, describing it as "the process of integrating an international perspective into a college or university system. It is an ongoing, future-oriented, multidimensional, interdisciplinary, leadership-driven vision that involves many stakeholders working to change the internal dynamics of an institution to respond and adapt appropriately

to an increasingly diverse, globally focused, ever-changing external environment" (Ibid., p.199). Other definitions emphasised the educational process, including those proffered by Soderqvist (2002, p.29) and Raby (2007, p.58).

More recently, the discourse on the meaning of internationalisation has reflected the continuing evolution and increased interest in the scholarship on, and practice of, internationalisation. Hudzik (2015) has argued for a re-conceptualisation of internationalisation that takes into account the multiple perspectives that have emerged and that can be used as a paradigmatic framework for HEIs to organise their activities and approaches, while Knight (2008) has noted an increasing bifurcation in the conceptualisation of internationalisation at institution level into 'internationalisation at home' and 'internationalisation abroad' (Knight, 2008).

Research interest in the field of internationalisation of HE has predominantly focussed on its commercial aspects, particularly the areas of international student recruitment and TNE. However, Maringe, Foskett and Woodfield (2013) have noted a shifting terrain towards new areas of study, encompassing the motives and rationales of internationalisation and how these impact low-income countries.

Among the increasingly wide range of definitions in the literature, Knight's definition in its general scope provides the possibility of incorporating the breadth of perspectives which are more reflective of the range of current internationalisation issues and activities of HEIs, including internationalisation strategies, programmes and policies; institutional values; the impact in both the 'home' institution and that of their partner overseas; and spanning institutional and global dimensions (Knight, 2004). It also emphasises internationalisation as a dynamic process, enabling the inclusion of different and changing responses to globalisation from different contexts. As such, I have used this broader, more expansive definition in my discussions of internationalisation in this study.

The globalisation of higher education

Globalisation and internationalisation describe different but related processes (Altbach, 2004; Knight, 2004; Maringe, 2009). Globalisation has been defined as "the widening, deepening and speeding up of world-wide interconnectedness" (Held *et al.*, 1999, p.2) and is related to world-scale transformations in the ideological, political, cultural, social, technological and economic realms (Altbach, 2013; Maringe, Foskett and Woodfield, 2013). Internationalisation is a response to globalisation, which in turn is itself argued to be reinforcing and quickening the

process of globalisation and, therefore, becoming bound within a mutually reciprocal relationship of cause and effect (Maringe, Foskett and Woodfield, 2013). While some theorists hold that globalisation has an homogenising effect, which over time increases the integration and interdependence, and decreases the differences between nations (Steger, 2003), other scholars argue that as globalisation is experienced differently within societies and parts of the world according to specific contextual factors, including economic position, language and culture, the level of infrastructure and availability of technology, differences may be exacerbated and increase inequalities on a global and local scale (Marginson and Wende, 2007; Unterhalter and Carpentier, 2010; Altbach, 2013).

Within the processes of globalisation, the most significant transformation in economic terms has been the growing importance of knowledge as capital (Olssen and Peters, 2005; Stiglitz and Greenwald, 2014). The knowledge economy, in which knowledge creation and innovation have been positioned as key drivers of prosperity, has placed higher education, deeply involved as it is in the production and transmission of knowledge through research and teaching, at the centre of national and international economic policies (World Bank, 2003; Olssen and Peters, 2005; Marginson and Wende, 2007; Altbach, Reisberg and Rumbley, 2009; Castells, 2009). This challenged the idea of knowledge as a global public good and reoriented higher education towards engaging in knowledge capitalism driven by neoliberal imperatives (Stiglitz, 1999; Olssen and Peters, 2005).

Globalisation has driven considerable change in the higher education sector in many countries (Robertson, 2010a; de Sousa Santos, 2012), and in turn, higher education is implicated in the processes of globalisation and the knowledge economy (Maringe, Foskett and Woodfield, 2013), both of which have acted as accelerating forces in the transformation and internationalisation of higher education (OECD, 2014).

Neoliberalism, the global knowledge economy and the commodification of higher education

A further development influencing the extent and forms internationalisation of HE came in the late 1970s with the emergence of neoliberalism as a dominant economic philosophy based on market capitalism (Slaughter and Rhoades, 2004; Robertson, 2010a; Naidoo and Williams, 2014; Busch, 2017). Increased recognition of the economic value of higher education led to the inclusion of higher education in the General Agreement of Trade and Services (GATS) by the World Trade Organisation (WTO) in 2001, which classified and treated higher education as a tradeable commodity.

Neoliberalism emerged as a set of ideas based upon the principles of deregulation, privatisation and competitiveness (Kelsey, 2004). It diverged from post-war economic liberalisation, which advocated a laissez-faire approach by the state to market behaviour, towards more explicit and active state roles in promoting markets and developing competition, including state intervention in public institutions, including many HEIs, to ensure that they are transformed into, and are engaged in, competitive markets (Harvey, 2005; Olssen and Peters, 2005; Busch, 2017). International aid and development assistance to low-income countries, under what came to be known as the Washington Consensus, modelled by international financial organisations, including the World Bank and IMF, was also reframed within a neoliberal ideology and had a profound impact on HE development in these contexts, their governments facing an orchestrated campaign of mass privatisation, financial deregulation and reduction in public funding (Olssen and Peters, 2005; Naidoo, 2010; Mwangi *et al.*, 2018).

It has been noted that the inclusion of education in the GATS has stimulated much debate among scholars of higher education from both the global North and South (Cossa, 2013). Particular concerns have arisen around the flawed and inequitable structures of the WTO, which disadvantages higher education systems in the global South, including loss of autonomy (Altbach, 2002) and a growing imbalance of influence and negotiating power with the WTO, with the EU as the most influential and African countries the least (Cossa, 2013).

The last two decades have seen considerable growth in the commodification, commercialisation and marketisation of higher education (Robertson, 2010a; Knight, 2013; Marginson, 2013). As state funding decreased and GATS paved the way towards the opening up of global markets in HE, HEIs have been increasingly expected to generate income themselves. These commercial activities include student fees, particularly from traffic in international students, selling HE products and services abroad through transnational education mechanisms and partnerships, links with industry, monetising knowledge through IPR, and winning research grants through competitive tender (Slaughter and Rhoades, 2004; Luke, 2010; Naidoo and Williams, 2014; Selenica, 2018).

A substantial body of literature has been published on the rise in the commercialisation of HE and the impact of global competition on HEIs (see Marginson and Considine, 2000; Altbach, 2002; Ehrenberg, 2007; Robertson, 2010). The transfer of the economic costs from the state to the student shifted the conceptualisation of HE as a public good to a private good, which conferred benefit to individuals, who were therefore expected to bear the brunt of the costs

(Slaughter and Rhoades, 2004; Carpentier, 2010). Nations supporting the neoliberal regime for economic growth, including those in the UK and the USA (Robertson, 2010b; Naidoo and Williams, 2014), imposed accountability levers and governance structures on HEIs under what has become known as New Public Management (NPM) to re-engineer them as market-driven institutions (Slaughter and Rhoades, 2004; Marginson and Wende, 2007; Busch, 2017). In a study on the UK HE system, Robertson argued that the logics of corporatisation, competitiveness and commercialisation, actualised through an NPM regime imposed by UK government policies, have been absorbed to such an extent that "structurally predispose UK HEIs, over time, towards new regionalising and globalising horizons of action" (Robertson, 2010b, p.191), and significantly increasing the economic imperative for the international activities of UK HEIs. In another study, Olssen and Peters (2005), in their examination of the responses of HEIs to globalisation and the neoliberal regime, found that "the traditional professional culture of open intellectual enquiry and debate has been replaced with a institutional stress on performativity, as evidenced by the emergence of an emphasis on measured outputs: on strategic planning, performance indicators, quality assurance measures and academic audits" (Ibid., 2005, p.313), representing a profound shift in the strategic drivers of HEIs.

These market-driven structural pressures and policies have had considerable influence on the way that HEIs approach internationalisation and the rationales behind Northern HEIs' engagement with HEIs in low-income countries, which I discuss further later in this chapter.

Growth of international student mobility and transnational education

Over the last two decades, the recruitment of overseas students has been a dominant component of the internationalisation strategies of many HEIs located in the developed North, particularly in the UK (Enslin and Hedge, 2008; Walker, 2013; Lomer, Papatsiba and Naidoo, 2018). In the top three receiving countries, the USA, UK and Australia, international students provide a significant source of income, charged at substantially higher rates than domestic students (Altbach and Knight, 2007; Enslin and Hedge, 2008; Walker, 2013; OECD, 2017).

The 'market' in internationally mobile students has grown remarkably within a generation (see Figure 3 below), from 0.8 million students in the late 1970s to 4.6 million within 40 years (OECD, 2017), driven by a range of factors, including the rise of knowledge and innovation-driven economies requiring higher skills, the inability of developing countries to keep up with demand for quality HE, the pull of institutional prestige and a growing middle class able to afford to send their children overseas for an education (Ibid., 2017).
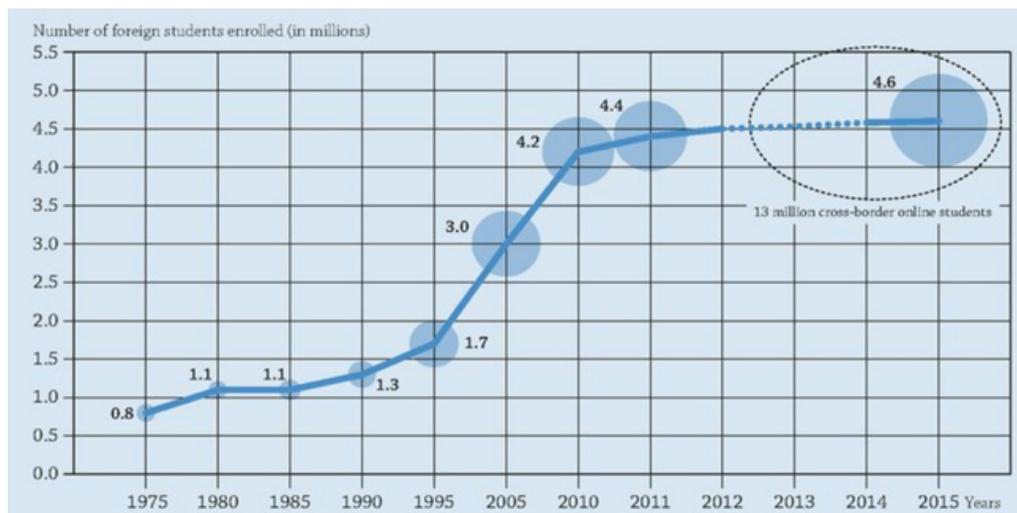
Figure 3: Growth in foreign enrolment in tertiary education worldwide, 1975–2015
Source: OECD, 2017: Education at a Glance, p.295

More recently, however, the focus of international HE 'edubusiness' appears to be shifting. While growth in outward-bound student mobility has slowed since 2010, over the same period an unprecedented expansion in the scale and forms of transnational education (TNE) has occurred (McNamara, Knight and Fernandez-Chung, 2013; OECD, 2017). TNE is variously described and understood in countries across the world, and is often referred to synonymously by terms such as 'offshore', borderless' or 'cross-border' education (Knight, 2005). Generally, TNE describes courses and programmes that are delivered abroad to students studying for foreign HE qualifications who remain in their own 'home' country, or travel to a nearby country in their region, rather than studying abroad in the 'sending' country in which the awarding HEI is based (Knight and McNamara, 2017).

TNE encompasses a range of programme and delivery types, including international branch campuses, delivery of joint or double degrees in partnership with a local HEI, franchise arrangements and articulation degrees, requiring various levels of engagement with local, often private, HEIs. Articulation mechanisms provide pathways from the local delivery of lower level courses, often diplomas, to gaining full degrees if the student travels to the foreign HEI[2], a model that drives students towards the awarding country for high fee top-up degrees, or higher level study at Masters or PhD levels. The majority of these arrangements are with the private sector in the non-awarding host countries. Forms of international HE through TNE are

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[2] For example, a UK HEI can offer a two-year Higher National Diploma (HND) locally in Yangon, through forming a partnership with a Myanmar HEI (in this case, a private college), after which a student is eligible to complete a final third year of study in the UK to gain a Bachelor's degree.

now found in over 120 countries and in some represents a significant proportion of their HE provision, comprising between 10-20% of total HE enrolments in Singapore, Malaysia and Hong Kong, and in the UAE more than 50% (Knight and McNamara, 2017). The growth of TNE as an international activity is starkly illustrated through a recent Universities UK/British Council commissioned study, which found that 52% of international students enrolled in UK HEIs were studying through TNE arrangements – in other words, over half of international students studying for a UK HE qualification were enrolled through a provider outside the UK, usually in their home country (Warwick Economics and Development, 2016). In Myanmar, TNE is a growing form of private sector HE internationalisation, delivered mainly through business partnerships with UK HEIs.

TNE, social justice and erosion of the public good

While there is a wide body of research on TNE, it has been noted that most of it emanates from the perspective of the awarding, or 'sending' countries in the Northern metropoles; few studies have examined the impact on the countries, predominantly in Africa, Asia and the Middle East, in which the TNE programmes are being delivered (McNamara Economic Research, 2014). A comprehensive study commissioned by the British Council and DAAD across 10 countries indicated that while there were perceived benefits from TNE related to quality and expansion of HE provision, there were also negative impacts (Ibid., 2014). One of the myths debunked by the findings is the oft-cited benefit that TNE courses provide specialisms and disciplines not otherwise available in the delivery country. Instead, the study found that TNE courses were duplicating and competing with local, domestic provision, and were not aligned to country priorities and skills gaps, concerns expressed by government officials in the low-income countries in the study (Ibid., 2014).

Other research has raised further concerns on the impact of TNE in low-income country contexts. There are indications that the unchecked expansion of TNE degrees can lead to local market distortion, altering the profile of HE provision towards a narrow range of low-investment foreign courses, including MBAs, finance and accounting and software engineering, leaving the state to fund high-cost programmes (for example, medicine) and those in non-profession-specific disciplines, such as the social sciences, humanities, arts and pure sciences (Naidoo, 2007). This in effect reduces the ability of the state to cross-subsidise expensive disciplines, research training (TNE does not often include research degrees) and those that are critical to social, cultural and economic development (Ibid., 2007). Several studies show that

developing countries' governments are trying to protect their HE systems from the negative effects of TNE (King, 2003; Verbik and Jokivirta, 2005; Naidoo, 2010).

Some scholars go further and argue that increasing commodification of HE as a global export can lead to "developing countries becoming mass markets for the 'dumping' of low quality knowledge" (Naidoo, 2007, p.9), exacerbating inequalities between those with access to high quality, high cost HE in the Northern/Western metropoles and those in developing countries who are offered low cost, low quality, homogenised HE programmes with little contextual relevance (Moja and Cloete, 2001). An emergent body of literature is beginning to document the ways in which the rich, middle class and elites in low-income countries are using international HE as a means to bypass poor domestic provision to entrench their privilege in their own societies (Waters, 2006, 2012; Waters and Brooks, 2010). Marginson warns that there is a serious risk in the international activities of HEIs in exacerbating and reinforcing the power of a global elite by providing "privileged access to cross-border students with the private means to pay who often leverage their foreign degrees to secure better careers when they return home, enhancing social and economic stratification" (Marginson, 2017). Lall warns that TNE in Myanmar will inevitably increase the gulf between the urban elite and the rural poor (Lall, 2008).

Brown and Tannock raise concerns that equity and social justice in higher education tend to be framed at national and sub-national levels, ignoring the international activities of HEIs (Brown and Tannock, 2009). Tannock concludes in his study on UK policy debates between 2010 and 2012 on equity issues of UK HEIs that "demands for educational equity stops at the border" (Tannock, 2013, p.449) and asks:

> "If we oppose educational discrimination against, and the creation of educational disadvantage for, the children of working class and poor families in our own country, why should we not hold the same stance with respect to children of the working class and poor from other countries as well? Most importantly, why should we allow our own institutions of higher education to promote inequalities of educational opportunity for those who grow up beyond our national borders when we stand firmly opposed – in principle at least – to allowing them to do this at home? Is there not something essentially hypocritical about this?" (Tannock, 2013, p.458).

With this question, Tannock cuts to the heart of the equity debate in TNE.

The emerging equity discourse in HE internationalisation is embedded within a broader debate on HE as a public good. Scholars have argued that corporatisation and commercialisation has distanced higher education from its public goods function and is eroding the social contract in

higher education (Polster, 2000; Robertson, 2010b; Marginson, 2012). The concept of a public good has its roots in economics, defined by Samuelson in 1954 as a good which is non-rivalrous and non-excludable, and therefore, is not expendable and not restricted to particular individuals. In contrast, a private good is rivalrous, open to competition, and excludable, only available to some individuals or social groups (Samuelson, 1954). In an era of globalisation, the notion of public goods in HE has evolved to encompass 'global' within the realm of 'public' (Marginson, 2007; Menashy, 2009) and includes debates on the internationalisation of HE. While HE is claimed to impart public goods in the form of production of new knowledge, supporting civic responsibility, democracy, culture, health, and a wide range of public and common benefits, as mentioned earlier in this chapter, scholars have argued that the internationalisation of HE in recent times has prioritised private good functions through the adoption of market-based logics, while public goods have been weakened and marginalised (Polster, 2000; Naidoo, 2007; Robertson, 2010b; Marginson, 2012; Busch, 2017). Nevertheless, there is a re-emerging interest in centring the public good functions of the university within the continued globalisation of economies and societies in strengthening the role of HE in solving global challenges, but also in their contributions to the locality in which they are situated as 'anchor' institutions (Goddard and Kempton, 2016).

Associated with this, concerns have arisen over a key public good function of HEIs in access to knowledge. Aspects of HE commercialisation, closer links to industry and the strengthening of the global legal framework controlling the ownership of knowledge through intellectual property rights has resulted in a "global knowledge grab" (Polster, 2000, p.19) that undermines the role of HEIs in accessing and contributing to the intellectual commons and performing their public good missions (Polster, 2000; Busch, 2017, p.20). I return to this issue in the following section in relation to the colonisation of knowledge.

Finally, McArthur links the overshadowing of the public good to an erosion of a core social justice purpose of HEIs:

> "To flourish, human agency requires authentic expression in positive, public spaces that allow us to freely participate in and shape the social world. Higher education should be just such a space. However, any push to commercialise higher education could diminish such public spaces and subvert our abilities to act as democratic citizens. Rather than higher education being a space in which we learn about and practice how we can contribute to wider society, it risks becoming a private experience focused on what we can get out of it for ourselves alone" (McArthur, 2011).

The erosion of the public good in its multiple dimensions and the growing pressures on revenue generation has important influences on the rationales and purposes behind the international interactions of HEIs, particularly between HEIs situated in the Northern metropoles, embedded as they are in global competitive markets and ranking systems, driven by national and global knowledge economy regimes and imaginaries, and HEIs on the periphery, particularly Southern public HEIs, with fewer resources, and without the protection of organisational frameworks and regulatory mechanisms, but with urgent, different and divergent needs and imperatives for internationalisation.

Inequalities in globalisation, the colonisation of knowledge and epistemological hegemonies

As I have discussed above, there are concerns that while internationalisation brings benefits, there are much more complex, interconnected and overlapping features that affect higher education differently across the world, particularly between the North and the developing South that can also bring disadvantages (Altbach, 1989, 2004; Maringe, 2009; Naidoo, 2010; Robertson, 2010a). It has been suggested that the features of internationalisation can "represent as many challenges as opportunities to increase or reduce inequalities within and between countries" (Unterhalter and Carpentier, 2010, pp.17-19) and therefore, could in some circumstances, hinder social justice. However, it has been noted that there is a lack of criticality in the scholarship of HE internationalisation. A review of international HE research found that over half of the articles on internationalisation in the four major HE journals in the study did not in any way discuss issues of asymmetry in benefits, disadvantage and privilege, or other aspects related to social justice (Mwangi *et al.*, 2018).

Yet there are strong indications of inequalities resulting from the globalisation of higher education and the ascendancy of the knowledge economy paradigm, resulting in a highly stratified world in terms of global knowledge power and knowledge economy capacity (Maringe, 2009; Naidoo, 2010; Robertson, 2010b). HEIs are central to the global knowledge system; the global rankings of research universities serve to indicate the imbalance, with 54 of the top 100 research universities located in the USA and UK according to the 2018 Academic Ranking of World Universities (previously the Shanghai Jiao Tong listing) (Shanghai Ranking Consultancy, 2018) and 52 in the Times Higher Education ranking in 2019 (Times Higher Education, 2019). These global structures and systems, which have fused into a "particular hegemonic view of knowledge" (Naidoo, 2010, p.79) are argued to have hindered the ability of HE to contribute to development, and may, in fact, be exacerbating global inequalities (Ibid., 2010). Another key factor reported to have increased inequalities in knowledge production

and sharing is the language of knowledge. English, associated with colonialism and economic domination, is argued to "privilege the cultural and intellectual priorities of the English speaking nation/partner" (Hoey, 2016, p.42). The way that success, relevance and quality of HE is documented and measured emanates from priorities and values set in the North and puts pressure on HEIs in low-income countries to conform to a highly restrictive form of knowledge (Naidoo, 2010a, p.79). Slaughter and Rhoades (2004) links this to what they refer to as a 'capitalist knowledge regime', in which commercial drivers, linked to business interests and IPR, which I discussed above in relation to the erosion the public good, subjugate other forms of knowledge and research interests (Slaughter and Rhoades, 2004).

Knowledge legitimacy and power asymmetries have been debated in the field of aid and development. Developing countries, such as Myanmar, are argued to be subject to even further knowledge constraints and restrictions, as donors, through their ideological stances and the focus of their development funding, decide what knowledge counts. The World Bank's influential Knowledge for Development report (1998-99), for instance, has been critiqued for its approach, conceptualised as a Southern deficit and Northern transmitter of knowledge model, and for its non-recognition of "culturally, socially or spiritually valuable [knowledge]" (McGrath and King, 2004, pp.48-49), while privileging knowledge linked to economic growth (Ibid., 2004).

The geographical distribution of the global economy of knowledge in which HEIs are embedded has been studied and found to be highly unequal with distinctive boundaries (Connell, 2016; de Sousa Santos, 2016; Hall and Tandon, 2017). Connell asserts that the knowledge institutions of the global North, comprised of HEIs, databanks and research institutes located in the Northern metropoles, form the "hegemonic centre" of the knowledge economy (Connell, 2016, p.1). The dominant position of these metropoles as the intellectual authorities in the global knowledge economy can be traced back to its roots in imperialism (Hountondji, 1990; Connell, 2016; de Sousa Santos, 2016) and constructed through a vast circulation system of data, largely drawn from the periphery, which included enormous sections of the colonised and post-colonial world. This data flowed towards the Northern global metropoles, where it was theorised, organised and processed, to be transformed through applied sciences and knowledge and exported back to the periphery (Hountondji, 1990; Connell, 2016).

It is argued that this pattern persists in the contemporary neoliberal world and remains the primary route through which knowledge circulates, much of it through the international

activities of HEIs (Connell, 2016). As such, the system is self-reinforcing, with researchers in the periphery having to become experts in the knowledge processes in the institutions of the Northern metropoles to survive, get promoted and be published (Ibid., 2016). de Sousa Santos (2016) points out that the architecture of knowledge domination is so entrenched that the systems of the global North have become resistant to change, postulating that "after five centuries of teaching the world, the global North seems to have lost the capacity to learn from the experiences of the world" (Ibid., 2016, p.19).

While HEIs in the colonised and postcolonial world, comprising the vast majority, have played a major part in establishing many of the theories and frameworks in their production of data, they continue to be on the periphery (Robertson and Verger, 2008; Connell, 2016). Scholars stress the loss or absence of global knowledge through epistemic exclusion by the intellectual centres of the North and through the enduring system of Western models of scholarship across the world (Connell, 2016; de Sousa Santos, 2016; Hall and Tandon, 2017; Stein, 2018). As Connell states, "the problem is not the absence of the majority world, but its epistemological subordination within the mainstream economy of knowledge" (Connell, 2016, p.3). Hall and Tandon (2017) concur and argue that modern HEIs in the metropoles of the North are complicit in epistemicide, which they define as "the killing of knowledge systems" (Ibid., p.6) by their maintenance and protection of a powerful global knowledge hegemony through the unequal representation or exclusion of knowledge systems in the global South. Connell (2016) describes three main areas in which southern knowledge has been marginalised or ignored: indigenous knowledges, alternative universalisms (or knowledge systems not emanating from the Northern knowledge economy paradigm), and Southern Theory, some of which emerge from the colonial and post-colonial experience itself and have established rich schools of thought.

Knowledge inequalities and epistemological hegemonies are critical issues in the internationalisation of HE. Of particular importance is the need for more scholars to recognise the influence of internationalisation in either entrenching or interrupting Northern epistemological dominance, an area that has not received much academic attention to date (Mwangi *et al.*, 2018). Robertson and Verger (2008) claim that epistemological domination extends to international HE partnerships, which when "constructed on the basis of an unequal exchange, have the potential to undermine certain logics of production of knowledge coming from the South, in turn promoting a world academic monoculture" (Ibid., 2008, p.39). It has been noted that this influence is commonly observed in research projects between a new

researcher, recently returned to their home country after studying abroad, and a former supervisor, where the topic, methodology and theoretical foundations are mostly dictated by the assumptions and epistemological stance of the supervisor (Habermann, 2008).

The questioning and denaturalising of the dominant epistemological and ontological frames upon which HEIs and HE imaginaries are constructed is, according to Stein, crucial, who warns that if this is not addressed, then "efforts to pluralize possible higher education futures will risk reproducing existing conceptual limitations and enduring colonial harms" (Stein, 2018, p.1). To mitigate this, Connell emphasises the importance of international HE collaboration in supporting knowledge democracy, suggesting that:

> "what matters most in the development of knowledge is encounter and interaction – encounter with the world, encounter with ideas, and interaction (cooperation, debate, communication) among knowledge workers" (Connell, 2016, p.5).

It has been suggested that through these international encounters, historical and current inequities can be rebalanced by supporting the emergence and recognition of epistemologies and theoretical approaches from the South (Robertson and Verger, 2008; Stein, 2018). These comments invoke a critical role for international North–South HE partnerships in creating a more equitable, expansive, inclusive and sustainable knowledge system, a theme I will return to in my exploration of internationalisation in Myanmar's HEIs.

I now turn my attention to international partnerships and examine the motivations for, and rationales of, HEIs to engage in international interactions, central to one of my research sub-questions.

Rationales for the internationalisation of higher education

Studies on the motivations of HEIs to internationalise have revealed a wide range of rationales, including economic, academic, political, sociocultural and technological (see Altbach, 1998, 2013; Knight, 2004; Scott, 2014). As Knight (2015) notes, understanding the rationales for internationalisation provides deeper clarity about the benefits and outcomes that HEIs and national governments expect from these activities (Knight, 2015). Knight and de Wit propose four dominant rationales for internationalisation,: academic, socio-cultural, economic and political (Knight and de Wit, 1999; de Wit, 2002, 2011), which can be expressed at national and institutional level (Knight, 2015).

Over time, rationales for establishing international connections between centres of learning and scholarship across the world have shifted (Knight, 2015). Academically-driven rationales over centuries have led to the collaboration, shared learning and the generation and dissemination of knowledge between peoples and cultures (Altbach, 1998; King, 2009). Gaillard, in his study of North-South scientific relations, argues that during the colonial era, political and economic rationales dominated, providing Northern scientists working in the colonies with two main tasks: to make inventories of the natural resources for exploitation and export, and to understand the cultures and languages of the colonised peoples so that they could be more effectively controlled (Gaillard, 1994), activities through which the foundations of the imperial-based circulation of knowledge I described in the preceding section were established. In fact, many North-South HEI connections have their origins in the colonial era (King, 2009) at a time when the colonisers, in addition to knowledge and information to expand their colonial enterprises, also required a local, educated elite to administer the colony and protect the interests of the colonial power (Ashby, 1967). Towards this purpose, new universities, institutions and colleges were established in the colonised Southern countries, styled on a Northern university model, often affiliated with either an institution in the Northern metropoles or one in another, more established colony (Hountondji, 1990; Altbach, 1998; de Wit, 2002; Samoff and Carrol, 2004; Perkin, 2006; King, 2009). Religious institutions were also established and linked to Northern churches and private foundations to spread religious doctrine (Altbach, 1998; Perkin, 2006; King, 2009). This describes precisely the foundations of the Myanmar HE system, which I explain in more detail in Chapter 4 on my research context.

In the post-colonial period, particularly during the 1950s and 1960s, many North-South HEI linkages were financed by multi- and bi-lateral development aid (King, 2009), with the rationales of addressing development challenges and nation-building (Ibid., 2009) and for ideological and soft power motivations (Marginson and Considine, 2000; Luke, 2010). Private philanthropic institutions, such as the Carnegie, Ford and Rockerfeller foundations, were also active in HE, although not as focused on establishing international partnerships (King, 2009). Significant power asymmetries were noted between collaborating HEIs during this period, with the impositions of Northern HEIs on language of instruction and research (Altbach, 1998; Sehoole, 2008), curricula and models of university organisation and in the division of tasks and roles within the collaboration (King, 2009). Aid and support to higher education in the developing world during this period was in large part driven by political rationales as part of

the Cold War, with Western Allies and the Soviet Union in competition for power and influence in regions across the world; HE linkages and large scholarship programmes resulted in close ties with HEIs in the North and West, geographically distributed by political affiliation (Arnove, 1980; Altbach, 1998; Samoff and Carrol, 2004; King, 2009).

In the decades following the end of the Cold War, and as international donor agencies deprioritised higher education in international development, as discussed earlier in this chapter, the rationales for international HEI partnerships shifted, driven by new geopolitical imperatives and the intensification of globalisation, underpinned by neoliberalism (Crossley and Watson, 2003). A study of nearly 200 HEIs across the world in 2013 unveiled significant differences in the motivations and aims behind their international activity, related to their geographical, political and economic contexts (Maringe, Foskett and Woodfield, 2013). The findings showed that economic imperatives dominated internationalisation rationales in Western/Northern universities, while in Confucian and some Middle Eastern countries, cultural drivers appeared to be the most significant, and in low-income countries, educational and development drivers were the most important (Ibid., 2013). The authors concluded that there were wide and growing inequalities and disparities between HEIs of the North and South and called for further research on how to reconcile the commercially-driven rationales of Northern HEIs with the needs of HEIs in poorer countries (Maringe, Foskett and Woodfield, 2013).

Indeed, the evolution of higher education into an international 'edubusiness', according to Luke (2010), is a defining feature that distinguishes this from the colonial and Cold War eras, in which, for Northern HEIs, economic interests have been prioritised (Graham, Luke and Luke, 2007). As Luke puts it, "revenue appears to have trumped ideology and culture" (Luke, 2010, p.49). Further differences in motivation have been noted by Habermann (2008), who suggests that Northern HEIs are compelled to work with partners in the South to access research funding and obtain permissions to conduct research in the Southern country, while the Southern partner may be driven by potential benefits from "the prestige, access to power and resources as well as networks that such partnerships promise to yield" (Habermann, 2008, p.34).

Inequalities in international HE partnerships

Scholars have drawn attention to the paucity of research into issues of hegemony, equity and power relations in international partnerships between universities in the North and South, given the different motivations and interests of the partners involved (Naidoo, 2007;

Gutierrez, 2008; Robertson and Verger, 2008; Koehn, 2012; Maringe, Foskett and Woodfield, 2013).

Several studies highlight asymmetries in the distribution of roles and activities of Northern and Southern researchers in HEI partnerships. The setting of research agendas, research design and planning, financial control, analysis of results and dissemination (through conferences and publication) have been found to be primarily the responsibility of the Northern researchers, while Southern researchers are allocated responsibility for data gathering and applied aspects of the research (Maselli, Lys and Schmid, 2006). Gutierrez has termed this "the hidden reproduction of colonial domination" (Gutierrez, 2008, p.21) and mirrors the colonial rationales discussed previously.

Gutierrez questions whether or not it is possible to mitigate the power asymmetries in North-South partnerships without first making equitable the economic resources available to each partner (Gutierrez, 2008). Other scholars postulate that inequity in North-South research partnerships goes beyond inequalities in finance and infrastructure, but is enmeshed in issues of power and agency that are related to the way that international development is framed and orchestrated (Brinkerhoff, 2002; Habermann, 2008), including financial control constraints imposed by funders, which may only allow funds to be disbursed to Northern partners (Habermann, 2008). Robertson and Verger, in their paper 'The whereabouts of power in partnerships' concur, and argue that an examination of the dynamics of power relations in North-South HE partnerships is critical to understanding why partnerships are formed in the way they are and what influences these have in terms of social justice (Robertson and Verger, 2008) .

The literature in this area also emphasises the tensions and stresses imposed by the current neoliberal edifice on North-South HE partnerships to do research and development together (Koehn, 2012). Koehn argues that HEIs in the global North face competing institutional priorities and are constrained by revenue-seeking agendas which limit their ability to respond to the sustainable development needs and institutional realities in the global South. Furthermore, the responsibility of good governance in partnerships is particularly problematic, as Northern HEIs in a capital-driven global terrain find themselves "ensnared by their own crises" (Koehn, 2012, p.333). As a study on UK HEIs shows, there are further dimensions of complexity, not only between North-South partners, but also in the variety of ways internationalisation is conceptualised and actuated within UK institutions (Khoo, 2011), indicating substantial differences in the internal narratives relating to internationalisation.

Luke (2010) identified additional internal problems and tensions in the internationalisation approaches of Northern HEIs, stemming from a weak and limited contextual understanding of the HEIs and the countries with which they seek to engage. He argues that northern HEIs have been slow to tap their own expertise and knowledge of countries, cultures and regions for the benefit of their international interactions, and have failed in the majority of cases to engage their social sciences and humanities scholars, including linguists, anthropologists, historians, sociologists and educationalists in their institutional international strategies and marketisation endeavours. Instead, they see this work as the domain of senior business managers, who in most cases, do not have any knowledge of the places to be 'internationalised' (Luke, 2010).

2.6 Summary

In this chapter, I have sought to identify and discuss the key studies, discourses, issues and the wider contexts associated with the focus of this study on international interactions of Myanmar HEIs and their relationship to social justice. I have examined four bodies of literature and their interconnections: the roles of HE in development, conflict and peacebuilding, social justice and internationalisation. Overall, three main themes were identified and significant gaps in the research unveiled:

Firstly, HEIs have important roles in social justice, including the formation of societal structures, contribution to development goals and in building longer-term peace. Despite the inclusion of HE in the SDGs, the sector continues to be marginalised in development and its potential contribution underestimated and understudied.

Secondly, the roles and experiences of universities in times of conflict and their subsequent development and contribution towards peace have received little attention. The studies that do exist are unevenly distributed, with some conflict-affected countries receiving little or no research attention, including Myanmar. It has been reported that HE has contributed to conflict prevention and societal stabilisation, reconciliation and conflict resolution, promoting critical debate and citizenship and in providing highly skilled human capital. There appear to be very few studies on the internationalisation of HE in conflict-affected contexts and the roles these might have in peacebuilding and social justice.

Thirdly, the internationalisation of HE, the roles of HEIs as producers of knowledge in a global knowledge economy system, the increasing privatisation and commodification of HE, and the impacts and consequences of global and institutional inequalities and hegemonies, both present and past, on international interactions in low-income countries are complex,

intertwined and under-researched. Although power imbalances and inequalities in North-South HE partnerships have been noted, there is limited research that traces the logic behind these and how they are manifested within and between the collaborating HEIs, and the impact and influence they have on the topics, types and forms of collaboration in low-income countries.

Drawing from the literature review presented in this chapter, the following chapter sets out the conceptual frameworks adopted for this research.

3   Conceptual frameworks

This chapter describes the conceptual frameworks used in this study to understand the rationales and drivers of international interactions between Myanmar and UK HEIs and how these relate to social justice within, between and beyond the institutions.

The study adopts two conceptual frameworks. Building on the literature review in the previous chapter on rationales for internationalisation, I present Knight and de Wit's typology of rationales (Knight and de Wit, 1999) as the basis for analysing the intentions, motivations and drivers for international interactions in higher education in Myanmar HEIs and for UK HEIs to engage with Myanmar. After that, drawing on my previous discussion of key concepts and issues in social justice in HE, I lay out an approach to analyse social justice in the international interactions of HEIs in Myanmar, based on Nancy Fraser's theory of social justice.

3.1   Conceptual framework for rationales of international interactions

As noted in the preceding chapter, studies have revealed a wide range of rationales for internationalisation. As Knight (2015) suggests, a deeper understanding of these rationales can provide greater clarity about the benefits and outcomes that HEIs and national governments expect from these activities. As described earlier, Knight and de Wit present four dominant rationales for internationalisation: academic, socio-cultural, economic and political (Knight and de Wit, 1999; de Wit, 2002, 2011). According to De Wit (2011), they "are not mutually exclusive, they may vary in importance by country and region, and their dominance may change over time" (Ibid., 2011, p. 245). These widely-used rationales usefully encompass a range of interactions applicable to differing contexts and have been developed further by Knight (2015) in her recent framework adaptation to include new and emerging perspectives. In the diverse contexts of Myanmar HEIs and their international HEI partners, including the UK, this categorisation enables the capture of different priorities and interests.

A closer examination of the framework reveals further levels of categorisation useful for deeper analysis of the study data. The four main rationales and their sub-categories are summarised in the table below.

Table 1: Four rationales for internationalisation of higher education

Social/Cultural	National cultural identity Intercultural understanding Citizenship development Social and community development
Political	Foreign policy National security Technical assistance Peace and mutual understanding National identity Regional identity
Economic	Economic growth and competitiveness Labor market Financial incentives
Academic	Providing an international dimension to research and teaching Extension of academic horizon Institution building Profile and status Enhancement of quality International academic standards

Sources: Knight (2004) and de Witt (2002)

As I described earlier, rationales for HE internationalisation have changed with time, intertwined in various contexts with aspects of scholarship, colonialisation, geopolitical influence, ideologies and business-driven activities. Knight (2015) notes that the challenges of globalisation in the last decade has resulted in "important and discernible shifts in the rationales driving internationalization" (Knight, 2015, p.3), which the traditional four categories of rationale do not neatly capture, and proposes new, additional, emerging rationales driving internationalisation, which draw out distinctions at national and institutional levels (ibid., 2015). At the national level, these include human resources development, strategic alliances, commercial trade, nation building, and social/cultural development, and at the institutional level, international profile and reputation, student and staff development, income generation, strategic alliances, and research and knowledge production. For the purposes of my approach to the analysis of the data in this study, I have summarised and presented these in Table 2.

Table 2: New emerging rationales for internationalisation

National/Sector rationales	
Human resource development	Building human capital for competitiveness in the knowledge economy; global/regional mobility of labour force; access to/development of the brightest and best
National strategic alliances	Closer geopolitical and economic relations through HE connections
Commercial trade	HE as a key national economic sector, including foreign student recruitment and TNE
Nation-building	HE for nation-building agendas, including democratisation, creating active citizens and leaders, new knowledge for national purposes, social service delivery
Institutional rationales	
International profile and reputation	Building world-wide reputation and brand
Student and staff development	Enhancing international and intercultural skills for greater understanding and employability
Income generation	Internationalisation as a source of revenue, including TNE, student recruitment and development contracts
Strategic alliances	Developing a smaller number of strategic partners for academic, cultural and economic objectives
Research and knowledge production	Acknowledging that international collaboration is necessary to find solutions to global problems

Source: based on Knight (2015)

The division between national and institutional rationales in recent years indicates both the increasing autonomy of institutions in much of the world, but also includes the use of higher education by nations as a mechanism of soft power and for national strategic aims. These rationales encompass a wider politico-economic scope for an analysis of internationalisation from the perspective of the differing economic and political contexts of HE in Myanmar and the UK, and were therefore utilised in this study as part of the analytical framework, in addition to the four commonly used rationales.

Reflecting on the potential research findings in the study's context in Myanmar, it is also important to consider the conceivable intersections and interactions between these rationales, and that while international approaches may seem to align to a distinctly identified rationale

type, there may be other rationales associated or embedded within the motivations of institutions, national policies or individuals that have an impact on HE international interactions. Also, it may be expected that there is a more complex relationship between rationales and the actual outcomes of international interactions, particularly for partners from very different contexts. Activities could result in an array of intended and unintended consequences, driven by seemingly clear objectives (Pawson and Tilley, 1997), perhaps related to global positioning, national and institutional policies and HE system structures. As I discuss in Chapter 5, the critical realist approach that this study takes enables an analysis and interpretation of the complexities and contradictions associated with a range of interrelated perspectives, influences, values and behaviours to be found in international interactions that may go beyond the level of the programme.

3.2 Conceptual framework for social justice

While Knight and de Wit's framework of rationales for internationalisation is useful in understanding what kinds of interaction are happening between Myanmar and UK HEIs and the factors driving them, there are limitations in what that tells us. Knight argues that rationales and the intended outcomes of internationalisation are driven and given shape by the underlying values of institutions and that these need to be much more clearly understood: "There is room for greater reflection and clarity in the articulation of the values, especially cooperation and competition and the positioning of education as a "public" or "private good," in the provision of higher education" (Knight, 2015, p.5).

Furthermore, the rationales framework does not sufficiently explain the power dynamics and social justice aspects of international interactions between UK and Myanmar institutions and academics, and how international interactions in higher education respond to the wider societal context in Myanmar. Both of these aspects of internationalisation are central to my study's research questions. To address these, I employed a theoretical framework which allowed me to situate internationalisation within social justice parameters, which I explain further.

In deciding upon an appropriate social justice framework, several aspects relating to my research context and data were considered. The framework needed to take into account the importance of the political, cultural, historical and social contexts of Myanmar and the UK, ranging from the development and conflict context in Myanmar to the more economically developed and globally connected context of the UK. This requires an expansive analytical

framework in which the wide range of contexts and geographical domains (institutional, local, national and global) could be applied. The work of Fraser on social justice is positioned within this broader contextual frame and has been utilised by scholars to analyse education (Tikly and Barrett, 2011; Novelli, Cardozo and Smith, 2015; Bozalek and Bouhey, 2012).

Fraser's conceptual framing also incorporates a range of social justice dimensions. It has been suggested that in the field of social justice and HE, research has been too narrowly focussed on quantitative measures of redistributive justice, such as the number of minority groups having access to HE, or the proportion of faculty from these groups, but more studies need to focus on explaining the root causes of the systems and social structures that result in unequal distributions, as Morley, Leach and Lugg's (2009) research in their study on HE enrolment in Ghana and Tanzania suggests. Referring back to the three conceptual frameworks for social justice discussed in Chapter 2, Fraser's framing of social justice seems relevant to further understanding participation equity in HE, emphasising, as it does, the underlying structures and systems of cultural and political processes that lead to social (in)justice (Patton, Shahjahan and Osei-Kofi, 2010).

There are close links between Sen's capabilities approach and Fraser's concept of parity of participation. While the capabilities framework implicitly encompasses Fraser's social justice dimension of redistribution and recognition justice, its strength lies in its focus on the individual (Otto and Ziegler, 2006), in contrast to the broader, structural framing that Fraser applies. However, by adopting Fraser's framework as the basis for analysis, aspects of individuals' capabilities and the agency they have to convert opportunities (provided through international interactions in HE) into functionings, or actions, may also be captured. Furthermore, while Sen's capabilities approach tends to be framed in humanistic, personal terms that can reflect more inclusively the complexities of multiple, interconnected social structures at an individual level (Robeyns, 2003), Fraser categorises social justice into three distinct, but related areas that lend themselves to a social justice analysis that engages with larger economic and political landscapes. These areas concatenate well with the dominant rationales identified for internationalisation of higher education, which allows for a combined, relational analysis in this research.

