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NORTHERN ILLINOIS UNIVERSITY

"Organizational Behavior in Myanmar Universities and Its Impacts on Students' Career Success"

A Thesis Submitted to the

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Department of

Management

By

Ye Pyae Thu

DeKalb, Illinois

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Capstone Title   : Organizational Behavior in Myanmar Universities and

                                   Its Impacts on Students' Career Success

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ABSTRACT:

After ending nearly six-decades of military dictatorship, Myanmar, formerly known as Burma, has its first civilian government in 2015. Along with national reconciliation and peacebuilding, educational reform has become one of the top priorities of Mrs. Aung San Suu Kyi's (Suu Kyi's) government to develop more human capital and set the stage for robust economic growth. However, due to several contextual obstacles (e.g., political uprisings), almost all higher educational institutions in Myanmar face uncertainty about their institution-wide leadership and strategic management. Since universities are among the key organizations of the society, understanding what principles from the field of organizational behavior can apply to this situation is important to improve solidarity, cohesion, and to motivate stakeholder enthusiasm and creativity for organizational effectiveness and efficiency.

The aim of this study is to find out what organizational behavior factors affect students' career success. To improve quality of education, and develop the nation's human capital, it is very important to understand the interdisciplinary factors associated with organizational behavior and educational development. The results of the study will provide suggestions for the enhancement of students' career readiness at Myanmar universities and recommendations for proper educational reforms.

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INTRODUCTION

Burma[1] society traditionally values the importance of education since the early time before the independence in 1948. Burma had its golden era around the 1950s and was considered one of the richest countries in Asia with a high education standard. Because of the robust economic growth and the quality education, Burma was believed to become the first Asian Tiger, the four highly developed economies, in the Asian region. Nevertheless, the 51-year of military dictatorship from 1962-2011 left the country far behind most ASEAN[2] countries regarding every sector.

Along with the global wave of increasing demand for quality education in the late 20th century, Myanmar parents and students have long been anticipating for the betterment of education system. But, the government efforts on educational reforms in the 1990s were some dramatic changes which later turned out to be the greatest turbulences for the progress of the nation. Examples include the two-year closure of universities after the students' protest of the 8888 Uprising, another three-year closure after the 1996 students' strikes, the relocation of universities to isolated places far from cities, and the transfer of universities from Ministry of Education (MOE) to other ministries such as Ministry of Sciences and Technology (which was dissolved in 2016 to merge with MOE). These events have disrupted educational reforms and negatively affected students, teachers, and other stakeholders in Myanmar higher education institutions.

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[1] As the military government changed the country's name in 1989, the term "Burma" is used for the events happened before 1989 and "Myanmar" for events happened in and after 1989.
[2] The Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN) was established on 8 August 1967 and its member states are Brunei Darussalam, Cambodia, Indonesia, Lao PDR, Malaysia, Myanmar, Philippines, Singapore, Thailand and Viet Nam.

Officials in the current Suu Kyi's government deeply understand that Myanmar's economy should not be built on natural resources, but on the talents, skills and knowledge of its people. According to the U.S. Department of Commerce (2017), Myanmar government has increased its educational expenditure from MMK310bn ($251.8m) in FY 2012-13 to MMK1.4trn ($1.1bn) in 2015-16 and MMK1.5trn ($1.2bn) in 2016-17. The government also initiated the policy framework for educational reform called the National Education Sector Plan 2016-20. Although the radical Myanmar education system has long been in the decline stage with several difficulties, we hope to understand what factors enable student success in this challenging context.

OBJECTIVES

In Myanmar society, people have long been raising several concerns that most university teachers are not fully qualified to teach, the higher education system is dysfunctional, and that students do not learn well at universities and are not ready for their careers. These concerns trigger my curiosity to find out the main problems which are negatively affecting the quality of education and student career success, as well as the solutions which can be applied by the government and universities in order to improve the educational effectiveness.

I decided to conduct this study from the perspectives of organizational behavior as I believe that the problems and the potential opportunities mentioned above may relate to organizational behavior topics which can be observed at Myanmar universities (e.g., motivating teachers and increasing their job satisfaction, providing universities with adequate resources, and preparing students to be ready for their careers after graduation). I am eager to investigate how organizational behavior of universities impacts students' career readiness and what solutions are needed.

Moreover, I also want to find out more about the prevalence of the challenges and how various stakeholders perceive these in order to provide recommendation for institutions which are operating in this difficult context. This study will emphasize the importance of having positive organizational behavior in Myanmar universities by compiling qualitative data about that discipline to focus on its benefits and illustrate its impacts on students' career success which are yet to be explored.