Fraser's conceptual framework for social justice

As I introduced in my literature review of HE and social justice in Chapter 2, Fraser conceptualises social justice through three interrelated dimensions: redistribution, recognition and representation, and proposes that justice depends on social arrangements that are constructed to enable people to interact as equal peers, or have 'parity of participation' (Fraser, 2007). In Fraser's model, redistribution relates to the economic sphere; for social justice to be achieved, resources need to be distributed in a way that enables people to engage equally. Injustice occurs when there is a maldistribution of resources in aspects of economic life, including income, education, health and leisure time (Fraser, 2007; Bozalek and Bouhey, 2012). Cultural justice requires recognition, which entails the absence of factors such as cultural domination of one group over another, disrespect or non-recognition of groups or individuals related to, for example, ethnicity, language, class, caste, gender, age or disabilities (Fraser, 2007). In their analysis of Fraser's work, Bozalek and Bouhey (2012) explain that misrecognition can be institutionalised through "a hierarchical status order in which institutionalized patterns of cultural value depreciate certain attributes associated with people or the activities in which they are engaged" (Ibid., 2012, p.689). The importance of culture in social justice is emphasised by Freire, who claims that "cultural invasion is always an act of violence" (Freire, 1993, p.133), arguing that the people invaded may lose their originality, and results in them conforming to another's (the invader's) values, goals and standards (Ibid., 1993, p.133). Representation refers to political, governance and decision-making processes and structures at different levels, including global and local, national and institutional. It also encompasses rights to make claims relating to justice (Fraser, 2007).

Fraser's social justice framework embraces the importance of global influences on social justice (Fraser, 2007). Keddie (2012) draws attention to the influence of global political movements and suggests that neoliberalism is undermining social justice in education by narrowing down how access, retention and achievement is measured, which sidelines the "broader moral and social purposes of schooling" (Rizvi and Lingard, 2009 cited in Keddie, 2012). This global influence is important to consider in higher education, where arguably, global influences in economic and knowledge terms, are relatively powerful, connected to global markets, research interests and knowledge domains.

Applying Fraser's theoretical framework for social justice to education

As I discussed in Chapter 2, several scholars have related Fraser's social justice framework to education. More recently, Fraser's work has been used to develop a new framework to

analyse the contribution of education towards sustainable peacebuilding in conflict-affected countries, including Myanmar, by a group of researchers at the Universities of Sussex, Amsterdam and Ulster (Novelli, Lopes Cardozo and Smith, 2015). Their 'peace with social justice' analytical model comprises of Fraser's three dimensions, plus a further dimension of reconciliation, which they have termed the 4Rs, in which the authors interpret reconciliation through the following actions: dealing with the past; transitional justice and reparations; forgiveness and understanding, and building positive relations. While Fraser's three dimensions of (in)justice highlight inequities that can be drivers of conflict and demand accountability, restitution and rebalancing, the fourth dimension, reconciliation, demands actions towards and support for understanding, accommodation and forgiveness to promote long-term peace. This difference in response types, the latter based on the notion of 'positive peace' (Galtung, 1975a), highlights an innate tension between Fraser's 3Rs and the fourth R. The 4R model, shown in Figure 4 below, while developed primarily for school education, could also be useful in analysing social justice in higher education in the Myanmar context.

The 4Rs
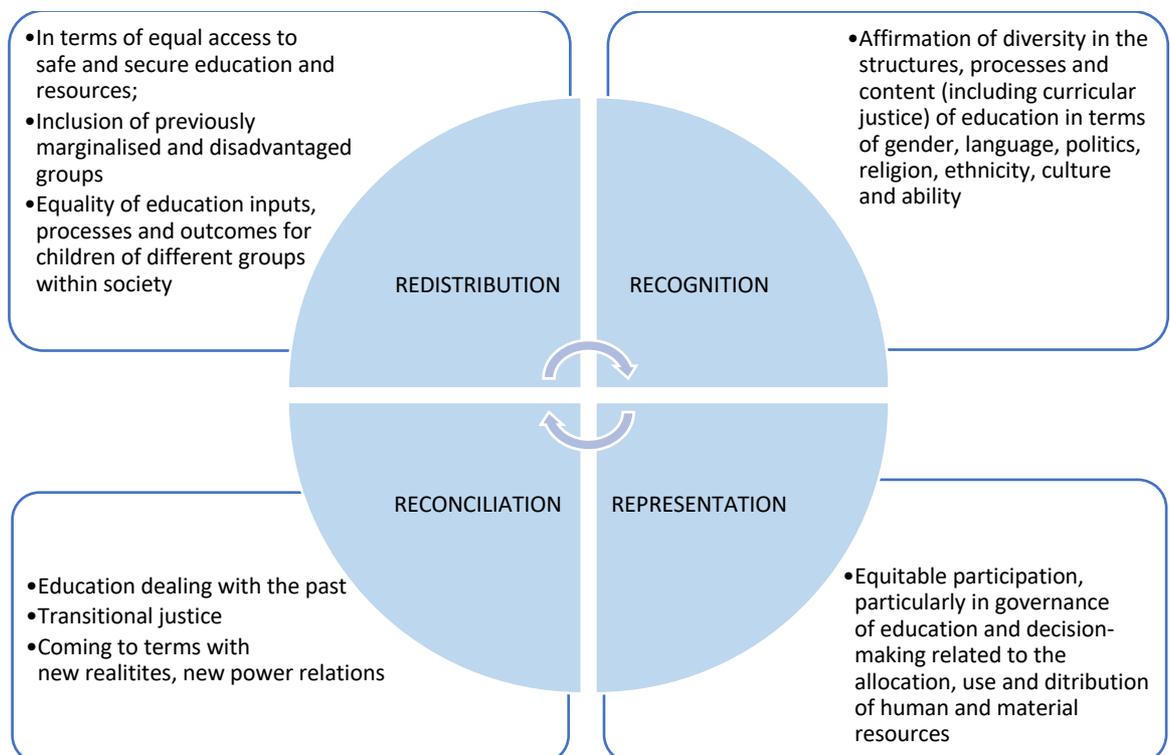
Figure 4: A theoretical framework for analysing the contribution of education to sustainable peacebuilding: 4Rs in conflict-affected contexts. (Source: Novelli, Lopes Cardozo and Smith, 2015)

In consideration of the study's potential findings in the context of international HE, complex links may be expected between all 4Rs. Injustices in redistribution, for instance, may have impacts on representation in HE partnerships, and may surface through situations in which the research grant holder and the location of analytical equipment places a partner in a position to exercise more power and decision-making in the interaction. Furthermore, injustices in international HE interactions in Fraser's 3Rs, when examined in a conflict-affected context like Myanmar, may have unintended consequences on the fourth R, that could perpetuate or deepen conflict in an already deeply divided society, for instance, in the focus of research topic, or privileging or excluding ethnic groups through the selection of students, researchers and institutions in Myanmar to benefit from international activities.

As Novelli (2016) suggests, the 4R approach allows an analysis of inequalities in education to include, but go beyond, the access and quality issues that occupy the discourse in international development for education. Furthermore, the model encompasses both the internal obstacles, which modernisation theory focusses on, and the external, global and regional geopolitical power imbalances, particularly affecting post-colonial low-income countries, of which Myanmar is one, that dependency theory emphasises (Novelli, 2016). By doing so, the broader and deeper relationship of higher education and social justice may be uncovered.

An analytical framework for social justice and international interactions in higher education

In this section, I present potential themes and features to guide an analysis of international interactions in higher education, mapped against the 4Rs of social justice from two perspectives: firstly, in the relationships and structural arrangements of the international interactions of Myanmar HEIs, and secondly, in their contribution towards social justice in society, an 'outward' facing role of universities. The themes and features, developed and drawn from a synthesis of the literature on the role of HE in social justice and peacebuilding (described in Chapter 2) and building on the work of Novelli, Lopes Cardozo and Smith (2015), are intended to provide an indication of the areas that could usefully be examined under each of the 4Rs for HE, and while not a comprehensive nor definitive list of social justice indicators, help to frame, categorise and analyse the data.

3.2.1 Themes related to redistribution

Under Fraser's theory of social justice within my study context of the international interactions of HEIs, I relate redistribution to the division, access and use of resources between HEIs that enable them to interact as equals. Analysis of this aspect of social justice includes tracing the

distribution of funding between partners (for example, mobility grants, research grants, transnational income and fees) and how equipment and facilities are distributed and used. In higher education, production and ownership of knowledge is a key driver of international interaction and therefore, redistribution in the HE context concerns equitable arrangements for intellectual property rights (IPR) and ownership of educational products, including research data, curricula, courses, exams and titles, produced as a result of the international interaction. Access to opportunities, through travel grants or financial support for academic presentations and publication of papers constitutes a further area of redistributive social justice. Under Fraser's model, the time, freedom and capability to make this feasible are also important factors associated with redistribution. Relevant to international interactions are reputational assets and visibility, which can lead to positioning benefits for future opportunities and resources as a result of the interaction, including entry to markets (for edubusiness development, for example), access to resources and research funding. The question of who will benefit from future opportunities and resources as a result of the interaction is also pertinent in an analysis of redistributive social justice in international higher education.

In terms of how international HEI interactions are focussed on and respond to the wider social justice issues in Myanmar's political and social context, the literature points to a range of social justice issues that can present a frame for analysis of social justice as a result of the activities and focus of international interactions. These could include, for example, projects that support fair access to HE through activities that widen participation; a focus on HE system strengthening related to supporting autonomy and improving quality; aligning and contributing to social justice-related research agendas; offering learning opportunities for marginalised and displaced people in Myanmar (e.g., in IDP camps in Myanmar, on the Thai/Myanmar border or in Bangladesh); and informing policy that relates to social justice through research activities. Table 3 below provides a summary of potential themes and features for redistributive justice in this study's context.

Themes and features related to redistribution	
Between Myanmar HEIs and their international partners	**Wider society and system change**
1. How partnership funding is distributed (mobility grants, research grants, transnational income and fees)	1. Providing fair access through activities that widen participation and increase access
2. How equipment and facilitates are distributed and used	2. System strengthening related to autonomy and improving quality

3. How issues of IPR are addressed	3. Aligning with and contributing to development-related research agendas (agriculture, health, law, teacher training, etc.)
4. Ownership of research and educational products (data, curricula, courses, exams and titles)	
	4. New courses aligned to local development needs, including fair and sustainable use of natural resources
5. Positioning: who will benefit from future opportunities and resources as a result of the collaboration? (Entry to markets (edubusiness), access to resources and research funding, national interests in trade/political influence	5. Offering learning opportunities for marginalised and displaced people in Myanmar (eg in IDP camps in Myanmar, on the Thai/Myanmar border and in Bangladesh)
6. Influence on reforms and priorities (privatisation, research areas, teaching approaches, governance)	6. Building capacity in government ministries to enable them to achieve a more equitable HE system
	7. Research and training that addresses inequalities in primary and secondary education to better inform policies and programmes related to the distribution and type of education provision and support in Myanmar

Table 3: Redistribution: examples of social justice themes and features for international interactions in higher education

3.2.2 Themes related to recognition

Social justice requires the absence of cultural domination, disrespect or non-recognition of groups or individuals related to, for example, ethnicity, language, class, caste, gender, age or disabilities (Fraser, 2007). In the context of the relationship, hierarchical structures, processes and arrangements between international HEIs in their engagement with each other and within a global HE frame, these aspects of social justice can be analysed through imbalances in the recognition by HEIs of cultural approaches to learning, teaching and research, recognition of status, position and experience of academics and students involved in the interactions, recognition of local knowledge, and recognition of respective priorities in the activities of the international interaction. Who gains prestige from the activities of international interactions is an important question, and can be indicated, for example, by the recognition of IP and authorship of research papers.

In terms of the 'export' function, international interactions can be assessed through the foci of activities that promote recognition, for example, development of new courses on understanding cultural aspects of social inequality and power relations; contributing to

scholarship in protecting sources and building repositories of cultural assets, knowledge, language and customs; utilising community-led research approaches; and facilitating more equal participation and recognition in regional and global knowledge domains. Table 4 summarises some example themes and features.

Themes and features related to recognition	
Between Myanmar HEIs and their international partners	**Wider society and system change**
1 Recognition of cultural approaches to learning, teaching and research 2 Recognition of status, position and experience of academics, students and managers 3 Recognition of local knowledge 4 Recognition of respective priorities 5 Protecting sources and building repositories of cultural assets, knowledge, language and customs 6 Community-led research approaches 7 Development of new courses on understanding cultural aspects of social inequality and power relations	1 Protecting sources and building repositories of cultural assets, knowledge, language and customs 2 Community-led research approaches 3 Providing new courses on understanding cultural aspects of social inequality and power relations. 4 More equal participation in regional/global knowledge domains

Table 4: Recognition: examples of social justice themes and features for international interactions in higher education

3.2.3 Themes related to representation

Representation in international interactions in HE refers to political, governance and decision-making processes and structures at different levels and geographies, encompassing the global, national, institutional and individual. In my study context, this includes issues around the inclusivity of the relationship between the Myanmar and UK HEIs, including the governance of the international project or partnership: how this is organised and shaped; the equality of representation in decision-making; who chooses the topics and modalities of the activities undertaken; who participates in the international collaboration and in what roles (e.g. learner, teacher, researcher, recipient, principle investigator).

The wider contribution to social justice through representation may develop from activities that enable more equal interconnection with, and participation in, regional/global systems and knowledge domains; strengthening autonomy and resilience; establishing systems and rights

at the university as a free and independent space for critical discourse; providing training or by sharing experiences in governance and leadership within and without the partnership to promote an inclusive, socially cohesive governance structure in the university; adopting an open and democratic procedure for governance of the university; supporting new courses related to social justice and law; contribute to policy through research and using intellectual tools by participating in think tanks, government advisory committees; bringing truth to power. These themes and features are summarised in Table 5 below.

Themes and features related to representation	
Between Myanmar HEIs and their international partners	**Wider society and system change**
1 How the governance of the international partnership is organised and shaped – equality of representation in decision-making	1 Adopting/amending leadership and power distribution to reflect an inclusive, socially cohesive governance structure in the university
2 Who chooses the topic of the interaction	2 Adopting an open and democratic procedure for governance of the university
3 Who participates in the international collaboration and in what roles (learner, teacher, researcher, recipient, principle investigator)	3 New courses related to social justice and law
4 Issues of inclusivity in the partnership	4 Strengthening autonomy and resilience; establish the university as a free and independent space for critical discourse
5 Addressing areas related to access and participation associated with the international engagement in the institution	5 Advisers to the government through research using intellectual tools by participating in think tanks, government advisory committees; bringing truth to power.

Table 5: Representation: examples of social justice themes and features for international interactions in higher education

3.2.4   Themes related to reconciliation

The conflict-affected context of Myanmar can affect an institution's relationship with the international HE community. The presence of conflict in a country, or one that is ruled by an authoritarian regime, can surface ethical issues in international partnerships, for instance, how the humanitarian crisis in Rakhine is recognised and dealt with by foreign HE partners, who are responsive to their own HE constituency at home (including other academics, institution leaders and students) and the global community.

This aspect of social justice within the context of this study also relates to the role of the international HE partners in promoting greater inclusion, communication and collaboration across ethnic, religious and class divides within and beyond the HEIs. This may involve addressing issues related to social inequalities, social cohesion and social transformation in Myanmar, including integration of pro- and anti-government activists and/or persecuted groups (within the institution and in wider society), and fostering democracy, citizenship and social cohesion within the university and within wider society. Further areas include creating space and opportunities in the university through activities that support critical thinking and free speech; developing courses, curricula or research associated with conflict resolution and peace studies; integrating learning with an understanding of conflict, peace processes and human rights; and amending/writing new history courses to reflect, analyse and acknowledge the causes and results of past and present conflict and social inequality.   Table 6 below summarises potential areas related to the reconciliation aspect of social justice in international interactions.

Themes and features related to reconciliation	
Between Myanmar HEIs and their international partners	**Wider society and system change**
1 Promoting greater understanding, inclusion, communication and collaboration across ethnic, religious and class divides within and between the HEIs 2 Developing and questioning narratives of past and current conflict in Myanmar through a need to understand the context and develop cultural relations between partners 3 Advocate, develop the space, and support the capacity for critical thinking skills 4 New/amended courses and research related to understanding present and past conflict and causes of political and social inequality; conflict resolution, peace studies; integrating learning with an understanding of conflict, peace processes and human rights	1 Research or activities related to issues that are the cause of grievances and discrimination 2 Integration of marginalised and persecuted individuals and groups 3 Fostering citizenship, social cohesion and understanding, and democratic practices and within the university and with wider society

Table 6: Reconciliation: examples of social justice themes and features for international interactions in higher education

While the social justice themes and features above are not all-inclusive, I present them as indicative areas for my analysis.

3.3   Summary

I began this chapter by presenting two conceptual frameworks that I use in my analysis to understand the types of international interactions of Myanmar HEIs, and of UK HEIs in their engagement with Myanmar, and how they relate to social justice. The first framework was Knight and de Wit's typology of rationales for internationalisation (Knight and de Wit, 1999), expanded by new emerging rationales identified by Knight (2015). This was followed by a discussion of Fraser's theoretical framework based on parity of participation, adapted by Novelli, Lopes Cardoso and Smith (2015). I then presented indicative themes and features for each of the four dimensions of social justice as a guide for my analysis of international interactions in HE.

In the next chapter, I turn my attention to the research context in Myanmar, positing the current situation of the HE sector within the wider socio-economic, historical, political and conflict-affected context of Myanmar. Following that, I move on to describe the research design and methodological approach used in this study, which was, to a large extent, influenced by specific contextual considerations of HE in Myanmar.

4 Research context in Myanmar

In order to analyse the relationship of HEIs to social justice in Myanmar, it is important to understand the political, social and historical context of its higher education system. In this section I provide a short overview of Myanmar's socio-economic situation, examine the legacy and impact of colonial and military rule on the HE system, give an account of how universities have been caught up in conflict with the country's ruling authoritarian and military regimes, and the role of university students and staff in Myanmar's struggle for social justice and democracy. Then, drawing on the emerging data on social inclusion and the political context, I highlight social inequalities relating to the current higher education system, and reflect on new reform directions in higher education, including the role of internationalisation.

Before I start, it is interesting to note the limited amount of published research on higher education in Myanmar. In fact, Myanmar education, in general, appears not to have received much scholarly attention (Lall and South, 2014). Literature searches show that while research in the fields of political theory, conflict/war studies and student activism have, in some cases, referenced HE in Myanmar, only few examine aspects of the HE system itself. In addition to the published literature, therefore, I have drawn information from a range of formal and informal sources, including Myanmar government documents, sector plans and reviews, international development and media reports, formal and informal meetings I attended in my job at the British Council in Myanmar with Myanmar university staff, international development partners, NGOs and government officials, British Council-convened HE policy dialogues, and communications with Myanmar higher education stakeholders.

At this point, it is useful to clarify the definitions of the terms 'higher education institution' and 'university' as they are understood in the contemporary HE system in Myanmar and how they are used in this study. Most degree-awarding HEIs in the public HE sector are formally recognised and commonly referred to as universities by the Myanmar government, students and employees. However, private HE institutions in Myanmar are not permitted to identify themselves as universities, even if they are degree-awarding. In this study, therefore, in the Myanmar context, the term 'higher education institution' is used to describe the whole range of different types of institution (both public and private) which fall under the OECD definition provided at the start of Chapter 2, but the term 'university' in the Myanmar context is used only to describe the public HEIs. It should also be noted that the scope of this research does not include the 23 teacher education colleges in Myanmar, which are also, under the OECD

definition, categorised as HEIs. Historically, these colleges have been separate from the university system in Myanmar, and although at the time this study was being conducted, administrative responsibility for teacher education colleges was transferred to the Department for Higher Education, in this thesis, reference to Myanmar HEIs does not include teacher education colleges.

4.1   Myanmar: a socio-economic overview

My research context is Myanmar, a country emerging from 54 years of military-backed authoritarian rule. Neighbouring India, China, Bangladesh, Laos and Thailand, Myanmar is the second largest country, after Indonesia, in South East Asia, endowed with natural resources, including oil and gas, minerals, gems, fresh water, coastal fisheries and wood. Yet it remains amongst the least developed countries in the world, ranked 150 out of 187 countries on the Human Development Index (UNDP, 2016), with significant horizontal and vertical inequalities across ethnic, religious, gender and geographical domains (Burke *et al.*, 2017; Government of Myanmar and World Bank, 2017; Independent Fact-Finding Mission, 2018a). Almost a third of the population were estimated to be living below the national poverty line in 2015 (ADB, 2019) and less than a third (32.4%) of households had electricity for basic lighting (2014 figures) (Myanmar Ministry of Immigration and Population, 2014). Nevertheless, it has one of Asia's fastest economic growth rates at 7% (World Bank, 2016). There are vast inequalities in wealth (Government of Myanmar and World Bank, 2017).

Myanmar is a highly diverse country, with 111 living, indigenous languages (Lewis, Simons and Fennig, 2016). By religion, the country is comprised of 89% Buddhist, 4% Christian, 4% Muslim and 3% others (Myanmar Ministry of Immigration and Population, 2016). The government recognises 135 ethnic groups as 'National Races', but some are excluded, including the Rohingya, a Muslim ethnic group in Rakhine State. Over one million people have either partial or no citizenship in Myanmar, which denies them access to basic rights and services, including healthcare, education and democratic representation and highly restricted freedom of movement (Carr, 2018; Independent Fact-Finding Mission, 2018a).

Myanmar has some of the most enduring and protracted civil conflicts in the world, some persisting for nearly seven decades, dating from the country's independence from British colonial rule after World War Two. These conflicts are not confined to the periphery, but exert considerable influence on the country's political and social life, and national level policies and structures. Out of Myanmar's 330 townships, 118 are affected by conflict, comprising over

one third of the country and involving at least 20 ethnic armed organisations (EAOs) and militias in violent opposition to the central government (Burke *et al.*, 2017). Currently, it is estimated that over 800,000 Rakhine Muslims have fled to refugee camps in Bangladesh (Egreteau and Mangan, 2018), and over 240,000 people from other conflict zones in Myanmar are internally displaced in refugee camps, especially along the Thai/Myanmar border (OCHA, 2019). There are multiple causes of Myanmar's conflicts, mainly based on identity and belonging, pro-democracy movements against military oppression, religious divides and control over resources (Lall and Win, 2013; Cheesman, 2017; Egreteau and Mangan, 2018).

International aid to Myanmar was peripheral for much of the 1960s to 1980s under isolationist socialist military regimes (Carr, 2018; Sheader, 2018). Following the violent crackdown by the military on political protests in 1988, almost all international aid was withdrawn. In 2011, under the military-backed reformist government, the new State Law and Order Restoration Council (SLORC), led by President and former General Thein Sein, initiated a process of partial economic and political liberalisation. These reforms signalled a 'post-junta' era and persuaded the European Union and the US to lift some of the decades-long economic sanctions imposed on Myanmar (Egreteau and Mangan, 2018). By 2015, Myanmar had become the seventh largest recipient of global aid, from 79th in 2010, receiving US $1.2 billion (Burke *et al.*, 2017). Education aid comprises around 6% of bilateral Official Development Assistance (ODA) to Myanmar (2011-2016) (Jolliffe and Speers Mears, 2016, p.28) of which higher education receives a very small fraction, as I discuss further in my findings.

Having provided a broad overview of Myanmar's national socio-economic context, I now turn my attention to the education sector in Myanmar, describing the history of the HE system, its relationship to conflict and its current condition, issues and reforms.

4.2   Myanmar's education system from colonial times to the present

The British ruled Burma as a colonial state annexed to British India for 124 years, from 1824 to 1948. Colonialism destroyed Burma's traditional education system, which, for many centuries, was largely provided by Buddhist monasteries, mostly for followers of Theravada Buddhism in the majority Bamar ethnic group, located mainly in the lowlands. The relatively high rates of literacy in Myanmar in pre-colonial times were attributed to the effectiveness of monastic education (Cheesman, 2010). While most students were Buddhist, monastic education was free and open to all ethnic groups and religions. However, it is argued that the education

provided was ideologically driven and part of a project to assimilate non-Buddhist ethnic groups into the lowland Bamah majority culture (Ibid., 2010, pp.48-49).

Under colonial rule, the British established new schools with the purpose of providing bureaucrats and clerks for the colonial administration (Lwin, 2000). The medium of instruction was English, and English language proficiency became essential to gain entry to government jobs and the professions (Ibid., 2000). These schools were positioned as the 'best' education institutions in the country, usurping the legitimacy and reputation of ethnic and religious education, which came to be regarded by the public as sub-standard (Lwin, 2000; Cheesman, 2010). With the most valued education out of reach of most Burmese due to high fees and competition, the demand for education declined and, consequently, literacy rates plummeted in British administered areas. The British continued to use education as a tactical political instrument, deliberately undermining Buddhist influence and power by further devaluing Buddhist schools and expanding the non-Buddhist state system of schooling in local languages (Lwin, 2000).

The legacy of colonialism has deeply affected the structure and condition of Myanmar's current education system. Inequitable access to British administration church schools taught in English, the decline of Buddhist monastic school enrolment and the emergence of more ethnic community schools in the 1930s to the end of colonial rule in 1947, resulted in an education system that was highly stratified, divided along ethnic, religious and language lines (Lwin, 2000; Shah and Lopes Cardozo, 2018). This remains the case today, with three parallel school systems in place: the state, monastic and ethnic systems. Most children are taught through the state system, which constitutes 80% of all schooling in Myanmar. These 43,000 government-funded schools (staffed by 280,000 teachers, of which 83% are female) serve 8.9 million students, who are instructed mainly through the Myanmar language (the language of the majority Bamah population), with some subjects taught in English. The monastic system, comprising 1,255 schools, provides education for over 150,000 children (Myanmar Ministry of Religion and Culture, 2019), although others put this figure higher (see, for instance, Tin and Stenning, 2015), many from poor families, and the ethnic education system, run by ethnic groups (including Kachin, Shan, Mon, Kayin, Kayah and others) in their local languages, with minimal financial and training support, teaches over 240,000 children (Jolliffe, 2014). There are very few ethnic and monastic schools above primary level, and although there are reports of a small number of higher education institutions in Karen refugee camps, the qualifications

obtained are not recognised in the Myanmar national system (Lall and South, 2014; Jolliffe and Speers Mears, 2016).

Under successive military regimes, education was critically underfunded and the quality very low, with schools in dire physical condition and teachers underpaid and undertrained. In ethnic areas, education continued to be highly contested, with ethnic groups resisting ideological, linguistic and cultural assimilation into the central government system and the Bamah-dominated Myanmar nationalist project (Lwin, 2000; South and Lall, 2016). This remains the case today.

Since the start of liberalisation in 2011 and then the elections in 2015, which brought to power a quasi-democratic government led by the National League for Democracy (NLD), education has risen up the political agenda and become a central reform priority as a driver and enabler for social and economic development. In the first two years of the NLD government, the Ministry of Education was restructured, a new education law enacted (and an amendment to the law in 2015) and an ambitious five-year National Education Strategic Plan (NESP) (2016-21) put in place to modernise the curriculum, improve learning outcomes and expand access and equity of education across pre-primary, primary, secondary, technical and vocational training and higher education. Education funding, although still low compared to the regional Asia average, was increased from 0.7-0.8% of the government budget in 2011 to approximately 2.7% (OECD, 2016; ADB, 2017). However, the substantial international development assistance committed to education development through the implementation of the NESP has, by and large, ignored the reform of the higher education sector.

Having briefly introduced the history, evolution and current political position of education in Myanmar, I now turn my attention to the higher education sector, the focus of my research.

4.3   Myanmar's universities, colonialism and conflict

The HE sector in Myanmar, with its contemporary issues and challenges, has been shaped to a large extent by its long relationship with colonialism, conflict and social activism. Universities in Myanmar have been some of the most politically tense and contested spaces in the country over the last 100 years. Throughout decades of successive military-backed authoritarian regimes, many of the country's universities became centres of opposition, resistance and challenge to the state and their academics and students subjected to repression, imprisonment and violent attacks.

Universities as spaces of opposition and social justice activism

Universities have played a particularly important and pivotal role in social justice and pro-democracy movements in Myanmar (Metro, 2017), the hub of which was the campus of Yangon University (previously Rangoon University), from its inauguration in 1920 to the present day. Rangoon College, as it was first known, was established by the British colonial regime in 1878, as an affiliated college of the University of Calcutta. Graduates of the college entered the British civil service or went on to study in London and returned to Burma to support the colonial administration (CESR, 2013; Rives, 2014; University of Yangon, 2019). In 1920, the college was amalgamated with a Baptist college, Judson College, to form Rangoon University. The university grew over the next twenty years, with the addition of several affiliated, semi-autonomous colleges: Mandalay College in 1920, a teacher training college and a medical college in 1930, and an agricultural college in 1938 (CESR, 2013). As I discussed in the preceding chapter, the rationales behind the establishment of HEIs as part of the British colonial project is well studied and the foundation of Myanmar's HE system is a clear example of the colonial process.

However, the strategy for the development and concentration of an intellectual elite on the university campus for the purposes of supporting the colonial project had other consequences. In the 1920s and 1930s, university students began to organise themselves against the colonial regime. The first student-led anti-authority action occurred in 1920 with a boycott at the opening of Rangoon University in protest against the university's elitism and the British-dominated university governance structure (Kyaw, 1993), one of the first acts of defiance in Myanmar against British colonial rule. Over the next two decades, the university campus became a cradle of nationalist ideas and political intellectual thought. The Rangoon University Students' Union (RUSU) was established in the 1920s, followed by the All Burma Federation of Student Unions (ABFSU) in 1935. These two student unions were critical in the anti-colonial movement, and in subsequent post-colonial anti-military protests, and led to Burma's independence in 1948, producing key political leaders, including Aung San (the father of Aung San Suu Kyi) who became the first national leader of the Burmese opposition after the Second World War. Aung San, who was assassinated in 1947, left a powerful legacy in the way students see themselves as champions of social justice, still deeply rooted in the university student psyche today (Koon-Hong, 2014; Rives, 2014), even though student activism appears to be declining.

In the decade following independence, Myanmar's education system is reported to have flourished and Rangoon University was reputed to be among the most prestigious in South East Asia[3]. The HE system continued to expand, with the establishment in 1959 of Mandalay University as the country's second university with its own set of affiliated colleges (University of Mandalay, 2018). However, this relatively brief period of progress was curtailed abruptly in 1962, when a military coup brought in a socialist dictatorship under General Ne Win, which heralded an era of exertion of state control over education. The new military government annulled the University Act which had until then protected the autonomy of the two universities in Rangoon and Mandalay and brought them directly under state control. This drew over 2,000 university students from Rangoon University onto the streets in protest, triggering a brutal response by the military, resulting in the dynamiting and destruction of the Student Union building on the Rangoon University campus (Koon-Hong, 2014). This was the start of what came to be known as the 50-year 'War on Students' (Rives, 2014).

Under the military regime's 'Burmese Way to Socialism' policy, the focus of education, including HE, shifted towards professional and vocational training to supply the skills for a new socialist workforce (CESR, 2013). The professional training faculties of the universities, including medicine, agriculture, economics and education, were established as separate HEIs with their own degree-awarding status. The pared down Rangoon and Mandalay Universities became 'arts and science universities', teaching and researching the liberal arts, science and law, as they remain today. As part of the 'Burmification' of education, the medium of instruction of higher education was changed from English to Burmese (CESR, 2013).

Despite attempts to de-unify and reconfigure higher education, anti-military sentiment prevailed in the student body. Social justice and equity issues sparked student-led protests throughout the 1970s, often drawing support from large numbers of the Burmese public, on issues including food shortages, rises in living costs and, in 1974, protests against the refusal of the military regime to grant a state funeral to the ex-UN Secretary-General U Thant. While all were marked by anti-government and pro-democracy overtones (Koon-Hong, 2014; Rives, 2014), the focus of their activism may be more accurately ascribed to social injustice and a notion of 'unfairness' rather than as overtly political (Metro, 2017; Sheader, 2018).

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[3] This view is widely cited by scholars and Myanmar education stakeholders, but it has not been possible to source a root reference.

By far the largest anti-government protests occurred in 1988, in response to growing and widespread civil discontent at the government's mismanagement of the economy, authoritarian rule, corruption, and finally triggered by the sudden demonetisation of the national currency, which wiped out an estimated 80% of currency without compensation (Seekins, 2007). The peak of the protests occurred on 8 August 1988 (which later became known as the 8888 Uprising, and the students who took part the '88 Generation'), involving hundreds of thousands of people protesting on the streets of Yangon. The military responded brutally and decisively, killing thousands of people. The military retaliation against student leaders in 1988, many of them imprisoned for decades, and the regime's punitive actions in the years following the uprising, had a profound impact on universities, students and academics.

The systematic suppression of social activism in Myanmar's universities

After 1988, under the authoritarian government State Law and Order Restoration Council (SLORC), and later, the State Peace and Development Council (SPDC), all universities were closed for two years (Rives, 2014) and gatherings of more than six people became illegal in Burma (Sheader, 2018). On their re-opening, however, the universities by default became the only places other than monasteries where larger groups could come together (Ibid., 2018), the regime having shut down all other potential opposition forces (Koon-Hong, 2014). The university campus persisted as a critical space for discussion and debate on democracy and human rights, and students remained a recurring headache for the military regime.

Further student protests occurred in 1996 and 1998, and consequently, for much of the 1990s many of Myanmar's universities were closed for extended periods of time. Yangon (formally Rangoon) University and many others in the city were shut down for ten out of the twelve years from 1988 to 2000, and Yangon and Mandalay Universities were prohibited from enrolling undergraduate students, a situation that was only reversed in 2015. During this time, in order to suppress student and staff activism against the regime, the HE sector was again dismantled and reorganised (Lall, 2008, p.132; Rives, 2014), structurally, pedagogically and by access, resulting in the HE system that exists today. Students and staff from the existing 32 HEIs were transferred to 156 newly-built institutions or campuses outside the main urban centres (Shah and Lopes Cardozo, 2018, p.79), a faculty retraining camp was set up to indoctrinate, re-educate and control university staff (Rives, 2014), and new, but poorly resourced universities were opened in conflict-affected ethnic regions and states. The control and governance of the different specialist universities were divided between fifteen line

ministries, placing the medical universities under the Ministry of Health, for instance, leaving only the non-technical Arts and Science universities under Ministry of Education.

The teaching, learning and research in universities were all profoundly affected. Curricula were battened down to narrow texts, critical thinking was removed from the learning process and rote learning became the main pedagogical approach, a situation that continues to this day (Thaung Win, 2015). Research was minimised or completely eliminated in most institutions, and isolationist policies suppressed international academic contact and collaboration.

Access to the country's top universities was highly restricted, admission often connected with rewards for political loyalty and compliance (Lorch, 2007) and large numbers of students were channelled into a vast new distance education system. This had the dual, politically-expedient purposes of pacifying students by increasing HE access (a persistent key student demand) and removing them from campuses where they might organise against the regime. As a result, the quality of higher education in Myanmar deteriorated and the ability of universities to function as learning institutions was profoundly eroded and undermined (King, 2013). Government surveillance of university staff ensured they were not inciting students to become politically active (Martin, 2015). During the same period, the government opened and expanded army higher education institutions for army-affiliated students to "obtain military ascendancy as the dominant force in Burmese society by producing army officers with a better education than it was possible for civilian students to obtain within Burma" (Rives, 2014, p.221).

Despite these measures to suppress and contain resistance to government, student protests have continued to play a visible role in social justice, the most recent in 2015 in response to aspects of the new Education Law. Concerns, articulated by the National Network for Education Reform (NNER), a network of civil society education groups, that the law had been developed top-down without adequate consultation with wider society (Saning, 2016), sparked student protests across the country. Again, student demands were characterised by issues related to social justice, particularly inclusion, diversity and autonomy (see Figure 5 below). In the development of the law, student protests resulted in government negotiations and a subsequent Amendment to the Education Law in 2015, responding to some but not all of the students' demands.

Figure 5: The 11 demands of protesting students in response to the Education Law (2015)

1	Inclusion of teachers and students in legislation process of education policies and laws
2	The right to freely establish and operate student and teacher unions
3	Establishment of National Education Commission and University Coordination Committee
4	Self-determination on educational affairs of individual state/regions and schools
5	Modifying current examination and university matriculation system
6	Modifying teaching methods to ensure freedom for thinking and self-studying of students
7	Ensure freedom for the practice of ethnic languages and mother tongue based multi-lingual education for ethnic populations and tribes
8	Inclusive education for all children including children with disabilities
9	Resumption of enrollment for students previously expelled due to the student uprisings
10	Allocation of 20 percent of national budget for education
11	Free compulsory education up to middle school level rather than primary level

Source: Burma Partnership: www.burmapartnership.org/updates-national-education-law-student-protest/

Myanmar's authorities continue to regard student activists as threats to security and stability, as recent research on Myanmar's youth by Higgins and Lopes Cardozo (2019) highlights. The authors found that youth are still perceived by sections of the government as "subversive of social and national order, needing containment through monitoring, surveillance and regulation" (Higgins and Lopes Cardozo, 2018, pp.196-197). However, the same study uncovered a range of different wider societal attitudes towards youth, ranging from troublemakers to important agents in peacebuilding and national development (Ibid., 2019, p.199). I will return to the issue of the perceived role of students in peacebuilding and conflict by the Myanmar Ministry of Education in Chapter Eight.

Having provided an historical account of the higher education sector in Myanmar, how it has been affected by military rule and conflict, and its pivotal national role in the struggle for social justice, in the next section I present a brief overview of the country's higher education system as it exists today with its main challenges and issues. I describe the drivers and focus of current higher education reforms, and how these interact with internationalisation.

4.4   Overview of the Myanmar higher education system

The higher education system in Myanmar is highly centralised. The 171 higher education institutions (HEIs) are controlled by eight ministries[4] and differentiated into two broad categories: the technical and professional universities (such as medicine, engineering, agriculture and economics universities) and the Arts and Science universities. The latter type makes up the majority and offer a range of subjects in the sciences, humanities and social sciences, including geography, biology, chemistry, English, Myanmar, anthropology, history and law. All 171 higher education institutions are publicly funded and operate on very low levels of government grant.

The higher education system is poor by global standards (Lwin, 2007; CESR, 2013, 2014). The curricula of most university courses are outdated and unaligned to the needs of the country (Lwin, 2007; CESR, 2013; Thaung Win, 2015). In the World Economic Forum's Global Competitiveness Index for 2015-16, Myanmar's higher education and training was ranked 138 out of 140 countries (World Economic Forum, 2015, p.13). This condition is well-acknowledged in Myanmar. In a speech at a Myanmar-UK higher education policy dialogue convened by the British Council in 2013, Aung San Suu Kyi, the then leader of the opposition, noted that "the standard of our university education has fallen so low that graduates have nothing except a photograph of their graduation ceremony to show for the years they spent at university" (Aung San Suu Kyi, cited in King, 2013, p.33).

The higher education GER is low, at 15.96%, (UNESCO, 2019) comprising of 636,342 students in the academic year 2015-16[5]. Students enter university to study at undergraduate level at the relatively young age of 16 years old[6] after passing the matriculation exam at the end of upper secondary school. University fees are nominal at around US $0.50 per semester. However, there are additional associated costs related to study guides and private tuition.

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[4] Ministries controlling HEIs: Defence; Border Affairs; Religious Affairs and Culture; Agriculture, Livestock and Irrigation; Transport and Communications, Natural Resources and Environmental Conservation; Health and Sport; and Education. The Ministry of Education directly controls 60 HEIs.

[5] Ministry of Education figures, provided to British Council

[6] The entry age for university is set to change to 18 over the next 3-5 years as the basic education reforms in the NESP increase schooling (primary, lower secondary and upper secondary) from 10 to 12 years.

A defining feature of Myanmar's higher education system is the remarkably large proportion of students in distance education, over 400,000 students[7], comprising approximately two-thirds of total HE enrolment, who study through two distance education universities. The low quality of distance education has been noted (CESR, 2013; King, 2013; Myanmar Ministry of Education, 2016a). It is widely understood that distance education degrees could be, and mostly are, obtained by only three weeks of study over three years, students having to attend the compulsory one week-long pre-examination courses held each year at local universities. The ready availability of model assignment papers, which can be bought cheaply on the street, and reported frequent leakage and repetition of exam questions means that students can obtain a degree at low cost with minimum effort while working full-time, and is now a preferred mode of study for many Myanmar students. A study by the UK Open University commissioned by the British Council found that some distance education students were also enrolled on foreign TNE courses at private Myanmar institutions, enabling them simultaneously to gain both a Myanmar-recognised degree as well as a foreign qualification.

English is the official medium of instruction in Myanmar's universities. This had been the case from colonial times, but replaced by the Myanmar language in 1962 under the socialist military junta. In 1982, Myanmar was again replaced by English (CESR, 2013). The general level of English language proficiency, however, is very weak in both staff and students, a result of low quality teaching of English in secondary schools. Despite this, all textbooks and exams are in English, at a language level too high for the majority of students and staff. University students on most courses learn from a single textbook, accompanied by a study guide, handbook and private tuition. It is reported that, in general, students do not need to use libraries or any other sources of subject material, but rely on the rote memorisation in English of the handbook, which contains all the information needed to pass the exam. In my observations at several HEIs, most lectures appear to be conducted in the Myanmar language to explain and translate the content of the English textbooks. This critical language issue, noted by others, has a severe impact on the quality of learning and teaching in Myanmar's universities (King, 2013). This is also important in internationalisation and research, to which I return in Chapter Eight.

Although one of the goals of the new education reforms is to eventually grant autonomy to universities, this is not currently in place. Universities are managed under a restrictive system

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[7] Figures provided by the two distance universities for a British Council commissioned report on distance education reform in Myanmar conducted by the UK Open University in 2016.

of permissions and instructions issued from the Ministry of Education and the other line ministries. At the time of this research, rectors and senior managers in universities have virtually no decision-making power in areas including staffing and promotion, the degrees they offer, research, infrastructure investments, selection of students and budgeting. A gradual and phased introduction of autonomy is expected to change this, initially in the leading universities, particularly in research and institution-based selection of students. It was noted at a recent regional South-East Asia HE policy dialogue, in which key Myanmar HEIs participated, that the lack of autonomy was a significant impediment to internationalisation (SHARE, 2017). While some of the leading universities have received some degree of autonomy and extra funding to upgrade their facilities, particularly at Yangon University, there has been little support in changing the ideological mindset of HE leadership to assert their emerging independence and move away from legacies of authoritarian control (Esson and Wang, 2018).

Access to higher education is highly unequal

The higher education system reflects the considerable inequalities present in Myanmar society. Analysis of the Myanmar Integrated Household Living Conditions Survey 2009-10 data found that youth from poor households are highly under-represented (Myanmar Ministry of Education, 2016a) and the cost of tuition fees, study guides, boarding costs and other auxiliary expenses a significant barrier to higher education (CESR, 2013; Myanmar Ministry of Education, 2016a). There is very low enrolment for students with disabilities (Thaung Win, 2015).

While figures on the ethnicity and religious affiliation of students and staff in HE are not in the public domain, the significant inequalities in access and completion rates downstream in primary and secondary education make it highly likely that this is reflected in HE enrolment figures. Only 52.2% of students progress to secondary education (ADB, 2015, p.229), reduced further to only 30% by the end of grade 11, the final year of upper secondary schooling. Of these, only around one third pass the matriculation exam needed to enter higher education (Myanmar Ministry of Education, 2016, p.100)[8]. Indeed, in the 2017-18 academic year, out of 789,845 students who sat the matriculation exam, only 259,190 passed, a rate of 33%

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[8] The Minister of Education often gives the example that of 100 students that start primary school, only 52 progress to secondary school. Of these, only 30 complete secondary school, of which 10 pass the matriculation exam. I would also add that of these 10, only around 4 attend campus universities, while the remaining 6 enrol in the very poor quality distance education system.

(Myanmar News Agency, 2018). The remaining 67% who fail the matriculation exam leave school with no qualifications, as failure in even one subject out of the six needed for matriculation results in an overall fail mark. This situation has probably led to a highly unrepresentative higher education system, privileging the more wealthy, urban, Bamar Buddhist majority, particularly in medicine and engineering at the country's most prestigious institutions. Figures on matriculation pass rates starkly reflect some of these inequities: in 2018, 40.22% of Mandalay students and 37.2% of Yangon students taking the matriculation exam passed, while in Chin and Rakhine, two conflict-affected areas, the rates were 19.04% and 17.16%, respectively[9].

Unequal access to HE has also arisen from the consequences of the development of separate, parallel ethnic systems of education, described earlier, which are not aligned to the government school system (Medail and Dofegnies, 2017; Lall and South, 2014). Lall and South (2014) report that an unintended consequence of the Karen education system, for instance, developed with the support of NGOs on the Myanmar/Thai border has created obstacles for Karen students to enter the Myanmar HE system because of language (Karen education is in the Karen (Sgaw) languages and English). As Myanmar language is not taught, students are not able to sit the Myanmar language matriculation exam, so cannot enter HE. The authors conclude that the Karen education system "has thus helped to reproduce a separatist identity among its students" (Ibid., 2014, p.308). This is in contrast to the Mon system of mixed language schools which teach Myanmar at secondary level, allowing them to integrate into the HE system.

The Rohingya in Rakhine State are particularly severely discriminated against in higher education. In addition to the low matriculation pass rate, multiple barriers have resulted in very low HE participation rates, including lack of national identity cards, which exclude many from the education system, restrictions on movement and security issues. In the UN's report on Myanmar Rakhine, the authors note "Rohingya students have not been able to enrol at Sittwe University since 2012, effectively removing access to higher education. It is a violation of the right to education and a powerful tool to ensure cross-generational marginalisation." (Independent Fact-Finding Mission, 2018b, p.8). On a visit in November 2017 to Sittwe University, Rakkhine State's largest HEI, I was told by the rector that no Muslim students were currently enrolled in the university as full-time students, and only 33 Muslim students out of a

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[9] Figures provided to the British Council by the Ministry of Education

Rakhine State total of 18,000 students were enrolled in distance education[10]. As all distance education students who study science degrees have to attend weekend laboratory classes at a university near them, Rohingya students, whose movements are restricted, are in effect only able to study arts and humanities degrees. Although the Ministry of Education has enabled a limited number of distance education teachers to deliver exam preparation classes to Muslim students in nearby townships, this only enabled 48 students in Nov 2017 to take their graduation exams.

Gender Balance in Higher Education

Another distinctive feature of Myanmar's HE system is the striking gender imbalance. According to the CESR, 82.6% of academic staff and 60% of students in 2012 were female (CESR, 2013). My own observations in Myanmar HEIs support this. The reasons for this imbalance have not been adequately researched, but academic staff are generally attributed to low salaries and status issues[11] (Ibid., 2013). Interestingly, in distance education, the gender ratio is more evenly spread, compared to full-time campus enrolment (Ibid., 2013).

Higher education remains marginalised in peacebuilding and development

As we have seen, education, including higher education, has been deeply implicated in ideological and political struggles in Myanmar and strongly associated with issues of ethnicity, religion and social justice. Access to high quality and unbiased education remains a central issue in peace negotiations and demands by all the ethnic regions and armed groups in Myanmar, who see education as a foundation for economic growth, cultural identity and a basic human right that has been denied them or been impeded under the national military regime. However, South and Lall note that there has been little attempt to leverage the role of education in peacebuilding:

> "Thus far, those engaged in the broader movement of political reform in Myanmar have largely addressed education and peace building as separate issues; likewise, state, international (donor) and other actors in the peace process have mostly ignored issues of language and education" (South and Lall, 2016, p.129).

Furthermore, it has been argued that inequalities in education in Myanmar "seem to have been inadequately acknowledged by those discussing the rejuvenation of the higher education system" (Sadan, 2014, p.70), a grievance which, it is suggested, has been a causal factor in the

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[10] Visit briefing document prepared by the Ministry of Education Myanmar 2017
[11] From personal conversations with senior managers in Myanmar HEIs

formation of armed opposition movements in Myanmar's ethnic areas (Sadan, 2014), and which has also been reported in other countries in the literature, as I discussed in Chapter 2.

Yet higher education has not been entirely absent from the peacebuilding and development discourse in Myanmar. During the period of the expansion of HE following student-led anti-government protests, the authorities set out to establish at least three HEIs in all of Myanmar's conflict-affected states (Lall, 2008). Depending on political perspectives, this can be seen as either a genuine attempt to redress inequity, or underlies a political rationale to control and quell ethnic student activism. Some view the continued poor conditions of universities in conflict-affected states as a deliberate policy to undermine ethnic youth, one oft-cited example being the high levels of heroin addiction reported at Myitchyna University in Kachin State (Kachin News Group, 2009; Kachin Women's Association Thailand, 2014), which has seen conflict over the last 60 years. As university admissions in Myanmar, with the exception of the top national and professional universities, operate on a catchment area basis, the conditions at Myitchyna University effectively excludes many ethnic Kachin youth from higher education, while appearing to provide equitable access and opportunity. Some have suggested that allowing heroin use at Myitkyina University is a deliberate military policy to prevent challenge to the state, as articulated by a Myitchyna activist who reportedly commented: "Myitkyina University has been producing Kachin leaders for decades. But now most of our recent Kachin graduates are heroin junkies. What better way to undermine the Kachin political opposition?"(Kachin News Group, 2009, p.8)[12]

New reforms in higher education and the role of internationalisation

In 2013, increasing economic liberalisation and a critical need for a higher skilled workforce, the military-backed Thein Win government commissioned a comprehensive education sector review (CESR), with the support of international education aid agencies, INGOs and development sector organisations, including UNESCO, JICA, Australian Aid, DFID, World Bank, ADB and the British Council, among others. These produced a series of analytical reports on each education sector, including higher education, and started to fill the considerable gap in education data. While the CESR produced valuable information on the conditions and challenges of the education system to enable more evidence-based reform strategies, the

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[12] It should be noted that the conflict situation in Kachin is complex, news outlets prone to political propaganda and the sources of these reports cannot be verified independently.

process itself has been widely criticised for being dominated by foreign experts[13]. Since then, efforts to rebalance the ownership of education reforms in the direction of the Myanmar government, and the establishment of formal education sector working groups, have improved the coordination and transparency of interactions and agreements between international development partners and the Ministry of Education.

In 2016, informed by the CESR, a five-year National Education Strategic Plan (NESP) was developed, providing strategic goals and a road map for education development from 2016 - 2021 (Myanmar Ministry of Education, 2016a). Although the NESP has been widely supported, its priorities were undoubtedly influenced by the international development aid community in Myanmar.

Under the overall goal of the NESP, to achieve "improved teaching and learning, vocational education and training, research and innovation leading to measurable improvements in student in all schools and education institutions" (Myanmar Ministry of Education, 2016, p.10), nine transformational shifts were identified, aligned to the SDG goal 4 for education. Throughout the development process of the NESP, higher education was marginalised and afforded relatively minor status by international development agencies. Consequently, the national higher education chapter, whilst wide in scope, lacks detail and has attracted very little international development funding. The restricted nature of the HE contribution articulated in the SDG 4 goals, discussed in the literature review in the previous chapter, may be significant here.

The NESP higher education reforms are situated firmly within a human capital logic, channeling education, above all else, towards economic development. The introduction of the five-year plan for HE states:

> "Higher education is fundamental to a country's social and economic
> development. It is responsible for nurturing skilled human capital needed for
> government, business and industry. Higher education institutions (HEIs) also
> incubate the innovative and creative thinking needed for an economically
> competitive society. International research has proven that the quality of

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[13] This was widely acknowledged by the international aid community in Myanmar in meetings and discussions during my time there, who cited the lack of education expertise in the Ministry of Education, time pressure and an absence of an effective aid coordination architecture as justification for this approach. This did, however, result in an imbalance in the data obtained across education sub-sectors, with some sub-sectors and issues being highly resourced and funded by international agencies with interests in these areas, and some minimally resourced, including higher education. This, in turn, influenced the reform priorities under the NESP.

knowledge generated within HEIs and its availability to the wider economy, is becoming increasingly critical to national competitiveness." (Myanmar Ministry of Education, 2016, p.188).

The transformational shift for HE, specified as the overarching goal for HE set by the Myanmar government by 2021, is:

"Students have equitable access to a world-class higher education system leading to better opportunities for employment and significant contributions to a knowledge-based economy" (Myanmar Ministry of Education, 2016, p.189).

In order to achieve this, the NESP identifies three key strategic areas for HE development: firstly, the governance and management of HEIs; secondly, quality and relevance, and thirdly, access and equity. Internationalisation features strongly in the programme sections of the NESP reforms for HE, which I briefly outline below.

4.5   Internationalisation in Myanmar's HE reforms

It is important to understand the MoE framing of internationalisation in order to analyse the contribution of Myanmar's international interactions towards Myanmar's national goals in my research.

The first strategy on HE governance and management sets out a plan for senior HE managers and leaders to undertake a series of foreign study tours to learn best practices and establish partnerships with foreign HEIs and international research centres. Other programmes under this category include leadership training, strengthening autonomy and accountability through the establishment of university charters and university councils, building international networks with other countries' HE agencies, and setting up a Higher Education Quality Assurance Agency. Alignment and connection to international norms, frameworks and standards is emphasised, including conducting research into the process of autonomy in other countries, and ensuring Myanmar's new HE quality assurance system is designed to articulate with its neighbours' systems through the ASEAN quality assurance reference framework.

In the second strategy, improving the quality and relevance of HEIs, the importance of international collaboration is again highlighted through the establishment of, and participation in, research networks, particularly in fields of national and socio-economic importance. The plan incorporates an aspiration to support Myanmar universities to enter the global HE rankings through the development of a strategy to establish two or three world-class national universities by learning from similar policies in ASEAN.

In contrast to the previous two areas of reform, international activity is absent in the programmes under the third strategy, which focusses on expanding equitable access to higher education for students from low socio-economic backgrounds. Measures under this area include expanding the number of dormitories, offering remedial teaching, setting up student support centres and providing stipends and scholarships. International cooperation, therefore, is not considered important in improving access and inclusion, an issue I will discuss further in my analysis chapters.

While, overall, the Myanmar government is encouraging of international HE, it does not have the systems in place to support this (Atherton *et al.*, 2018). In a study to assess the extent to which ASEAN governments support equitable access and sustainable development of international HE activities, Myanmar scored the lowest, indicating that international HE is largely restricted to those from higher income brackets (Ibid., 2018).

A recent study by Esson and Wang (2018) on the reform of Yangon University notes the importance of international collaboration in building the capacity of staff and students, particularly in supporting higher quality and more relevant research, and development of critical pedagogies, leading to a more "critically-informed citizenry" (Ibid., 2018, p.1191).

Private and international HE provision is growing

While all 171 universities are public and under the control of the state, there is increasing demand in Myanmar for international and private tertiary education. In the absence of government legislation regulating private and international higher education provision, several 'university colleges' have established a small, but growing market in TNE foundation and pathway qualifications. These appear to be dominated by UK institutional arrangements, mainly offering Higher National Diplomas (HNDs) and leading to top-up degrees provided in the UK by UK HEIs or through UK off-shore campuses in the Asia region, following the modes and trends observed in other countries, as discussed in the previous chapter.

Unsurprisingly, given the absence of regulatory frameworks, there is a lack of data on the extent of international and private HE provision in Myanmar, although the number of Myanmar students going abroad for their higher education has increased significantly over the last few years, from an estimated 1,600 in 2012 to 7,582 in 2018 (Atherton *et al.*, 2018). However, concerns have been raised. Lall notes that TNE in Myanmar, mainly available in Yangon, is increasing the divide between the urban elites and rural poor (Lall, 2008). King, in a report commissioned by the British Council on policy recommendations and reform of

Myanmar HE, warns of the rise in private TNE provision: "It will be very important that the quality of Burma universities is increased prior to any such situation of alternative provision" (King, 2013, p.21).

It should be noted here that public HEIs in Myanmar are highly restricted in their commercial activities. Some HEIs, however, are permitted to raise funds through what are known in Myanmar as Human Resource Development (HRD) programmes. These are often delivered in the mornings, evenings or on weekends, outside normal office hours and target mature students in employment, ranging from short certificate level programmes of 2-3 months to two year Masters degrees (CESR, 2013). There appears to be little up-to-date information on the extent to which HRD programmes are being offered and how much of the funding is retained at the institution[14] or gathered by the Ministry of Education. There are indications that some HEIs, including the Yangon University of Distance Education, are expanding their income-generation activities, while others appear not to offer any at all.

4.6 Summary

In this section, I described the historical origins of Myanmar HE and its relationship to colonisation, how university campuses have acted as important spaces to contest social and political injustice, the way that HEIs have been impacted by conflict, and the political, social and educational consequences that have shaped the present HE system. The history and experiences of Myanmar HEIs exhibit several of the features identified by other conflict-related studies discussed in the literature review in the previous chapter. Over the last 50 years, violent attacks against university students and staff, and the dismantling of the higher education system by a succession of military-backed regimes has resulted in a low quality, much depleted system with out-dated curricula and limited research, unaligned to the development needs of the country.

The new democratically elected NLD-led government has heralded in an era of wide-ranging education reforms, which although have achieved some important early gains, remain fragile and untested. Access to HE in Myanmar is highly unequal and its provision very low quality, yet the sector is largely neglected by international development aid agencies in Myanmar, despite its inclusion in the SDGs. The role of HE has been marginalised in peacebuilding and development strategies. Under a new five-year national education strategic plan, HEIs are

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[14] From my discussions with HE stakeholders, very little revenue is retained at the institution level and therefore there is a lack of incentive to offer such courses

preparing for increasing degrees of autonomy and re-alignment towards supporting the country's economic and social development. International engagement and collaboration feature strongly in these plans, but not in the areas of equity and access.

Contextual considerations in Myanmar, as I have described in this chapter, had a considerable influence on aspects of the research design and methodological approach of the study, to which I now turn.

5 Research methodology and research design

This chapter provides a discussion and explanation of the study's research methodology and design. It begins with a review of the purpose of the study, followed by a discussion and rationale for adopting a critical realist ontological position. I then provide an overview of qualitative research and case study design, laying out my approach to case sampling, a description of the research sites, and my strategies for data collection and data analysis. After that, I address ethical considerations and researcher positionality in the study. Finally, I reflect on the limitations of the study.

Research questions and purpose of the study

To start the discussion on research design and methodology, it is useful to first briefly review the purpose of the study and the research questions. This research examines social justice in the international interactions of higher education institutions in Myanmar.

The central question of this research is:

"In what ways do emerging international interactions in Myanmar higher education institutions relate to social justice?"

The three sub-questions that underlie this are:

RQ1:   What are the activities and foci of international interactions in Myanmar higher education institutions?

RQ2:   What are the rationales and motivations of HEIs in Myanmar to collaborate internationally, and of UK HEIs to collaborate with HEIs in Myanmar, as perceived by senior managers and policy makers?

RQ3:   What are the implications for social justice within, between and beyond the HEIs?

In considering the research design, my starting point was to reflect on the nature of these questions. Through this study, I am attempting to understand the underlying motivations, intentions and views of the research participants engaged in international activities, as well as the substance of the activities that are taking place. I also seek to understand how these are influenced by the sociocultural and political contexts in which they are embedded, which, in the field of higher education, can intersect and span global, regional, national and institutional domains. HEIs and the individuals who work in them in the UK and Myanmar are situated differently within these domains, and their perspectives and decisions will be influenced and informed by their different understandings and interpretations of the realities and the

contexts which they experience and in which they operate. This study particularly seeks to understand the causal mechanisms of international interactions, the reasons why certain interactions have been chosen, and the factors affecting the decisions and behaviours of individuals in the HEIs and their institutions in relation to these interactions. Finally, I analyse these interactions in terms of social justice, which involves understanding the power relationships between international partners and in Myanmar within the contexts of their political cultural economies.

The nature of the research context and questions and the type of data that are needed lends itself to a critical realist, qualitative approach, which I explain further.

5.1   Critical realism

One of the most distinctive features of realism is its analysis of causation. Developed by Roy Bhaskar as a social ontology in the 1970s, critical realism holds that in trying to understand the social world, understanding the underlying causes for actions are important (Bhaskar, 2006, p.108). Critical realists seek to understand and analyse data from the perspective of social realities and power relations within complex, open systems, which may be associated with institutions, individuals or larger frames, with an aim to interpreting and explaining social structures and rationales (Edwards, O'Mahoney and Vincent, 2014). Critical realism recognises the importance of structures and individual agency and how these influence and interact with reality; that things happen in the world not only because of individual agency, but context matters as well. As Sayer (2012) argues:

> "Explanation of the social world also requires an attentiveness to its stratification, to emergent powers arising from certain relationships, and to the ways in which the operation of causal mechanisms depends on the constraining and enabling effects of contexts." (Sayer, 2012, p.27)

In the context of globalisation and its influences on the higher education sector, the position of universities in Myanmar and the UK are widely different but connected through what may be described as a rich, 'thick', open and complex system, that drives universities and individuals within them to act in certain ways. Indeed, Bhaskar argues that all human actions "depend upon our capacity to identify causes in open systems" (Bhaskar, 2006, p.108). The emphasis of critical realism on the deconstruction and critique of social structures, relations and institutions is particularly pertinent to international HE relations in Myanmar, the focus of this study. Through the interrogation of factors that impact social power relations, including historic (which in Myanmar's case, includes colonial and post-colonial influences), political,

cultural and economic factors, social justice issues can be brought into view and through this, a transformative agenda can be strengthened that focusses on redressing inequities and power asymmetries that promote marginalisation, oppression and exploitation (Crotty, 1998; Giroux, 2011). Furthermore, in researching international education, criticality engages with colonial and post-colonial thought (Tikly and Bond, 2013), which needs to be explicitly acknowledged and examined to uncover the normalisation of domination of Western epistemology and knowledge production (Stein and Andreotti, 2017). As Mwangi et al (2018) point out, without directly engaging with these social power structures and relationships in higher education through a critical lens, these influences remain unrecognised yet embedded and implicit within structures and processes (Mwangi *et al.*, 2018).

Another feature of critical realism is the importance of understanding the wider frame and context of the research study. Sayer (2012) states that:

> "It is not enough to cite the will and actions of key individuals and institutions as sufficient for producing change, because their effectiveness depends on how they relate to wider discourses and to the shifting and uneven possibilities of the context." (Sayer, 2012, p.25)

This is highly relevant to a study in higher education, a sector which has been influenced strongly by globalisation and neoliberalism in terms of the roles of universities and the way that they operate (Naidoo, 2007; Robertson, 2010b). A critical realist approach enables me to engage with this wider frame of drivers and motivations to understand why and what kind of international interactions are emerging in Myanmar's HEIs.

Within a critical realist frame, I also recognise that my own position as a researcher, my sociocultural identity as a UK expatriate female, my job, and other socio-economic and cultural positions I may be identified with, inevitably affected the research process. These factors have had inevitably an influence on shaping the research, through my relationship with the interviewees, the reputation and interests of the organisation I worked for, my own experience, cultural and social position, and my interpretations of the data gathered (Dunn, Pryor and Yates, 2005; Bryman, 2008; Olivier, 2012). I discuss further researcher positionality later in this chapter.

5.2   Qualitative research

Using a critical realist paradigm as a guide I adopted a qualitative research approach in my attempt to understand the richer contextual, cultural and political dimensions of international university interactions.

While qualitative research encompasses a broad range of approaches, several features appear to be common (Miles, Huberman and Saldana, 2014, p.14; Creswell, 2017). Qualitative research generally seeks to provide an in-depth picture. It often attempts to interpret phenomena culturally or historically, it values participants' perspectives on their world or situation, and usually deals with smaller numbers than quantitative research; as Creswell notes, qualitative research is used when "we need a complex, detailed understanding of the issue" (Creswell, 2017, p.40). Qualitative research methodology, when situated with the philosophical frame of critical realism, embraces an ontological position that recognises subjective understandings of reality and seeks to comprehend and report different views and perspectives experienced by the research subjects (Bryman, 2008). This approach allows for multiple interpretations of the 'truth' to emerge (Dunn, Pryor and Yates, 2005).

These features of qualitative research are highly relevant to my study as it allows me to examine in depth the views, perspectives, and importantly, rationales of interactions between individuals and institutions as perceived by senior managers and leaders in Myanmar and UK HEIs at a subjective and contextual level that could not be captured through a more positivist approach. While there exist studies on the globalisation of higher education which provide some understanding of these international relations, a more complete insight can only be gained through a study that encompasses and engages with the contexts of Myanmar and the UK.

In adopting a qualitative approach to research, the issue of reliability and validity of data arises. Guber and Lincoln (1994) emphasise the importance of trustworthiness in evaluating qualitative research. Trustworthiness encompasses the credibility, transferability, dependability and confirmability of research findings (Bryman, 2008, p.377). These were integrated into the research process as far as possible in the circumstances, by checking responses to questions across different interviewees and, where possible, triangulating views and answers, checking feasibility of accounts with other sources of information and with third party Myanmar education specialists and colleagues that I knew; keeping detailed records and notes of interviews should they be required, and while unable to completely remove the

influence of interviewer positionality, constantly reflecting on the bias that may be introduced throughout the research process.

In choosing my research approach, I also considered how my positionality in the research context could be used to benefit the study by conducting research that would otherwise be difficult; in other words, how I could effectively use my situation working in the field to gain insights into my chosen field of study. This also led me to a qualitative approach, building on my existing relationships and knowledge in higher education in Myanmar and the UK, which enabled me to be close to the research subjects within their work contexts to conduct the research and gather data.

5.3   Case study research design

Within the qualitative approach, this study employs a case study methodology. Creswell defines case study research as "the study of an issue explored through one or more cases within a bounded system (i.e. a setting, a context)" (Creswell, 2017, p.73). One of the key features of case study research is that the investigation approach is about depth (Hammersley *et al.*, 2017, p.2).

An issue often raised in utilising case study methodology is the highly specific focus of the study and the extent to which findings can be generalised. As Bryman observes, case study researchers do not set out to identify cases that are typical examples of their class, group or situation, but to understand a specific context, in other words "*case studies are not a sample of* one" (Bryman, 2008, p.55). Although there is a disinclination in qualitative researchers to generalise findings from one case study to another due to their differing contexts, using multiple case sampling "adds confidence to findings" (Miles, Huberman and Saldana, 2014, p.33) and strengthens the "precision, validity, stability and trustworthiness of the findings" (Ibid., 2014, p.33). Furthermore, from a critical realist ontological perspective, rather than large scale extensive research which homogenises context, intensive research on the causal nature of things through a few cases situates it in a specific context as part of a larger window, therefore findings are not necessarily limited to narrow, local interest and can be argued to have some generalisability (Sayer, 2012). Sayer argues that:

> "Those who assume that extensive research methods are the only legitimate 'scientific' approach often suppose that intensive research must lead to results that are unique and of purely parochial interest, and not generalizable. However, causal groups are not necessarily local; indeed in this research they involved global networks and markets which extensive research, with its claims to produce

'representative' results, usually ignored. [....] . By situating actors in causal groups, intensive research provides a window onto larger entities, showing how the part is related to whole; hence it need not be of purely parochial interest." (Sayer, 2012, pp.24-25).

Considering the position of critical realism, and the features of qualitative research and case studies, I therefore selected a collective case study methodology, an approach which allows perspectives and issues to be illustrated through multiple cases. This allowed me not only to more deeply understand the specific context of Myanmar and UK interactions, but also, through tracing causal mechanisms that are linked to the 'larger entities' of economic and geopolitical frames, to engage with the discourse around wider phenomena related to internationalisation and social justice.

5.4   Researcher positionality

As a researcher, my position in relation to education stakeholders in Myanmar and the UK is associated with, and influenced by, my job and the organisation I worked for. I was employed as the Director of Education at the British Council in Myanmar and based in Yangon for three years, during which time I conducted this research. The British Council is a cultural relations organisation, partially funded by the British Government through the Foreign and Commonwealth Office (FCO) and partly through its own commercial activities. It has the status of an independent charity operating at 'arms length' from government. The organisation's aim is "to create friendly knowledge and understanding between people of the UK and the wider world" (British Council, 2019), which is achieved, among other activities, through encouraging and supporting higher education collaboration between UK and Myanmar HEIs.

It is important to recognise the influence, both present and past, of the British Council in Myanmar. The British Council has been present in Myanmar for over 70 years, since 1946, and has a wide network of relationships across government, public institutions and civil society organisations, a strong reputation and high levels of trust with the public and government. The corporate aims of the British Council and its reputation in Myanmar, while enabling access to high level stakeholders, also has an influence on the research process. The status and reputation of the British Council is, in part, linked to the UK's past in Myanmar and colonialism, which has varied significance and meaning to different social groups, related to a range of factors, including age, ethnicity, religion, culture and language.

My research topic was closely aligned to my work, for which I was required to have a clear understanding of the types of international collaboration happening in Myanmar's universities

and why universities in Myanmar and the UK want to collaborate. This involved understanding the priorities, pressures, motivations and interests for international collaboration and matching the priorities and needs of institutions in both countries to help build mutually beneficial and long-term partnerships. To this purpose, I built relationships within the Ministry of Education and the Department of Higher Education in Myanmar and with senior stakeholders in more than forty Myanmar universities. I also engaged directly with stakeholders from a wide range of UK HEIs that are either active in Myanmar or intended to develop activities within the country.

I was aware that my role as a researcher within this context, gathering qualitative data through in-depth interviews would be complex. The issue of 'power asymmetries' arises, in addition to the interviewer/interviewee power dynamic inevitably present in interviews (Dunne, Pryor and Yates, 2005; Bryman, 2008). Most of the interviewees knew me through their involvement in British Council projects and events, and although I would describe my professional relationship with them as open, trusted and friendly, the dynamics of potential donor/recipient positions and the status of the British Council would inevitably affect the interview discussion. I tried to minimise the potential effects of this by explaining the purpose of the research carefully to each interviewee, by giving them the chance to opt out of the process and to maintain anonymity through the consent forms and at the interview stage (see later section on ethics). Cognizant that these power asymmetries, and cultural and historical influences could not be fully eliminated, I reflected on this in the interpretation of my data and analysis of my findings.

There are also other complex multiple identities and dynamics I had to consider, particularly in relation to this research context and topic, including those related to nationality and ethnic identity (of both the interviewee and myself as interviewer), gender, age, interviewee's personal experience of social activism, politics and conflict, and others. This required a considerable degree of awareness and reflexivity on the extent of bias or influence introduced during and after the interview process (Dunne, Pryor and Yates, 2005).

5.5   Selection of research sites and participant recruitment

> "Where regimes are closed (or closing), whether haunted by an authoritarian past or abandoning democracy, the selection of research sites and choice of fieldwork techniques are relatively constrained compared with more open regimes."
> (Goode, 2010, pp.1055-1056)

Conducting research interviews in 'closed states', or authoritarian regimes poses several research design challenges; information can be hard to find and there are serious ethical

considerations that can limit topics and questions, especially if the subject is politically sensitive (Goode, 2010; Barros, 2016). Although Myanmar is now emerging from decades of isolation and brutal repression, it still has many of the characteristics of a closed and repressive state. I anticipated that in conducting my research, getting beyond the authoritarian line and 'state-truth' would be a challenge, particularly regarding research into the roles and activities of universities. As discussed in Chapter 3, universities in Myanmar have been centres of anti-government protest and political struggle, and university and ministry staff are careful to be seen to conform to state-proscribed ideologies and state-sanctioned views. They can be cautious about who they confide in and what they are willing to discuss. My methodological approach to the study was designed with this context and its challenges in mind.

My research design, therefore, was developed from an understanding of the political economy context and an awareness of my positionality as a researcher. I recognised the importance of getting beyond the formalities of job roles and state (and for me, organisational) representation, and although this could not be fully achieved, it could be reduced. I therefore set out to design a research strategy that enabled a less formal, more flexible approach to gathering data, which I describe below. This approach took into account the particularly sensitive issues surrounding social justice and was supported by a rigorous ethical framework to ensure, as far as possible, truly informed consent, confidentiality and data security (see later section on ethical considerations).

Sampling strategy

This study is based on interviews with participants in four HEIs in Myanmar, three HEIs in the UK and interviews with two government representatives in Myanmar. My rationales for selecting these institutions and individual participants is explained below.

In the selection process, I first considered the context of Myanmar's higher education system and how that might inform the selection criteria. Firstly, human resource management in HE in Myanmar is strictly controlled. All staff in Myanmar's universities (all of which are under state control), from rector to lecturer, are rotated every 2-4 years. This system, instigated by the previous regime, is regarded by many as both a means to control (and suppress) any individual or collective opposition to political authority, and also as a means to achieve equity in HE – by ensuring that 'good' Yangon and Mandalay academics also spend time in more remote universities teaching students from poor and marginalised sections of society, and that those originating from more outlying areas have the opportunity to work in one of the more

prestigious universities. There are, of course, avenues that allow some staff to stay longer, or get more desirable postings, and vice versa, but in general, it is quite common to find Yangon professors teaching in rurally located universities. This had implications for my research: interviews with senior university staff would provide insight into, and be affected by, not only their current posting, but their past experiences in possibly 5-6 universities across the country. However, it also may mean that their institutional knowledge and integration into the local culture of their current posting may be limited, as on average they will have only worked at the institution for two years. They may, however, have known an institution longer as a student, most professors having completed their PhDs at a limited number of 'top' institutions that are permitted to award higher degrees.

The second factor concerned international exposure. Myanmar's universities have been effectively isolated from the outside world for over half a century, until relatively recently. Only few have engaged in international activity.

5.5.1   Sampling strategy of institutions

Given these considerations, in this study HEIs in Myanmar and the UK were not randomly sampled, but chosen through purposive sampling to select institutions with demonstrated international interaction between the UK and Myanmar and individuals that had spent enough time in their current institution to have been involved in international interactions. Purposive sampling, according to Bryman, enables the researcher to select cases "in a strategic way, so that those sampled are relevant to the research questions that are being posed" (Bryman, 2008, p.415). It allows for variety across sample cases and thicker descriptions to be collected and analysed (Ibid., 2008). In this study, samples were selected according to the criteria set out below.

The first consideration in Myanmar was to select universities that had exposure to international activities. The nature of this research, to understand the motivations and drivers behind international engagement predicates that the universities have some international activity. Many universities in Myanmar have no, or very limited, international connections and so were excluded from this study. The most internationally active universities were identified using knowledge of participation in international activities gained from the British Council, development agencies involved in higher education reform, and the Ministry of Education and were selected for the study. One of the few, but most active private institutions in Myanmar operating in the higher education space was also selected.

Institutions in the UK were selected from the few that were already engaged in activity with Myanmar. Through my work at the British Council, I have gained a detailed picture of existing UK-Myanmar collaboration, which enabled me to select universities that had relatively more developed interests in Myanmar higher education. These interests were evidenced across a range of activities, including the number of visits to Myanmar, participation in conferences and meetings on Myanmar-focussed collaboration, and the implementation of projects with Myanmar universities. Of these, four UK universities appeared to have significantly stronger interests than others. One of these institutions, the University of Oxford, I regarded as an exception and thus was excluded from the study. The University of Oxford has a significant partnership with the University of Yangon, initiated in 2013, but is, in many ways, untypical of the position of most UK universities in terms of the way it engages with globalisation and market-driven agendas. Furthermore, the partnership is founded on a personal connection with Aung San Suu Kyi, an Oxford alumnus, and funded to a large degree through various Oxford-related Myanmar trusts, and therefore is not subject to the same drivers, pressures and decision-making processes as other UK HEIs. (See Appendix 3 for a short summary of UK-Myanmar collaboration of which I am currently aware).

5.5.2   Research sites

A total of seven universities (four in Myanmar and three in the UK) and the Myanmar Ministry of Education were selected for the study. All participating institutions were allocated a code, M-A to M-D for Myanmar HEIs, M-O denoting officials in the Ministry of Education, and UK-A to UK-C for UK HEIs.

Research sites in Myanmar

Of the four Myanmar universities selected, three institutions, M-A, M-B and M-C were public, government-funded universities. One, M-D, was a private sector 'university college'.[15]

University M-A

Established early in the 1900s, university M-A is one of the oldest in Myanmar. Based in a major city, it was first established by the British as an affiliated college of the University of

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[15] A note on referencing and anonymity: The information on universities presented below was mainly gathered from university websites, government documents and presentations made at British Council events. Although it would be relatively easy to identify institutions through their profiles, I chose not to explicitly mention the names of universities in this thesis and therefore I have omitted direct references in this section. I discuss the anonymity of individual interviewees within these institutions later in this chapter.

Calcutta. In the 1930s-40s university M-A was considered one of the best in the Asia region. Historically, it has a strong association with social activism. Since the colonial era and under successive military regimes, students and faculty of the university have been active in pro-democracy movements and political protest, and as such, have been subject to violence and brutal oppression.

In the 2015-16 academic year, university M-A had approximately 2000 postgraduate, 4500 undergraduate students and over 750 faculty members. It offers a range of courses in arts and science subjects. As one of the country's leading public institutions, it has been selected by the Ministry of Education to fast-track reforms in the higher education sector. The university's mission emphasises creating a vibrant academic environment in response to the needs of Myanmar and the challenges of the knowledge age, and to become a world-recognised university.

The university is one of the most internationally active in Myanmar. It is a member of the ASEAN University Network (AUN) and has signed a large number of MOUs with foreign institutions, although government and university sources report that many are inactive.

University M-B

Founded early in the last century as an affiliated college of the University of Calcutta, university M-B is one of the longest established universities in the country. After World War II, M-B became an independent institute with four faculties: arts, science, agriculture and medicine. In the 1960s under the military socialist government, medicine and agriculture were separated from the university and established as independent institutions.

University M-B has over 1600 postgraduate and 2500 undergraduate students (including diploma level students) and nearly 500 faculty staff. It offers a range of disciplines across arts and science subjects. Like university M-A, the institution has been prioritised for institutional reform as part of the new higher education five-year plan.

M-B's institutional vision centres on becoming a national research university and making a contribution to knowledge. Its stated mission is rooted in service to society and includes the provision of high-quality teaching based on "ethical, professional and principled approaches", conducting research of benefit to society and engaging with local and global communities.

University M-B is also active in international collaboration, having connections mostly with universities in Asia, but also with some in Europe and a number of NGOs.

University M-C

University M-C is a specialist medical university, one of five in Myanmar under the control of the Ministry of Health. It was founded in the mid 1950s and provides a range of medical degrees, including Bachelor of Medicine and a range of postgraduate medical science degrees. It is one of the largest institutions for the training of medical doctors in the country. It has nearly 4000 students, 16% of which are post-graduate (1% at PhD level), and over 500 academic staff.

The institution's guiding ethos is service and compassion, with an overarching vision to become an internationally-recognised institution. The institution has a threefold mission in education, research and service, which include producing competent medical practitioners and educators, developing a culture of research and innovation, collaborating internationally in research and to serve the community.

Although limited in number, the university has several international partnerships with medical universities in the Asia region and connections with the UK.

Institution M-D

Established just over a decade ago, M-D is a private 'university college'. As there is currently no government regulatory framework or legislation on private universities in Myanmar, it is not formally recognised by government as a degree-awarding body. The institution started its operation offering English language and teaching diplomas and has grown substantially over the last decade into three campuses totalling over 2000 students. More recently, M-D has established arrangements with a range of foreign universities, including the UK, and provides diplomas and degrees, some of which are jointly awarded with their international partner, though four faculties: Business, Engineering, Education and Linguistics, and Health Science.

The institution's stated vision focusses on changing the lives of students and society through their education provision and the opportunities it provides. The strong international nature of the institution's interests is expressed in its ambition to offer international quality courses and nurture students to become local and international leaders and professionals.

Ministry of Education, M-O

The Ministry of Education is responsible for the majority of Myanmar's education provision from kindergarten to higher education in Myanmar. The Ministry is divided into seven departments, one of which is the Department for Higher Education, which oversees just over

half of Myanmar's 171 universities. In January 2017, the Ministry published its first five-year National Education Strategic Plan (NESP), which lays out ambitious reforms across the state-controlled part of the education system, including higher education (see Chapter 3 on Myanmar's HE system for more details). The Ministry of Education's vision for the higher education sector is "to produce graduate human resources who possess the required qualifications for the construction of a new, modern, developed, disciplined, democratic nation" (Myanmar Ministry of Education, 2016, p.188).

Since the election of a new government in 2015, there have been many changes in the Ministry of Education, but it still carries the legacy of hierarchies, processes and structures established by previous authoritarian regimes. Currently, universities have almost no functional autonomy, and are managed under a restrictive system of permissions and instructions issued by the Department of Higher Education in the Ministry of Education and other line ministries. This includes most staffing and promotions at universities, the research they conduct, the degrees they offer and infrastructure investments. There are rigid permission systems in place covering almost every aspect of international collaboration, including the signing of MOUs, undertaking overseas travel, receiving international visitors and hosting seminars and conferences.

As part of the study, a detailed review of international collaborations in the Myanmar HEIs was undertaken and is presented in my findings in Chapter Six.

Research sites in the UK:

The three universities selected in the UK are all public autonomous universities with existing connections and engagements with Myanmar.

University UK-A

Founded in the early 1800s, university UK-A describes itself as a public civic research and teaching university. Its vision and mission highlight its modern, international outlook and its roles as a contributor to community and society. It was a polytechnic until 1992, when, along with many other institutions in the UK, it was granted university status. It is still characterised by its links with employment and industry.

University UK-A has over 20,000 students, offering a wide range of degrees from undergraduate to PhD. It has a number of international partnerships, including some in Asia,

particularly in China and Malaysia. It has an office in Malaysia which focusses on international student recruitment and development of transnational education (TNE) arrangements with partners in Asia for delivery of UK-A courses and awards overseas.

Several years ago, the university awarded an honorary fellowship to Aung San Suu Kyi and was one of the first UK institutions to visit Myanmar at the start of liberalisation in 2013. Since then, university staff have made several trips to Myanmar, engaged in three UK-Myanmar higher education policy dialogues, supporting journalism studies at university M-A, offered scholarships to Myanmar students, and hosted an HE delegation from Myanmar (2016). Representatives of its office in Kuala Lumpur have regularly travelled to Myanmar to explore TNE and student recruitment opportunities.

University UK-B

As an institution, UK-B can trace its roots to the late 1800s, when it was a small technical institute. In 1992, it was awarded university status. Its mission statement emphasises its connection to industry, a strong focus on employability and social responsibility to local, national and global communities.

It currently has over 20,000 students studying in over 500 undergraduate and postgraduate programmes. It has been particularly noted for its work in widening participation and focus on the student experience.

University UK-B's involvement in Myanmar started in 2012, leading a project working with civil society groups on teacher training in inclusion. For the last three years, it has operated a commercial partnership with a private university college in Yangon offering UK Higher National Diplomas (HNDs) in engineering and business. The HND is a pathway qualification enabling Myanmar students to study in the UK for one more year to gain a UK Bachelor's degree.

University UK-C

Established as a technical institute in the early 19th century, University UK-C offers a wide range of undergraduate and postgraduate programmes in which over 30,000 students are enrolled. Particular specialist areas are science, technology, engineering and business. Its current strategic plan reflects a strong international focus and an ambition to be increasingly globally engaged.

University UK-C's involvement in Myanmar began in 2013, at the start of liberalisation in Myanmar, with an academic visit to explore opportunities for collaboration in marine science.

Researchers subsequently won a UK government Prosperity Fund award as part of a UK consortium to improve the quality of Geoscience teaching and research in Myanmar universities and help them forge links with the oil and gas industry. UK-C's Malaysia office staff regularly visit Myanmar to explore TNE opportunities and student recruitment to the UK or to one of its overseas campuses.

5.5.3   Sampling strategy of participants

This study adopted a purposive sampling strategy, as previously discussed. The selection of interview subjects in the universities started with identifying those individuals that had responsibility for international activities in their institution. This role can involve several individuals, particularly in the UK, depending on the nature of the international collaboration. An international strategy at UK institutions is typically led by the head of an international engagement office, of which part is a business-focussed international unit, responsible for generating income for the university through international activities such as overseas student recruitment and transnational education arrangements. In the UK, however, many international partnership decisions are made by heads of research in individual faculty departments and, depending on the institution, may not interact directly with the international engagement office.

I planned to conduct interviews with two senior managers in four HEIs in Myanmar and three HEIs in the UK, and two interviews with senior government officials in Myanmar's Ministry of Education, providing a set of 16 in-depth interviews, which comprised most of the data for the study.

Sampling strategy of participants in Myanmar

A purposive sampling strategy was used in Myanmar to select those with clear responsibility for international activity. The Rectors and Pro-Rectors of the universities were already known to me. I approached them directly to recruit study participants. I utilised a snowball sampling technique, also referred to as chain referral sampling (Biernacki and Waldorf, 1981) to identify from the Rectors and Pro-Rectors members of their university who were actively engaged in international collaboration, particularly with the UK. The individuals who were deemed to be most internationally active were selected as participants. In Myanmar, it was important to seek permission from the 'gatekeepers', that is, the people that have the authority to provide access to the research sites (Creswell, 2007, p.125). In Myanmar, this was the Ministry of

Education, from which formal permission for the study at the research sites was obtained. There was no restriction made by the Ministry on the selection of individual participants located at each institution.

The selection of study participants in the Ministry of Education (M-O) was approached in a similar manner. Two criteria were used: the first on the level of their authority in decision- and policy-making in higher education, and the second their role in decisions regarding international cooperation in higher education.

Once Ministerial permission had been granted to conduct my research in the three public universities and formal letters signed, the Ministry informed the Rectors of selected institutions. I then sent formal letters to the Rectors informing them of my research and seeking their participation and identification of one more participant. These letters were followed up by phone calls and visits to the universities to explain and arrange interviews (see Appendix 4 for sample letters).

The single private institution selected for the study did not need government permission and was approached directly. I sent a letter to the president of the institution, explaining the research and asking for their participation, which was granted. Only one participant, the president, was recruited at the institution, as they led and managed all international activity; the involvement in international activity of the institution's other senior staff was confined to training and implementation of foreign courses, with no direct role in decision-making regarding international partners or international strategy formation.

Sampling strategy of participants in the UK

In the UK, two senior university staff in each institution who were most engaged in international activities with Myanmar were selected, including a head or senior manager of the international office of the university known to be engaged in decision-making on partnerships related to Myanmar. The exception was at institution UK-C, where only one participant was included in the study, due to the non-response of the head of commercial operations in Asia, possibly due to turnover of staff. As a replacement with experience and knowledge of the institution's work in Myanmar could not be identified, I decided to recruit only one participant from institutions UK-C. This was offset to some extent by the participant selected, who not only had research interests in Myanmar at department level, but also had a direct role in the institution's overall international strategy unit. These individuals were known to me through my work at the British Council.

A total of 14 participants were selected for interview, as summarised in Table 7 below.

Table 7: Participants of the study (total=14)

Institution	Participant code	Position *	Gender
M-A	M-A1	Senior Professor/Manager	Female
	M-A2	Senior Professor/Manager	Female
M-B	M-B1	Senior Professor/Manager	Male
	M-B2	Senior Professor/Manager	Female
M-C	M-C1	Senior Professor/Manager	Female
	M-C2	Senior Professor/Manager	Female
M-D	M-D1	Senior manager	Female
M-O	M-O1	Senior government policy maker	Male
	M-O2	Mid-level government policy maker (HE)	Male
UK-A	UK-A1	Senior Manager, International Unit	Male
	UK-A2	Senior Manager International Office, South East Asia Region	Male
UK-B	UK-B1	Senior Professor/Manager	Female
	UK-B2	Senior Manager International Office	Female
UK-C	UK-C1	Senior Professor/Manager	Male

*Due to the risk of identification of individuals, only generic titles have been given.