METHODS

To understand what factors are affecting student readiness after graduating from Myanmar universities, this study mainly explored primary qualitative data collected from Myanmar professors from both the United States and Myanmar, and undergraduate and graduate Myanmar students living in different countries. This paper also includes secondary sources from scholarly articles, research statistics, and information available on the internet.

Qualitative interviews are the primary source of data in this study. These interviews allow me to examine emerging themes and uncover the viewpoints of participants who are familiar with educational context of Myanmar universities. My interview process started with the recruitment of participants. First, I contacted four Myanmar faculty members working in either the U.S. or Myanmar universities, and asked for the possibility to interview them. I also reached out to seven Myanmar undergraduate and graduate scholars who have pursued or are currently pursuing their degrees in the U.S., and other countries. All eleven people I contacted agreed to be interviewed.

Interviews were conducted from February 2017 to March 2018. Each interview lasted between thirty minutes to about an hour, and was conducted via Skype or in-person. To help transcribe the interviews, all interview sessions were audio-recorded with participants' permissions. Each interview was immediately transcribed within two days after it had been

conducted. I started the interview by asking their backgrounds and experiences regarding Myanmar universities. Other questions included how university experiences have helped them to be successful or challenging in their careers, what benefits or challenges they have experienced in terms of academic development, students' professional development, teachers' professional development, and their suggestions regarding above three fields.

If the interviewee is an undergraduate student studying in the U.S., he or she was also asked two additional questions about the differences between Myanmar and U.S. universities, and the pros and cons of U.S. liberal or general education. These additional questions helped me to comprehend how the U.S. liberal education is different from Myanmar education system, and observe any possibility to replicate a part of that system in Myanmar (see Appendices B and C for the exact interview protocol).

Following the transcription of the interviews, I used a grounded theory procedure stated by Glaser and Strauss (1967) and edited by them and others (Corbin & Strauss, 1990, 2008; Glaser, 1978; Miles & Huberman, 1994; Strauss, 1987; Strauss & Corbin, 1998). According to Lewis-Beck, Bryman & Liao (2004), grounded theory methods aim to generate theory, analyze the emerging concepts and map their interrelationships.

This grounded theory method engages in the analytical processes and helps ensure that emerging theory is grounded in the data. Grounded theory is highly suitable for this study to gain grounded insights of the participants and categorize these results. This method is helpful to find out the causes of the significant problems in Myanmar universities without the needs of developing hypotheses. Furthermore, the subject, organizational behavior, itself is a multi-disciplinary subject related to several social science disciplines such as psychology, sociology, and social psychology. Thus, grounded theory is very appropriate to conduct this study in the cross-fields of education and management.

After the first stage of data collection and transcribing, I engaged in data analysis and coding. Each interview transcript was analyzed using a method called coding and memoing (Emerson, Fertz and Shaw, 2011). It is sometimes known as writing ethnographic fieldnotes. The coding process is based on the transcribed content, my direct experience interviewing the participant and the sensitivity toward the concerns of the participant. Emerson, Fretz and Shaw (2011) state that, "the secret of coding lines in turning the answers to these questions into a distinctive kind of writing – a word or short phrase that captures and signals what is going on in a piece of data in a way that links it to some more general analytic issue" (p. 122).

Among the two coding processes for qualitative analysis with grounded theory (i.e., open coding and focused coding), I applied an open coding method in order to identify and formulate new ideas, themes or issues which the participants suggest. This method of coding is derived from grounded theory which helps researchers discover new trends or themes while analyzing the data. Emerson, Fretz, and Shaw (2011) also note about open coding that, "qualitative coding is a way of opening up avenues of inquiry: the research identifies and develops concepts and analytic insights through close examination of reflection on fieldnote data" (p.144).

The following steps after coding are sorting and selecting themes. This coding process helped me to identify ideas which can be grouped into similar themes, which allowed me to relate all the interview results and group them accordingly. My interview coding resulted in resulted in three major themes, which were power distance, resource dependence theory and fundamental attribution error. This study explores these three themes in the results section below.

FINDINGS

The findings from the participants are interdisciplinary: relating to organizational behavior, educational development, human resource management etc., however, my study will mainly focus on three organizational behavior topics: power distance, resource dependence theory, and fundamental attribution error. The results and recommendations from this study will be beneficial to Myanmar universities which they can later apply in educational reforms.