5.6   Ethical considerations and challenges

In contexts affected by conflict, authoritarian rule and political uncertainty, ethical considerations in conducting research are all the more critical and can have life-affecting consequences if not approached rigorously, with care, awareness and sensitivity (Goodhand, 2000). It has been noted that standard ethical principles are insufficient in these contexts and that conflict "heightens and amplifies the ethical challenges faced by all researchers" (Ibid., 2000, p.15). Although many regions in Myanmar cannot simply be categorised as conflict zones, brutal military rule and violent repression have been widespread and endemic, including in the higher education sector, as I discussed in Chapter 3. This study took place soon after a new democratic government was elected in Myanmar, and much of the civil service remained unchanged from the previous military-backed regime. It was unknown whether some threats were still present and remained at least a career risk to individuals who speak out against the recent authoritarian 'state-truth'. As my research involved asking the

interviewees about the politically sensitive area of social justice, my data collection was undertaken with caution and with awareness that the participation of interviewees may still involve personal and professional risk.

Obtaining informed consent is central to ensuring ethical responsibility. The effectiveness, honesty and openness of the process is influenced by differences in the researcher's and interviewee's cultural norms and practices, relationship and power dynamics associated with status, nationality, ethnicity and other socio-cultural factors. Imbalances can be addressed to some extent through as full a disclosure as possible of the purpose of the research, how the findings will be disseminated, respecting autonomy of decision to be involved without pro or adverse consequences (Sieber, 1993), and ensuring prospective interviewees understand they can withdraw at any stage or decline to answer specific questions during the interview (Wood, 2006). I explained to the participants the purpose of the research in both written and spoken form, aware that although all participants had good levels of English, it was a second language to all Myanmar participants and that they might find it easier to read and understand a text, and that they had a record they could refer to at any time. I followed up the emails by telephone calls, explaining the research and asking them for their participation. Furthermore, at the start of the interview, the purpose was again explained.

It is equally important to ensure a level of confidentiality, in accordance with the wishes of the interviewee, to ensure protection against any negative consequences associated with the research or use of the findings. To protect anonymity, I used a coding system instead of names of individuals and institutions. I ensured that data was encrypted and stored in a secure internet-based site. As the research analysis involved describing some aspects of the HEIs and government departments involved, this may risk a 'best guess' in identifying interviewees. This risk was explained clearly to those taking part and the option of withdrawing consent, should the risk prove to be too great, at any time was offered. Confidentiality and the right to withdraw was explained by email, then by telephone, at the start of the interview and through asking all participants to complete a consent to participate form (see Appendix 5).

Finally, in this context, flexibility on the part of the researcher becomes important; to notice the direction the interview is taking, the emotional state of the interviewee and responding humanely and responsibly (Fujii, 2009). This may mean steering the conversation around issues that are considered too sensitive and uncomfortable (Ibid, 2009), which could result in gaps in the research data. While planning the interviews, I considered that some participants may prefer to meet for their interviews outside the institution, for example in a local teahouse

in Myanmar, to ensure a more private space where the interviewee could be more open and less concerned with being overheard by colleagues who might not share their views. All participants were asked for their preference of interview site. The university-based Myanmar participants preferred to be interviewed at their institutions in private meeting rooms. All but one of the UK participants were interviewed over the telephone, and one face-to-face in a hotel during a work-related visit to Yangon. The two Myanmar government representatives were interviewed outside their offices in a hotel. This was driven more by convenience than by any other factor, as they were travelling for Ministry-related meetings, but had the benefit of being outside their formal offices and potentially, able to talk more freely.

How risk is perceived is highly subjective (Sieber, 1993), however, and therefore it is important that the researcher has a good understanding of the cultural, societal, historical and political context in which the interviewees are situated to more accurately judge what is being asked of them and whether or not this is reasonable and ethical. To this end, my experience of working in the HE sector in Myanmar and based in Yangon was invaluable, as was the knowledge, information and guidance of my British Council Myanmar colleagues. Background information was gathered before the interview, particularly related to the participants' university. More information was gathered from the individuals themselves through some introduction questions, asking them to outline their career and education, under the conditions agreed with respect to confidentiality, before proceeding with the key research topics.

It is important when conducting research in this environment to follow the humanitarian "do no harm" principle (Anderson, 1999; UNICEF, 2003). However, it has been argued that researchers have a responsibility to go beyond this, to "do some good" through the selection of the topics of their research, and what it is used for, although care needs to be taken not to raise unrealistic expectations (Goodhand, 2000). My research approach adhered to both these principles.

I kept a reflective journal throughout data collection process, noting questions and topics where the interviewee seemed less comfortable, and those that took the discussion into more sensitive areas. I used these notes to consider whether or not the topic or questions were necessary for my research, and if so, rephrased them or approached them differently in the following interviews. This was the case in several interviews in Myanmar related to aspects of social justice, particularly in terms of their perception of power imbalances between themselves and their international partner.

5.7   Data collection

The importance of context and research positionality is central to qualitative research and therefore, most data collection is conducted in some form of natural setting, where it is possible to study phenomena in depth and explore perceptions and experiences of a lived reality (Norum, 2012). There are several forms of data that qualitative researchers commonly employ. Creswell categorises these into four main types: "observations (ranging from nonparticipant to participant), interviews (ranging from close-ended to open-ended), documents (ranging from private to public) and audio-visual materials (including materials such as photographs, compact disks and videotapes" (Creswell, 2007, p.129). In my study, data was collected through interviews and documents.

5.7.1   Interviews

I used semi-structured interviews as the primary method of data collection for this study. Bryman defines a semi-structured interview as one in which the interviewer has a list of questions or general topic as a guide, but allows the interviewee flexibility in their answers and the interviewer freedom to pursue areas of interest raised through their responses (Bryman, 2008). He emphasises the flexibility of semi-structured interviews and the importance of responding to "how the interviewee frames and understands issues and events – that is, what the interviewee views as important in explaining and understanding events, patterns, and forms of behaviour" (Ibid., 2008, p.438).

In Myanmar's context as a politically sensitive, post-authoritarian state, where topics may have to be approached indirectly, I required a significant degree of flexibility in asking questions and gathering data. For interviews with both Myanmar and UK stakeholders, flexibility was required to capture subjective meaning and to allow for in-depth exploration. A semi-structured interview format provided this flexibility. I developed a structured framework to provide a logical sequencing of the interrelated research questions, which helped me to keep the interviewees' responses within the scope of the research brief and prevented drift, but also allowed the freedom to express complex and nuanced ideas and views (Bryman, 2008). In order to capture fuller and more reflexive responses, enabling the construction of a rich picture around each topic, open questions were used, which also allowed the interviewee to express more detailed, nuanced views and allowed me to probe deeper into significant areas as they arose. In addition, utilising a semi-structured interview framework facilitated comparison and analysis between interviews.

As Creswell advises, once the interview questions and approach have been designed, it is important to pilot the interviews to refine them further (Creswell, 2007, p.133). I conducted two pilots, one with a university contact in the UK and one with a head of department in a Myanmar university (from an institution not included in the study), with the aim of refining the questions, testing the logical flow, exploring the nuances and structure of linked ideas and revealing any barriers or opportunities to answering the research questions as fully as possible. I subsequently made amendments to my questions before conducting interviews with the study participants (see Appendix 6 for interview guide).

Due to the potentially sensitive questions relating to social justice in Myanmar, individual interviews were undertaken, rather than in focus groups, in which, due to political and cultural factors, interviewees may not have been as open in their views. In the UK and well as Myanmar, individual, private interviews also allowed for more open subjective expression, which may in some cases, be critical of their institution or government.

 As the research was concerned with understanding internationalisation at the institutional level, as well as from direct experience in collaboration, and for the government representatives, requiring knowledge and understanding of policy and practice at the national level, the participants were necessarily all in positions of authority and seniority. This raises issues of elite interviewing. The literature describes a range of challenges related to interviewing individuals in positions of power or professional expertise, including influence and control of the research, being well-versed in extended and practiced repertoires on topics related to the research questions, and sensitivity and vulnerability due to their exposed position of authority (see Smith, 2006; Harvey, 2011; Miles, Huberman and Saldana, 2014; Lancaster, 2017). It has also been noted that elite interviewees may 'self-censor' (Lancaster, 2017, p.100). It is important for the researcher to be aware of potential bias and influence (Miles, Huberman and Saldana, 2014, p.294) and to be prepared for approaches and discourse directions to be employed by potential interviewees. Furthermore, it was important for me to ensure I was well-prepared for the interviews to be able to engage in discussion at an appropriate level of knowledge and experience, and be able to recognise effects and influences associated with the changing dynamics of authority and power during the interview (Lancaster, 2017). As discussed further in this section, issues of anonymity and consent were rigorous and carefully prepared, addressing as much as possible in the circumstances the potentially heightened challenges of authority, trust, control and vulnerability in the interview process, and with reflexivity and care in the analysis of my findings.

The issue of interview language arose during my interview preparation. In Myanmar, a country with over 100 ethnic languages, I was aware that language is a politically and culturally sensitive issue, in which deep-seated contestations and grievances exist related to recognition, legitimacy and identity (South and Lall, 2016). In this context, the cultural and ethnic background of interviewees was important in understanding the ways in which they may frame their views around social justice and the role of public institutions. English, although a language associated with colonisation, is widely considered to be a more neutral language than the dominant majority Myanmar language. In Myanmar, English is also the language of instruction in all public universities, although levels of English fluency can vary widely. All my interviewees had a relatively high degree of fluency in English, due to their level of education and position in their institutions or organisations. Their role in international interactions was also indicative of their relatively high level of English. In consideration of these issues and challenges, the research data was gathered through individual, face-to-face, semi-structured interviews conducted in English.

5.7.2 Documents

In addition to interview data, relevant higher education policy documents in both countries were examined in relation to international collaboration. There is little written on the experiences of Myanmar higher education institutions and their role in social justice under the decades of authoritarian rule, therefore, the research aimed to provide only a broad overview. Evidence and material were gathered through 'grey' literature, accounts in newspaper articles, reports by aid agencies and development organisations, including the British Council, and government documentation where available. As some was in the Myanmar language, particularly government documentation, I arranged for assistance in sourcing relevant materials and translating them into English.

5.7.3 Approach to data analysis

Qualitative data analysis can be seen as "three concurrent flows of activity: 1) data condensation, 2) data display and 3) conclusion drawing/verification." (Miles, Hubermann & Saldana, 2014, p.12). Creswell (2007) emphasises the interrelatedness of the qualitative data analysis process, which involves "describing, classifying and interpreting" (Creswell, 2007, p.152) data in a non-linear, iterative manner that continues, throughout the enterprise, to deepen understanding (Ibid., 2007). As such, data analysis can start at any point before, during or after data collection (Miles, Hubermann & Saldana, 2014, p.14). I began my data

interpretation during the interview process, taking brief notes while the interview was being recorded, and immediately following each interview reflecting and making further notes on main impressions and emerging patterns. This part of the analysis was unstructured and informal, in the form of personal observations, reflections and questions.

There are a range of approaches to qualitative data analysis. While quantitative data analysis methods are more clearly defined, "there are few well-established and widely accepted rules for the analysis of qualitative data." (Bryman, 2008, p.538). I adopted an analysis approach that involved interview transcription, coding/categorisation and constant comparison, which I explain further.

Transcription, categorisation and coding

The interview data was analysed using transcripts of recorded interviews. During the transcription process, I began to categorise and code the content of the interviews under emerging themes and sub-themes connected with the research questions and analytical frameworks. I then examined each transcript intensively, categorising and coding responses against the two analytical frameworks, namely Knight and de Wit's typology of internationalisation rationales and Fraser's dimensions of social justice. I included my field notes, memos and related documents, building a detailed and structured categorisation of data, and noting common threads in participant responses. This in-depth and detailed analytical process allowed me to capture and organise the varieties and commonalities of the data I had collected, and also reveal any gaps or inconsistencies, both in relation to the frameworks and between the participants. In this manner, I prepared data sets which could then be discussed and compared with current knowledge and understanding of the issues and theories in the literature.

Constant comparison analysis

By applying constant comparative analysis, themes and topics were drawn from the data as they were identified. I then clustered, eliminated or built upon these as the analysis progressed, by comparing across transcripts, alert to emerging threads or patterns. Constant comparison analysis is a tool that has its origins in grounded theory, a qualitative research framework developed by Glaser and Strauss in 1967, in which theory is derived from data through a process of data collection and analysis (Glaser and Strauss, 1967 cited in Biernacki and Waldorf, 1981). While it remains one of the most often used approaches in social science

research (Bryman, 2008, p.541), the tools of the grounded theory approach, including constant comparative analysis, have been used by researchers to analyse data across a broad range of qualitative research approaches (Ibid., 2008). In this study, I used constant comparative analysis to organise and analyse my data in relation to two existing conceptual frameworks of internationalisation and social justice, as mentioned above. This approach enabled me to not only code and categorise my data around pre-defined themes, but also to go beyond and between the theoretical frameworks, using the frameworks as a guide. This was particularly useful for the social justice analysis, the framework for which, as far as I was aware through my literature review, had not previously been used to analyse internationalisation in higher education.

5.8   Limitations of the study

This study has four main limitations. Firstly, it is limited to the experiences and views of the study participants in four institutions in Myanmar, three in the UK and two officials in the Ministry of Education in Myanmar. As a multi-case study, my research has limits to the generalisability of the findings to other contexts, institutions and individuals. However, though a critical realist approach, analysis of the underlying logics and mechanisms of causation of international interactions of these institutions relates my findings to wider international frames, which I engage with in my analysis.

Secondly, my study is limited in terms of geographical and socio-economic context through my sampling approach and the institutions chosen as cases. In Myanmar, institutions were chosen for their exposure and engagement in international activities. This necessitated the selection of institutions located in the largest urban centres, where the country's most prestigious institutions are located. This meant that institutions situated in rural or conflict-affected regions of the country were not directly included in the study. Therefore, while my cases could be analysed from similar contextual situations, the study was limited in terms of diversity of institutional contexts. In the UK, as in Myanmar, the study did not aim to select and analyse cases that were representative of the HE sector, but to study in depth specific cases.

Thirdly, the theoretical frameworks used in the study pose limitations on the analysis of my findings. As a researcher, my choice of framework (Fraser's social justice framework and Knight and de Wit's typography of internationalisation) reflects, to a degree, my own interests

and socio-cultural viewpoints. It would be expected that by using different theoretical perspectives, the findings of the study could be differently interpreted.

Fourthly, data sources and collection proved to be a significant limitation. Not only was there limited data on higher education in Myanmar, but also on international interactions between the UK and Myanmar. To understand more precisely and deeply the power dynamic and interaction between UK and Myanmar institutions and individuals, the study would have benefitted from observations of meetings between individuals during the initiation and implementation of international activities. It would have also been beneficial to conduct a textual analysis of MOUs and agreements between UK and Myanmar institutions. My own time constraints and the non-availability of documents limited the range of data sources available.

5.9 Summary

I began this chapter by outlining my research questions and providing a discussion on my rationale for adopting a critical realist approach to my study. This was followed by an overview of qualitative research and case study design. This included an explanation of my sampling approach, participant recruitment, data collection and analysis methods. I emphasised the importance of ethical considerations in my study and discussed research positionality. The chapter ended with a discussion on the limitations of the study.

At this point in my thesis, having presented a literature review, the conceptual frameworks that the study uses, the context of my study in Myanmar, and the research design and methodology, I now proceed to the presentation, analysis and discussion of the research findings in Chapters 6, 7 and 8, starting with an analysis of the international interactions of Myanmar HEIs at global, regional, bilateral and institutional levels.

6 The international interactions of Myanmar higher education institutions

The aim of this chapter is to address the first of my research sub-questions: "What are the activities and foci of international interactions in Myanmar HEIs?"

To restate, the research data analysed and presented in this and the next two findings chapters were mainly collected from 14 semi-structured interviews with senior managers of four HEIs in Myanmar, two senior government officials in Myanmar's Ministry of Education, and senior managers in three UK HEIs known to be engaged with Myanmar. I gathered other data, particularly in this chapter for reasons explained below, from a wide range of further sources, including discussions held with international development agencies and foreign national programme teams active in education in Myanmar, Myanmar government documents (published and unpublished), international development education working group meetings held in Yangon and Nay Pyi Taw that I regularly attended as part of my job, presentations by Myanmar university staff at policy dialogues and briefing meetings, university, government and development-related websites, and British Council documents and commissioned reports (published and unpublished).

To begin an analysis and discussion of the international interactions between Myanmar and UK HEIs, I first present my findings on global, regional and bilateral engagement in higher education development and cooperation in Myanmar. I then turn my focus to the level of the institution and describe the activities and foci of existing international interactions of the four Myanmar universities (three public and one private) in the study. I conclude the chapter with an analysis and discussion of the findings.

6.1 Overview of international and regional cooperation with Myanmar HE

It became clear through local and global education database searches, including the main aid transparency portal, Mohinga, set up by international development partners and the Myanmar government to track international aid to Myanmar (https://mohinga.info/en/), Myanmar government documents and individual interviews with international development organisations and Myanmar Ministry of Education officials, that details of international financial aid to the HE sector in Myanmar in many cases were either not available, not comprehensively assimilated into a central register or database, or not disaggregated from general bilateral aid agreements, rendering it problematic to accurately examine financial aid

to HE in Myanmar. This is in contrast to international education aid programmes in the basic education, non-formal and TVET sectors, which are clearly documented and tracked by government and development agencies alike. Furthermore, several countries known to be active in higher education in Myanmar, including China, South Korea and India, do not participate in international donor coordination meetings nor do they formally or consistently share details of their programmes with the wider development community. In addition, in some cases, even where bilateral aid programmes in HE were well-documented in terms of activity, such as those operated by the Japanese International Cooperation Agency (JICA), funding levels were not available in the public domain, nor disclosed to third parties, including working groups established for Myanmar government and international partner coordination in HE; an interview with a senior project manager in JICA revealed that Japan does not officially publish funding details of their assistance to Myanmar as a matter of bilateral diplomacy. It was, therefore, difficult in this study to accurately compile financial information on HE development directly from international donors and the Myanmar Ministry of Education. Nevertheless, through in-depth interviews with Myanmar government officials and senior managers in HEIs, websites, international donor programme reports, discussions at working group meetings over a period of three years, during which time I was an active member of donor partner working groups and co-chair of the formal sub-sector working group for HE (the main government-international partner coordinating group) in my role at the British Council, it was possible to gain an understanding of the landscape of regional and national-level international cooperation in HE at the time of the study.

Overall, the research revealed limited attention to, or funding of, the higher education sector in Myanmar by international development aid agencies. The few programmes that did exist and which involved the institutions in the study were initiated through bilateral government-to-government or regional higher education programmes, funded by the external partner country or regional organisation. Most international interactions with the three public Myanmar HEIs in the study, however, were formed outside national or regional programmes, initiated independently by the foreign (non-Myanmar) HEI, but many partnerships were inactive. Only the private Myanmar HEI had a strategic approach to international partnership with foreign HEIs.

The study found that international agency and bilateral government support to HE in Myanmar was limited. Most donor agencies and international development partners were not engaged with the HE sector. Of those that were, Japan appeared the most active, followed by several

smaller donors, notably Australia, South Korea, the UK and Denmark. It was evident in universities M-A and M-B that China was also an international collaborator. However, the scale and scope of this activity, including details of funding, were not available to the senior management of the universities, nor were Ministry of Education officials clear about the extent of China's engagement with HEIs.

A small number of CSOs were found to be involved in higher education, most notably the Open Society Foundation. At the time of the study, there were no loans to Myanmar's government for the development of higher education from international lending organisations such as the World Bank or Asian Development Bank, both of which are currently active in the schools and TVET education sectors.

Compiling the data from the research sources described above, a brief overview of the main international agencies and foreign governments engaged in the HE sector in Myanmar is summarised below.

Japan

The focus of Japan's cooperation in higher education was in institution-based capacity building in the engineering, medical and agricultural sectors. Japan, through a bilateral agreement with the Myanmar government and in cooperation with the ASEAN University Network (AUN) (see below), supports Myanmar's top technical universities in Yangon and Mandalay, through a consortium of seven Japanese universities collaborating on curriculum development in six engineering departments, development of research capability, providing grants to procure equipment and facilitating faculty exchange and scholarships for 40 PhD students. Under the programme 'The Enhancement of Medical Education Project' Japan funds a consortium of six Japanese universities to support Myanmar's four medical universities, including one of the universities selected for this study, University M-C. More recently, Japan has developed projects with Yezin Agricultural University. Initiated under the previous military-backed government, Japan provides the largest foreign HE scholarship programme in Myanmar, having funded 370 places since 2002. In terms of regional cooperation in HE, Japan supports Myanmar's participation in its pan-Asian cooperation in HE through their Regional Science Education Project involving 26 technical institutions across the ten ASEAN countries[16].

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[16] Reports by JICA to British Council HE coordination meetings and to the Ministry of Education Sub-Sector Working Group on Higher Education. Very few details are in the public domain, but mention of

Australia

The Australian government supports higher education in Myanmar mainly through scholarships (around 50 per year up to 2018) to Australian universities, mainly at Masters level with half allotted for government officials and the other half for students. In previous years, the Australian government supported technical HE consultancies for the Comprehensive Education Sector Review (CESR) process, study tours to Australia and provision of Australian volunteers to work in three HEIs, two of which are nursing universities. 1.9 million AUSD was provided for a partnership between Australia National University (ANU) and the University of Yangon in law, archaeology, international relations in research and pedagogy, and development of a strategic long-term plan for the university. In 2017-18, however, a 40% reduction in the Australian aid budget led to a significant scaling back of support to HE in Myanmar and a sharper focus on support to the Ministry of Education in education quality enhancement systems and inclusion.[17]

UNESCO

At the time of the study, UNESCO was not providing support to the higher education sector, except where this intersected with teacher education as part of their work on developing teacher competency standard frameworks in the basic education sector. Previously, UNESCO contributed to two technical consultancies on HE as part of the CESR.

The UK

Compared to basic education, the UK's aid to HE has been limited. The UK's main engagement with HE in Myanmar is through the British Council, DFID and DIT. The British Council supports the Myanmar government and HEIs to increase the quality of education and build relationships between HE bodies, institutions and individuals in the UK and Myanmar. This has included HE policy dialogues, UK study tours, capacity building workshops in teaching and research, leadership and management training, commissioning needs analyses in improving teaching quality and distance education, and providing opportunities for MoE officials and HEI leaders to participate in international networking and debates in HE. The British Council, until 2017,

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some of JICA's work in HE can be found at
https://www.jica.go.jp/myanmar/english/office/about/cooperation.html

[17] Information from British Council working documents and non-formal sub-sector meetings on higher education in Myanmar (unpublished meeting minutes). Limited information was obtained from Australia government websites and programme documents, including:
https://dfat.gov.au/geo/myanmar/development-assistance/Pages/australia-awards-myanmar.aspx

organised annual education trade exhibitions in Myanmar for UK HEIs to recruit Myanmar students for study in the UK, usually attended by around 20 UK HEIs, including the three in this study.

DFID Myanmar education programmes are focussed on basic education. However, in 2017, Myanmar was one of only 10 countries that received DFID support to HE through their global HE project Strategic Partnerships in Higher Education for Innovation and Reform (SPHEIR), with the objective of transforming "higher education systems in focus countries in Sub-Saharan Africa, Asia and the Middle East to better meet the needs of graduates and employers" (SPHEIR, 2018). The project in Myanmar aims to reform distance higher education to create employable graduates in sustainable environmental management of Myanmar's natural resources, with funding totalling approximately 5m GBP over four years (Ibid., 2018).

The UK government's Department for International trade (DIT) interest in higher education in Myanmar focusses on building opportunities for UK HEIs to increase overseas student recruitment from Myanmar, to develop TNE activities to deliver UK courses and qualifications in Myanmar and to sell UK education resources and services to the government and private sector. In 2015-16, Myanmar was the recipient of Prosperity Funding from the UK government, a fund "to remove barriers to economic growth in order to reduce poverty" (UK Government, 2018) in low- and middle-income countries in the area of Geoscience. Myanmar's significant natural wealth, including oil and gas, continues to be of keen interest to the UK and other nations. The Prosperity project in Myanmar, co-funded by the FCO and the British Council, primed research and teaching links, and connections with industry, between a consortium of UK HEIs specialising in oil and gas research, the British Geological Survey, and four universities in Myanmar, including universities M-A and M-B in this study.

Open Society Foundation

The Open Society Foundation (OSF), a civil society organisation funded by the financial investor and philanthropist George Soros, has supported the development of HE in Myanmar since 2014. OSF, the most active CSO engaged in HE in Myanmar, provides scholarships to/from Myanmar in the humanities and social sciences, convenes national conferences in partnership with the Myanmar Ministry of Education on issues related to strengthening university autonomy, quality improvement and university leadership. The Central European University, also founded by George Soros, has a longstanding partnership with the University of Yangon, and provides scholarships, European study visits for capacity building, and supports the development of their institution Master Plan.

In addition, there have been other sporadic activities from other countries that have added to a deeper understanding of the HE sector, for example a needs analysis visit by a consortium of ten US universities organised by the Institute of International Education (IIE, 2013). While IIE has since delivered training in Myanmar on how to run an international relations office, not many initiatives appear to have led to sustained engagement or funded programmes.

Inter- and intra-regional interaction in higher education

Myanmar participates in a number of higher education Asia region programmes, Asian HE sector governmental bodies, networks and organisations. The European Union funds one of the largest regional HE development programmes involving ASEAN countries, including Myanmar. The EU-SHARE programme is funded by the EU at 20m Euros over four years and involves 10 ASEAN countries in four areas of development: international student mobility, credit transfer systems, internationalisation and quality assurance. The programme's objectives are stated to "strengthen regional cooperation, enhance the quality, competitiveness and internationalisation of ASEAN higher education institutions and students" (SHARE, 2018) through learning from the European experience. In addition, several Myanmar HEIs are collaborators in the EU-funded Erasmus programme; University M-A in this study is currently involved in four separate Erasmus projects in partnership with consortia of European universities.

International collaboration at a regional level involving Myanmar HEIs are also facilitated through Myanmar's membership of two key Asia region HE groups: the South-east Asian Ministers of Education Organisation Regional Centre for Higher Education and Development (SEAMEO-RIHED) and the ASEAN University Network (AUN). SEAMEO-RIHED aims "to foster efficiency, effectiveness, and harmonization of higher education in Southeast Asia through system research, empowerment, development of mechanisms to facilitate sharing and collaborations in higher education" (SEAMEO-RIHED, 2018) through the organisation of regional workshops and policy dialogues for South-east Asian HEIs. The primary purpose of the AUN is to bring together apex HEIs across Asia to enable greater collaboration across leading Asian universities. Two of the Myanmar HEIs in this study, M-A and M-B, were engaged in events and activities organised by these bodies, however, the range and number of activities appeared to be limited.

Routes to international collaboration for Myanmar HEIs

The main routes by which Myanmar HEIs form international collaborations with overseas HEIs is summarised in Figure 6 below. Here, it is important to restate that this list may not be comprehensive, but presents data obtained or made available for the study through a wide range of sources, including interviews, websites, discussions and reports.
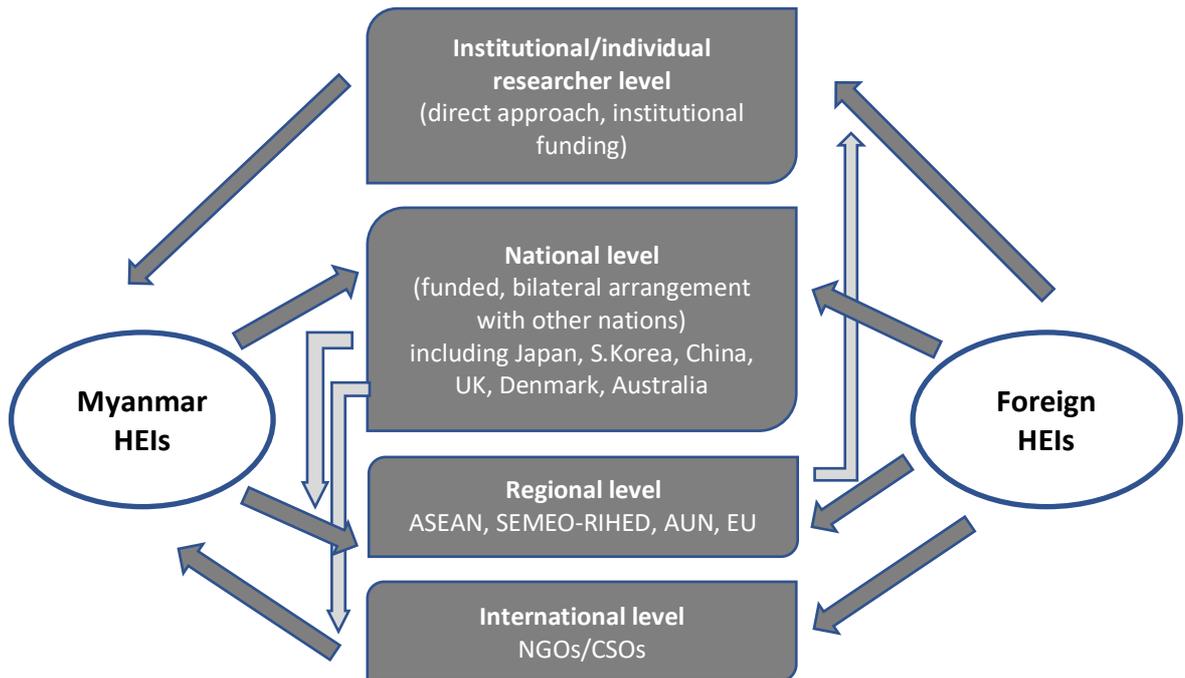
Figure 6: Main routes of HE international collaboration between Myanmar and overseas HEIs

While there existed a few regional and bilateral programmes in higher education, as the next section shows, most international interactions of Myanmar HEIs were initiated outside formal government-to-government or international donor programmes.

6.2 Types and foci of international interactions of four Myanmar HEIs

The study's findings reveal a wide variety of small-scale interactions with foreign HEIs. It was evident that most international interactions were initiated by the foreign (non-Myanmar) HEI with limited funding, often only covering the foreign HEI's costs, mostly outside formal national or regional programmes or grants. Two HEIs in the study, M-A and M-B, were found to have signed at least 70 and 37 MOUs, respectively, but many were reported by university senior managers as non-operational with no subsequent activity having taken place after the formal signing of the MOU. In contrast, the private HEI, M-D, had initiated a small number of

active, strategically selected international partnerships through which they were delivering transnational education in Myanmar.

The types of international activity in each of the four universities in this study are described below. As mentioned earlier, a comprehensive understanding of the number and types of international activity of Myanmar HEIs could not be obtained through one source, but captured through a range of sources, mainly directly from the senior managers of the four HEIs, but also from reports and presentations by Myanmar government officials and international development partners, websites, government documents and formal national and regional programme documents. The information presented below, therefore, although not exhaustive, provides an indication of the extent, scope and number of international connections.

International interactions of University M-A

University M-A is one of the most internationally active in Myanmar. It is a member of the ASEAN University Network (AUN) and has signed over 70 MOUs with foreign HEIs, although only 38 were reported by government and university sources as active. Their HEI partners were located mainly across the Asia region, but also included some UK and other European partners.

Most international interactions of university M-A were focussed on research and capacity building. These fall into three distinct discipline categories: natural resources (biology, geoscience, marine and environmental science; socio-cultural studies (law and justice, anthropology, women's studies, community development, archaeology, culture and heritage); and international relations (including languages: Myanmar, Japanese, English).

Capacity building and system reform were also priorities in M-A's international interactions. Activities included HE systems support (quality assurance, credit transfer, e-libraries, establishing international offices), student exchange, organising visiting lecturers (mainly from the foreign HEI to Myanmar), stipends and scholarships for Myanmar students, training in proposal writing and grant applications; curriculum development; leadership training and English language improvement.

There were very few explicit income-generating arrangements resulting from international activity, possibly due to the restrictive financial regulations under which public universities operate in Myanmar, mentioned previously in Chapter 3. The only source of income generation for M-A as part of international collaboration, other than winning research funding,

was from international student fees, which were so low to be considered insignificant by senior managers in M-A.

International interactions of University M-B

University M-B was also active in international collaboration, although to a lesser extent than University M-A. M-B had signed 37 MOUs mostly with universities in Asia, but also with some in Europe and a number of international NGOs.

Similar to University M-A, the main foci of international interactions were research and capacity building. Very limited income-generating activity was taking place, except, as in University M-A, low levels of income from international student fees. A similar picture emerged in terms of disciplines in their international collaborations, mainly related to natural resources (geology, zoology, botany and chemistry), socio-cultural studies (archaeology, Asian studies, law) and international relations (including languages). However, there appeared to be more international activity in other sciences (astronomy, physics and chemistry) and a few in tourism.

International interactions of University M-C

Although limited in number, the university had several international partnerships with medical universities in the Asia region, the UK and Australia. These included relationships with the Royal College of Physicians, the Royal College of Surgeons and the Royal College of Paediatricians in the UK, mainly for the purposes of providing exam centres for Myanmar medical students to gain access to work and study in the UK.

University M-C was reported by its senior managers to be engaged in international research in several medical areas, including microbiology, pathology, rheumatic heart disease and dengue haemorrhagic fever. Capacity building was also an important aspect of their collaborations, particularly in medical education, including curriculum development and training in specific medical procedures.

International interactions of Institution M-D

University M-D had a much smaller number of highly specific international connections with the UK, Hong Kong and Thailand, all focussed on delivering TNE programmes in Myanmar.

University M-D's international partnerships focussed on teaching in four distinct discipline areas: business management, engineering, health science and education. University M-D was not engaged in research. In addition to delivering TNE to Myanmar students, capacity building

activities for M-D involved HE administration systems training, quality assurance and pedagogical training for Myanmar staff.

A summary of the types of international activity of the four Myanmar HEIs is presented in Table 8 below.

Table 8: Summary of international interactions by type in four Myanmar HEIs

Type and scope of international interactions	Myanmar HEI*
Research: Mainly collection of field data. Assistance in joint applications for international research funding (e.g. EU Erasmus, bilateral research funds)	M-A, M-B, M-C
Capacity development (faculty and/or students): including teaching pedagogies, research methodologies, academic writing, skills for curriculum development, ICT training, administration training, quality assurance	M-A, M-B, M-C, M-D
Faculty exchange: mostly short visits for research and/or capacity development of foreign academics to Myanmar (short term, most less than one week, only very few semester-long). For Myanmar faculty: PhD scholarships and fellowships or short academic visits to other countries (mostly under bilateral government schemes, very few in independent partnerships)	M-A, M-B, M-C, M-D
Student exchange: very few, in the public universities, mostly foreign students to Myanmar. Limited programmes for Myanmar students. For the private institution, M-D, pathways for Myanmar students (fee-paying) to study in the UK.	M-A, M-B, M-C, M-D
Limited, but some participation in international conferences/HE policy dialogues	M-A, M-B, M-C
Institutional systems development: limited, but some aspects present, including development of quality assurance systems, e-libraries	M-A, M-B, M-C, M-D
Infrastructure development/upgrade of equipment and facilities	M-A
Curriculum development of new courses	M-A, M-C, M-D
Transnational education (delivery of international fee-paying courses and qualifications in Myanmar)	M-D

* Institution type: M-A (public, arts and science); M-B (public, arts and science); M-C (public, medical); M-A (private)

6.3   International collaboration by Myanmar HEIs in research

To provide a more detailed picture of research performance and international research collaboration of Myanmar HEIs, the Scopus research publications database was used to extract data on Myanmar's national research output. The findings, presented below, indicate very low levels of international peer-reviewed research and international research collaboration in Myanmar HEIs.

According to the Scopus dataset, Myanmar has few internationally active researchers. Over the five years from 2012 to 2017, only 988 papers by 1,175 authors from Myanmar HEIs were published in peer-reviewed journals in the Scopus dataset. These figures indicate a very small fraction of academics in Myanmar HEIs have published internationally in journals within the Scopus range (out of a total of 11,214 academics in the state system (Myanmar Ministry of Education, 2012)). Table 9 shows the research performance of ASEAN countries from 2012-2017. According to Scopus data, during this period Myanmar had the lowest research performance in ASEAN.

Table 9: Research performance of HEIs in ASEAN (2012-2017) using Scopus dataset

Country	Publications	Publications (growth %)	Citations*	Authors	Citations* per publication	Field-weighted citation* impact
Malaysia	151,970	31.9	544,187	125,671	3.6	0.89
Singapore	112,114	15.2	1,058,518	75,538	9.4	1.75
Thailand	76,155	20.4	334,414	64,253	4.4	0.94
Indonesia	46,404	211.3	110,662	53,178	2.4	0.82
Vietnam	25,318	84.7	120,227	26,692	4.7	1.2
Philippines	13,298	69.9	66,970	14,690	5	1.18
Brunei Darussalam	2,138	112	7,155	1,490	3.3	1.04
Cambodia	1,778	54.2	15,001	1,917	8.4	1.72
Lao	1,235	29.6	8,445	1,147	6.8	1.39
Myanmar	988	167	3,689	1,175	3.7	1.67

*self-citations included
Source: Elselvier SciVal: citation information generated using data from the Scopus database on 13 October 2017. Database updated on 13 Oct 2017 (prepared by British Council)

Interestingly, further analysis of the data showed that 80.8% of Myanmar's publications were co-authored with institutions from other countries. In terms of research topic, a Scopus database analysis supported, to some extent, the interview findings of the international collaborations in Myanmar HEIs in this study: medicine and medical science-related publications were dominant, comprising 34.3% of Myanmar's total over the five years, followed by topics broadly linked to natural resources at 24%. However, only 5% of publications by Myanmar HEIs were categorised under social science research. This result is contrary to the research interests of foreign HEIs reported as priorities by the three Myanmar institutions in the study, which I describe in more depth later in the chapter.

It should be noted that other topics in the Scopus database, for instance computer science and engineering, could not be compared to interview data as Myanmar's HEIs are differentiated by specialisation and no computer science universities nor engineering universities were included in this study.

Figure 7: Research output of Myanmar HEIs by topic published in international peer-reviewed journals in the Scopus dataset
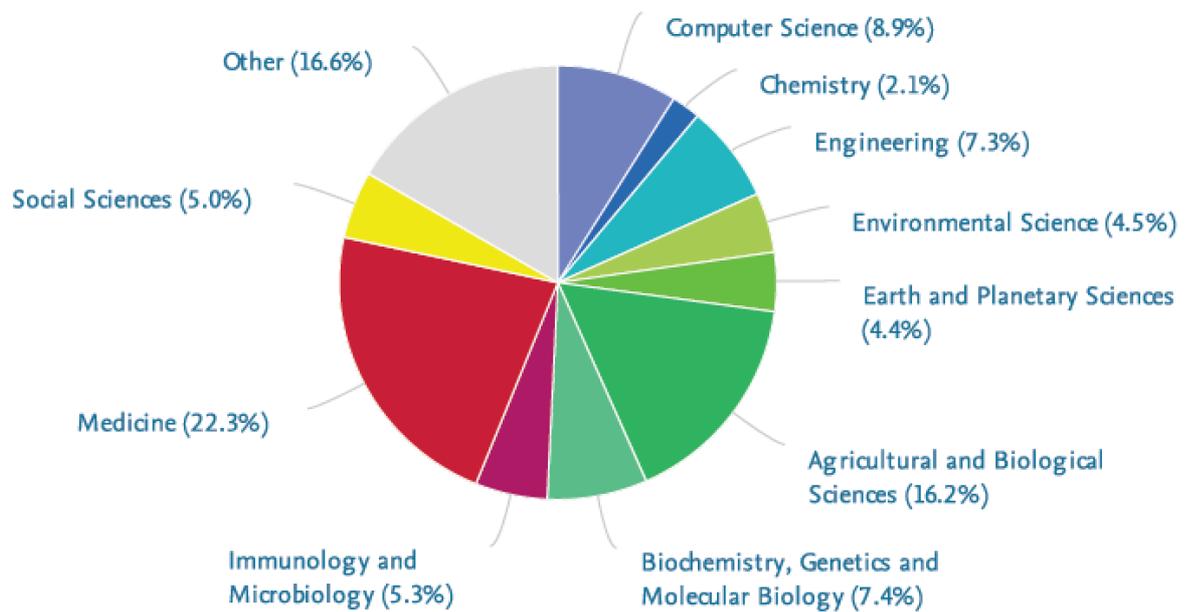

Source: Elselvier SciVal: citation information generated using data from the Scopus database on 13 October 2017 (prepared by British Council).

6.4   Analysis and discussion

In this section, I analyse and discuss, with reference to the literature review, the research findings to answer the first research sub-question, RQ1: "What are the activities and foci of international interactions in Myanmar higher education institutions?"

Firstly, a review of current international interactions between Myanmar and overseas HEIs at regional and national levels shows that HE development in Myanmar has been marginalised within education reform by international development agencies and national governments. HE development support by international organisations is not sufficiently tracked, information by sector unconsolidated, and international donor databases of funding and activities in HE incomplete. At national and regional levels, Myanmar HEIs were engaged in a limited range of relatively small-scale international interactions through bilateral arrangements with several countries, predominantly Japan, although data was not available on some other countries such as China, which could be significant. Myanmar HEIs were engaged at a regional level, albeit to a limited extent, through regional organisations (ASEAN, AUN, SEAMEO-RIHED and the EU), mainly for the purposes of regional harmonisation of HE systems, capacity building and networking.

The neglect of HE reform by international aid agencies and donors in Myanmar's development, with the exception of Japan's support to medical and technological universities, accords with previous studies and reports of HE's marginalisation in development (see Lebeau, 2008; Robertson, 2009). It appears that in Myanmar, the inclusion of HE in the SDGs has not significantly influenced this trend. During my work for the British Council in Myanmar, it was clear that higher education was largely neglected in mainstream education aid, with limited interest, expertise or funding from most national and international aid agencies and donors. As reported in other contexts, this is contrary to the interests of the Myanmar Ministry of Education, which, while prioritising the improvement of basic education, at the same time views higher education as a central pillar of its socio-economic development and democracy-building strategies. As previous studies have shown, higher education plays a significant role, not only in democratic and social reform, which are also stated key goals of several national and international actors and agencies, but is also a vital provider of much-needed high-skilled human capital for social service delivery, economic development and producing the next generation of society's managers and leaders. Indeed, there is wide consensus that quality higher education is "an essential prerequisite for developing countries to escape their peripheral status in the global economy" (see World Bank, 2000; Naidoo, 2008). The critical

and underpinning role of HE in achieving the SDGs and contributing towards Myanmar's democratic transition and a more peaceful and equitable society has been largely overlooked as a sector by international development organisations, multinational lenders and bilateral aid agencies.

Importantly, the neglect of HE in international development in Myanmar may be inadvertently increasing social injustice and inhibiting social transformation by sustaining the status quo of Myanmar's elitist and stratified HE system, thereby perpetuating, legitimising and reinforcing the position of dominant elites in Myanmar society, as described by elite reproduction theorists. At the same time, the failure to engage sufficiently in higher education is to ignore the liberal allocative purpose of HE which liberal theorists argue supports progressive social change through enabling social mobility based on access, inclusion and meritocracy, as described in Chapter 2 (see Moore, 2004; Brennan and Naidoo, 2008).

At the time of this study, most international interactions of Myanmar HEIs were initiated outside formal government-to-government or international donor programmes. An analysis of the activities of international activity in the three public universities in Myanmar in this study reveal a wide variety of small-scale interactions with foreign universities with low levels of funding, in addition to a small number of regional and bilateral programmes. Most interactions were reported to have been initiated by the foreign (non-Myanmar) HEI. Many were inactive or involved low levels of activity, and others operated with limited funding, often only covering the foreign HEI's costs. As I will discuss in the Chapter 8, this situation has considerable social justice implications in the roles and relationships between partner HEIs.

Dominant areas of research focus in international collaborations with the three public Myanmar HEIs areas reported by the HEIs fell under four main categories: medical science, natural resources, socio-cultural and international relations. However, a Scopus database analysis of international peer-reviewed research performance of Myanmar HEIs showed very low levels of publication in journals covered by Scopus, the lowest in ASEAN, and focussed only on the first two categories of discipline. A number of factors may be significant in these low levels. Undoubtedly, as a consequence of decades of international academic isolation, many Myanmar academics do not have access to, nor much experience of publishing in, international journals. Of the small number of publications by Myanmar scholars at Myanmar HEIs in the last five years, over 80% were co-authored with international scholars, indicating, and corroborated by Myanmar researchers interviewed in this study, the dependency of Myanmar scholars upon international collaborative research partnerships to conduct and

publish their research internationally. The implications in terms of social justice of the four research topic areas chosen in international partnerships and issues surrounding international publication are further discussed in Chapter 8.

Returning to the research questions, the type and foci of international interactions of Myanmar HEIs, research and capacity development were found to be the main activity types of the three public Myanmar HEIs. Evident in the summary Table 8 above, the data suggests imbalances between the activities of Myanmar HEIs and those of their international partners, particularly in activity dependent on international mobility, such as faculty and student exchange and participation in international forums and conferences. This issue was a common theme highlighted by Myanmar researchers in interviews and discussed in the next section on rationales and motivations for international collaboration.

In contrast, only the private HEI, M-D, was involved in commercial, for-profit activities in Myanmar with international partners. This finding is unsurprising, given the restrictions on commercial activities of public Myanmar HEIs, but is also illustrative of an emerging tension and growing division between the public and private HE sectors in Myanmar and the nature of, and rationales for, their international collaborations.

While the main international interactions of Myanmar HEIs at national, regional and institutional levels described above gives a useful perspective on the scope of international interactions, it provides limited detail on the depth, impact and relevance of activities, particularly in the absence of accurate information on funding levels. It should also be noted that the actual activities taking place between HEIs may not necessarily reflect the intentions or priorities of participating HEIs. To provide further insight on these, the next section moves on to present and analyse the study's findings on the rationales and motivations of Myanmar and UK HEIs to engage in these activities.

7 Rationales and motivations for international collaboration of Myanmar and UK HEIs

The focus of this chapter is on addressing the second of my research sub-questions, RQ2: "What are the rationales and motivations of HEIs in Myanmar to collaborate internationally, and of UK HEIs to collaborate with HEIs in Myanmar, as perceived by senior managers and policy makers?". It aims to provide a deeper understanding of why institutions are participating in international interactions in HE in Myanmar and the factors driving them. An analysis of intentions and rationales is important, particularly in social justice terms, in elucidating what outcomes and benefits each collaborating institution expects from the interaction, and the values, actions, behaviours and contextual factors behind the drive towards these objectives. As explained in Chapter 4, my analysis is based on the four dimensions of internationalisation described in Knight and de Wit's typology of internationalisation rationales: academic, economic, social/cultural and political (Knight and de Wit, 1999; de Wit, 2002), supplemented by new institutional and national rationales identified as emerging from the increasing globalisation in higher education (Knight, 2015).

In conducting the interviews and analysing the data, I was aware of intersections between the four different rationales (de Wit, 2011), and also that the interviewees in Myanmar and the UK were speaking from multiple perspectives shaped by their current and previous roles as researchers, teachers, senior managers of HEIs and policy makers, at individual researcher, departmental, institutional and Ministry levels. These interconnections and positionalities, and their effect on the priorities and rationales expressed, were important considerations in the analysis.

It is important to note again at this point that my questions to Myanmar institutions focussed on their engagement with all of their international partners, not only (but including) the UK. In contrast, my questions to UK institutions dealt specifically with their interests in Myanmar.

This chapter is organised as follows: I first present and analyse the rationales of the interviewees in the four Myanmar HEIs and Myanmar Ministry of Education, followed by those in the three UK HEIs under each of the analytical framework's four rationales for internationalisation. I follow this with a discussion and conclusion, drawn from the substantive findings of the analysis.

To restate the coding, the interviewees of Myanmar HEIs (M-A, M-B, M-C and M-D) were at the level of senior professor or above, most holding key positions in the university leadership structure. The government interviewees (M-O1 and M-O2) were senior officials in the Ministry of Education with responsibility for HE, and the interviewees in UK HEIs (UK-A, UK-B and UK-C) were senior managers in international units or senior researchers. Individuals from the same HEI were designated with a number 1 or 2 at the end of their institution coding. Interviews all took place between November 2016 and April 2017.

7.1 Rationales and motivations of Myanmar HEIs to engage in international interactions

Academic rationales of Myanmar HEIs

Academic motives, particularly research and capacity development, dominated the rationales of the four Myanmar HEIs in this study to engage in international partnerships. In response to the question of why their institution wanted to partner with foreign universities, leaders and senior managers in all four Myanmar HEIs emphasised the importance of international collaboration in improving academic quality:

> "My priority is to upgrade capacity of my teaching staff. This is my first priority." (M-B2)

> "Research collaboration is one of the essentials, and student exchange programmes and training of trainers." (M-C2)

> "The main objective to work with them is to develop our staff […]. We would like to provide the same student experience as those peer students who are having in the UK institutions." (M-D1)

Specific academic rationales cited by Myanmar senior managers included capacity development in research methodologies, effective teaching pedagogies, access to information and knowledge in their specialist subject areas, access to, and training in, the use of modern equipment for data analysis, academic writing for publication, writing research proposals to access international funding, and developing institutional systems for quality improvement.

The academic rationale was also a priority at government level in Myanmar. MoE officials emphasised the importance of international collaboration in improving the quality of teaching and research, providing infrastructure support, enhancing the international reputation of Myanmar universities and enabling HE to contribute to society.

International profile and reputation, one of Knight's emerging priorities for internationalisation, was noted as a motivation for MoE officials and one Myanmar HEI (M-C) but all three public HEIs stressed this was a much higher priority for their foreign partner institution.

Constraints and barriers within Myanmar's HE system were found to both drive and, in some situations, suppress the academic motivations of Myanmar HEIs for international collaboration. National system structures and the human resource policies of the Myanmar Ministry of Education were cited by senior managers/leaders of Myanmar HEIs as key drivers for international collaboration in research. The study found that a significant motivation in Myanmar's public arts and science HEIs for international research partnerships stemmed from the Ministry of Education's human resource management policy regulating academic promotions, which is not only linked to length of service, but also, increasingly, to research activity. Three senior academics in the study claimed that due to the lack of government funding in Myanmar, they were driven to use their own, personal money to conduct research and stated that this practice was widespread.   Collaborating with international HEIs in research was specified as an important means to access external research funding and hence, for Myanmar academic staff, enable them to advance their own and their staff's careers and gain promotion within the Myanmar HE system, without using their own money. As one department head explained:

> "Without funding we can't move… […] Sometimes, our elite persons order us to do research, but they don't give any research funds. So we at that time, I need to use my own pocket [personal] money. So I answer like that to [foreign researcher]….collaborative research is number one – to get fund." (M-A1).

> " … because [international collaboration] is important to promote their level, for promotion. It they didn't do any research, they can't promote" (M-A1)

However, another senior manager in Myanmar university M-A, stated that the Myanmar Ministry of Education did indeed provide research funding up to USD $7,000 that researchers could apply for, at levels that would be considered small in international terms, but substantial to Myanmar researchers. Nevertheless, responses of the majority of Myanmar interviewees indicated that for most researchers, accessing these awards was not easy.

Furthermore, senior managers in the three public Myanmar HEIs in the study reported that national research grants, even when awarded, were unsupportive of international collaboration and were, therefore, not considered an effective driver for increased

internationalisation. It was noted that government research awards could not be used for international conferences or study visits, so were not helpful in supporting international collaboration. In fact, in the absence of research funding from the international partner, it appeared to be common practice for the Myanmar partner to use personal money, not government funding, to participate in the international collaboration, or to fulfil the conditions of an MOU they had signed. Myanmar researchers believed that their foreign partners were not aware of this situation.

Another important set of academic rationales for international collaboration for the three Myanmar public universities was connected with enabling the analysis, publication and presentation of their research data and findings. A common theme of discussion by Myanmar academics was the absence of equipment in their own institution, the challenges of publishing in international peer-reviewed journals and lack of opportunity to present their work to a wider academic audience, which they viewed as important personal drivers for international collaboration:

> "I would like to undertake joint geological studies, including field studies, data analysis, publication and dissemination of the data." (M-B1)

For a senior manager in the public medical university, conducting research and publishing was seen as an important function of their university that they were not able to meet without international collaboration:

> "[international research] is the most important thing to do. The value of the university is how many research papers, peer reviewed papers, is produced by this university. That's the main quality of the university." (M-C1)

From their discussions, Myanmar researchers appeared to be motivated by, and cognizant of, the new and emerging opportunities they have through international collaboration as potential contributors to and co-producers of knowledge. However, current international arrangements to enable this were limited.

The academic rationales of the private Myanmar institution (M-D) differed in several aspects from those of the public institutions and were principally related to the provision of fee-paying transnational education. These included curriculum development for internationally-recognised courses and qualifications, establishment of internationally-aligned systems, including assessment, and offering academic pathways to students for international study or top-up degrees outside Myanmar, particularly in the UK. In contrast, senior managers in the

three Myanmar public institutions in this study did not regard the development of joint or dual international degrees or course provision as an important rationale for their international collaboration. This was probably a reflection of the strict regulations in the public sector regarding income-generating activities of the university and the lack of national legislation regarding foreign degree provision within Myanmar.

Not all of Knight and de Wit's academic rationales were regarded as important to the Myanmar HEIs in the study. For instance, senior managers did not discuss the integration of an international dimension, a key component of the academic rationale in the framework. They did, however, attribute this rationale to the motivations of their foreign partners, particularly as a benefit to their international (non-Myanmar) students. In fact, a senior manager in institution M-A reported this as the first priority of foreign universities. While student exchange was mentioned as an important rationale by Myanmar HEIs, the main benefit to students appeared to be connected to the higher quality of teaching and research in their partner institution, rather than experiencing an international dimension. Although student exchange was commonly mentioned by all four Myanmar HEIs and were typically part of their MOU agreements with foreign HEIs, it was acknowledged that this was not a significant activity for Myanmar students due to costs, which limited the numbers of Myanmar students able to undertake reciprocal visits.

The academic rationale for international HE collaboration was driven to some extent by the recognition of priority research areas for international collaboration at national policy level. Ministry of Education officials stated these as water studies, water management, coastal area research and fisheries, food security, environmental sustainability, energy (hydro, oil and gas), agriculture, international trade and business management[18]. English language training was specified by the three public HEIs and government officials as a particularly important area to enable international collaboration.

Finally, as noted in the chapter on research context, the academic rationale was evident in the prominence given to international collaboration at HE policy level in the Myanmar government's National Education Strategic Plan (2016-21), of which the first component for HE reform is to "undertake overseas study tours to document best practices and establish

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[18] Information provided by the Ministry for a British Council organised policy dialogue at Oxford University in 2017

partnerships with international universities, research centres and other higher education institutions" (Myanmar Ministry of Education, 2016, p.51).

In summary, for senior managers of public and private Myanmar HEIs and government officials in Myanmar in the study, academic rationales were dominant for international collaboration, particularly in terms of capacity development for academic staff and, for the public universities, as an enabler for research, data analysis and international publication.

Economic rationales of Myanmar HEIs

Although academic rationales for international collaboration were cited as the foremost priority for the Myanmar HEIs and government officials in this study, economic rationales, while mentioned far less frequently, were also present.

Firstly, at institution level, three key economic rationales for internationalisation were identified, depending on the type of institution: research funding, student employability and student fees. As described previously, for senior managers in Myanmar's two arts and science public institutions in the study (M-A and M-B), the economic rationale for international collaboration was linked to academic rationales, expressed in the need to access research funding and, on an individual level, to gain promotion. Income to the university through international student fees was not mentioned as a key rationale for forming international partnerships by the three public universities. While two public universities, M-A and M-B, had growing numbers of foreign students studying on their campus (in university M-A, 30-40 Japanese students and more than 100 Chinese students), this was framed not in terms of a source of revenue for the Myanmar institutions, which was stated as being negligible, but as a senior professor in university MA explained, stemmed from the economic rationales of their international HEI partners, who were able to enhance their market offer to prospective students back home by providing opportunities to study in Myanmar to increase their employability. As one Myanmar senior manager explained:

> "Most of the Chinese students they study Myanmar language and they stay in our dormitory. Even [while] they study Myanmar language, they try to get a job here. So many Chinese companies are invest here, so they can easy to get a job because they can speak Myanmar. [...] the business relations between Myanmar and China is increase the number of business relations. Even the student go back to China, they can easily get a job." (M-A2)

The hosting of international students in public Myanmar universities, therefore, was perceived to be an important economic rationale for their foreign partners, but not for their own institutions.

Myanmar student employability and national economic growth were stated as important drivers for HE international collaboration by government officials. The two senior MoE officials interviewed framed international collaboration, and indeed, a fundamental purpose of universities, in terms of the development of national human capital, in producing a more highly-skilled labour force needed for the country's economic competitiveness.

> "We need to develop the curriculum in line with the local labour market. Otherwise, our graduates will [find it] very difficult to find a job, [so] education and the economy should be matched. ...We would like to make sure the quality of higher education, our graduates are employable, our graduates are very competitive in the labour market wherever they would like to go to work locally or internationally. This is very important." (M-O1)

It was evident while conducting the interviews, particularly for the Myanmar government officials, the high degree of importance placed on increasing the quality and value of higher education and for this to be very visible and relevant to students, who might otherwise express their frustrations through protest.

The issue of student employability in relation to international collaboration had various responses at institution level. The two Myanmar public arts and science HEIs (M-A and M-B) did not explicitly link their motivations to collaborate internationally to improving Myanmar student employability. In contrast, this was a key economic rationale for the public medical university (M-C) and the private institution (M-D). As a senior manager in the medical university explained:

> "We want to be an internationally-recognised university, because, as you know, Myanmar is not freedom for almost fifty years. Once graduated from our university, [our] doctors cannot practice apart from in our country. We can learn a lot from neighbour countries as well as overseas countries. Once we [become] accredited with other universities, the graduates from our university can work in the other near country. Otherwise, they can serve only here." (M-C1)

For the private institution, M-D, student employability, market need and the notion of the student as a customer were strong motivations for international collaboration and the courses it chose to offer, as illustrated through the logic of decision-making in partnering with a Thai university:

> "In Myanmar, we don't have any trained dieticians here, whereas in Thailand […]
> it is compulsory for [a hospital] to have at least one registered dietician. We don't
> have any nutritionists over here, if you are going for medical therapy, weight loss,
> so this is a very, very strong area for us where we don't have any expertise. And
> for that we have identified these areas." (M-D1)

Indeed, while economic rationales for international engagement were, in general, relatively weak drivers for the three public Myanmar institutions, they were priorities for the private Myanmar HEI. In contrast to the public HEIs, institution M-D was founded as a business for the purpose of profit-making and the senior manager at M-D framed the institution in terms of a corporate entity, requiring investment, return on investment (student fees) and driven by market forces:

> "We have built lab facilities there, which requires a substantial investment […].
> We think that these will pay off." (M-D1)

A senior manager from the same private university also attributed an economic rationale to their foreign partners, commenting that Brexit had heightened interest in, and widened the scope of UK institutions' search for international markets in higher education, driving them to new TNE countries such as Myanmar:

> "Particularly with Brexit, they don't even know where they are heading […] [they]
> will have to be outreaching to the new markets. Singapore, Hong Kong – these
> are very saturated. Malaysia is very saturated." (M-D1)

To summarise, economic rationales for international collaboration were present at government policy level and in the motivations of the Myanmar private HEI, but for public HEIs were minimal. Myanmar government officials strongly linked international collaboration in HE with producing skilled human capital for national economic growth and competitiveness. Conversely, the economic rationale for the three public HEIs was not a strong driver for international collaboration, except where it related to accessing funding related to academic rationales and career progression. In contrast, the economic rationale was a fundamental motivation for the private Myanmar HEI.

Social/cultural rationales of Myanmar HEIs

Social and cultural rationales, in terms of widening access and improving inclusion and equity in HE, were mentioned by Myanmar government officials and HEI senior managers, but only in the context of priorities for reforms in HE for which the government was seeking broad international donor support, not explicitly in the domain of international HE collaboration.

Social and cultural rationales were also discussed in relation to changing attitudes and mindsets of Myanmar academics through international experiences:

> "Most of the teachers and most of the students need foreign exposure.. without foreign exposure, their mind is not …not only open, but broadly open." (M-A2)

During interviews, senior managers in Myanmar HEIs commented on the need to change an institutional culture shaped by years of authoritarian control and international isolation. They also regarded international collaboration as important in raising awareness of how universities in other parts of the world functioned, and as leaders, to help them envision what Myanmar universities could and ought to be. Given the imbalance in researcher and student exchanges in and out of Myanmar, this need was not being met through current collaborative arrangements.

The private Myanmar HEI in the study attributed a cultural motivation, albeit secondary to an economic rationale, to their foreign partner HEI and the positive contribution that Myanmar could bring to them:

> "The [financial motivation] is the main area. The other is cultural – they [the UK partner] have the diverse background of students and the more diverse you have, the more creativity." (M-D1)

It was noteworthy that compared to the public institutions in Myanmar, the private HEI was much more aware of Myanmar's economic and cultural value to foreign partners.

The analytical framework used in this study includes social and community development as an aspect of the socio-cultural rationale.   Only one example of this rationale type was mentioned, which emerged as a benefit to the Myanmar HEI through a student exchange programme from Indonesia as part of the student mobility area of the regional EU-ASEAN SHARE project, which brought six Indonesian students to university M-B for a semester. The Indonesian students, as part of their international experience, conducted a university community engagement project in Myanmar, which, as one Myanmar professor explained, could enhance the service function of University M-B:

> "International students, they can work together and can teach in schools… this is community engagement, that's what I'm thinking. I think we can do like that with our students. That's why I would like to get international student exchanges." (M-B2)

As I describe below, socio-cultural rationales were also linked with political rationales. However, in general, socio/cultural factors were mentioned much less frequently than academic as rationales for internationalisation.

Political rationales of Myanmar HEIs

Knight and de Wit frame the political rationale for internationalisation in HE in terms of a wide range of national and supra-national drivers related to foreign policy, national security, technical assistance, peace and mutual understanding, national identity and regional identity. Political rationales were apparent in two of these areas: peace and security and national/regional identity, mainly expressed by government officials. The crucial role of international collaboration in peacebuilding was emphasised, exemplified by this comment from a senior ministry official:

> "International collaboration is very important, because education plays the key role for the poverty reduction and a key role for the peacebuilding, also. We can work together with the NGOs, INGOs and international development partners and then we can reduce poverty, we can build the peace of the nation, for the equity concerns, for the inclusiveness, and we can be successful." (M-O1)

In this case, while the discussion was about higher education collaboration, the ministry official appeared to be emphasising a general role of international collaboration and aid across the broader education sector, not specifically HE, for peacebuilding and equity. When asked whether peacebuilding was a rationale for international HE collaboration, the ministry official linked peacebuilding to the general socio-cultural roles of universities, but did not elucidate further on how international collaboration in HE could contribute to this. In contrast, government officials were more aware of the role of international collaboration in terms of regional and global standing and competitiveness.

> "If we don't have international collaboration, our universities will be left behind. Even in the ASEAN region, we will be left behind." (M-O2)

It was notable that senior managers in Myanmar HEIs did not explicitly state political rationales, including peacebuilding and identity, for their international collaboration.

Political rationales, therefore, appeared not to be a strong driver for international collaboration in HE in Myanmar, and were hardly mentioned at institution level. Although the government officials interviewed regarded universities as central to peacebuilding and cultural

identity, there was not a clear sense of the role of international HE collaboration in these areas.

Perceptions of Myanmar HEIs and government officials of the rationales of foreign HEIs

Before presenting the rationales of the UK HEIs in the study for collaboration with Myanmar, it is useful at this point to note the perceptions of Myanmar HEIs and government officials of the academic rationales of foreign HEIs to collaborate with them.

Asked why foreign HEIs (including, but not specifically, those from the UK) wanted to collaborate with them, all three public universities stated that access to research data and research sites in Myanmar was the primary driver:

> "I think, we have a lot of field data. [We are a] virgin area, a lot of virgin data. I think it's their main motivation, field data." (M-B1)

> "They come to Myanmar to collect the data. […] When they want to collaborate with us, they can apply our energies for their data collection. We do their data collection." (M-A1)

> "Now that Myanmar is open, so now they would like to get the information, do the research, collect the data, like Oxford University." (M-B2)

It was interesting to note that Myanmar researchers emphasised their utility to foreign HEIs in gaining access to research sites and their language ability in the field, but did not identify their own expertise in these areas as a reason for foreign universities to collaborate. These perceptions were shared at Ministry level, where a senior Ministry official stated that one of the main drivers and benefits for foreign universities was the opportunity to conduct research in 'virgin' areas or under-researched subjects, particularly related to the environment and health. Myanmar government officials were keen to use this as a means to attract international collaboration in higher education.

Altruistic rationales were also attributed to foreign HEIs. From the perspective of the Myanmar respondents, particularly at Ministry level, there was a sense that foreign HEIs were motivated by a desire to help Myanmar as a country:

> "They want to help us, to improve Myanmar's economic status. And they want to help us, our education system, to be in line with the other education systems in the region and beyond" (M-O2)

This perception was also mentioned by two other Myanmar institution leaders in the study, with one recognising that foreign HEIs had multiple rationales driving collaboration:

> "Maybe [an]other is they really want to help a developing country like Myanmar – that's a reason." (M-C2)

> "…and also they would like to improve and develop our country, and also our university. You know, in higher education, research collaboration they would like. This is a separate thing. Not only one thing they are looking for in Myanmar universities – several things. (M-B2)

A connection between the academic and economic rationales of foreign HEIs was identified by senior managers in Myanmar HEIs. In the views of some of the Myanmar researchers/senior managers in the study, Myanmar field data and association with Myanmar HEIs provided new opportunities for foreign researchers to access international development-related research funding from outside Myanmar through foreign national, global or regional development programmes and research grants. Examples of this were noted for ERASMUS+, KOICA and Danish government funding. In this sense, research funding was perceived by Myanmar institutions as an economic driver for academic collaboration by both Myanmar and their foreign HEI partners.

Academic promotion was also perceived by the Myanmar HEIs as being an important rationale for their foreign partners. One senior manager in the Myanmar medical university (M-C) in the study noted that their foreign partners viewed their collaboration as important for their career advancement, by being designated to senior positions in the collaborative project, such as course director, building their experience in specific areas of research and training, and fulfilling promotion requirements by meeting targets for numbers of trainees participating in international courses.

Only one institution, the medical university M-C, attributed national interests to foreign partners. One senior manager from the medical university stated:

> "One of the benefits for the UK hospitals – they can get the good doctors from here to the UK." (M-C1)

As noted previously, however, this was framed positively by the Myanmar senior manager as improved employability and career opportunities for Myanmar medical students.

To briefly summarise then, the academic rationale was perceived by researchers in the three Myanmar public universities in the study to be a major driver for foreign universities, with access to research data the primary motivation for collaboration attributed to foreign HEIs. Altruism and a motivation to help Myanmar develop were also ascribed to foreign HEIs. Career progression was mentioned as a rationale of researchers in foreign HEIs. In addition,

two further economic rationales of their foreign partners, presented previously, were also mentioned: international student fees, as noted by the private Myanmar HEI, and improving the employability of foreign students, noted by a senior manager in institution M-B as a rational explaining the number of foreign students sent to M-B's campus.

I turn now to the rationales and motivations of senior managers in UK HEIs for their collaborations with Myanmar.

7.2   Rationales and motivations of UK HEIs to engage with Myanmar

Academic rationales of UK HEIs

The academic rationale was much less dominant for the UK HEIs in the study than for Myanmar HEIs, although still clearly significant, according to interviews with senior managers of UK HEIs. Research and knowledge production, creating strategic alliances for academic purposes and student and staff development, included in Knight's typology of emerging rationales, were all present in the rationales of the three UK HEIs in the study, but in none of the cases were these stated as the key driver for engagement with Myanmar.

Where academic rationales were mentioned, specific research interests and altruism were stated as important to their engagement. In two UK HEIs, academic rationales were framed within a donor-recipient, or deficit, relationship, in which the UK HEIs saw themselves as providing expertise, support and capacity building to Myanmar HEIs.

> "[I] knew that Myanmar, Burma, was coming out of, or opening up, so to speak, and understood there would be potential interest there for international type collaborations …[…] …you feel that they are just crying out for help and its very nice to be able to contribute something, so that's the main reason for that." (UK-C1)

In one of the UK HEIs (UK-B), an altruistic motivation to contribute to the public good in Myanmar through the application of the university's expertise and knowledge for Myanmar's development was a strong driver for engagement. However, in order to justify these activities to the university leadership, as a senior manager explained, the altruism of the researcher had to be framed within an economic rationale:

> "One of the reasons we can shout about this work is that what it's done, if we move away from the specifics of the project, what it's done for the university is given us a brand identity and respectability in Myanmar that some of the other non-Russell group universities may not have. So we've set up a partnership with

one of the private universities and we're delivering engineering and business type programmes out there. And increasingly, at events, if the name of university [UK-B] comes up, there are people who say: "Oh, we know you are doing good work in Myanmar", so they may not know the details of the project, and that, in many ways, has been the financial reward that the university has reaped for its investment in this project." (UK-B1)

The same senior manager, while acknowledging the strong economic rationales driving their international engagement in Myanmar, observed that this could be used as a lever or camouflage for other academic, altruistic or non-commercial activities:

"While all universities have pressure for commercialisation, I think actually sometimes that's a very nice shield for them to hide behind." (UK-B1)

For UK HEIs, academic motivations were intertwined with economic rationales. Two UK HEIs in the study, UK-B and UK-C, were cognizant of the importance of Myanmar in attracting international research funding and development aid and were actively positioning for funds, either directly or through partners. Among the potential funding sources mentioned were the Natural Environment Research Council, the Darwin Initiative, DFID funding through the SPHEIR project, the Global Challenge Fund and international development opportunities funded through UNICEF, the Danish government, UNESCO, DFID, Save the Children and the UK's Prosperity Fund.

In terms of student and staff development, also academic rationales, a senior manager in university UK-B cited the involvement of UK university staff in a project in Myanmar through their university policy to allow all academic staff to dedicate time to self-managed research, motivated by the opportunity to make practical use of their knowledge and skills in Myanmar and to support their teaching in the UK:

"…when this project came along, I was head of a department where three people in that department said that they would like to dedicate their self-managed time to this project. So if I need to do accounting, I can give you the financial cost of that, which in pure financial terms, if I was selling the time, is around £300,000 - £400,000. They made that decision because they saw that opportunity to put into practice many of the things that they theorise or educate about to undergraduate or post graduate level." (UK-B1)

Interestingly, only one of the three UK HEIs explicitly mentioned access to research data as one of their key rationales for engagement with Myanmar HEIs, in contrast to the perceptions and experiences of Myanmar HEIs in their interactions with foreign HEIs, which stated this as the leading motivation of foreign HEIs to collaborate with them.

Economic rationales of UK HEIs

For all three UK HEIs in the study, commercial gain was clearly at the forefront of their decisions to engage with Myanmar HEIs. Other rationales, including academic, political and socio-cultural, either ultimately supported the economic rationale, or they were made possible through other income generation activities.

> "Fundamentally, the work that we do with organisations [in Myanmar] is based on a revenue stream coming to the university as a result of that […]. The expectation from the altruistic aspects would be that eventually there would be an income stream drive from there." (UK-B2)

The same senior manager from university UK-B explained that business development was a pre-requisite for any other activity the university may want to engage in:

> "We are working towards a business model. I think that we recognise there may be opportunities to do activities which are more about corporate social responsibility and that's something that I am very interested in, but until we have a firm foundation in a country, I don't think that's something that is particularly on the agenda." (UK-B2)

When asked why their university had engaged in Myanmar, a senior manager from another UK university, UK-A, also recognised the tension and the interconnection between their public good mission of the university and the need to grow their economic base:

> "I think it would only be accurate for me to say that there are two motivations. One obviously the global corporate responsibility bit […]. But the other motivation, I think it would only be fair to note, was with a long-term eye on market potential in Myanmar. […] If we get in early, if we develop relationships and demonstrate our commitment and are not looking for a return on that commitment in the early years, maybe we could be a bit of a fast mover […], because if Myanmar does come through its transition, then it could present itself to UK universities as, if you like, a bit of a new Malaysia, with very strong educational and cultural orientation towards the UK, and opportunities in the long-term for us to develop a bit of a business model in Myanmar." (UK-A1)

University UK-C also acknowledged the economic rationale as a primary driver:

> "Obviously any activities, at some point, have to be, look as if we are bringing money in or doing our business." (UK-C1)

The economic rationale was expressed in a variety of ways by UK HEIs in the study. International student recruitment was a driver for all three institutions. In two institutions, this was primarily through strategies to establish TNE arrangements in Myanmar and in recruiting Myanmar students to study in the UK. The third UK HEI, UK-C, while actively positioning for

potential UK research funding in Myanmar, considered the TNE and student recruitment market in Myanmar too small compared to their interests in China, India and Malaysia, indicating a link, and possibly a tension, between the two agendas:

> "A lot of our international strategy is student recruitment [...]. But I push a bit more on the research interests, obviously where there's more post-graduate recruitment, then I am more interested there." (UK -C1)

Another notable motivation for engagement with Myanmar concerned changes in domestic student interest and economic conditions in the UK. For university UK-C, Myanmar's long coastline and natural resources in oil and gas presented an opportunity for international student recruitment in an area that had been traditionally strong at the university, but where demand was declining in the UK:

> "Especially in the North Sea, the UK sector is declining now, and a lot of the students, post-graduate and doctorate, come from other countries, so they [university senior management] are always with that idea, and I think the same thing, Myanmar opening up and their interests there." (UK-C1)

In this case, a dependence appeared to exist between the continuation and maintenance of research and teaching activity in these specialised, but declining, areas in the UK and the ability of the institution to replace falling UK student numbers with international students (and their fees).

Socio-cultural rationales of UK HEIs

Socio-cultural motivations for internationalisation, according to Knight and de Wit's framework, encompass four main elements: national cultural identity, intercultural understanding, citizenship development and social and community development. All three UK HEIs in the study explicitly related the socio-cultural rationales expressed in their overarching university mission and purpose to their engagement with Myanmar:

> "In terms of values, I do see a very strong connection between what we're looking to do here [in the UK] within the city region - training graduates that are going to be making vital contributions to the local economy - and developing educational capacity. There's a strong link about what we're doing here [in the UK] and what we try to do through partnership." (UK-A1)

The wider mission of the university was emphasised as a rationale by other senior managers, one of whom stated:

> "It's a two-way thing, I don't think we are here just to do business. I think we are here to contribute to the country and also globally. The reason why British universities or any university in the UK are abroad – of course, in one sense, it is the business, but secondly it's really that hopefully we have cultural exchange, academic exchange and things like that." (UK-A2)

All UK HEIs in the study stressed the importance of developing intercultural understanding in their UK-based staff and students through their engagement with Myanmar. The intercultural dimension was invoked by two UK senior managers as benefits for international students, including Myanmar students, studying in the UK through experiencing UK culture and enriching the cultural experience of others in the UK university. Conversely, the importance of understanding the cultural environment in Myanmar in their interactions was also recognised by two UK senior managers.

The socio-cultural link between the UK and Myanmar through historical, colonial ties was only mentioned by one UK senior manager. This was viewed in a positive light, claiming that this had resulted in the close alignment of both HE systems, which made international cooperation easier.

All three UK HEIs discussed socio-cultural rationales for engagement with Myanmar related to social and community development, which were mainly expressed through their research and teaching interests and projects. Those mentioned included Myanmar-based training for community-based special needs education, UK scholarships in social media and journalism, and furthering sustainable development in Myanmar through supporting HEIs involved in studying marine resources.

The socio-cultural rationales of UK HEIs, then, were mainly associated with the values and mission of their institutions, including the development of intercultural understanding and framed within the broad range of benefits of internationalisation to international and UK students and UK academic staff, and linked to their research and teaching interests. There was little discussion of other socio-cultural rationales described in Knight and de Wit's framework related to the development of national cultural identity and citizenship.

Political rationales of UK HEIs

It is important to distinguish between the political rationales of HEIs and the use of the political for other (academic, economic and socio-cultural) rationales. Knight and de Wit's typology of political rationales includes factors associated with foreign policy, national

security, technical assistance, peace and mutual understanding, and national and regional identity. At an institutional level, these drivers were not perceived by UK senior managers to be a significant influence on the interactions of their university's activities in Myanmar. However, there was evidence to suggest that UK HEIs in the study were to an extent driven by research funding, designed and provided by UK government departments, EU programmes and international development agencies, all of which have political drivers. A further influence, and, for some HEIs, a strong driver for engaging with Myanmar was the association with Aung San Suu Kyi, who, at the time the interviews in this study were conducted, before the international condemnation of her handling of the Rohingya crisis, was linked to supporting democracy and social justice and could be interpreted within Knight and de Wit's framework within the category of peace and mutual understanding. Association with Aung San Suu Kyi was highly valued by the UK HEIs and was a significant driver for international engagement with Myanmar in two out of the three UK universities in this study. It was also found that the link with Aung San Suu Kyi in two of the UK HEIs was purposefully co-opted into business marketing activities to enhance international reputation and profile both globally and in Myanmar.

It is interesting to trace the political rationales of UK-A through a series of connections and interests as a result of association between the university, the UK government and Aung San Suu Kyi: the link with the UK government came through the university's Chancellor, who occupied a high-level political association with the UK government, and a professor at the university, who was a peer in the House of Lords. Both had a personal interest in Aung San Suu Kyi's campaign for democracy in Myanmar, which led to an award of an honorary doctorate to Aung San Suu Kyi, which in turn, established a formal university connection with Myanmar. This has since led to activities including two Master's scholarships for Myanmar students, and engagement in policy dialogues and UK visits by Myanmar scholars and ministry officials.

Another UK HEI explained the value of an association with Aung San Suu Kyi to enhance institutional reputation through powerful marketing opportunities:

> "I'm sure if you look on our website you'll find photographs of [UK HEI senior academic] and Aung San Suu Kyi, and a great deal has been made of that in the media and we're very proud of that connection. [...] these are media opportunities that we couldn't actually pay for." (UK-B2)

Other political considerations were important in some aspects of UK HEI's engagement with Myanmar. A senior manager at university UK-A explained that their decisions on collaboration through academic programmes in Myanmar were influenced by a mix of rationales, driven by their public good mission, political caution, social need and to raise their institutional profile:

> "We're looking to help develop capacity, we're looking to make a difference […]. The development of journalism just struck us – it seemed to be a critical need. And when I was there, there was an explosion of social media and Facebook. This appeared to be a way to make a contribution without it being seen to be overtly political and also without going down the subject pathway of engineering and business, which are obviously critical requirements as well, but how could we do something that's a little bit more distinctive than that?" (UK-A1)

The driver to be distinctive for economic advantage and institutional profile was also noted by University UK-B as a rationale for collaborating with Myanmar. The geo-political and development context of Myanmar appeared to provide these kinds of opportunities.

In terms of influence on UK HEI collaboration in Myanmar by UK political rationales, one of the UK institutions in the study discussed the incompatibility of DFID's approach to funding projects with the activities of universities:

> "The Darwin Initiative, which is through DEFRA, although DFID also funds them quite a lot, is mainly on biodiversity and that's my area, so I tried them, but they seem to be less narrow these days in funding universities, they more tend to fund NGOs for direct on-the-ground development, whereas universities have to have a bit of academic research and teaching interests in it, and that doesn't always fit." (UK–C1)

One university, which was involved in the DFID-funded SPHEIR programme in Myanmar on developing distance education to improve the employability of graduates in environmental sciences, was encouraged to seek out the support and advice of UK businesses engaged in Myanmar to develop relevant human capital:

> "For example, at the meetings of the SPHEIR discussions before the submission was put in, the British Chamber of Commerce was heavily involved, giving advice on what the industries there probably need, the type of training for graduates that they would see as being of interest." (UK-C1)

However, a perception of uncoordinated activity towards Myanmar across UK government departments was noted by same senior manager in UK-C:

> "What I wonder, sometimes, is within the British Government, whether the departments talk to each other and join up things like that, you know, through – like the SPHEIR aspect on education, FCO interests, trade interests, post-Brexit

now […]. Obviously, trade and industry are pretty different from what the
university sector is." (UK-C1)

Here, the senior manager viewed the activities of universities as incompatible with
government trade and industry interests, despite the focus of the university on international
student recruitment and the recognition and priority given to international education in
international trade and the HE sector in the UK government's industrial strategy.

7.3 Analysis and discussion

In this section, I analyse and discuss the findings to answer the second of my research sub-
questions, RQ2: "What are the rationales and motivations of HEIs in Myanmar to collaborate
internationally, and of UK HEIs to collaborate with HEIs in Myanmar, as perceived by senior
managers and policy makers?"

I foreground the discussion with a reflection on the origins of the international interactions
that have been established in the Myanmar institutions in this study. At an early stage in my
data collection, it became clear that in the three public Myanmar HEIs, most international
interactions were initiated by the foreign (non-Myanmar) partner, whether at government,
institution or individual researcher level. The asymmetry of relational capital between
Myanmar HEIs and their foreign HEI partners, providing the associations and capabilities to
approach and make connections with HEIs of relevance and interest to themselves, raises the
question of the motivations of Myanmar HEIs to engage with those that approached them,
how closely aligned their motivations were with those of the foreign institution and, if there
were any differences in rationale, how these are reconciled and what impact they have had on
the type and purpose of the interaction. The exception to this were the international
interactions of the private Myanmar HEI, which strategically and proactively sought out UK and
other international HEIs which could provide services (TNE courses, qualifications, reputation
and capacity building) of value to them and their market. I return to the implications of
associational injustice in the next chapter.

The study showed that there were significant asymmetries in the motivations and rationales of
the UK and Myanmar HEIs in the study. The motivations of the Myanmar HEIs, particularly the
three public HEIs, were overwhelmingly academic, related to capacity building of staff and, for
the public institutions, research and publication. However, for the UK HEIs, economic
rationales were dominant, behind which a range of research interests, socio-cultural, political
and altruistic rationales existed. This finding is consistent with Maringe, Foskett and

Woodfield's (2013) study showing that Northern HEIs are driven primarily by economic rationales, while for HEIs in low income countries, educational and developmental rationales are most important. My study further shows that UK rationales were often multifaceted and more clearly identifiable through Knight's 'emerging' rationales for internationalisation at the level of the institution: income generation, international profile and reputation, student and staff development and research and knowledge production.

There is both a tension and complementarity between the market-driven rationales and the public good rationales of UK HEIs in their international engagement with Myanmar HEIs. The study findings show that there is a clear expectation in the UK HEIs that international public good activities, through research and capacity building, will lead to revenue streams. The study finds that internationalisation in the Myanmar context blurs the distinction between public good and market-driven rationales; that public good activities in the UK HEIs are co-opted into revenue-seeking logic in internationalisation strategies, where academic capitalism and the public good co-exist, overlap and intersect. This finding also supports a recent study on the challenges internationalisation poses to the public good functions of US HEIs (Poloma, 2017). There exists, therefore, a conflicting but coexisting narrative in the UK HEIs in this study about how and why they engage with Myanmar, driven primarily by commercial motives in a low-income country in a context of conflict, with widespread poverty, inequalities and multiple developmental needs. While this finding wasn't surprising, the extent of the pervasiveness and consistency of this logic in the three UK HEIs to justify engagement with Myanmar was unexpected.

The study findings indicate that the reported stratification of internationalisation rationales internal to UK institutions (see Slaughter and Rhoades, 2004; Robertson, 2010b) are being manifested through the UK HEIs' differentiated internationalisation approaches in Myanmar, in which their commercial activities are focussed on the private sector and other activities to the public sector. Myanmar interviewees commonly mentioned access to research data and joint research (with very limited funding), rather than commercial gain, were the primary drivers of foreign HEIs to collaborate with the Myanmar public sector HEIs. This approach appeared to be encouraging the stratification of HE at a national level in Myanmar, by increasing the divisions between the roles, functions and capabilities of private and public HEIs.

This finding also accords with the assertion that in countries following a neoliberal regime for economic growth, which includes the UK, HEIs have been comprehensively re-engineered into

income-seeking institutions (see Marginson and Wende, 2007; Robertson, 2010a; Busch, 2017). It could be argued that the public Myanmar HEIs, particularly through research and knowledge production, which I examine further in the next chapter, are being drawn into and shaped by a neoliberal framing of HE, driven by the knowledge economy, economic gain and global competitiveness, for which they are unprepared, and therefore puts them at a disadvantage, given their restrictions on commercial activities, their current role as public-good institutions, their historical and political role in social activism, and the legacies of conflict, and that this could further fuel division and inequality across the private and public HE systems in Myanmar. There were also signs that, at government level in Myanmar, the neoliberal ideologies of marketisation and deregulation for HE development were emerging, framed within human capital logic for economic growth, graduate employability and responsive to global competition, which were uncontested and regarded as a wholly beneficial, normative development approach and an effective solution to driving up quality, access and equity in HE. However, this approach, as scholars have argued, may in fact be distancing HE from its social justice and public good functions (see, for instance, Polster, 2000; Marginson, 2012). The conviction that opening up the Myanmar HE system to the global HE market to deliver social justice-related national strategic goals and the logics behind them appeared insufficiently interrogated, by both Myanmar HE stakeholders, UK HEIs in their engagement with Myanmar HE and many of the international development organisations involved in education reform in Myanmar. This in contrast to school education reform, which in my experience in Myanmar, was deeply questioned and critiqued in terms of equity and access in relation to the cultural political economy in Myanmar.

The co-existence and stratification of international activities may also explain why the three public Myanmar HEIs reported conflicting and multiple rationales of their international partner HEIs, attributing both access to research data and altruism to foreign (non-Myanmar) HEIs to collaborate with them, while seemingly unaware of the economic drivers, as these were being directed towards the private sector. Interestingly, not all the motivations perceived by Myanmar HEIs of foreign (non-Myanmar) HEIs, were substantiated in interviews with two of the three UK HEIs in the study, particularly access to field data as a rationale, which Myanmar public HEI interviewees stated as being the most common rationale of foreign HEIs to collaborate with them. This may have been due to the type of UK institution, which were not categorised as research-intensive HEIs and therefore may not prioritise research in their international strategy, or may be ascribed to the UK having a more commercially-driven

international HE sector, compared to other countries collaborating with Myanmar. Nevertheless, during the Myanmar interviews and from my own dealings with a wider range of UK HEIs and other international HEIs while I was working in Myanmar, it was clear that research data was an important rationale for many of them, corroborating Marginson's argument that for the global elite HEIs, the main motivation is research-building rather than student recruitment, as, fundamentally, it is research that defines their brand, prestige and, finally, their resources and funding (Marginson, 2013). The rationale for research data by foreign HEIs also has associations with colonialisation, global knowledge hegemonies and imbalances in the roles of Northern and Southern HEIs (see Connell, 2016; de Sousa Santos, 2016; Hall and Tandon, 2017), mentioned in the literature review , which I discuss further in the next chapter on social justice in international interactions.