Power Distance

The first major theme to emerge from the interviews was related to the organizational behavior concept of power distance. Power distance is the extent to which individuals experience hierarchical management and power inequalities between one another within an organization (Tyler, Lind, & Huo, 1995). According to Hofstede (1983), the intensity of power distance can be measured using the Power Distance Index (PDI) which indicates the power relationship between individuals with low and high positions. Moreover, it also represents society's level of inequality regarding power distribution and workplace practices. Power distance can be measured from different dimensions, such as cultural, religious and other dimensions: however, this study will mainly analyze power distance from the cultural aspect.

Myanmar, similar to other Southeast Asia countries, has a cultural context with values and traditions which vary sharply in certain respects with those of the western countries (Cheng, 1999a, 2003; Cheng & Walker, 2008; Dimmock & Walker, 1998, 2005; Hallinger et al., 2005; Mok, 2004, 2006). Hallinger (2010) argues that, "Confucian societies tend to accept large differences in power, status, and rank as normal. …. It is characteristic of Asian cultures to show respect for authority, age, rank and status. This applies not only in

relationships between teachers and students, but also throughout the system hierarchies" (p.16). McShane and Glinow (2007) state that "those (people) with high power distance accept and value unequal power. They value obedience to authority and are comfortable receiving commands from their supervisors without consultation or debate. They also prefer to resolve differences through formal procedures rather than directly" (p. 31).

My interview data indicates that Myanmar, a strongly Buddhist nation, has a high power distance. First, the teacher-student relationship in Myanmar is not characterized by friendship, immediacy and communicator style. A statement from Participant #5 exemplifies this relationship:

> *In Myanmar education system, there are only teachers and learners. It is black and white. If someone is not a learner, he/she is a learner. There is nothing in between. Teachers do not usually intend to learn. .... When teacher become learners in some classrooms or situations, there is a cultural conflict between these teachers and the actual teachers or instructors who are in front of them.*

Most Myanmar teachers discourage two-way communications in classes. Due to the high power distance, teachers do not usually accept feedbacks or concerns from their students. In Myanmar culture, teachers and parents are considered as two of the five Holy People and are well-respected by younger people. At some situations, teachers are regarded as individuals who are always right. If students ask questions in classes, some teachers may traditionally consider such behavior to be rude.

Hallinger (2010) mentions that, "these social norms translate into greater power among administrators at all levels of the system. It is the 'natural inclination' of stakeholders in Southeast Asia to provide a polite, often unquestioning, audience at the announcement of change initiatives" (p.17). Similar to other Asian universities, in-class questioning behavior is

sometimes considered by Myanmar teachers that their students do neither pay attention to their instructions nor behave politely (Hallinger & Kantamara, 2001; Hampden-Turner & Trompenaars, 1997; Homles & Tangtongtavy, 1995).

Participant #3 described students' arguments and in-class discussions as such:

Students are not encouraged to question further or argue with teachers. This leads to cultivation of their silence and non-engaged behavior in the classrooms. As teachers are being taught with the same system while they were young, ... they don't like students who ask questions or argue with them in classrooms.

Participant #3 states that most organizational issues are caused by extremely high power distance since most teachers still do not realize to increase their courtesy. Participant #2 also argues about the courtesy issue he faced with his faculty members that,

When we requested our faculty members to have an appointment with them, they said they are not free at the moment (to schedule an appointment) and would call us back for the appointment time. But, they never called us back. Professors don't have mutual respects to their students.

High power distance also leads to higher physical distance (Napier and Ferris, 1993; Stanko, 2006; Allen, 1977; Barnlund & Harland, 1963; Monge & Contractor, 2003; Sorenson & Stuart, 2001). Participant #4, a faculty member at a U.S. university, reflects her outreach experience with Myanmar universities that:

Teachers don't easily avail themselves to students. It is hard for students to get a very close professional relationship with their faculties and thus cannot benefit fully from their teachers.

Since Myanmar teachers do not have private offices and office hours, students cannot easily schedule or request an appointment to discuss their concerns regarding subject matters, tests, activities, etc. All the above examples entail that teachers have negative power influencing on students. Participant #5 supplements that:

As [high power distance] is ... associated with culture and religion (Buddhism), the discouragement of classroom discussion by teachers is already rooted for decades in their minds by themselves. ... Students will nod their heads even though they do not understand the subject matter. At the same time, students may have already decided in their mind to agree or disagree with their teachers' explanation or content matters.