Returning now to the study finding that most international interactions of the three public Myanmar HEIs were instigated by the foreign (non-Myanmar) HEI, it was clear that UK HEIs were guided in the collaborations by an internationalisation strategy, founded on an institutional vision or mission, which set out their needs and priorities. This was also the case for the Myanmar private HEI. However, the lack of institutional strategies, and therefore clear, detailed rationales, in the public Myanmar HEIs meant that their international engagements were often reactionary and ad hoc, as Knight (2015) predicts. For some Myanmar HEIs, overwhelmed by the number of approaches by international HEIs, this has undoubtedly led to a fragmented project-based or department-based interaction, unaligned to their needs and priorities. The broad specification at government level of themes and discipline areas of importance to Myanmar seemed to be doing little to guide Myanmar HEIs in seeking out potential partners in these areas.

At national level in Myanmar HE, there were indications that Myanmar's internal policies and governance structures, including restrictions and permissions for international activity and travel, research grant availability and conditions on use, and the staff promotion system, were not encouraging internationalisation, a finding in accordance with a recent study (Atherton, 2018).

Political and socio-cultural rationales were not aligned between the UK and Myanmar HEIs. The relevance of HE in social cohesion and peace-building was recognised by the Myanmar government, but the relevance of international HE collaboration was not understood, and, at the time of the study, was not generally being addressed through the international activities of the HEIs in this study.

In two of the UK HEIs, (UK-A and UK-B), the use of the political for economic, academic and socio-cultural purposes, mainly the former, was an important factor in, and justification for, engaging with Myanmar. This was based largely on the international reputation of Aung San Suu Kyi as a champion of democracy and human rights. Unsurprisingly, the fall of Aung San Suu Kyi's global standing and the international reporting of the Rohingya massacres and refugee crisis, has led to a significant disassociation by international HEIs. Evidence of this was very clear in my work at the British Council in Myanmar, which, from August 2017, started to involve, for the first time, responding to UK HEIs' concerns about continuing their engagement with Myanmar HEIs. For some, particularly those in mid-programme with external funding for Myanmar activities in place, work has continued, but for others, ethical concerns that by continuing to engage with Myanmar HEIs, they would be supporting a military regime accused of genocide and ethnic cleansing, or, in terms of economic concerns, they would risk reputational damage for too little reward, and so have turned to focus on other markets. Significantly, the already small number of grants and projects supporting HE in Myanmar has further diminished. The market branding advantage that came with an association with Aung San Suu Kyi has now become a reputational risk, a situation has revealed the precariousness of the basis of the internationalisation of Myanmar HEIs.

7.4   Conclusion

The aim of this chapter was to examine the rationales and motivations of Myanmar HEIs to engage internationally, and for UK HEIs to engage with Myanmar. Overall, the study found that the priorities of the Myanmar HEIs in the study, which are overwhelmingly academic in nature, are largely not being met, with the exception of the private HEI. While a wide variety of small-scale international activities are taking place, the inequalities of resourcing, global academic position and reputation, national structures in HE governance, and lack of relational capital thwart public Myanmar HEIs from engaging in their priority areas, including conducting, analysing and publishing research, sending staff and students abroad for study, and staff capacity building. The rationales for the three UK HEIs to engage with Myanmar stem mainly from economic drivers, behind which other rationales related to capacity development, public good missions and institutional values exist, indicating a tension between conflicting and co-existing logics for their international engagement with Myanmar.

In building the knowledge and understanding of international interactions in Myanmar HEIs, Chapters 6 and 7 have provided the context for a social justice analysis, the focus of the following chapter.

8 Social justice in the international interactions of Myanmar higher education institutions

This chapter analyses and discusses the international interactions of Myanmar HEIs through economic, cultural, political and peacebuilding dimensions of social justice. It brings together the findings and analysis in addressing RQs 1 and 2 in the two preceding chapters to answer my third sub-research question, RQ3: "What are the implications for social justice within, between and beyond the HEIs?" and through this, together address my central research question "In what ways do emerging international interactions in Myanmar higher education institutions relate to social justice?".

Drawing on Fraser's three-dimensional model of social justice based on the ideal of parity of participation through redistribution, representation and recognition, and its adaptation for education in conflict-affected contexts by Novelli, Lopes Cardozo and Smith (2015) to include reconciliation, I use this '4R' framework to analyse data drawn from 14 in-depth interviews with leaders and senior managers from four Myanmar HEIs and senior officials in the Ministry of Education, and senior managers from three UK HEIs with existing interests in Myanmar on the intended and unintended effects of their international interactions on social justice. I discuss my findings in relation to the international literature on the impact of neoliberal drivers on international HEIs, shifting notions of the roles of HEIs and rationales for international engagement, and the implications for social justice within and beyond university partnerships in Myanmar.

I approach my analysis from two perspectives: firstly, through critically examining the relationships, activities and structural arrangements of international interactions of Myanmar HEIs, including (but not confined to) the UK, and between UK and Myanmar HEIs, posited within local, national and global discourses. Secondly, I analyse the contribution of international interactions of UK HEIs in Myanmar towards social justice in wider society in Myanmar, an 'outward' facing role of universities, in response to Myanmar's context of conflict, multiple horizontal inequalities and cultural political economy.

8.1 Redistribution: economic justice in international HEI interactions

Redistribution is theorised by Fraser as the economic dimension of justice (Fraser, 2007). To achieve social justice, resources in aspects of economic life, including income, education, health and leisure time, need to be distributed in a way that enables actors to engage equally.

Conversely, maldistribution of these economic resources results in injustice (Fraser, 2007; Bozalek and Bouhey, 2012). Applied to the international interactions of Myanmar and UK HEIs, I analysed redistributive justice through the allocation and availability of resources around five thematic areas, which I presented in Chapter 4: firstly, how funding is distributed between Myanmar and overseas HEI partners, which may include, for example, mobility grants, research grants and transnational student fees; secondly, how equipment and facilities are distributed and used by partners; thirdly, how issues of intellectual property (IP) are addressed in the interaction; fourthly, positioning for future economic benefits as a result of the collaboration, such as entry to education markets, access to further resources and research funding; and fifthly, issues related to power and influence over institutional and HE sector reforms, policies and priorities affecting resourcing. One of the most visible signs of imbalance between Myanmar HEIs and their overseas partners was access to economic resource. A key question is whether in the context of economic capital inequality, power asymmetries can be eliminated, reduced or mitigated against within the arrangements between HEIs to achieve parity of participation in their international activities.

Turning now to the study data and looking first at the formal arrangements specified in the MOUs agreed between HE partners[19], which outlines the obligations, principles and foci of their partnership. Many of the MOUs signed by the three Myanmar public HEIs[20] were based on a principle of equal resource commitment and obligated each partner to provide their own funding, academic resources, staff time and expenses for collaborative activities. The stark economic imbalances and inequities in international interactions in Myanmar HEIs were not only unacknowledged by many of their overseas partners, but reinforced and legitimised from the start through their MOUs. Myanmar senior managers were cognizant of what appeared to be generous offers of an equal, two-way collaboration by their overseas partner HEI, were, in reality, out of their reach in their economic context:

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[19] At the time of the study, MOUs were an official requirement of the Myanmar Ministry of Education for international collaboration to take place, although there has since been some relaxation of requirements for particular activities in recent months.

[20] Large numbers of MOU had been signed by HEIs M-A and M-B, many of which were inactive or resulted in very limited activity. From observations during my work at the British Council it was clear that significant amounts of Myanmar HEI senior managers' time was spent hosting speculative foreign university visits to their institution, many of which did not progress further due to lack of funding, equipment, business opportunities or poor conditions.

"Funding is a problem. In the case of the MOU between [UK HEI] and my university, [we] will bear our own costs." (M-B1)

"Even though we have MOUs with other international universities, we have a main problem: under the MOU we signed the student exchange programme, the staff exchange programme, and joint research programme, but joint research programme is not so difficult, but the student exchange programme and the staff exchange programme there is a problem. Under the MOU we need to provide our staff financially […] so we cannot send our student by our own finance and also we cannot send our staff." (M–A2)

The inability of the Myanmar HEIs to secure equal resources had, in most cases, led to vastly disproportionate numbers of researchers and students involved in exchange visits and research trips, with far fewer participants from the Myanmar universities.

In nearly all the international partnerships mentioned by Myanmar HEIs that were not part of larger, externally-funded projects, the 'equality' of funding commitment in MOUs also placed them in a precarious financial situation. In a number of cases, Myanmar researchers reported having felt obligated to conduct activities, even if it meant using their personal money and vehicles at their expense to take international researchers to research sites and provide hospitality. As one senior Myanmar manager and researcher put it:

"[I used my] personal money […]. All transport is my own car, own four wheeled car. Very difficult, a lot of struggle […] because I already signed. I follow this MOU." (M-B1)

This personal financial cost was often hidden from their non-Myanmar partners, who were unaware of the difficult situation they had placed them under. As the average salary of a senior manager in a public Myanmar HEI was between USD$200 - $300 per month, this was regarded by Myanmar researchers as a significant financial burden.

According to Bourdieu (1984), asymmetries in the types of capital, (for example, economic, cultural, knowledge and skills) necessarily determines the structural position and power of actors within social fields (scientific, religious, cultural, etc). This was exemplified in the different roles of the Myanmar and non-Myanmar HEI researchers in international research collaboration, which were considerably affected by the deficit of economic resources in the form of equipment and facilities in Myanmar HEIs. Two of the three public Myanmar HEIs in the study (M-A and M-C) reported that their roles were diminished due to a lack of analytical equipment and other academic resources in their departments. Consequently, while Myanmar researchers organised field trips and gathered research data, the data and samples

were analysed at the overseas partner HEI, not at the Myanmar HEI and often not involving Myanmar researchers, as explained by one senior Myanmar researcher:

> "As you know, we have a lot of experience in the field work and knowledge of the field work, but the scientific instrumentation is very limited here […]. We have the field data, and we dig together, and professor [UK researcher] […] then take to his university and analyse the data." (M-B1)

At one public medical university, M-C, the lack of resources was reported as severely restricting their participation in critical areas of medical research with their international partners. Myanmar public HEIs reported that very few international partnerships offered resources which would enable them to participate on an equal footing in this regard. Two notable exceptions were mentioned: the JICA-funded project that supported capacity building and joint research in Myanmar's medical universities; and a grant by the UK government's Prosperity Fund and the British Council to enable Myanmar geoscience researchers to spend time at UK HEIs (on one short trip only), some of which was used for data analysis in UK labs. Both of these involved funding from an external source, not from the participating institutions themselves.

Exclusion from the analysis of the data, or operating under a model of cooperation that significantly restricts parity of participation in data analysis, could be argued to be entrenching the subordinate position of the Myanmar researcher, who is limited to the role of data collector and privileging the position of the non-Myanmar research in the role of analyser/thinker, generator of knowledge and holder of the IPR. The maldistribution of resources, as noted by other scholars (see, for instance, Maselli, Lys and Schmid, 2006; Gutierrez, 2008), exposes contradictions in the ideology of international HE partnerships, which, while often founded on the principles of mutuality and equality, as reflected in Myanmar HEIs' MOUs, in practice reinforces the "hidden reproduction of colonial domination" (Gutierrez, 2008, p.21).

Of the four Myanmar HEIs in the study, the issue of IPR was only explicitly raised as an important issue by the one private Myanmar institution, M-D. Senior managers at the public Myanmar universities were unclear about the ownership of the intellectual property generated as a result of their international collaboration and, in fact, seemed surprised at the question. In their answers, however, they indicated that joint publication and ownership of research, even though often not specified in MOUs or other legal agreements, was an expectation of Myanmar researchers. The decision and impetus behind publishing results of

collaborative research appeared to be led by the foreign partner. Again, while there were some instances of planned, joint presentation of research at conferences, the study found that agreements were in place that permitted each partner individually to write up research findings and present at conferences and symposia, as this researcher, discussing collaboration with their Korean and Danish partners explained:

> "But my research partner [in Korea], they can present their research outcomes personally. And then our key Danish institute, they agree to use our findings freely, but we need to inform I will use these data in where." (M-A1)

However, it was clear that the Myanmar researchers and institutions did not have the status, networks, financial resources and, in many cases, the experience, to access international forums, conferences or international research publishers to make any real use of the offer of equality of data use and authorship. This arrangement, therefore, did not appear to be empowering Myanmar researchers nor expanding their experience and capacity to contribute to international publications but entrenching their further dependence on their Northern partner. Data presented in Chapter 7 on the low levels of international research publication by Myanmar HEIs suggest that there is a serious issue of academic publication and IPR of research data in international HE activity with Myanmar HEIs. Current practice and arrangements as reported in this study appeared to be reinforcing the domination of knowledge of Northern HEIs, thereby maintaining imbalances in the ownership of knowledge economy assets. In contrast, the private Myanmar HEI was very much aware of the issue of IPR, directly related, as it is, to the business model of delivering courses created, owned and quality assured by the Northern TNE partner, and on which their ongoing revenue depended.

Economic injustice can also be associated with the (non)availability of time and capacity resources. In this regard, Myanmar researchers were clearly at a disadvantage compared to their foreign counterparts. Several managers stressed the challenge of finding time within their university work hours to conduct joint activities with their foreign partner, often having to do this during their holidays and weekends. One Myanmar senior researcher, when asked how they managed the workload, explained how, according to the contract signed with their partner HEI, she had to find 120 days a year for the project, but this was in addition to her full-time responsibilities and duties at the university:

> "We choose the school holidays […], and then Saturday and Sunday we have to go to the research place. I chose [x] township and [y] village. Every weekend, we go to get data and write report. […] We have to take these duties. We spend our [own] time for research." (M-A1)

This particular researcher was at the time teaching 22 hours a week to undergraduate, masters and pre-doctoral students and supervising five PhD students, as well as conducting administration duties in her role as a senior manager at the university[21].

The same senior manager illustrated another aspect of economic injustice in the transparency and levels of consultancy rates paid to Myanmar staff and foreign staff, explaining that the rates were calculated according to present salaries, which she had to divulge to her partner.

> "[The funding] is not equal. Because they decided. […]. They support us travel allowance, accommodation allowance, DSA, they support. And then, as an honorarium fee they give us. Over 60,000[22] per day for me. Another person over 40,000[23] per day as honorarium fee. It is decided by the [overseas] institute. […] It depends on our salary. My salary is not more than US $300." (M-A1)

Payment grants for externally funded research was found to be dependent on salary levels, even though these were very low in the Myanmar HEI, even in Myanmar terms. In contrast, the foreign HEI partner was under no obligation to divulge their own salaries to their Myanmar counterparts, indicating non-parity in the degree of financial transparency required of each partner.

> "They declare how much they got [from the research grant], but according to the rules and regulation, we can't access their salary [data]." (M-A1)

This inequality in the economic realm also relates to lack of cultural equity in terms of parity of recognition, discussed in the next section.

Another senior manager in the public university M-B linked the unequal disclosure of financial data with the different degrees of autonomy under which the Myanmar and foreign partner operated:

> "But such kinds of things, some are equal […]: they have responsibilities, I have responsibilities. But when you have to think salary, facilities, they are not equal.

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[21] In my regular meetings with rectors in other Myanmar universities during my work at the British Council, it was clear that the personal cost of time, money and low remuneration were significant barriers in motivating Myanmar academics to undertake international research collaboration. The most sought-after activities were in the nascent, but growing private HE sector, which were starting to engage public sector academics at significantly higher salaries to teach on their TNE courses.

[22] Kyats (approx. £30 at the time of the study).

[23] Kyats (approx. £20 at the time of the study).

No. […]. Autonomy is - you may not know their salary also, you know. Because of autonomy, it is secret with everything." (M-B2)

According to these two Myanmar senior managers, the power, or autonomy, of their foreign partner to withhold information was regarded as unjust and weakened the position of the Myanmar partner. In this sense, where the level of autonomy was unequal, economic injustice in international partnerships was present.

Turning now to systemic factors affecting parity of participation through redistribution, economic inequalities were found to be caused in part by administrative processes and governance structures in Myanmar HEIs and the Department of Higher Education in the Myanmar Ministry of Education, which senior managers reported did not allow public institutions to operate autonomously, particularly in regard to financial arrangements. Thus, even when external funding was available for international collaboration, it was problematic for Myanmar HEIs to access, requiring the university rector to seek permission from the highest levels in the Ministry of Education. However, there were signs that international interactions were encouraging more institutional autonomy by creating opportunities for Myanmar HEIs to find solutions to, and challenge, the bureaucratic obstacles they were facing. Interestingly, in Myanmar's political context, there was, in general, substantial resistance by Myanmar HEIs to seek financial autonomy; the risks associated with having direct responsibility for financial control and being open to accusations of corruption were a substantial concern of Myanmar senior managers.

I turn now to redistributive aspects of social justice in the commercial activities of international HEIs in Myanmar. As described in the previous chapter, the study data showed that the main motivation of UK HEIs to engage in Myanmar was to develop commercial opportunities, primarily through the recruitment of Myanmar students to either study in the UK or undertake TNE courses delivered through the nascent but growing (and as yet, unregulated) private HE sector in Myanmar. Issues of economic inequity are implicit in private fee-paying education, particularly in a context of extensive poverty and wide economic disparity, strongly linked to socio-cultural inequalities.

Firstly, it was interesting to note that the issue of private higher education and student fees in Myanmar was not brought up by senior managers of public Myanmar universities in the interviews, who regarded the privatisation of HE outside their area of concern. Furthermore, they did not attribute commercial TNE or student recruitment as motivations of their international partners, including UK HEIs, for engaging with them. Conversely, the UK HEIs

emphasised the setting up of commercial arrangements or access to funding as their key driver for engagement in Myanmar. As discussed in the previous chapter, even where UK academics were altruistically motivated or wanted to pursue other non-commercial academic interests, they were compelled by their own institution to provide a market-driven logic for their activities in Myanmar, specifically in terms of potential profit-making opportunities. In some cases, an uncomfortable tension between the public good and social responsibility roles of their HEI and institutional commercial drivers and income targets were clearly felt by UK senior managers in relation to Myanmar, or as a senior manager in a UK HEI put it: "you have to disaggregate the university perspective and a personal perspective" (UK–B2).

Conversely, officials in the Department of Higher Education in the Ministry of Education did not see a tension between the commercial activities of international HEIs and the developmental needs and social good purposes of Myanmar HE. They expressed strong interest in the engagement of international HEIs in the private HE sector in Myanmar, generally regarded the privatisation of HE in positive terms. One Ministry official emphasised the importance of the private sector in driving up quality, providing more student choice and producing the graduates that Myanmar critically needs:

> "The private education sector is also very important for the quality assurance of the higher education sector. And then if some international universities can do in Myanmar and work together with the Myanmar universities, or they would like to establish their own universities, this is also very nice programmes for the Myanmar students who would like to study abroad. For Myanmar, also we can get the very high-level quality graduates in Myanmar, and then they can work in Myanmar and, then, this is their duty." (M-01)

When questioned about the impact of such programmes on inequitable access for students in Myanmar, particularly those from poor, rural and conflict-affected areas, the official suggested that international HEIs in the private sector offer support for poorer, marginalised students:

> "If the private international universities can establish in Myanmar, they can also offer stipend programmes, or scholarship programmes for the disadvantage groups. This is also very good. They can also have equity." (M-01)

This view shows the Ministry of Education embracing what has been defined as a key characteristic of the neoliberalisation of HE, namely the transformation of the state as an active provider of social justice (a role expected of the NLD after winning the election in 2015, replacing the authoritarian military-backed government) to an enabler for the private sector by creating the conditions for a competitive market economy and thereby positioning the

private sector to contribute (voluntarily) to the public good (Hursh, Henderson and Greenwood, 2015). In conversations with Myanmar education officials during my work at the British Council, trust in the activities and motivations of international HEIs with powerful, global brands and high global rankings, including those from the UK, was high and unquestionably welcomed, particularly for activities that did not require Myanmar state funding. This view appeared to occlude the interrogation of any potential negative aspects of HE commercialisation in Myanmar, particularly regarding equity and access, and impact on the Myanmar public HE sector. According to de Sousa Santos (2016), international organisations do not question or challenge the ideologies of marketisation and globalisation, with the concomitant deregulation and competition of markets, and by not doing so, legitimise them; in Myanmar, this view appears to be internalised at policy-making level in Myanmar in, and possibly driven by, the absence of international aid for the public HE sector.

The UK HEIs in the study viewed their TNE activities as part of a positive change in Myanmar and globally, reasoning that by establishing these alternative programmes, they were supporting the broad expansion of HE provision, which would thus create more room in the public sector for others, particularly for those less well off:

> "By taking students out and putting them in the private sector, their finances, their parents' loans, what we're doing is freeing up space in the public sector, but obviously, what it means is a two-tier system, but there is anyway, and we are supporting the higher tier"(UK-B2)

The benefits of Myanmar students studying in the UK was echoed by another UK senior manager who reasoned that they would return to Myanmar to "build institutional capacity and to advance higher education in Myanmar" (UK-A1).

Another UK HEI stated that engaging with the private sector was the only way that Myanmar could improve its HE system, given the paucity of funding for public HE:

> "Unless there is a quantum shift in tertiary education funding in Myanmar, the only way they are going to develop is through commercial tie-ups, would be my view. And that is also with genuinely private sector operations as well as public universities in the West. And those developments would have to work commercially at some level for the Western partner." (UK-A1)

It appears, then, that the UK HEIs in the study frame their commercial TNE and recruitment activities in social justice terms, firstly as a viable and practical, if not the only feasible, solution to the improvement of the Myanmar HE sector, and secondly, by expanding access and

participation, not only for the wealthier classes of Myanmar society, but also for the wider public good.

These perspectives, however, surface contentions in the redistributive injustice of higher cost, private education, particularly of the danger of entrenching elite privilege, providing opportunities for an international-standard, higher quality degree that only the wealthier in Myanmar can purchase, that, arguably would provide them with skills knowledge, skills and credentials that will enable them to continue to get the best jobs and most influential positions in the country, and, furthermore, to join a global elite (Lall, 2008; Tannock, 2013; Marginson, 2017). At the same time, these logics adeptly avoid the issue of the neglect of the low-funded, low-resourced public universities, where the majority of Myanmar's students study, including the poor and marginalised (if they are fortunate enough to overcome the structural barriers in the national system). The counter-argument, articulated by the Myanmar officials interviewed, is that TNE, delivered through the private sector in Myanmar, will provide the quality of knowledge and skills needed in Myanmar that public HEIs do not currently have the capacity to provide in the subjects and numbers needed.

The issues in TNE surfaced in this study, viewed through Fraser's social justice dimension of redistributive justice, can offer insights from differing perspectives. Firstly, at a national level, TNE could be seen to be reinforcing inequitable student participation in HE in Myanmar, accessible only to wealthier, mostly urban-based societal groups, posing a serious risk to social justice highlighted by Marginson (2012) by entrenching privilege and widening the social and economic stratification of societies. However, as argued by UK HEIs, TNE, when framed at a global level, can be said to be enabling Myanmar students (albeit only a few) to undertake previously unavailable international HE courses in Myanmar and the UK, and therefore support Myanmar students and local private HEIs towards participation in global HE through access to international-standard education products and international HE markets; while the current levels do not satisfy the condition of parity of participation, at least, UK HEIs suggest, some is better than none. This argument appears to be thin, concentrated as it is on offering access to a privileged elite with the private means to pay, and resonates with a main critique in the discourse on the international activities of mainly Northern HEIs which claims that equity and social justice appear to "stop at the border" (Tannock, 2013), and while Northern HEIs are concerned with equity issues at home, they do not sufficiently interrogate their social justice impact internationally (Brown and Tannock, 2009).

Secondly, at an institutional level, as there was no TNE activity reported in this study involving Myanmar public HEIs[24], TNE does not appear to be supporting the redistribution of economic resources between them. However, through the selective focus of TNE in the private sector by UK HEIs, TNE could be argued to be further exacerbating economic disparity between Myanmar's public and private HEIs, particularly in the context of low levels of government and international donor funding for the development of the Myanmar public HE sector. Furthermore, TNE may be benefiting from vulnerabilities and restrictions in the public HE sector in Myanmar, as local private HEIs build their reputation and branding through delivery of foreign courses and partnership with internationally recognised HEIs, attract the best teachers away from the public sector through higher remuneration, and enrol the wealthier, elite students, further diminishing the reputation and perceived worth in the eyes of the public of the public HEIs.

Thirdly, in contrast, parity of participation in the economic sphere in interactions between the private Myanmar HEI (M-D) and its UK counterparts appeared to be more evenly matched and took the form of a mutually beneficial business transaction which enabled profit-making on both sides, as well as capacity building for the local private TNE provider. This degree of parity in the economic sense (in terms of influence on decision-making power, roles and financial reward) was made possible by the significant financial resources of the local private institution. Although the educational products (curricula, course material and awards) were UK-owned, the private Myanmar institution was clearly benefiting financially from the international partnership.

Fourthly, it is important to analyse the impact of private HE previously reported to skew graduate numbers across the range of disciplines (Naidoo, 2007). Although at a very early stage in the privatisation of the HE market in Myanmar, the TNE courses offered by the private HEI in the study was highly restricted in type and showed signs reported in other, more mature private markets (Ibid., 2007) of a focus on certain professions, in particular business (MBAs and accountancy, for instance), software engineering and health-related (but not medicine), duplicating and competing with local courses, mostly offered by the public sector, an issue raised in a previous study (McNamara Economic Research, 2014). However, in this study, the findings were not so clear cut, with indications that the private Myanmar HEI (M-D) was also

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[24] Commercial activities in public HEIs in Myanmar are subject to restrictions – see Chapter 3 on context

playing a role in extending the range of HE courses in Myanmar by providing niche TNE courses in professions not locally catered to, for instance in training dieticians and nutritionists.

Reflecting on the study data presented above on economic justice, at a global level, TNE in Myanmar exemplifies what Robertson (2010) refers to as the new logics dominating the globalising of UK HE that "structurally predispose" UK HEIs towards the "corporatisation, commercialisation and commercialisation" (Ibid., 2010, p.191) of their international interactions. In equity terms, this approach in Myanmar brings to light the tensions faced by UK senior managers of delivering the values and mission of their HEI, which have strong ethical and social justice foundations at home (in the UK), but which can sit uncomfortably within a dominant market-driven logic for their international work in highly unequal and poverty-stricken countries such as Myanmar, particularly in the public HE sector. Tannock's critique of UK internationalisation is highly relevant here, questioning "whether and how ideals of educational equality and justice, that have traditionally been framed at the level of the nation [and sub-national] state, should apply internationally" (Tannock, 2017, p.1).

To briefly summarise this section, the study found that that the asymmetries in economic resources between UK and Myanmar public HEIs significantly affected the structure, focus and power balance between, and the agency and roles of, collaborating HEIs. Senior managers in Myanmar public HEIs stressed their reliance on their international partners to secure funding and resources for research and capacity building, but also reported the unequal terms and conditions under which they found themselves operating. UK HEIs in the study expressed constraints in their financial resources to engage with Myanmar public HEIs, citing a lack of UK institutional, national and international development funding in HE. In cases where the UK institution used its own funds for collaboration with Myanmar HEIs, this was often commercially driven, conditional on future business development and income generation opportunities in Myanmar. In general, the initial international encounters of Myanmar public HEIs in this study did not appear to be supporting progress towards economic parity, either between partners or within a global frame, but, as I discuss further in the final section of this chapter, reinforcing Northern domination within the knowledge economy. Beyond the institutional relationships, the TNE activity of UK HEIs can be argued to be entrenching, if not exacerbating, economic inequalities in Myanmar society by providing wealthy elites with access to highly valued international courses.

8.2   Recognition: cultural justice in international HEI interactions

In Chapter 3 on conceptual frameworks, I proposed areas related to cultural justice based on Fraser's notion of parity of participation through recognition, which requires the absence of cultural domination, disrespect or non-recognition of groups or individuals (Fraser, 2007). In the context of international interactions in higher education, cultural justice can be analysed through recognition of cultural approaches to learning, teaching and research, recognition of status, position and experience of academics and students involved in the interactions, recognition of local knowledge, and recognition of respective priorities in the focus, topics and types of joint activity. From a wider societal perspective, cultural justice may include aspects of international activity related to protecting and building repositories of cultural assets and knowledge and community-led research approaches.

I turn first to a key finding that supports cultural recognition. Many of the international HEIs engaged in Myanmar had a strong interest in, and focus on, topics related to Myanmar's cultural assets, knowledge, language, customs and environment. These included research and courses on Myanmar language, anthropology, religion, community development, law and justice, gender studies and archaeology. According to Myanmar researchers in two public universities (M-A and M-B), foreign HEIs were particularly interested and engaged in Myanmar Studies and Myanmar language, which were explained in Chapter 7 as being related to three interconnected rationales. Firstly, an economic rational, driven by growing international business interests in Myanmar, which, in turn, was increasing the market value of Myanmar language skills and cultural knowledge and creating a demand for graduates with these skills, particularly from countries in the Asia region, including China, Japan and South Korea. Secondly, an academic rationale, driven by the substantial research gaps and very limited academic publications on Myanmar's culture, natural environment and resources, a consequence of Myanmar's decades-long academic isolation from the international academic community and the lack of access to Myanmar by international scholars. Thirdly, a political rationale, linked to the first, driven by the increased interest in international development and foreign government trade interests in Myanmar. Undoubtedly, studies in these culturally-related fields support and extend the scholarship of Myanmar's culture, language and customs, and thereby supports international recognition of Myanmar's culture.

Interestingly, the focus on Myanmar culture-related topics of international interactions also surfaced aspects of cultural *in*justice associated with the non-recognition of Myanmar researchers' interests. While Myanmar government officials and researchers acknowledged

that the focus on Myanmar-specific subjects for collaboration were relevant and useful to

Myanmar's development, from the position of the Myanmar researcher, this was also seen as

restrictive and isolationist. Two senior Myanmar researchers and senior managers reported

that the choice of these Myanmar-focussed topics and the scope of the collaborative research

were not driven by the research priorities of Myanmar HEIs, but by the interests of foreign HEI

and donor-influenced research agendas. The need for Myanmar researchers to do

international research or extend their expertise and apply their knowledge beyond Myanmar's

borders appeared not to be recognised by foreign HEIs and were therefore not included in

their international activities. As one senior Myanmar researcher put it:

> "I would like to do research not only in our country, but also international study.
> So I would like to go to the UK and I would like to study about them. I would like
> to seize their real situation, I would like to know how to solve their daily
> problems. […] According to my experience, they choose only Myanmar as their
> research area so that they can get information from Myanmar. I would like to get
> from them." (M-A1)

The non-recognition of Myanmar researchers' interests in the wider world outside Myanmar

and the privileging of the foreign partners' interests impeded parity of participation in the

realm of cultural recognition. This confinement to the local and exclusion from the universal

has been noted by Paulin Hountondji (1990) in his studies on scientific research dependence in

Africa, who warns that the Southern researcher is in danger of playing the subordinate role of

informant for Western research. Linking this with my findings and discussion in the previous

section on redistributive injustice, where resource imbalances were reported to channel the

division of labour to field data collection (by the Myanmar researchers) and data analysis and

theorising (by their foreign HEI partners in their overseas labs), the data is striking in its

modern-day exemplification of colonial and post-colonial roles of researchers in the global

economy of knowledge. International research collaboration with the three Myanmar HEIs in

this study describe with uncanny accuracy the subordination of their roles, located as they are

in the Southern periphery to their Northern partners in the hegemonic centres within the

global circulation of knowledge (Hountondji, 1990; Connell, 2016; de Sousa Santos, 2016).

Connell (2016) mentions particular subjects, including botany, zoology, geology,

oceanography, sociology, linguistics and gender studies, all of which are a specific focus of

international HEIs in Myanmar today, and goes on to describe how, once the data has been

collected, it is returned to the (Northern) metropoles to be organised, classified and analysed

and theorised, then transformed (or 'processed') into applied solutions (for example, in

development economics, engineering, medicine and education) which are exported back to

the periphery. It appears that as Myanmar encounters internationalisation, it is being swept up in these deep and well-established currents of knowledge circulation shaped by the global neoliberal paradigm driving international HE.

There are further implications of the non-recognition of Myanmar researchers. The exclusion from the design, interpretation and theorising of research, teaching and learning in HE, examples of which were reported by Myanmar institutions (some of which are discussed in the next section on political justice), surely raises an issue of the epistemological subordination of Myanmar researchers to their partners in the global metropoles. The risk of this form of non-recognition was noted by a senior manager from a UK HEI who had been involved in Myanmar for over four years:

> "What we're finding is with people coming into Myanmar, people coming in and assuming that they know, and the Burmese national knows nothing [...]. There could be a danger in collaborative research if the West comes in and finds what they are looking for, but without local input. They will miss the uniqueness of Myanmar." (UK-B1)

The cultural dominance over, and the non-recognition of different epistemologies in the global South is an observation noted in some of Myanmar's international interactions, and is consistent with the thinking of de Sousa Santos (2014), who, in his work 'Epistemologies of the South : justice against epistemicide', asserts that global social justice is not possible without global cognitive justice, arguing that the Western-centric approach has subordinated or ignored different ways of knowing in the global South, and in doing so, has marginalised the diversity of the world's epistemologies by seeing itself "as a vanguard theory that excels in knowing about, explaining, and guiding rather than knowing with, understanding, facilitating, sharing, and walking alongside" (de Sousa Santos, 2014, p.ix).

Returning now to the data, as expected in light of the discussion above on the different roles in research collaboration, according to senior researchers in all three public Myanmar HEIs, the local cultural knowledge of Myanmar researchers was highly valued by foreign HEIs in terms of access to, and collection of, field data. This was also the case even in areas of conflict which could entail personal danger. One senior researcher in a Myanmar HEI expressed the difficulty and risk in a UK HEI's demands[25] for geology field data from Kachin State, an area in northern

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[25] Not one of the three UK HEIs participating in the study interviews

Myanmar long-affected by conflict between the Myanmar military and armed ethnic groups

over valuable jade deposits and other gem fields:

> "[UK researcher] wants to go to the jade mine areas. No permission for many
> areas, no permission, but he wants to go, very keen to go. Very aggressive
> sometimes, yes." (M-B1)

In this particular instance, the field trip did not go ahead, but was related by the researcher as

indicative of the pressure she faces in her international research collaborations. As discussed

in Chapter 6 on the rationales and motivations for collaboration, all three public Myanmar HEIs

in the study reported that their cultural knowledge was regarded by their international

partners as one of the most important aspects of their role in the collaboration.

Having discussed the data in terms of (non)recognition of cultural knowledge from a global and

local perspective, I turn my attention to another aspect of cultural social justice: the

recognition of the status and position of those involved in the international interactions

themselves. Differences in the roles of Myanmar and non-Myanmar partners were apparent

in the data and have influence in the economic justice domain, discussed in the section above.

Here, in terms of recognition, the study found two key barriers to parity of participation: level

of expertise/capability and cultural approaches to collaboration. Firstly, there was, in general,

but with some exceptions[26], less experience in high quality research and teaching in Myanmar

academics than in their overseas partners, which made it difficult for those involved to engage

equally in collaborative activities. As a UK senior manager described of a recent visit to

Myanmar:

> "One of the times I went to [university M-A] and was asked to give a talk about
> [university UK-C] and other research areas, and I thought I was talking to
> students, but it turns out they were young lecturers from different universities
> around, and I was just, wow, if that's the lecturing staff, then, I mean, I'm sure
> they're good in their own ways, but I didn't see any sort, apart from heads and
> one or two experienced people, most of them were young and need better, or
> international, exposure and training." (UK-C1)

All three UK HEIs in the study articulated a strong desire to address this deficit through

capacity building. Indeed, some training was taking place, particularly through the few

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[26] While visiting universities across Myanmar, I met a significant number of senior staff, usually over 50
yrs old, who had received their PhDs abroad, notably from Japan and Germany, but also smaller
numbers from the UK, who were actively trying to maintain their research interests and pass on their
training with very limited support and resources.

overseas government sponsored schemes, however, funding was, in most cases, a significant limitation. Nevertheless, there were positive indications that a few foreign universities were laying the foundations for future parity of participation through capacity building, particularly in research proposal writing and research methodologies, areas that Myanmar HEIs stated as priorities for them and which the study findings identified as critical capabilities for the agency of cultural justice in international HEI interactions

There was a recognition, however, and mentioned explicitly by two of the three UK HEIs in the study, that some senior Myanmar HEI staff had high levels of international experience and expertise, highlighting a non-uniform situation across Myanmar institutions. One UK senior researcher warned of a common mistake of foreign HEIs and development partners in assuming that Myanmar had no expertise:

> "I think there is a lot of, I would class it as imperial arrogance and naivety. I won't be polite, because what has happened I think is because the UK has been excluded from Myanmar, they kind of expect that the country has been left in a complete social and global vacuum and have been shut off – but there is a group of elite Burmese people, all of them are highly educated, doing their best. […] My expert [Myanmar] advisory group – about 50% of them are qualified medical doctors, but all of them are educated to a very high standard." (UK-B1)

Despite some examples of equity in the recognition of status and position, there were also examples described in the interviews of non-recognition.   One Myanmar HEI leader experienced this through an international partnership in which students from their partner HEI, rather than experts, were sent to the Myanmar HEI and what was initially intended as a capacity development programme, funded by KOICA, for Myanmar researchers and students, evolved into capacity building for the non-Myanmar partner HEI:

> "… a little problem between [Korean University], especially the anthropologists in Korea and KOICA, because in their proposal, they mentioned they will raise our capacity building not only in our university, but also in local people, but in reality […] he sent only students. Then in reality, we had to train their students, because their students have no knowledge, anthropological knowledge. We had to train and teach them." (M-A1)

While instances of non-parity in cultural justice appeared dominant in the interviews with Myanmar senior managers and leaders, there were also, although much fewer, examples of inclusivity and responsiveness to equity in the cultural domain. Interviewee M-A2 stated that, in her experience, there was some flexibility in research area, albeit within distinct parameters set by their foreign partner:

> "Even if this is a priority area [for the Myanmar HEI], not always offer from the other university, we can request for that when we discuss with other universities, which field we want to cooperate, which field we want to promote." (M-A2)

In another example, a UK researcher (UK-B1) described the approach of their UK HEI to working with Myanmar based on mutual recognition of status and expertise. This involved actively seeking out local expertise in Burmese counterparts while bringing in a global perspective from UK HEI academics and trainers, so that jointly "we would pull it all together in a culturally appropriate and relevant set of trainings" (UK-B1).[27]

Hence, there were indications that in some, albeit fewer, international interactions, space existed for both Myanmar and foreign HEIs to participate equally in negotiating the focus of their joint activity.

I move on now to an overarching obstacle faced by Myanmar institutions in their attempts to form equitable partnerships with foreign HEIs. It was pointed out by several Myanmar senior managers of public HEIs that they do not have agency in the choice of their partners, but are chosen by foreign HEIs. This situation surfaces an imbalance related to what Power and Gewirtz (2001) refer to as associational justice. Reflecting on the global frame of HE, associational injustice manifests itself in the inequalities of access to and association with international networks of HEIs and therefore, the ability and status to proactively choose partners based on self-determined criteria such as quality, common research interests, shared institutional ethos, specialisation and geography. Most Myanmar HEIs do not have the international networks, relationships or global recognition to exercise agency in choosing their partners. For international collaboration, therefore, they mainly rely on international HEIs approaching them. This, then, determines the subsequent shape of and arrangements for collaborative interactions, driven by the foreign HEI's intentions.

The exception in this study, however, was in the case of the one private Myanmar HEI (M-D), which was highly proactive and selective of their international partners, based on distinct requirements:

> "I wrote to them [UK HEI] […] We had identified some of the interested partner organisations and universities in the UK which were offering quite similar to us […] We usually look at their experience in international partnerships and the commitment from top level management […] because working with them takes a lot of resources from us, as well as resources from them, so we would like to work

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[27] It was not possible during the time of this study to corroborate this with the Myanmar partner.

for the long term, because we can't afford to have, you know, come and go. So it has to be carefully chosen. […] We have a set of criteria. (M-D1)

In contrast, the three Myanmar public universities, did not have specific international strategies in place to enable them to strategically select international partners[28]. It has been noted by leaders of these and other leading institutions in Myanmar that they spend a significant amount of time preparing for and meeting foreign HEIs coming to Myanmar on speculative visits and signing MOUs, in university M-A, over 70 and in M-B over 30 MOUs in less than three years, many of which turn out to be inactive. The Myanmar government's reaction to this issue has had an unintended consequence of internationalisation leading to further restrictions on university autonomy, as described by a senior researcher in university M-A:

> "When I attended meetings [with foreign HEIs], I explain when you come to our university or use our university for a seminar, I have to submit application to our Ministry of Education before two months ahead […]. They want to sign MOU, but our university atmosphere is not good to get a partnership, because Aung San Suu Kyi came to visit our university and on that day she told us that [we] already signed an MOU with over 40 universities, so this may delay to get permission to sign an MOU. Too many. This situation is not good. Because we didn't choose who is suitable, who is well-known, who is not well-known, so she wants to choose. Now we all accept that. When she said like that, research person hesitate to try to get an MOU." (M-A1)

The issue of cultural injustice was present in the non-parity of international participation of HEIs across Myanmar's geography and ethic areas. Unsurprisingly, foreign HEIs select Myanmar HEIs located in the main urban and more developed areas of Myanmar, overwhelmingly in Yangon and Mandalay. The broad exclusion of HEIs in Myanmar's ethnic and conflict-affected areas in international interactions has considerable social justice implications. As mentioned in Chapter 4 on the Myanmar HE context, the majority of universities in Myanmar operate on a catchment area basis, therefore most students are only able to attend their local university located within their state or area. These universities, particularly in conflict and ethic areas, are possibly the least developed in the country. The only exceptions to this restrictive admissions policy are those very few students who score high enough marks in the matriculation exam to enter the top 'national' universities in Yangon

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[28] I found all the public Myanmar universities I visited did not have an international strategy or a structured way of selecting international partners, although I am aware of at least two leading public HEIs which are now in the process of developing one.

or Mandalay or a regional specialised university. The exclusion of Myanmar's HEIs in conflict-affected and ethnic areas from international activities acts to further increase the quality gap and research output between the universities in predominantly Burman areas and those in ethnic areas, thereby reinforcing and reproducing the domination of Burman privilege in Myanmar society. Given the previous military-backed regimes' reorganisation of universities and disbursement of students and staff to the rural areas in the last 10-20 years as a strategy to immobilise, suppress and control social activism by isolating them, international HEIs, through their non-engagement with universities on the periphery, are inadvertently being co-opted into the subjugation and suppression of under-represented and conflict-affected ethnic and religious groups. Internationalisation of HE, seen through this perspective, is already exacerbating long term inequalities in Myanmar society. Furthermore, UK HEIs' primary focus on commercial activities with the private HE sector in Myanmar arguably adds to this inequality, providing further opportunities for international education to the emerging middle class and elites (mainly Burman) in Myanmar residing in the main urban centres, but out of reach of poor, marginalised and minority ethnic students in conflict-affected areas. In this sense, inequality in recognition has links with the fourth dimension of social justice in my framework, justice with peace.

Finally, as I pointed out at the start of this section, support for cultural justice in international collaborations was found in the topics and focus of activities. One of the indicators for recognition I proposed in my adaptation of Fraser's social justice analytical framework was the development of new courses on understanding cultural aspects of social inequality and power relations. Two of the UK HEIs in the study were working with Myanmar HEIs in issues of social justice: educational access and inclusion for children with disabilities (UK-B), and capacity building in journalism training (UK-A). These involved providing training and/or courses with the intention of improving social justice beyond the institution in wider society in Myanmar. Examining data on UK and other international HEI collaborations reported by Myanmar HEIs, topics connected with issues of social justice were present in some interactions, particularly across four areas: law and justice, social inclusion and community development, gender studies and journalism. The following table summarises the topics against origin country of the foreign HEIs engaged with the Myanmar HEIs in the study.

Table 10: Topics related to social justice in international collaboration with Myanmar HEIs

Topic of collaboration* related to social justice	Myanmar HEI in study	Country of origin of overseas HEI	UK HEI in study
Law and justice	M-A M-B	Japan, Hungary, UK, Australia, Denmark, Singapore, Thailand, South-East Asia regional networks,	-
Social inclusion and community development	M-A M-B	China, Thailand, UK	U-B
Gender studies	M-A M-B	UK	-
Journalism	M-A	UK	U-A

*Across a range of different types of activity, including research, curriculum development and capacity development.

A focus on law and justice reflects an alignment, probably driven by access to funding, to the priorities of nation states to support and stabilise the fragile democracy in Myanmar.

In summary, cultural recognition, a dimension of social justice in Fraser's analytical framework, was most evident in the topic focus of Myanmar's international HEI interactions, many of which were related to Myanmar's culture and language. While this was deemed relevant to Myanmar's development, there was also evidence that in the arrangements between institutions, Myanmar researchers were restricted to the local, studying their own context, but continued to be isolated from a global research frame, unlike their counterparts. In some cases, Myanmar researcher interests were subordinated to their foreign partners', revealing the presence of cultural domination in international interactions. Although Myanmar researchers have been very much involved in the system of knowledge production, they are marginalised epistemologically and intellectually in their international collaborations, a situation that reflects similar conditions under colonialism. Viewed from this perspective, serious issues and missed opportunities emerge for social justice, associated with historically enforced knowledge and economic hegemonies, the neoliberal structures that are driving commercialisation of HE, even in Myanmar's low-income context, and the resulting unequal global HE ecology.

One of the starkest areas of imbalance in recognition between Myanmar and their international HEI partners was related to the status, position and value of knowledge and expertise. A lack of adequately trained and experienced Myanmar academics was cited by UK HEIs as a barrier to parity of participation, and although there was a willingness to address this through capacity building, the absence of funding was a severe limitation.

The exclusion of Myanmar universities in rural and conflict-affected areas from international collaboration can be viewed as a form of cultural social injustice through non-recognition, and has implications on the fourth dimension in the 4R analytical framework, justice with peace.

Finally, while unequal recognition was present within and between collaborating HEIs, the study found indications that international collaborations were contributing to cultural justice beyond the institution-to-institution partnership through the topics and activities in which they were engaged.

As I will show, some of the cultural (in)justice issues discussed above are related and are influenced by issues of political (in)justice through representation, which I present and discuss in the following section.

8.3   Representation: political justice in international HEI interactions

Representation in international interactions in HE refers to political, governance and decision-making processes and structures at different levels, encompassing global and local, national and institutional. In the context of this study, these aspects can be related to issues around the inclusiveness of the relationship between the Myanmar and UK HEIs, the governance of the international project or partnership, how they are organised and shaped, the equality of representation in decision-making related to the choice of topics, activity focus and the modalities of the activities undertaken; and who participates in the international collaboration and in what roles (e.g. learner, teacher, researcher, recipient, principle investigator).

The study found that in most examples mentioned in the data interviews, there were deep-seated inequities in representational parity in decision-making within international activities and interactions. In terms of collaborative research, in all three public universities in Myanmar in the study, across all types of interaction mentioned by Myanmar researchers, the topics and approaches to joint research were almost always decided by the foreign HEI partner[29]. It

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[29] It is important to restate that Myanmar responses relate to all their international activity, not only those with UK HEIs.

appeared to be common practice in the three Myanmar public institutions in the study for their international HEI partner to lead on the conceptualisation, design, development and writing of research proposals. Agreement on research project proposals were only sought from Myanmar researchers at the final stages. As two Myanmar researchers explained:

> "First, they decided. They would like to find the money, they are the project leaders. We are the partners. And they decided. Then they send to me, you agree or not?" (M-B2)

> "[The foreign researcher] decides. [She] is the research designer. She told me, she sent me, this proposal – you agree or not? Which parts I want to change or correct, like that. She gives me. And then I read and I totally agree." (M-A1)

This approach was regarded by Myanmar researchers as hindering both their recognition and representational parity in terms of Myanmar researcher interests and priorities. The study unveiled hermeneutical power imbalances in joint research activities, originating, at least in part, from the one-sidedness of authorship and ownership of research proposals. As Cossa (2013) suggests, those who are closer to the document, that is, the writers, have the 'spirit' of it, while those who are more distant from its construction, but are regulated by it, are at a disadvantage in terms of expressing their own interests and left to conform to what others have proposed. The non-inclusiveness of research proposal design, development and writing appears to have had the effect of rendering Myanmar researchers voiceless in representation terms. As discussed previously, MOUs signed between Myanmar and overseas HEIs were reported to have had a similar effect.

It was noted by one senior Myanmar researcher that due to this approach, and linked to economic dependence, her own research interests and expertise were not being recognised:

> "We have no money. At that time, we depend on other sponsors. So when you study research methods, you will notice bias. We have to avoid bias, but sometimes we have to follow the sponsors' bias. […] When I meet other researchers, I always explain to them I have two researches: one is my hobby and one is according to the sponsors' demands." (M-A1)

Researcher M-A1 was clearly frustrated by the lack of influence she had on research topics and approaches. This situation was not clearly understood by Myanmar Ministry of Education officials, one of whom, when asked whether the ideas for the international activities came from the Myanmar or foreign HEIs, believed the needs of Myanmar institutions and researchers, as a consequence of their deeper contextual knowledge, were driving decision-making of international activities:

> "Mostly, I think Myanmar universities [decide], because universities abroad cannot understand the context very well like Myanmar universities." (M-O2)

This example of non-parity of participation in decision-making in the choice of research topic draws us back to the issue of knowledge hegemonies, discussed in the previous section on cultural justice. According to Koehn (2012), drawing on the work of King and McGrath (2004), in the context of international partnerships for research and sustainable development, donors and funders determine what kind of knowledge matters, which not only limits Myanmar researchers' autonomy, but also their international partners' agendas, as noted in Chapter 7 on rationales and motivations.

Analysis of activities related to capacity building of Myanmar HEI staff also revealed variation in representation within partnership decision-making. One leader of a Myanmar public university explained the restrictive situation she was experiencing as a key participant in a foreign-funded ASEAN programme:

> "My priority is to upgrade capacity of my teaching staff. This is my first priority. If I had the chance, I would. But this is the fixed programme I have to follow." (M-B2)

The lack of power in decision-making was voiced by a senior researcher in university M-A, who, after returning to Myanmar from her first academic visit abroad, related the difference she noticed between the situation in Myanmar and foreign academics she met:

> "And then when I came back from [country[30]], I feel depressed. […] Yes, it's true. We can't choose our ways as we like. Always we need to get permission, permission, permission. And when we cooperate with each other, we have no chance to choose what we want to do, because we depend on our sponsor's demands. It is very sorry for us. For me." (M-A1)

There were also some examples, albeit fewer, where participation in decision-making appeared to be more equal, as reported by the Myanmar medical university M-C, where there was more consultation in the choice of focus of capacity building activities through their partnership with an Australian HEI.

A connection may be made between the lack of parity in representation and the reported imbalance of seniority of foreign HEI staff in collaborative arrangements. I have discussed in depth the inequalities in roles in international arrangements mentioned by Myanmar HEI

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[30] The name of the country is withheld in order to protect the anonymity of the interviewee

senior managers in the last section on social (in)justice through (mis)recognition; these inequalities intersect not only cultural, but also economic and political realms of social injustice. A further aspect of political inequality in the assignment of roles reported by Myanmar HEIs was related to personal career progression (also present in my findings in Chapter 7 on rationales). In one institution (university M-C), it was noted that foreign researchers were often designated to senior positions in collaborative projects, such as course director, for the purposes of academic promotion, and not perceived by Myanmar researchers to be related to levels of expertise or seniority. While a staffing analysis of international HEI project governance was beyond the scope of this study, imbalances in the assignments to senior, decision-making positions would undoubtedly contribute to non-parity of representation and therefore, political injustice in international interactions.

In a few cases, including the three Myanmar public universities in this study, international collaboration was seen to be enabling representation with regional/global HE systems and knowledge domains. At the level of building international connections and system collaboration, these were being developed through participation in regional or bilateral aid projects[31], while connection with global knowledge domains were provided through access to a range of international journals and published research, enabled through NGOs or charities[32]. However, while access to global knowledge was getting easier, Myanmar researchers reported significant barriers in active participation, i.e. sharing their contributions to global knowledge through publishing their work in internationally-recognised peer-reviewed journals, even if they have good research, and cited strong dependence on their foreign HEI partner (discussed in my analysis of economic injustice), whose agency in this regard, as the low number of papers produced suggests, did not appear to be significant.

Turning attention now to representation within the structures of power in Myanmar, political representation with regard to influence and power with the Myanmar government was also reported to be unequal. Senior managers in both UK and Myanmar HEIs concurred that

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[31] For instance, the EU's SHARE project involving HEIs in 10 ASEAN countries, JICA's support to Myanmar's medical and technical universities and Asian regional groups such as SEMEO-RIHED, AUN and ASEAN (see Chapter 6 for a summary on aid to HE in Myanmar)

[32] Free access to online journals for Myanmar HEIs through two projects: 1) E-tekkatho, initiated by the University of Manchester, now operating through a charitable foundation, supports access to research publications and teaching/learning resources to over 25 Myanmar universities through a low-cost digital platform (http://www.etekkatho.org/), and 2) EIFL, a not-for-profit organisation supported by The Open Society Foundation, which at the time of the study was available in 13 Myanmar HEIs (http://www.eifl.net/eifl-in-action/elibrary-myanmar-project)

foreign HEIs were in a better position to gain access to, and have greater influence on, higher levels in the Myanmar government than their Myanmar counterparts. As one UK senior manager commented:

> "We have now got a very good relationship with the Ministry of Education. The new ministry is very, very accessible to foreigners, not quite so accessible to Burmese people." (UK-B1)

The UK HEI reported using this political power for the benefit of their joint project by raising issues and expediting permissions at the highest government levels. This non-parity of participation in political justice in the relationship with the authorities is not surprising. As I reflected upon in Chapter 4, the long history of Myanmar's HEIs' central role as spaces of anti-government movements and contestations of power has, as other studies on HE in conflict-affected contexts have shown (Lebeau, 2008; Walker-Keleher, 2006; Buckland, 2005; Sabic-El-Reyess, 2009), shaped a complex relationship with government, within which exist structures of control and influence, legacies of mistrust and hidden hierarchies of power. Foreign HEIs are, at one level, unencumbered and possibly not aware of the impact of this legacy on issues of representational justice, but are operating within this complex political economy, and consequently, may be unknowingly privileged, co-opted into political tactics, or unaware of the impact of their actions on Myanmar HEIs or individuals.

At the time of the data collection in this study, links with the State Chancellor, Daw Aung San Suu Kyi, as discussed in the previous chapter, were actively sought out by UK HEIs and used to enhance their global institutional reputation as well as locally in Myanmar (driven by economic rationales). Since that time, the dramatic fall of Aung San Suu Kyi's international reputation has undoubtedly had a negative impact on the willingness of UK HEIs to engage with Myanmar, particularly at government level.

Regarding the influence of international collaboration on system-wide governance of HE, Myanmar senior managers provided a mixed set of responses when asked about whether or not their international partnerships could help further university autonomy in Myanmar, and therefore, contribute towards their political (representational) agency and power. While some managers believed the system was too entrenched to be influenced through international pressure, others were cautiously optimistic that international interactions could have political influence in support of autonomy:

"I think the government is scared for international pressure. Many international universities giving them pressure. [If they say] give them autonomy, university autonomy, they might consider about that." (M-C2)

One Myanmar researcher emphasised the importance of a change in mind-set in government and university leadership to support a more international, open and autonomous HE sector in Myanmar:

"To our former rector, I told him we should do international. He replied "I prefer local!" [Interviewee laughs]. We need to change our mind-sets. [Just as] we want to take responsibility for our children, our government wants to take responsibility for us. I don't like it, because they didn't give a chance to do and decide for ourselves." (M-A1)

While it was considered important that international HEIs engage with government officials, it was also noted that sometimes not the most appropriate politicians were invited to attend overseas study tours and therefore opportunities for influence and enabling effective change were wasted.

Cultural influences were invoked as a barrier to equality of representation in international interactions in Myanmar. A UK manager commented that there were different cultural perspectives to power in their partnership, noting that:

"Burmese people are by inclination and by political constraint, deferential. So the first year, we would go and we would have meeting, and they would agree with absolutely everything. And you would come home and somebody would send an email saying I'm not quite sure that was right. And those are the frustrations!" (UK-B1)

The manager/researcher went on to explain their proactive attempts to equalise the power relationship in their interaction, and that by being able to separate the donor or funding role of the UK HEI from the research or teaching activity, a more equitable approach to partnership could be developed, in this case, with a network of professional educator practitioners in Myanmar:

"First, we are not donating money into the project, and so their level of deference to, say [the funder], who they know is the financial donor, and myself, is very, very different. Anyone who is donating money they are still very deferential to." (UK-B1)

The framing of the relationship as a donor-recipient binary was considered a strong factor in creating representation injustice between partners. The data also showed evidence of non-parity of participation in representation for UK HEIs when dealing with the international

development aid and donor community in Myanmar. One UK HEI senior manager explained the difficulties her institution had had in trying to meet staff in international agencies and embassies based in Yangon to discuss supporting education projects. It was only through their charitable donor, an ex-City of London banker, that connections were possible:

> "And having him on board has been what has made this project a success. Because unlike any other project, if I can identify who I need to speak directly to, he can manage to facilitate that meeting in some way. So, you know, we've met with UNICEF, Save the Children, the British Ambassador, the Australian Ambassador, and this is all because of his banking background." (UK-B1)

It is noteworthy that the individual with the highest degree of political agency in this case was an individual from the financial sector, an attribute that gave power of access to charities, development agencies and the top political representatives of foreign nation states, which the HEI, holders of the knowledge and expertise, did not have. This speaks to studies that show the marginalisation of HE in the development discourse and the persistent narrow view of HE as a potential contributor to the SDGs (Salmi, 2017; Selenica, 2018; Boni, Lopez-Fogues and Walker, 2016). But it could also indicate the existence of associational injustice (Power and Gewirtz, 2001) in international development circles, privileging those with the networks and connections based on social structures.

Summarising the main points in this section, the study found that political inequality existed in most cases of international collaboration discussed by senior managers in Myanmar HEIs, particularly in connection with decision-making in research topic and research design, but also in the influence on political actors in Myanmar. As discussed in the section on cultural justice, this arguably creates a situation which privileges the non-Myanmar partner in not only the topic area, but the epistemological framing of the collaborative research and teaching. Lack of parity in representation was also reported in some cases to be reflected in the lower positions and roles reported to be given to Myanmar participants in international activities, which then negatively impacted their agency and decision-making. Myanmar officials were not aware of the lack of decision-making power of Myanmar HEIs in their international relations.

While there were signs of increased representation of Myanmar HEIs in regional networks and structures, and improved access to global knowledge domains, participation in global knowledge production of Myanmar HEIs was still highly dependent on their international partners, and revealed significant non-parity of participation. In contrast to their access to high levels in the Myanmar government, UK HEIs lacked power of access to INGOs and high level

foreign government officials, indicating the continued neglect of the role of HE in development.

However, there were also examples, albeit fewer, of approaches by UK HEIs to lessen power imbalances in the decision-making and governance of international activities. There were clear opportunities for foreign HEIs to utilise their connections and influence to further their international activities and advocate for reforms, such as more autonomy for HEIs, in Myanmar.

8.4 Reconciliation: peacebuilding justice in international HEI interactions

In the previous sections, study data were analysed using Nancy Fraser's model of social justice, theorised through the three distinct dimensions of economic, cultural and political equity. In the context of Myanmar, a country with some of the world's longest-running civil wars and a succession of failed peace processes, I use a fourth dimension relating to peace with social justice, developed by Novelli, Lopes Cardozo and Smith (2015) for basic education, to analyse international HE interactions in terms of contribution to peacebuilding. While Fraser's three dimensions of (in)justice demand accountability and restitution, the fourth dimension, reconciliation, demands actions towards and support for understanding, accommodation and forgiveness to promote long-term peace.

International interactions in higher education that contribute towards justice through peacebuilding can take various forms. Partnerships between HEIs may express conflict awareness and sensitivity and respond to Myanmar's context through the inclusion of conflict-related issues and topics within partnership activities. These may encompass interactions and projects which include, for instance, developing and questioning the narratives of conflict, promoting greater understanding, inclusion and collaboration across ethnic and religious divides, and advocating for, and providing support to, the university's role in society as a space for critical thinking, intellectual diversity and free expression of opinions and ideas that contest issues related to inequalities and discrimination. The latter is particularly important in Myanmar, where decades of military rule has purposefully suppressed the development of critical thinking in the curriculum in schools and universities and violently quelled alternative ideas and challenges to the dominant authoritarian-imposed social narrative. Curriculum development related to peacebuilding may include courses which focus on understanding conflict and the causes of political and social inequality. Research and training that contribute to long-term peace may include topics, knowledge and skills related to conflict resolution,

intercultural understanding, peace studies and human rights. Regarding wider societal impact, indicators of a 'justice with peace' role include collaboration on research topics that lead to a deeper understanding of the causes of grievances and discrimination, and activities that foster citizenship, social cohesion and democratic processes within and beyond the university.

I start first with a reflection on the analytical framework. As I have noted in the previous sections, the three dimensions of economic, cultural and political justice intersect; for instance, inequitable distribution of economic resources between international partners can have a significant impact on decision-making and power balances, indications of political justice, which are also associated with the non-recognition or cultural domination by one partner over another. Similarly, social justice through reconciliation cannot be fully analysed in isolation from the other three dimensions of Fraser's social justice model, but interconnect within a 'justice with peace' frame, aspects of which I draw together in the following.

A policy perspective, provided through interviews with officials in the Myanmar Ministry of Education is a useful starting point. The two government officials in the study[33] emphasised the government's efforts towards peacebuilding through the opening of universities in rural and ethnic areas to enable greater access and participation of marginalised and conflict-affected communities, despite considerable challenges and limitations. The MoE officials were keenly aware of the importance of universities as social institutions and their role in contributing to and symbolising equity and cultural recognition, as one official explained:

> "We would like to consider the inclusive and equitable access for the education, because Myanmar has very diverse ethnic groups. That's why in every region and state there are universities for social science, science and engineering and computer universities." (M-O1)

When asked whether universities were important institutions for peacebuilding, the second Myanmar government official emphasised the opening of HEIs in the conflict-affected areas of Chin, Kachin, Shan and Kaya States, keen to show that the government was not discriminatory against ethnic communities in its HE development agenda:

> "Very recently we opened the Hakka College in Chin State. So that means, for Chin students, they, without too much cost, they can study in their region. And also we have university in Kachin State – Mychkyina University, and in Shan State

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[33] Both officials, as with many in the Ministry of Education, had occupied high level positions for a number of years at universities in Myanmar and directly experienced, either as a student or as member of staff, the dismantling of the universities and the repression of student protest by the military regime.

there are four universities: Lashio University, Taungyi University and Jiatong University. Three universities. And in Kaya State, Loikaw University." (M-O2)

Both officials ascribed only a positive, pro-peace logic to the opening of universities in conflict-affected states. This was unsurprising, as they were well-versed in positive government messaging on current education policy and wanted to demonstrate the responsiveness of the Ministry of Education to the rights of ethnic groups, but I was also aware that my own positionality in the interviews, as an employee of the British Council, which was an active member of Myanmar's international development coordination groups, may have had an influence on the high degree of positivity in their responses. However, bearing in mind that most of the universities referred to were opened under the former military-backed regime, which had a history of violent conflict with universities, an alternative logic could be traced back from an authoritarian, oppression-based rationale, which I discussed in Chapter 4 on research context. Under this interpretation, the opening of universities in the conflict-affected states was designed to appease and pacify students, provide political leverage with ethnic groups and organisations (and, possibly, the international development community), while also separating and isolating ethnic minority youth and intellectuals, through the imposition of a restrictive catchment area admissions policy, thereby excluding them from most universities in the main urban centres in the Burman heartland. As these contrasting perspectives illustrate, the different and shifting interpretations of HE policies and actions instigated under the previous political regime by civil servants in the current political environment has resulted in a complex interplay between rationales, actions and possible consequences that reflect the 'two faces of education' (Bush and Salterelli, 2000), which, through one perspective may be considered a positive contribution to equity and peace, but from another, may also be framed as a strategy to further exclude ethnic minorities, counter student social activism and suppress intellectual challenge to the state. The current official narratives on this situation could also be interpreted as an attempt to bridge the conflict-related origins of these universities with a more positive narrative that is genuinely more inclusive and socially just.

Nevertheless, given the importance attributed by the Myanmar Ministry of Education to the development of universities in poor, marginalised and conflict-affected states in Myanmar towards improving aspects of social justice, there was a striking absence of international

interactions in these universities[34]. As previously noted in the section on cultural justice through recognition, most foreign HEIs, including those from the UK, were only engaged with Myanmar universities located in the urban areas of Yangon and Mandalay and in the small, centrally-located city of Nay Pyi Taw, the military-designated capital and location of the Myanmar government. Perhaps with the exception of Sittwe University in Rakhine State, where access is more controlled, it appeared that the Ministry of Education was keen to include the more marginalised universities in conflict-affected states in international activities, particularly in capacity development projects[35], to support their inclusivity and equity agendas.

Regarding the UK HEIs in the study, only university UK-C appeared to have made contact with a Myanmar HEI in a conflict-affected region, through a visit to Mawlamyine University in Mon State in the far south of Myanmar[36], due to its geographical proximity to the long coastal resources that were a focus of UK-C's research interests. However, no ongoing activities were taking place with this HEI at the time of the study. University UK-B was building capacity of education CSOs in a wide range of states and regions, including conflict-affected areas, but not through the universities in these areas. University UK-A was not engaged outside the Yangon area. It can be concluded that international HEI interactions of the three UK HEIs in the study outside the main urban areas were minimal or non-existent, and as a consequence, were not engaging with the institutions where the majority of marginalised, ethnic students are situated, and therefore excluding them from the benefits of internationalisation or any contributions to justice with peace from international activities.

However, while there was no direct contact with HEIs in conflict-affected areas, the international activities of two public Myanmar universities in the study, located in the main cities of Yangon and Mandalay, included aspects of reconciliation and peacebuilding. Firstly, as described in the previous section on political justice, through topics associated with social justice and peace, through collaborations in law and justice, social inclusion, community development, and journalism. Indeed, the UK HEI in the study engaged in journalism explicitly

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[34] Since the data collection in this study, however, a project run by the British Council is engaging UK HEIs in capacity development in Mychyina, Taungyi and Sittwe Universities in the conflict-affected states of Kachin, Shan and Rakhine, respectively.

[35] It should be noted that travel to these main university towns at the time of this study was generally not considered to be high risk in terms of security, as most of the conflict areas are located outside the state capitals.

[36] Mawlamyine and most of Mon State is now considered to be relatively stable compared to Rakhine, Kachin and Shan.

stated this as an intention, in an effort to counter false news, anti-Muslim propaganda and hate speech promulgated through social media, mainly Facebook (Gowen and Bearak, 2017). In another example, the recent activity by a UK HEI (not in this study) to involve a Myanmar HEI as a member of the Peacebuilding in Asia Scholars Forum Network (http://peacebuildingasia.org) is also an encouraging sign that Myanmar universities are starting to extend their international associations in the area of peacebuilding.

Secondly, discussions with senior managers in Myanmar HEIs uncovered examples, albeit few, of international activities creating spaces in Myanmar HEIs for the development of intercultural understanding, an important aspect of reconciliation through peacebuilding justice. One example, as part of the EU-funded SHARE project supporting collaboration with HEIs across ASEAN and the EU, involved University M-B hosting a group of Indonesian Muslim students, an experience which has reportedly helped to change attitudes towards Muslims at institution M-B:

> "At the beginning I was afraid, because they are Muslim people, and as you know, our country there are issues. But they are very clever, we talk with them, they are very nice person, very intelligent." (M-B2)

There was a notable absence in interviews and other forms of data on international collaboration of initiatives explicitly advocating for, providing training in, or developing the space for critical thinking within Myanmar HEIs, which would arguably support the processes mentioned above, and a key demand of students[37], despite Myanmar education policy emphasising an urgent move from rote learning to analytical and critical thinking throughout the education system. McArthur links the deprioritisation of such spaces in HEIs that support participation and shaping of the social world with increased commercialisation of HE (McArthur, 2011). This could be a sign of commercial interests in international HE collaboration, but is also feasibly connected with a lack of funding and legacies of the complex political role of HEIs in Myanmar. Nevertheless, the development of this vital function of HEIs is currently neglected in Myanmar's international interactions.

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[37] During a visit to Sittwe University in Rakhine State, I met with a group of 100 students who stated their highest priorities for the development of their university was to help them develop critical thinking skills and to learn English (British Council visit to Sittwe University in December 2017)

Despite the lack of student engagement in this area, the government officials in the Ministry of Education emphasised the centrality of students' agency, values and responsibility to achieving peace:

> "For the peacebuilding, it depends on the value of the graduates. The graduates have to sustain, they have to, how to say, protect, they have to develop, they have to compete with others for their cultures and customs, their values. This is very important." (M-O1)

While the pivotal role of students in past pro-democracy movements was acknowledged, Ministry officials believed that the time had come for them to focus on employability and the development of Myanmar, as explained by a senior policy-maker:

> "Every movement was initiated from the universities and youth. This is very difficult for Myanmar students. They are very proud [that] they are the leading group for every change in Myanmar. That's why it depends on the mind-set of every people of Myanmar. They have to change their mind-set. We have to focus on our country, sustainable socio-economic development, and we, the Ministry of Education, is responsible for every school age children and youth – they have to be trained to meet the labour market. And they should be competitive and they should be qualified graduates. They should be employable. This is the most important one." (M-O1)

This perspective mirrors the reform objectives in the National Education Strategic Plan, which firmly posits HE reform in human capital development terms, linked to economic growth. Another official attributed a lack of understanding in students for the continuing political activism since the 2015 election:

> "..mostly they know that the government changes. Changes [in] the political weather of the country. But there are some, or a few, who don't know the context, so that's why they make protest, shouting slogans, using previous government slogans … such as 'We don't want military government' for example. […] I think some agitators behind them can use the students to do like this. Students without knowing anything, they do what they are asked." (M-O2)

Overall, discussions with Ministry of Education officials indicated a strategy to divert their universities, faculty and students away from social activism and their engagement in political discourse towards the production of human capital, citing employability and economic growth as the most important contribution they can make. It was for this latter purpose that the role of international partnerships was considered most important in peacebuilding. The Ministry officials appear to have adopted a neoliberal logic to HE's role in development and peacebuilding, also evident in the data on redistributive justice, with the role of HE in

peacebuilding interpreted primarily in terms of human capital development, based on social stability through economic growth and increasing privatisation of the sector. This reflects, to some extent, a main critique in the literature of the dominant development model for peacebuilding based on the liberal peace thesis, which in focussing on these elements, ignores other possible contributions by education to peacebuilding (Novelli and Smith, 2012) and may diminish the ability of HEIs to respond to society's complex needs for peacebuilding. Furthermore, as the growth of the private HE sector and TNE in Myanmar continues, albeit in the absence of national legislative frameworks, and while conflict remains present, important public institutions, as Paris (2004) cautions, which include HEIs, are at risk of even further destabilisation and worsening conditions, unable to compete with international competition under global rules.

Despite engaging in international collaboration related to social justice topics, none of the senior managers in Myanmar HEIs nor government officials in the study directly related international collaboration in higher education to helping Myanmar develop long term peace through engaging in collaborative research or teaching that might foster a deeper understanding of the causes of conflict, grievances and discrimination, nor to strengthen activities that foster citizenship, social cohesion and democratic processes in Myanmar. Indeed, when asked whether international collaboration in HE could contribute to issues of social justice in Myanmar, most Myanmar senior managers did not believe this was possible, a common answer exemplified by this senior manager in a Myanmar HEI:

> "This is an area we never think about! […] Initially, international collaboration is based on knowledge and skill, but not social justice." (M-C2)

It appears, therefore, that although some international collaboration in HE related to reconciliation through justice with peace was present in Myanmar HEIs, this was either not widely known to senior managers or Ministry officials, or not yet understood within a wider narrative of peace, social justice and the role of universities.

Related to equity of access to university in Myanmar, particularly of ethnic minorities and under-represented social groups, it is noteworthy that Myanmar senior managers and government officials perceived their HE system as equitable. Almost all Myanmar interviewees stated that Myanmar's HE system was fair because all students sat the same

matriculation (university entrance) exam[38] and fees were very low (equivalent to half a US dollar a term). While Myanmar HEI senior managers were aware of, and acknowledged, the educational inequalities downstream, including access to quality schooling, private tuition classes, the manipulation of the admissions system by wealthy parents moving their child into catchment areas with the best universities, or other well-known means to secure a university place, there was a sense this was outside their control and responsibility. There appeared to be little interrogation of any role their institution could have to reduce these inequities.

Turning now to the UK HEIs, while there appeared to be various levels of understanding of the conflict-affected context, peacebuilding was not a key focus of their interactions. Interestingly, where there was substantial contextual knowledge, this did not seem to be applied to their commercial interests. While it has been argued that northern HEIs fail to tap their own academic expertise in their institutions to engage with the countries with which they have international interactions, leaving this to the domain of senior business managers (Luke, 2010), in Myanmar's case, this appeared to be more to do with the low level of relevance or importance attributed to context in their international commercial activities.

Finally, the continued exclusion of HE in the main development discourse of many of the international education agencies and donors in Myanmar, particularly those engaged with peacebuilding, closes off potential roles of universities and their international partners to contribute in this area. This is all the more surprising given the prominent historical role of universities in the country's social justice and democracy movements.

To briefly bring together the main findings in this section, although Myanmar senior managers and government officials viewed universities as important institutions in social justice which contribute to equity in access and participation for students from conflict-affected ethnic areas, they did not recognise the significance or potential contribution that international collaboration in HE can offer to peacebuilding. There was very limited, or no international collaboration with Myanmar HEIs located in conflict-affected areas. As Myanmar HEIs start to internationalise, the non-inclusion of these institutions could be further entrenching, if not exacerbating, ethnic and religious divides. However, there was some, although limited, evidence of international activity related to reconciliation through justice with peace in Myanmar universities located in the main urban centres. Nevertheless, HE international

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[38] But there are gender inequities in the system, with females having to score higher than males to get into university in some of the most popular courses

collaboration did not appear to be specifically developing critical thinking skills or supporting Myanmar's HEIs as spaces for critical intellectual enquiry and debate to deepen the understanding of conflict contribute to long-term peace.

There were indications that social justice and potential peacebuilding functions of Myanmar HEIs were being restricted or overshadowed in three main ways: firstly, by Myanmar government policy and ideology, grounded in human capital production and economic competitiveness, which, secondly, and as discussed in previous sections, is also largely reflected in the main rationales of UK HEIs, driven by commercialisation and market-related imperatives, and thirdly, in the neglect of the HE sector by many of the international development agencies and donors involved in peacebuilding in Myanmar. Overall, the potential of international collaboration in HE in Myanmar to contribute to social justice through reconciliation is not well understood and is largely being overlooked.

8.5   Summary

In answer to my central research question: "*In what ways do emerging international interactions in Myanmar higher education institutions relate to social justice?*", this chapter has attempted to provide an analysis and discussion of the economic, cultural, political and peacebuilding dimensions of social justice in the international interactions of four Myanmar and three UK HEIs (RQ3) and their implications within, between and beyond the Myanmar HEIs, drawing on the study's findings of the international activities taking place in Myanmar (RQ1) and the rationales and motivations for engaging in international interactions (RQs 2).

The study identified substantive issues of social injustice in international interactions, which impeded parity of participation between Myanmar HEIs and their international partners. The study also highlighted social justice issues in the activities of the international interactions beyond the HEIs. I analysed the findings in relation to local and global HE contexts, situating Myanmar's international HE interactions within the wider conceptual and theoretical constructs and understanding of globalisation, the internationalisation of higher education, neoliberal-driven HE commercialisation, notions of international development and peacebuilding, colonialisation and HE's role in the knowledge economy.   I present the main conclusions of the study in the next chapter.

9 Conclusion

The aim of this chapter is to reflect critically on the contribution and implications of the study's findings. I start by restating the aims and rationales of the study, followed by a summary of the methodological and theoretical approaches used. I then present the major research findings in terms of the research questions, followed by implications drawn from the study's findings. After that, I reflect on the relevance and use of the theoretical framework in addressing the research topic and the limitations of the study, before turning my attention to the contribution of the study to knowledge and understanding in the field. I then suggest further areas of research highlighted by the findings. After a critical reflection on the research process and my learning, I conclude with some final thoughts.

9.1 Aims and rationales of the study

This study set out to examine social justice in the international interactions of Myanmar HEIs, firstly, from the perspective of the relationships and arrangements between the Myanmar HEIs and their international HE partners; and secondly, from an 'outward-facing' perspective, in the contribution of the international activities to social justice issues in Myanmar, in response to Myanmar's context of conflict and inequalities.

Higher education has important roles in social justice, development and peacebuilding. HEIs can promote social justice and equity, but can also support social injustice by entrenching inequalities and privileging elites (see Castells 2001; Hall 2012; Brennan and Naidoo 2008). With the rise of the knowledge economy, a functioning, high quality HE system is considered essential for low income countries, such as Myanmar, to move from the periphery of the global economy towards a more equal terrain in which they can more effectively compete and benefit (World Bank, 2003; Altbach, Reisberg and Rumbley, 2009). Nonetheless, support to HE in low-income countries, including Myanmar, has been neglected by international development agencies. Characterised by poor resources and facilities, yet faced with increasing demand, internationalisation can be seen as a useful approach to improving HE systems and supporting its functions in progressive social change, peace and development.

However, HEIs in low-income countries are affected by powerful, external forces associated with the globalisation of HE, including the neoliberal-driven commercialisation of HE, the ideologies that shape international development approaches, colonial and post-colonial legacies and the unequal geographies of the global knowledge economy (Naidoo, 2007; Feuer,

Hornidge and Schetter, 2015; Connell, 2016). Within this complex landscape, internationalisation can bring benefits to low-income country HEIs, but they may also be exposed to less advantageous effects and influences.

My research attempted to contribute to a growing body of work critiquing internationalisation in higher education by deepening an understanding of the emerging global and national influences on international HE collaboration in Myanmar. It was intended that the findings would contribute to future international collaboration and policy discourse in Myanmar on higher education reform.

Four main rationales underlie the study. Firstly, the analysis of HE through a social justice framework embraces a more holistic role of HE in development and social transformation, which, over the last twenty years or more, has focussed mainly on economic benefits and human capital production, and has failed to include HE's contribution towards the wider public good, societal transformation and peacebuilding, areas central to Myanmar's development goals.

Secondly, the understanding of the role of HE in social justice is understudied, particularly in low-income, conflict-affected contexts such as Myanmar. By contributing to the empirical evidence and analysis of this function of HEIs, international development agencies, policy makers, institutions, and those that influence them will be better informed about HE's role in social justice, development and peacebuilding.

Thirdly, by critiquing internationalisation in Myanmar's context, I highlight areas that internationalisation can contribute to social justice, but also expose the dangers and practices that hinder social justice in international HE engagements. In attempting to link local and global inequalities to the wider forces shaping global HE and the international strategies, rationales and actions of Northern HEIs, the study raises awareness of local and global consequences of international activities situated within these global currents and drivers, as a step towards finding solutions that can leverage internationalisation for the mutual benefit of Southern and Northern HE partners and wider society.

Finally, and importantly, the study is timely, coinciding with a policy window in Myanmar that, over the next few years, will shape the HE system in Myanmar and the way that it engages with internationalisation, including the role of the private sector, the provision of TNE, and how internationalisation may be leveraged for national social and economic development. For Myanmar's HEIs, now at an early stage of internationalisation, and, for some, gaining

increasing levels of autonomy, the study's findings can inform a more strategic consideration of the aims and objectives of their international HE interactions to be able to better meet their priorities and interests.

9.2   Research design and conceptual frameworks

The data was gathered through 14 semi-structured interviews with leaders and senior managers in four Myanmar HEIs (three public and one private), senior officials in the Myanmar Ministry of Education, and with senior managers in three public UK HEIs that had connections with Myanmar. Other data were obtained through a wide range of formal and non-formal sources, including Myanmar government policy documents, newspaper articles in Myanmar, international development coordination group meeting minutes, policy dialogues and policy briefings.

Two conceptual frameworks were used to understand the issues in the study. The rationales for engaging in international interactions were analysed through Knight's conceptualisation of internationalisation (Knight, 2003) and using Knight and de Wit's typology of rationales for internationalisation (Knight and de Wit, 1999; de Wit, 2002, 2011), more recently updated by Knight (Knight, 2015). This framework provided the breadth needed to capture multi-level rationales for internationalisation, encompassing academic, economic, socio-cultural and political dimensions from institution, national and global perspectives, and enabling strong alignment with the social justice framework utilised.

The application of Fraser's theorising on social justice through parity of participation in the dimensions of redistribution, recognition and representation (Fraser, 2007), with the added dimension of justice with peace through reconciliation (Novelli, Lopes Cardozo, & Smith, 2015), was found to be useful in capturing, analysing and understanding aspects of social justice in the international interactions of Myanmar HEIs. The inclusion of reconciliation shifted the axis of analysis in response to Myanmar's ongoing conflicts and the need to include peacebuilding as an important aspect of social justice in this context. The framework enabled the identification and analysis of the features and complexity of the economic, cultural, political and peace-related dimensions of international HE. It allowed an exploration of global, national and institutional power asymmetries and hierarchical patterns to be identified and examined, encompassing the globalisation of HE, the neoliberal-driven commercialisation of HE internationalisation, the impact of conflict on HE, and colonial and post-colonial hegemonies, revealing how they combine, coalesce and conflict at the intersection point of Myanmar HEIs.

9.3 Main findings

The central question of the study was: "In what ways do emerging international interactions in Myanmar higher education institutions relate to social justice?"

The study found substantial social injustices in the international interactions of the Myanmar HEIs that took part in this study, both in the relationships with their Northern HEI partners, and in relation to wider society in the focus of their activities. These were driven predominantly by the commercial interests of the Northern partners and shaped by external forces associated with the globalisation of HE. While UK HEIs expressed good will and altruism towards the development of Myanmar HE, their activities were framed within an economic logic and conditional on future income streams. These drivers were found to not only hinder social justice in international HE interactions, but also to entrench unequal knowledge and power in favour of the Northern HEI partners and to reproduce dependencies of the public Myanmar HEIs. The study highlights areas that internationalisation can contribute to social justice, but also exposes the dangers and practices that impede greater equity and social justice in international HE interactions.

In addition, the study found that the HE sector in Myanmar has largely been neglected by international development agencies. This implies that the roles, functions and purposes of HE in social justice, peacebuilding and development are unrecognised, unacknowledged or ignored.

In providing an answer to the central research question, three sub-questions were addressed, the findings of which I summarise below.

RQ1: What are the activities and foci of international interactions in Myanmar higher education institutions?

The purpose of this initial question was to produce foundational knowledge on the levels and scope of international interactions in Myanmar's HEIs at a sector level and, more specifically, in the four Myanmar HEI cases in the study, including the extent of support to HE by international agencies.

A review of the existing international interactions of Myanmar HEIs showed that HE in Myanmar has largely been marginalised in the international development discourse and remains at the periphery of education aid. This accords with previous studies documenting the continued neglect of HE in development, despite wide consensus that HE is critical for social and economic development (see World Bank, 2000; Naidoo, 2008). The inclusion of HE in the

SDGs has not influenced this trend in Myanmar. Consequently, HE's roles in social justice in terms of human rights, democracy and peace, sustainable development, critical social and political debate and producing highly skilled human capital (UNESCO, 1998; World Bank, 2000) is narrow, underdeveloped and constrained. Crucially, HE's influence on social structure in Myanmar remains unchallenged by those engaged in international development. Uncontested, Myanmar's highly stratified and elitist HE system may continue to entrench social injustice through perpetuating, legitimising and reinforcing the position of dominant elites in Myanmar society, while hindering progressive social change that could be achieved by enabling social mobility based on widening access and inclusion (see Bourdieu 1996; Brennan and Naidoo 2008).

In the absence of international development programmes, with a few exceptions, notably two Japan-funded projects with technical and medical institutions, the international interactions of the public Myanmar HEIs were formed through uncoordinated, independent approaches by foreign HEIs, resulting in a wide variety of small-scale, ad hoc interactions with low levels of funding, focussed mainly on research, some capacity development in medical science, in disciplines related to natural resources, socio-cultural areas and international relations. Only the private Myanmar HEI in the study appeared to be engaged in commercial TNE for-profit teaching activities with international partners, focussed on business management, engineering, health science and education.

A Scopus database analysis showed Myanmar to have the lowest levels of research publication in Asia in journals covered by Scopus over the last five years. Of these, over 80% were co-authored with international scholars, indicating the dependency of Myanmar scholars upon international collaborative research partnerships to publish their research internationally.

RQ2: What are the rationales and motivations of HEIs in Myanmar to collaborate internationally and of the UK HEIs to collaborate with HEIs in Myanmar, as perceived by senior managers and policy makers?

The study showed there were considerable asymmetries in the motivations and rationales of Myanmar and UK HEIs. For the public Myanmar HEIs, rationales for international collaboration were overwhelmingly in the academic sphere, related to research, publication and capacity development for staff, priorities which were largely not being met. For the private Myanmar HEI, the economic rationale was most important, but also present were academic capacity building rationales. Public Myanmar HEIs and Myanmar government officials reported the

main driver of foreign HEIs to collaborate in Myanmar was access to virgin research sites and data.

For UK HEIs, international interactions in Myanmar were driven strongly by economic rationales, behind which a range of research, socio-cultural, political and altruistic rationales existed. The clear differences in the rationales of the Myanmar public HEIs and those of the UK HEIs, which were predominantly academic and economic, respectively, support the findings of a limited number of studies on North-South HE partnerships (Maringe, Foskett and Woodfield, 2013).

The rationales articulated by Myanmar government officials for international collaboration in HE were founded on human capital logic. At policymaker level, internationalisation, including TNE, was viewed as supporting increased marketisation, competition and deregulation as positive forces for HE reform. These ideas appeared to be insufficiently interrogated and, as scholars have argued, may diminish the social justice and public good functions of HE (see Robertson, 2015; Marginson, 2012; Polster, 2000). Constraints and barriers within Myanmar's current HE system were found to both drive and, in some situations, suppress the academic motivations of Myanmar HEIs for international collaboration.

Finally, reflecting on the asymmetries in the rationales of Myanmar's public HEIs and UK HEIs, the study indicates that Myanmar public HEIs were disadvantaged in their international interactions by the lack of internationalisation strategies, supportive government policies and governance structures conducive to internationalisation.

RQ3: *"What are the implications for social justice within, between and beyond the HEIs?"*

The economic, cultural, political and peacebuilding dimensions of social justice were analysed in the international interactions of Myanmar HEIs, and between UK and Myanmar HEIs[39].

Economic justice through redistribution

The maldistribution of economic resources between Myanmar public HEIs and their Northern partners significantly affected the structure, focus, roles and power balance between collaborating HEIs, hindering parity of participation. The lack of funding and absence of modern analytical equipment in Myanmar's public HEIs restricted the Myanmar researcher

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[39] It is important to restate that the study analysed the interactions of Myanmar HEIs with a range of foreign HEI partners, including, but not confined to, UK HEIs. The UK HEIs in the study, however, were analysed in terms of their international engagement only with Myanmar HEIs.

mainly to the role of data collector, and the Northern researcher as the organiser of data, theoriser, and holder of the IPR. The study is striking in its modern-day exemplification of colonial roles of researchers (see Hountondji, 1990; Connell, 2016) and there were clear indications that contemporary international HE partnerships in Myanmar were reproducing the dependencies of an earlier age. Contradictions in the ideology of international partnerships were apparent in highly inequitable MOUs, severely limiting parity of participation.

Economic justice through redistribution analysis surfaced social justice issues related to TNE. UK HEIs framed their social justice and public good activities in Myanmar within a revenue-seeking logic, mainly related to TNE business development, creating a narrative that enabled UK HEI senior managers to co-opt their public good activities into market-driven strategies. The reverse was also found, whereby market-driven, TNE strategies were justified through a public good narrative. The research findings indicate that the global influences driving UK HEIs and their internal new public management (NPM) structures compel them to behave more as market-driven businesses than as social and cultural institutions, positing their international interactions with Myanmar HEIs at an intersection where the public good and commercialisation functions of the UK HEIs coexist, overlap and merge, enabling a logic to develop that attempts to reconcile fundamentally conflicting narratives of internationalisation for profit in the poor, highly unequal, conflict-affected socio-economic context of Myanmar.

The study provided evidence that while the TNE activities of the private Myanmar HEI in partnership with foreign HEIs was found to be duplicating, and therefore competing with, public sector courses, as noted in other country contexts, TNE was also expanding the range of HE by providing specialist niche courses in key areas that were not otherwise available. It was notable that the latter was driven by the market strategies of the Myanmar HEI. The study indicated that Myanmar policymakers did not appear to be aware of the potential negative consequences of the privatisation of HE, particularly on the public HE system and on equity and access.

Cultural justice through recognition

Cultural justice was most evident in the strong recognition of Myanmar's cultures and languages in the topic focus of international interactions in Myanmar. These were driven by foreign HEI and funder interests, reportedly linked both to the growth in international business in Myanmar and by gaps in the academic literature in these areas. However, cultural *in*justice was also evident in this situation, in the non-recognition of Myanmar researchers' interests,

confining them to the local, and inadvertently isolating them from a wider and more international research frame.

Injustice was also revealed in the exclusion of Myanmar researchers from the design, interpretation and theorising of joint research, a situation also connected with economic maldistribution. This raises the danger of epistemological subordination of Myanmar researchers and accords with previous research showing continued Northern epistemological domination and the marginalisation of knowledge systems and ways of knowing in the global South, with important global social justice implications.

One of the starkest areas of cultural injustice was related to the status, position and expertise of collaborators, with most Myanmar cases reporting non-recognition by, and non-parity with, their Northern partners. However, two UK HEIs in the study cited a lack of trained and experienced academics in Myanmar as a barrier to parity of participation, and while all three UK HEIs in the study expressed the desire to help develop capacity in Myanmar HEIs, the lack of development funding and poor prospects for return on investment prevented them from doing so.

Finally, cultural injustice in internationalisation was seen at the national level in Myanmar in the exclusion of Myanmar HEIs located in ethnic and conflict-affected areas from international interactions. The focus of foreign HEIs on the main urban centres of Yangon and Mandalay, in social justice terms, could be said to be reinforcing and reproducing the dominance and recognition of elites in ethnic, religious and wealth terms in Myanmar society, and increasing the quality gap and research output between HEIs in Myanmar at the urban centre and those on the rural periphery, which cater to under-represented and marginalised religious and ethnic groups. This inequality in recognition also has implications for the fourth dimension in the analytical framework, justice with peace.

Political justice through representation

Political injustice for Myanmar HEIs was present in most cases of international collaboration, manifested through unequal decision-making in research topic and design, and connected with the unequal epistemological framing of research, which were linked to the existence of cultural and economic injustice discussed above. Myanmar government officials appeared not to be cognizant of the imbalance of power in decision-making at the institutional level that privileged Northern HEIs over their Myanmar counterparts.

The study showed some, although limited, evidence of UK HEIs' attempts to lessen power asymmetries in the governance and decision-making in their joint activities by using their representational advantage with the Myanmar government to advocate for reforms and support for international activities. Noted by a UK HEI was an example of the lack of political agency of HE with the international development community.

Peacebuilding justice through reconciliation

The potential of international collaboration in HE in Myanmar to contribute to social justice through reconciliation is not well understood and is largely being overlooked.

There appeared to be none, or very limited, international collaboration with Myanmar universities located in predominantly ethnic or conflict-affected areas, a dimension of injustice linked with cultural injustice. This could be argued to be entrenching ethnic, religious and economic divides at the level of the student and the institution, excluding them from the benefits that internationalisation can bring to peacebuilding objectives, including research and knowledge production, curriculum development and capacity building, in addition to increased recognition, representation and redistribution.

A small number of peace-related international activities were found, however, in the Myanmar HEIs not located in conflict-affected areas, but in the urban centres of Yangon and Mandalay. These included collaborations in law and justice, social inclusion, community development, journalism, and intercultural understanding. None appeared to be specifically supporting the development of critical thinking or supporting Myanmar HEIs as spaces for critical enquiry and debate, a vital role of HE in social transformation and peacebuilding.

The peacebuilding functions of universities appeared to be restricted or unrecognised by the Myanmar government and HEIs. The Myanmar government emphasised the main peacebuilding contribution of universities lay in human capital production and economic development, reflecting liberal peace ideology and a strategy to divert students away from social activism towards employability. This aligns to the dominant economic rationales of internationalisation identified in UK HEIs, reinforcing this view. The non-recognition of HE in peacebuilding and conflict by the international development agencies involved in the peace process in Myanmar can be seen to be both missing opportunities for its potential contribution to peacebuilding and not addressing the grievances and harms that HE may be supporting.

9.4   Implications of the study and recommendations

To advance the field of social justice and peacebuilding in the internationalisation of HE, I now present some methodological, theoretical and practical implications and recommendations drawn from the conclusions of the study.

Methodological implications

The experience of designing and conducting this research provides an opportunity to reflect on the methodology used.

The study used a critical realist approach to qualitative research. In-depth elite interviews were effective in capturing deep, rich and nuanced data of the perceptions, experiences and perspectives of senior managers and policy makers, and the criticality allowed me to problematise internationalisation as a normative, beneficial process, and explicitly engage with, and expose, issues and inequalities relating to social justice. At the same time, I was able to critically reflect on my own positionality in the research.

My choice of methodological approach, based in part on my position as the Education Director of the British Council in Myanmar and having built professional relationships with high level HE stakeholders, enabled me to conduct research and gain insights into my field of study that would otherwise be difficult. The decision to conduct one-to-one interviews in English had advantages and disadvantages, balancing a more personal and private conversation at lower levels of English proficiency, with less privacy and anonymity by employing a Myanmar interlocutor either to conduct the interviews in the Myanmar language or to be present as a support during the interviews. On reflection, in this case, I believe my decision to use the former approach of a private interview in English was the most appropriate, given the degree of openness of opinion given in the interviews, which may have been jeopardised by using a Myanmar interlocutor and outweighed the issues of linguistic fluency. It is important, however, to acknowledge the substantial ethical dilemmas related to trust, career security, repercussions and other consequences that were particularly heightened in Myanmar for interviewees, taking into consideration the historical proximity in Myanmar to authoritarian rule and the personal risks for Myanmar interviewees in discussing the politically sensitive area of social justice. Furthermore, it must also be acknowledged that my work position, culture, gender, national identity and research purpose were also influential in the interviews.

The complex and multidimensional issues of social justice required a deep knowledge of context to examine and understand cultural and historical references and the contemporary

situation of HE in Myanmar, largely shaped as it is by its colonial history and conflict. This thesis attempted to gain a depth of insight and understanding of the specific context of international interactions of Myanmar and UK HEIs through employing a multiple case study approach. However, I recognise that the small number of cases of this approach limits and constrains the generalisability of the findings. Yet, while broad generalisations are not claimed, by taking a critical realist approach and situating the case study HEIs within the wider, global phenomena and structures affecting HE, this allowed a 'window' onto these larger systems which more extensive and 'generalisable' studies may ignore (Sayer, 2000).

My experience in conducting this study surfaced several implications for future research approaches in repressive, authoritarian and conflict-affected contexts in related fields and leads me to highlight four key methodological recommendations.

Firstly, establishing trust with the participants was very important. Fear of being identified as a critic of the government in Myanmar required a robust ethical framework, particularly in terms of anonymity, but also in being transparent about the purpose of the research. It is recommended that time is spent establishing human relationships, clear lines of formal permissions are sought through signed letters at the most senior levels, as well as utilising informal introductions by mutually trusted individuals and organisations.

Secondly, conflict has complex impacts and influences on HE. It was important prior to the interviews to have in-depth contextual knowledge of the conflict and post-conflict setting to understand interviewees' references and associations, particularly in terms of existing power hierarchies and cultural influences. It also proved critical to check understanding of issues after interviews with informed Myanmar advisers, while also maintaining anonymity.

Thirdly, in Myanmar little published research and information on HE was available. Use of unpublished data and sources of information were necessary, which not only required establishing relationships and gaining access to organisations and individuals in the contextual setting, but it was also important to acknowledge the informal nature of the sources if information could not be verified by other means.

Fourthly, the limitations of the generalisability of findings points to the need to utilise other research approaches from different perspectives and in a wider range of settings to expand and build a more comprehensive knowledge of the field of social justice in internationalisation in related contexts.

Theoretical implications

Fraser's theoretical model (Fraser, 2007) and its adaptation to include justice with peace (Novelli, Cardozo and Smith, 2015) enabled an expansive but deep and detailed global, national, local and institutional critique of internationalisation of Myanmar HEIs in terms of social justice, and by identifying the issues and barriers to economic, cultural, political and peacebuilding parity of participation, challenged the inequalities in international structures and arrangements. During the analysis, however, it was noticeable that the 4R framework tended to segregate aspects of social justice, which were, in many cases, closely intertwined. Further work on identifying and analysing the intersections between the 'Rs' could provide deeper insights into thematic inequalities in internationalisation.

Reflecting on the study findings, it may be enlightening to examine similar contexts through alternative social justice conceptual frameworks to expand on and contribute further knowledge to the field of internationalisation and social justice. In Myanmar's conflict-affected context and history, it may be useful to consider the capabilities approach to social justice (Walker, 2006; Sen, 2009; Nussbaum, 2011). A capability lens would enable a differently inflected examination of social justice by taking into account the capabilities of Myanmar and UK HEIs to capitalise on or use international HE collaboration for each partner's benefit. While the present research uncovered unequal conversion of opportunity between the two partners, a capabilities approach may illuminate an understanding of social justice in terms of what is needed to successfully convert opportunities into successful functionings as a researcher and an HEI, from the different capability standpoints of the HE partners. Furthermore, through an analysis rooted in notions of wellbeing and based on researcher- and student-driven ideas of an HE system that can do and be what they value themselves, embedded in local cultural and social contexts, rather than a universal global HE imaginary, a capabilities-informed framework may shed light and establish a way of thinking of HE that could contest current global hegemonic structures.

Recommendations for policy and practice

An aim of this study was to contribute to the discourse on future international collaboration between Myanmar HEIs and their international partners, and inform policy considerations in Myanmar on the role of higher education in social justice, peacebuilding and development. The recommendations and suggestions below, drawn from the main findings of this study, should be considered in the spirit of a contribution to alternative approaches and possible actions, and will be dependent on the changing policy contexts and status of individual HEIs.

For institutions/researchers

For both Myanmar and foreign HEIs:

1. Awareness of the hidden reproduction of injustices in North-South HEI interactions can ameliorate arrangements that perpetuate them. Explicitly and jointly defining roles and arrangements for each participating HEI can help surface issues and challenges, avoid rendering partners voiceless, and contribute to supporting epistemological equity. Capacity development for future equity of participation is vital to interrupt the cycle of global knowledge hegemony and structural power imbalances. By adopting a social justice framework to assess international interactions, injustices can be identified and challenged, and conflicting interests and elitist practices can be confronted.

2. Recognising and assessing asymmetries in rationales, capabilities and resources for international collaboration between Myanmar HEIs and their international (non-Myanmar) partners is important in establishing arrangements and activities that are fair and of benefit to both partners. A deeper understanding of institutional and societal contexts, including time, equipment, information, financial resources, and cultural and political enablers and barriers will enable more equitable international partnerships that respond to societal needs, including peacebuilding. Care needs to be taken that by focussing on national agendas, Myanmar researchers are not excluded from international knowledge contexts.

3. Responding to Myanmar's conflict-affected context and Myanmar HEIs' conflict-related history can provide opportunities through international collaboration to contribute to peacebuilding and long-term progressive social change in Myanmar, not only in the topics chosen for international interactions, including research and curriculum development, but also in developing universities as spaces for critical thought and strengthening the public good functions of universities.

4. MOUs for international collaboration need to reflect the different profiles, resources and capabilities of the HEIs involved and designed to be beneficial for an asymmetric partnership. In research partnerships, IPR and publication arrangements need to be explicit and support Myanmar's recognition towards, and contribution to, global knowledge production.

For Myanmar HEIs:

5.   The absence of international strategies in Myanmar public institutions can place them in a subordinate position within their international interactions. It would benefit Myanmar HEIs to develop focussed international strategies that help them identify, set out and communicate their priorities for international collaboration, understand their attributes, strengths and needs, and to actively seek out partners that are interested in collaborating in these areas, or form the basis of discussion with partners that approach them. This will enable more equitable and sustainable international partnerships for the future.

For Myanmar policy-makers

6.   International collaboration in the National Education Strategic Plan (NESP) provides a good starting point for Myanmar HEIs to engage internationally. The research findings suggest there is a need for clear policies and processes that incentivise, guide and facilitate Myanmar and foreign HEIs to collaborate in priority areas and steer international interactions towards areas that benefit development and social transformation in Myanmar. Without these, international collaboration, as this study shows, may not benefit Myanmar HEIs and Myanmar as much as they could, particularly in research analysis and publication. Myanmar researchers require resources and structural mechanisms that would enable them to participate as equals in international collaboration in research design, analysis, recognition through authorship and publication and undertaking overseas research visits for collaboration and data analysis, and for knowledge dissemination events.

7.   HE is central to economic and social transformation. Considering HE solely in terms of human capital development for economic growth, while important, may limit a vital opportunity for HE in societal transformation and peacebuilding. There has been little attempt at leveraging international collaboration in HE for peacebuilding purposes, not only in Myanmar, but elsewhere. Raising awareness with internal stakeholders and external donor agencies of the role of HE in peacebuilding strategies in a range of areas, including inclusion policies, research, teaching and skills development, can be a vital aspect of sustainable development.

8.   Policies need to be considered that address both the advantages and dangers posed by the commercialisation of HE, including TNE, to steer private HE in a direction that

benefits both students and national development plans. Left to market forces in the context of inadequate development funding, it is likely that the focus of international HEIs will be drawn to providing courses for short-term profit to the exclusion of high cost courses, research and capacity development. This may endanger the ability of the HE system in Myanmar to contribute to longer-term social and economic goals and to most effectively deliver sustainable, high quality HE for the wider purposes of society. While there can be clear benefits from TNE, previous studies show the private for-profit sector can also have detrimental effects, not only on equity, but also on the long-term viability and reputation of the public HE system if unchecked, in some cases taking students away from the public sector by duplicating courses in the private sector, which do not have the capacity or funding to compete, drawing academics away from public HEIs through higher salaries, and pushing research onto the back seat. Learning from the experience of other governments of the privatisation of HE and how to leverage TNE for national benefit will be helpful in formulating sustainable policies that support both the private and public sectors in the longer term.

9.   Encouraging international collaboration in Myanmar HEIs located outside the main urban centres, particularly in rural and conflict-affected areas, could contribute to peacebuilding and equity agendas, and spread the benefits of internationalisation more evenly across Myanmar.

For international development agencies, donors and bilateral organisations

10.   The integration of HE in development and peacebuilding strategies and programmes in Myanmar can make important sustainable contributions to long-term development and peace. Conversely, studies show that the neglect of HE can entrench the long-term domination of elites, fuel grievance by excluded communities, suppress critical thinking, openness and growth of national intellectual capital, result in persistent skills shortages, and a continued dependency on foreign aid and expertise. Without a functioning HE system, Myanmar's opportunities for self-determination, cultural and context-driven development are hindered.

11.   Leaving HE to the vagaries of the market can exacerbate inequality, skew the profile of skills production that do not necessarily correspond to employability, development and social needs. Funding of the public system is required, particularly by international development agencies and bilateral programmes, to sustain and develop the crucial social justice functions of universities and support key sectors (such as those

established by Japan). Universities are vital institutions that need rebuilding before market liberalisation, otherwise they risk further instability, increased public grievance and failure to adapt. International support to Myanmar HE is required concurrently with basic education support, not left until later when a malfunctioning HE system could jeopardise the sustainability of development gains.

12.   All the 17 SDGs are predicated on a functioning, quality HE system, from climate action, health and wellbeing to peace and justice, but the crucial role of HE is not explicitly stated nor adequately recognised in the SDGs. These necessary functions will not be achieved solely through providing HE scholarships. HE needs to be included across development and peacebuilding agendas and sufficient expertise and knowledge of HE in development built.

13.   Funded international HE collaboration can leverage global knowledge, networks and expertise through partnerships with foreign HEIs to provide a route to enable Myanmar's HEIs to contribute to development, peacebuilding and sustainable quality education. In this, care needs to be taken that the funding conditions and arrangements of international HE programmes enable equity between HE partners.

9.5   Contribution of the study

Early in the study, it became clear that aspects of my topic had received little research attention. The study was therefore able to contribute to knowledge in several ways.

Knowledge contribution

While there are a limited number of studies that apply Fraser's concept of social justice to aspects of HE, particularly in access and equity of outcomes (see, for instance, Bozalek and Boughey, 2012; Keddie, 2012b, 2012a), no other study, as far as I am aware, has examined HE international partnerships using Fraser's theoretical framework of social justice. Although a conceptual framework of peace with social justice, or the 4Rs, based on Fraser's work, has been developed by Novelli, Lopes Cardozo and Smith (2015) and applied to basic education in conflict-affected contexts, including Myanmar, this is the first study that adapts the 4R framework for an analysis of HE using themes established from the literature on peacebuilding in education and the role of HE in conflict recovery.

Fraser's social justice and Knight and de Wit's internationalisation rationales frameworks together enable an interrogation of external, global forces affecting HE as well as the internal,

institution-to-institution relationships, exposing power imbalances and hierarchies at global and local levels. This study identifies the limitations and inclusiveness of this theoretical approach and presents it a constructive way to imagine socially just partnerships and interactions in international higher education within three different socio-spacial intersections: at institution level between Myanmar HEIs and their international partners; at national level between the activities of international HE partnerships and wider society in Myanmar; and of Myanmar HEIs' encounters with the global context of HE commercialisation, the edifice of international development aid, and global knowledge production and ownership in a knowledge economy driven by neoliberal orthodoxy.

The study, based on Novelli, Lopes Cardozo and Smith's (2015) work, makes an original contribution to the field of conflict and peacebuilding in theorising the role of HE in peacebuilding as a dimension of social justice in international HE partnerships.

Lastly, this is the first study, as far as I am aware, that analyses the internationalisation of HE in a conflict-affected context. While a few studies have examined the role of HE in peacebuilding and reconciliation (see Milton and Barakat, 2015, for example), none that I have found has focussed specifically on the role of internationalisation of HE in a particular country context for these purposes.

Methodological contribution

The distinctiveness of the research design lies in the use of the unusual high-level access that I had to leaders, senior managers and policy makers in Myanmar HE, education directors of international and bilateral development agencies through my participation in national-level education policy development working groups in Myanmar, and senior managers in UK HEIs, due to my work position and relationships in HE developed over the three years I was based in Myanmar working for the British Council. This enabled me to design a research approach that drew on a rich combination of in-depth interviews with key high level HE stakeholders, combined with experience and access to working documents on Myanmar HE policy and strategic plans. No other studies in Myanmar HE have so far utilised elite interviews at national, international and institutional level to illuminate an in-depth picture of the intersections between Myanmar HE, social justice and internationalisation. This methodological approach allowed me to gather data that enabled a different contribution to understanding international interactions.

Furthermore, adopting a critical realism ontology in a qualitative approach to multiple in-depth case studies allowed me to interrogate, deconstruct and critique North-South HEI interactions through the social structures and power asymmetries between them and the different positions they occupied historically and in the context of the globalisation of HE. The criticality of this approach has enabled, as far as I am aware, one of the first attempts in the context of Myanmar HE to examine and problematise internationalisation as a wholly normative, beneficial process, and explicitly engage with, and expose, issues and inequalities relating to colonial and post-colonial thought, notions of global public good, and epistemological and knowledge hegemony at the intersection of international HE partnerships.

9.6 Areas for further research

The study's findings and limitations revealed areas that remain understudied. Firstly, as mentioned previously, the single country, multiple case study approach of this study, while providing deeper insight into the international interactions of Myanmar HEIs, limited the generalisability of findings. It would be useful to gain further understanding of social justice in HE internationalisation in other conflict-affected settings so that findings can be compared, contextual differences examined and broad generalisations identified.

Secondly, further examination is required on how to protect HE systems from the more detrimental effects of internationalisation in contexts where regulation is still weak and systems underdeveloped. This would enable discussion on how to steer internationalisation using policy levers towards contributing to HE quality and equity, exploring the roles of public and private provision and supporting HEIs to perform public good functions that are not so easily monetised or commodified. This would involve interrogating the relationship between public and private providers, and researching the socio-cultural and economic stratification of students in these contexts.

Thirdly, further examination and a more vigorous debate is needed on the logics behind, and the aid architecture supporting, the continued marginalisation of HE in development and peacebuilding by international development agencies, that, as this study indicates, persists in spite of encouraging rhetoric on the essential role of HE in social and economic development. The study has highlighted a need for further, up-to-date research in the field of international development on the current influences and non-inclusion of HE in development, and the short and longer-term consequences of this on HE systems and wider soceiety in conflict-affected, low-income and transitional societies, particularly in terms of democracy, fragility and social

justice. Connected with this, the findings of this study provide only limited insight into the rationales for or against support to HE and the role of internationalisation from the perspective of international development agencies, donors and bilateral organisations in Myanmar. A clearer picture of these views would allow a deeper understanding of the logics and causes of the continued neglect of HE in development and peacebuilding. From my interactions with the international development community in Myanmar and other countries, the lack of discourse and compelling evidence connecting HE with these issues may be part of the reason why HE continues to be marginalised in these contexts. Stimulating a more informed and evidence-based discourse on the wider role of HE, in which social injustice is either exacerbated or unaddressed, or equity strengthened, and the roles of internationalisation in these situations, would, I believe, contribute to future opportunities for HE to contribute to social justice.

Fourthly, equity issues in TNE raised by this study and by other scholars warrants further attention. Very few previous studies and limited discourse in the field of HE internationalisation have focussed on equity of access outside the national borders of the countries that provide TNE and receive international students. Further empirical research is needed on the impact of TNE on low-income countries, also noted by other scholars (Naidoo, 2007; McNamara Economic Research, 2014), including issues of social justice at global and local levels and its effect on public HE systems.

Fifthly, the study suggests that while there is a growing body of research on global knowledge hegemonies (see Robertson, 2009; Connell, 2016; de Sousa Santos, 2016), further interrogation and discussion is needed within the international HEI community on the consequences of inequitable international research partnerships, given the different motivations and interests of the partners involved (see also Gutierrez, 2008; Robertson and Verger, 2008; Koehn, 2012; Maringe, Foskett and Woodfield, 2013), including the epistemological subordination of researchers in the global South, and the resulting loss to global knowledge systems. Inclusion of these issues within mainstream internationalisation discourses may provide solutions and approaches to address unequal knowledge structures, interrupt the unbalanced global circulation of knowledge production, provide more equitable recognition and distribution of knowledge ownership, and reduce the deficits and inequalities that this study has, in the context of Myanmar, surfaced in international HE partnerships.

Finally, building on the attempt in this study of using Fraser's concept of social justice, alternative social justice frameworks, including Sen's capabilities approach, to examine and

guide international HE partnerships could be developed which are relevant and appropriate for the distinctive social and cultural conditions of HEIs in conflict-affected contexts, to encourage and support ethical internationalisation towards contributing to a more peaceful and just society, globally and locally.

9.7   Reflections on research journey

This study has taken me on an enlightening and complex journey along which I have engaged with multiple disciplines, conceptual frameworks, and learned about social justice, conflict and internationalisation in higher education through different perspectives, which have deepened my understanding and widened my views.

One of the first challenges I encountered was that not only had little scholarly attention been given to HE in Myanmar, but that the intersections between the fields of international higher education, social justice and conflict were under-researched and that there was a lack of research papers which comprehensively addressed the theme of this study. This led me to expand my approach to encompass inter-connected disciplines, using those as a departure point through which the role of higher education in social justice could be analysed. This benefited the study by allowing me to draw across rich veins of thought and research, but also presented the considerable challenge of drawing together disparate disciplines into a distinct and relevant analysis. Throughout this study, I have also been challenged by the lack of empirical data. Where there was insufficient research literature in specific areas, particularly regarding the Myanmar context, I have drawn on non-formal sources of information provided through my work and contacts in Myanmar and in the UK, and development and media reports. As a result, I have been aware of the difficulty of drawing definitive conclusions in some aspects of the study, and, as I have outlined above, revealed considerable gaps in the literature.

An associated challenge relates to the geographical and contextual unevenness of existing studies. These ranged from single country studies, institution specific case studies, broad-based global studies, to those located in developed, non-conflict-affected countries. Again, I was conscious of the challenge and limitations this presented in terms of their relevance and importance to the research questions, which is reflected in my literature review and analysis. The imbalance of existing research also speaks to one of the findings of this study, namely the uneven terrain of global knowledge production.

My original motivations for conducting this study while working in education in Myanmar was a concern about, and a need to understand the reasons why, HE was conspicuously absent from international development discussions in Myanmar, remained critically underfunded, and its role in societal transformation and peacebuilding unrecognised, while at the same time, experiencing increasing interest by foreign HEIs. While this study has increased my understanding of the situation of HE in Myanmar and answered some of my questions, the deep connections to underlying historical harms, an enduring architecture of exploitation and hegemony, and the influence of formidable global forces have raised many more. The experience of conducting this study and my learning from it has made me realise that in international HE and development, some questions don't often get asked and therefore remain invisible and uncontested.

9.8 Final thoughts

Overall, the study findings show that in their encounters with internationalisation, Myanmar HEIs are experiencing social injustice in their HE partnerships. In the absence of international development support, the unquestioned ideologies of market liberalisation are acting as obstacles to ethical HE partnerships, usurping the good will of international HEIs to support Myanmar HEIs. Through their activities and arrangements, some international encounters appear to be manifesting features of re-colonisation. While international collaboration in HE can't solve all the inequalities within and beyond the institution in conflict-affected contexts, this study invites international HE institutions to rethink their approach to international interactions in these contexts and strive not to reproduce and reinforce them.

Ending in a spirit of optimism, by revealing structural, cultural and epistemic inequalities in international interactions, the barriers to parity of participation can be dismantled, and by understanding some of the underlying processes that drive international HE, it may be possible for international HE to contribute further towards positive social change. International HE partnerships have the potential leverage and opportunities to construct a different, socially just role for HE that can start to rebalance global power and knowledge asymmetries and contribute to equity and long-term peace in low-income, conflict-affected contexts.

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11 Appendices

11.1 Appendix 1: Search strategy for literature review

I adopted a multidisciplinary approach to the review of the literature, which allowed me to examine a range of empirical and theoretical perspectives to adequately cover the complexity and multidimensionality of my subject and research questions. It became clear early on that the context of HE in Myanmar required an understanding of the intersecting fields of HE and development, social justice, peacebuilding and internationalisation, and that while there are distinct bodies of literature in some of these areas (e.g. HE and internationalisation), their interconnectivities were under-researched, evidenced by the low level of results obtained through direct searches of databases, particularly when searches were conducted through the starting point of higher education. Therefore, I decided to approach the literature review through the related themes and topics, searching within those for connections and references *towards* higher education.

This interconnected approach is described in the following diagram:
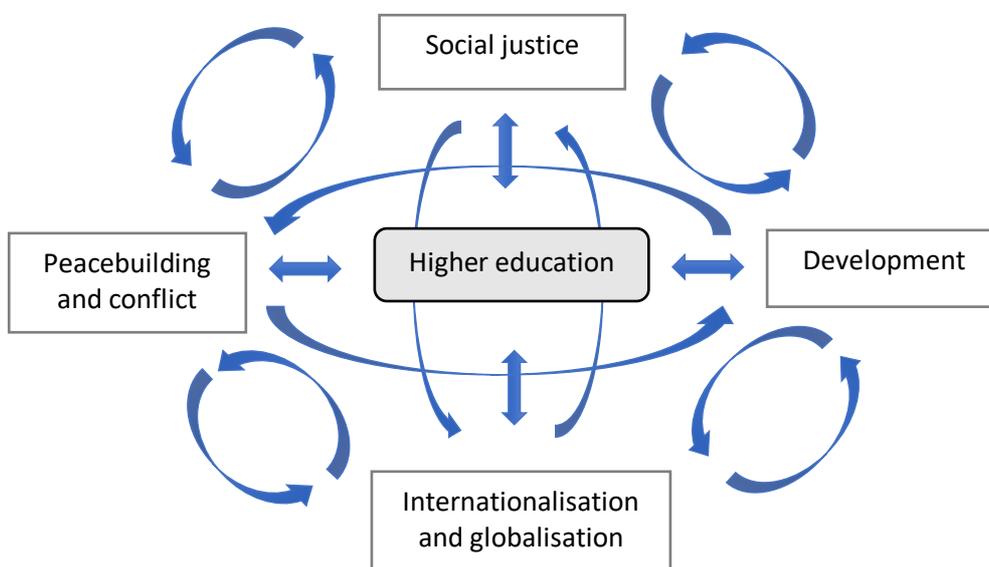
Figure 8: Interconnected thematic approach to a review of the literature

An inter- and multi-disciplinary approach is beneficial in enabling the capture of wider social factors and influences, particularly important in education (Tikly, 2011; Robeyns 2006; Walker 2006), and examining problems through multiple dimensions and sources. Social justice theories, for example, can have their roots in "feminist studies, sociology, history, disability

studies, critical pedagogy, postcolonial studies, globalization, and ethnic studies"(Patton, Shahjahan and Osei-Kofi, 2010, p267), aspects of which intersect with development, peacebuilding and internationalisation. My approach, therefore, attempted to engage with and make use of the multidisciplinary rich picture that my research topic presented.

My survey of the literature targeted three types of documentation: articles and reports (academic and non-academic, the latter mainly by practitioners, aid agencies, Ministries of Education and funders), media reports and websites. In some specific areas, such as the fields of HE in Myanmar, and HE in conflict and peacebuilding, there was a paucity of academic studies, and much of the available knowledge and information is reported from the field or through the media. Most of the literature, where it does exist, was produced by Western researchers and in English, possibly highlighting a gap in the accessibility or production of literature in this field in other geographical and cultural domains. I was aware of these limitations and uneven distribution, and sought to discover reports, media and literature produced by writers and researchers from other countries, particularly those affected by conflict, through snowballing references, cited sources and through professional connections in my work.

My survey started with a search of Scopus, ERIC, JSTOR, Web of Science and Dissertation Abstracts databases, and also Google's advanced search tool and Google Scholar using combinations of the terms higher education, universities, social justice, conflict, development, peacebuilding, internationalisation (etc). I also searched the databases for higher education, development, internationalisation and peacebuilding in specific countries that have experienced, or are experiencing conflict. I drew from non-academic reports, online articles and other grey literature using the same set of search criteria. Careful attention was paid to sources and articles that could be biased towards the authors' own agendas, particularly those found in political and social media, however, it was not always easy to discern, and was therefore used circumspectly where this type of reference has been used, particularly with respect to some sources used for Myanmar.

Another issue worth noting was that there was considerable segregation of the literature, possibly due to its specific contextual nature and the multidisciplinary approach, which posed challenges in analysis in terms of the relationship between evidence, results, process and causality. This has also been noted by researchers in related fields, for example, by Brennan, Durazzi and Sene (2013) in their review of the literature analysing the benefits of higher education.

I coded the content of the literature through descriptive categories under themes and sub-themes connected with the research questions, which progressively developed as the literature was surveyed. This coded approach allowed me to connect issues, concepts, data and knowledge from different types of sources and across research disciplines. Finally, I kept a researcher diary to record my reflections on the various directions I explored and emerging research ideas for the future.

11.2 Appendix 2: Synthesis of peacebuilding and social justice actions by HEIs

The following table presents a summary based on a synthesis of the literature on the role of education and higher education, both normative and actual, in development, peacebuilding and social justice in the context of conflict.

Table 11: Roles of education and HE in development, peacebuilding and social justice in conflict-affected contexts

Stage of conflict	Higher education activities
During conflict	Protection of students, academics, university staff and facilities Role of the international HE sector in maintaining links, providing places for academics and students outside the conflict zone Use of education to deliver psycho-social trauma support and sense of stability Provision of other modes of study (e.g. by distance) Protecting sources of cultural knowledge
Immediate post-war stage	Re-integration of ex-combatants Providing fair access through widening participation and increased access as part of DDR strategies University reconstruction and refurbishment Provision of psycho-social trauma support Peace education initiatives Training of high skilled professionals for essential social service delivery and administration
Medium-term post-conflict stage	System strengthening: • Higher education reform with a focus on strengthening autonomy, improving quality, interconnection with regional/global systems, addressing inequalities in primary and secondary education, capacity building in government ministries. University governance: • Strengthening autonomy and resilience;

| | Adopting/amending leadership and power distribution to reflect an inclusive, socially cohesive governance structure in the university; include civil society on boards Adopting an open and democratic procedure for governance of the university Responding to the conflict through admissions procedures Establishing the university as a free and independent space for critical discourse
Research:
Aligning and contributing research agendas with local/regional social and economic development needs (equity, agriculture, health, law, etc); community-led research approaches
Documenting, researching and analysing the causes and effects of the conflict on society
Linking HEIs with industry
Teaching:
New courses aligned to local and national professional needs (development-related, fair and sustainable use of natural resources)
Teacher training for basic education
New courses on conflict resolution, peace studies; integrating learning with an understanding of the conflict, peace process, human rights
Amending/writing new history courses to reflect, analyse and acknowledge causes and results of the conflict
Specific assistance to students, staff, academics and community, e.g. psychosocial training and assistance, law clinics, medical stations
Fostering citizenship and social cohesion within the university
Offering lifelong learning opportunities for people in the community affected by the conflict
Service/outreach: Specific services to the community through the university: medical, psychosocial counselling, etc Student and faculty engagement in development-related research and projects Putting the facilities of a university for the use of the community Becoming the knowledge repository and 'guardian' of local culture, language and customs – helping their revival after a conflict. |

	• Changing social relations between different groups of people for the better Policy: • Advisers to the government through research using intellectual tools by participating in think tanks, government advisory committees; bringing truth to power.

Sources: Compiled from: Mohamed et al., 2008; SANDOLE, 1997; Mannan and Nukuitu, 1997; Brennan, King and Lebeau, 2004b; Ndikumana, 2005; Buckland, 2005; Hayman, 2007; Harris, 2010; den Boer and van der Borgh, 2011; McLean Hilker, 2011b; Babyesiza, 2012; Johnson, 2013; Pacheco and Johnson, 2014; Milton and Barakat, 2016; Pherali and Lewis, 2019

11.3 Appendix 3: Mapping of UK-Myanmar collaboration in HE

Table 12: Mapping of currently known UK-Myanmar collaboration in higher education (anonymised):

UK university	Focus of collaboration with Myanmar institutions
1	Curriculum development with the Department of Journalism, scholarships, engagement in UK-Myanmar policy dialogues
2	Capacity building in inclusive education TNE: HND top up degrees in engineering and business management
3	Research and teaching collaboration in geosciences (oil and gas), funded by UK government Prosperity Fund Student recruitment in Myanmar through Malaysia campus
4	ERASMUS+ capacity building grant in social innovation
5	Establishing e-libraries in 20+ universities in Myanmar, including training and support (project now established through an independent charity)
6	Curriculum development in Law faculty, sending undergraduates to conduct English language summer schools at Yangon university, research in geosciences (part of UK consortium), training for MPs and leaders, exploring research opportunities in environment-related disciplines
Across a range of over 20 UK universities	Actively attending student recruitment fairs in Myanmar over last 2 years, seeking international student recruitment, partnership opportunities for TNE, and, in some cases, wider institutional collaboration

11.4 Appendix 4: Myanmar Rector contact/invitation letter

University of Sussex
Sussex House
Brighton
BN1 9RH
U.K.
26 November 2016

To: ……………………….……….., University of ……………………..…………..,

Re: Research project on international partnerships between Myanmar and UK universities

Dear

I hope you are well. In addition to my work at the British Council, I am also doing my doctorate at the University of Sussex, UK. For my research, I am studying how international partnerships between universities in Myanmar and the UK benefit both and relate to the economic and social development of Myanmar. I hope that the findings of this study will help to inform future international partnerships with Myanmar's universities, and to understand better how they can contribute to Myanmar's development and social justice priorities. The Minister of Education, Professor Myo Thein Gyi, has given me permission to do this research and to contact you.

I would like your permission to carry out this research with your university. I would like to interview you, and one other colleague from your university (pro-rector and/or senior professor who are involved in international partnerships). I will be asking about the reasons, aims and motivations for international collaboration with the UK.

This study has been approved by the Social Sciences Cluster Research Ethics Committee (C-REC) at the University of Sussex.

The participation of all interviewees is completely voluntary. I will take steps to protect anonymity and confidentiality. I will not mention the names of interviewees or their position or institution in my thesis.

Please find attached an information sheet about the research.

I will contact you by email to follow up on this letter. If you need any further information, I am very happy to discuss the research with you (my number is 0942 1053 942, lynne.heslop@britishcouncil.org), or you can also contact my research supervisor at the University of Sussex: Professor Mario Novelli (+44 12 7367 8639, m.novelli@sussex.ac.uk).

Thank you for taking the time to read the information and letter. I look forward to hearing from you about the permission to go ahead with my research.

Yours sincerely,

Lynne Heslop
Doctoral Candidate (and Director Education at the British Council)

11.5 Appendix 5: Interview consent form

Project title: Higher education, social justice and development: emerging roles for international partnerships in Myanmar

Project Approval Reference: ER/LH279/1

You should feel free to ask the researcher if you have any questions about this consent form or if you have other questions about the study. Please take the time to read this form carefully before signing. You can ask for new information at any time during the study. You will be given a copy of the signed form to keep.

I agree to take part in this study. The study has been explained to me and I have read and understood the Information Sheet, which I may keep for my records. I have had the opportunity to ask questions which have been answered by the researcher.	Yes ____ No ____
I understand that agreeing to participate in this study means that I am willing to: • Participate in a one-on-one interview with the researcher • Allow the interview to be audio-recorded • Be available if the researcher has other questions after the interview	Yes ____ No ____
I understand that any information I share is anonymous and private, and that my name and personal identifying information will not be included in the research reports. I understand that the researcher will keep my information confidential, except if required by law.	Yes ____ No ____
I understand that the information I share will only be used for the purposes of the study described in the Information Sheet, and that the data will be stored and saved in a secure location, in a locked cabinet or a password-protected computer that only the researcher has access to.	Yes ____ No ____
In understand that I can ask for a copy of the interview transcript to review before it is included in the report, and that I can review and approve the study findings before the final report is prepared.	Yes ____ No ____
I understand that my participation in this study is voluntary, that I can choose not to participate in the study, that I can choose not to answer certain questions, and that I can withdraw from the study at any time without any negative consequences and without giving a reason.	Yes ____ No ____
I agree to the processing of my personal information for the purposes of this research study. I understand that this information will be kept strictly confidential and handled in accordance with the Data Protection Act 1998 (UK).	Yes ____ No ____

Participant name: _____   Researcher name: _____

Signature: _____   Signature: _____

Date: _____   Date: _____

11.6 Appendix 6: Interview guiding questions

Each interview took 45-60 minutes.

Guiding questions for interviews with rectors, pro-rectors and professors of Myanmar institutions.

Establish basic information:

1. Tell me a little about yourself – where did you grow up? Where were you educated? Outline your career. How long have you been in your current post? What other positions have you held?
2. What is the purpose/mission of your university?

Explore role of international collaboration

3. Now that Myanmar is opening up to the world, the university has opportunities to form international collaborations. What kinds of collaboration do you have/would you like – what are your priorities? What is the purpose of these collaborations? Does the Ministry have any guidelines or encouragement for types of international collaborations they want you to have?
4. What funding sources (if any) do you have to collaborate with foreign universities?
5. Why do you think that foreign universities want to collaborate with your university?
6. (*On the subject of current collaboration*) How were the area(s) of collaboration agreed? Who initiated the partnership? Who decided (your university (who?)/the foreign university/Burmese or UK government/funder,donor)? Is this a priority area for your university/Myanmar?

Explore issues of social justice and development

7. There are many changes expected to happen in Myanmar now that a new democratic government is in place. How is your university contributing to this change? How would you like it to contribute?
8. Does your university have a responsibility/role in contributing towards more equality and social justice? How would you define social justice? What inequalities and unfairness exists in your university? What inequalities and unfairness exists in your country/community? Is responding to this this part of the purpose or responsibility of the university? If so, how is the university responding/would like to respond? If not, why not? Are there any constraints?
9. Has your university responded to social justice in the past? How/why/why not?
10. Do you see international collaboration as a means to address social injustice? In a global context or in a local context? How? Why/why not?
11. Do you have international collaboration that responds to improving social justice? (What/how?). Do you think that international collaborations have a role to support social justice in Myanmar?
12. Does your university respond to development goals? What are they? How?
13. (ask Qs 11 and 12 for development)
14. Before we finish, are there any other comments or points you would like to share or you think is important?

(Interviews with two officials at the Ministry of Education in Myanmar framed to include the same questions, but related to generic higher education and HE reform rather than specific institutions.)

Guiding questions for interviews with UK institutions

Establish basic information:

1. Tell me a little about yourself – where did you grow up? Where were you educated? Outline your career. How long have you been in your current post? What other positions have you held?
2. What is the purpose/mission of your university?
3. Do you have an international strategy? What is its focus/priorities?

Establish rationale for interest in Myanmar:

4. Why are you interested in Myanmar? What kind of collaborations do you have/are you seeking? What are the drivers and motivations to collaborate with Myanmar universities?   What are your strategic objectives in engaging with Myanmar universities? Why/where do these come from/what lies behind these strategies?
5. What funding sources (if any) do you have to collaborate with Myanmar? What is the strategic purpose of that fund?
6. Why do you think Myanmar institutions would want to collaborate with your university? What are their priorities?
7. (*On the subject of current collaboration*) How were the area(s) of collaboration agreed? Who initiated the partnership? Who decided (your university (who?)/Burmese university/Burmese or UK government/funder,donor)? Is this a priority area for your university/the UK/you (as a researcher)?

Explore role of international collaboration in social justice:

8. After years of isolation, conflict and authoritarian rule, Myanmar is a country with many inequalities in society. Does your university have a role in contributing towards more equality and social justice in Myanmar society through your international partnership? Why/Why not? How would you define social justice? Does your university have a role in addressing social justice in a global or local context? If so, what kind of social injustice, and how is/could the university responding/respond? Is this a priority/a main purpose in your collaboration?
9. Do you think that international collaborations have a role to support social justice in Myanmar?
10. Does your university have a role in development in Myanmar? What/how/why?
11. (if relevant) Do you see any connection/influences/contributions/ contradictions in the main purpose of your university, and the impact of your international collaborations on the local and global context of the Myanmar university and wider society?
12. Before we finish, are there any other comments or points you would like to share or you think is important?