Contradictory to my findings, I found an interesting article titled "The exploratory study of Myanmar culture using Hofstede's Value Dimensions" which was conducted by Rarick and Nickerson in 2006. According to that study, Myanmar PDI has a low power distance. Rarick and Nickerson (2006) argues that, "Myanmar culture is highly feminine, moderately individualistic, high uncertainty avoidance, and moderately long-term in its orientation" (p. 3). Although their research claims that Myanmar has little in common regarding power distance with ASEAN countries such as Thailand and Cambodia, it is reasonable to conclude that the unique characteristics of the researchers' sample population do not represent the wider view of Myanmar Culture.

For example, this sample population contained 37 Burmese in their late 30s and 40s, who were the graduates of the Executive MBA from the Yangon University of Economics. Since the researchers stated that half of the participants were women, held Executive MBA, had years of working experience and had travelled to the United States or Europe, these participants may have been especially high in individualism, feminism, independency, and uncertainty avoidance relative to the general population. High levels in these factors may

have led the researchers to conclude that Myanmar has low power distance whereas my data and other researchers have indicated that it has high power distance.

Resources Dependence Theory

According to Koberg (1987), the two major factors influencing on organizational behavior include environmental uncertainty as perceived by management (Lawrence & Lorsch, 1967; Yasai-Ardekani, 1986) and scarcity of critical resources (Pfeffer & Salancik, 1978), especially during economic downturns (Ansoff, 1979). Studies of environmental influences and resource allocations are also conducted by Hrebiniak & Joyce (1985), Lawrence & Dyer(1983), and Tushman & Romanelli (1985). In his research about resource scarcity and environmental uncertainty, Koberg (1987) states that, "the amount of uncertainty administrators perceived and the relative scarcity of critical resources were both associated with the overall frequency of adjustments made by the schools" (p. 804).

It is important to note that all universities in Myanmar are still centralized, state run and managed directly by corresponding ministries. Since all Myanmar universities rely solely on the resources allocated by respective ministries, resources and budget allocated to each university are different from ministry to ministry. Moreover, the previous military regime discouraged large concentrations of students on campuses. Thus, they separated highly dense universities into three or four small universities and relocated these campuses to isolated locations far from cities. Therefore, there are no comprehensive universities where students can study a wide range of disciplines. For example, medical schools in Myanmar are operated by the Ministry of Health and Sports and only offer medical degrees. Similarly, technological universities are run by the Ministry of Sciences and Technology (now dissolved into the MOE) and only offer engineering degrees. The following table shows the numbers of universities under different ministries.

No.	Ministry of	Numbers of Institutions
1	Education	134
2	Health and Sports	16
3	Defense	6
4	Religious Affairs and Culture	4
5	Border Affairs	3
6	Agriculture, Livestock and Irrigation	7
7	Transport and Communications	2
8	Union Civil Service Board	2
	Total	174

Table 1   : Myanmar universities and colleges under different ministries

Source   : National Education Policy Commission (2018)

Additionally, universities do not have authority to charge students any tuition, academic, or administration fees aside from those regulated by the ministry. Participants in my sample indicated that most resource-related issues such as inadequate infrastructure, resources, and budget, are solvable if Myanmar MOE grants autonomy to university management. Most participants argue about the importance of having autonomy by individual universities. Participant #7 states:

> *The first thing (to enhance academic development) is to have the autonomy. If the Ministry of Education grants autonomy to universities, university officials can make their own rules and regulations according to the region in which their universities are located or the disciplines in which their universities specialize in.*

If universities have autonomy, they can set their own regulations and strategies for the advancement of their universities. All Myanmar universities are currently steered by different ministries and, in some cases, university administrative teams are not allowed to support student clubs and activities although they have intentions to do so. Despite scare budgets, most universities also fail to support and empower students regarding their professional development. Participant #7 argued that:

For students' professional development, it is important to have student clubs and

organizations. But, officials from most universities do not support student activities and

involvements on campus. This hinders students' leadership and personal development.

Insufficient Infrastructures

According to Pfeffer and Salancik (1974), "… power in a university is found to be significantly related to the proportion of the budget received, even after statistically controlling for such universalistic bases of (resource) allocation" (p. 135). All Myanmar universities are still relying solely on the government's support and budget allocation. Although the Myanmar government's expenditure on education has been increasing, the percentage of expenditure in education sector is still the lowest in Southeast Asia countries according to the ASEAN State of Education Report, 2013.
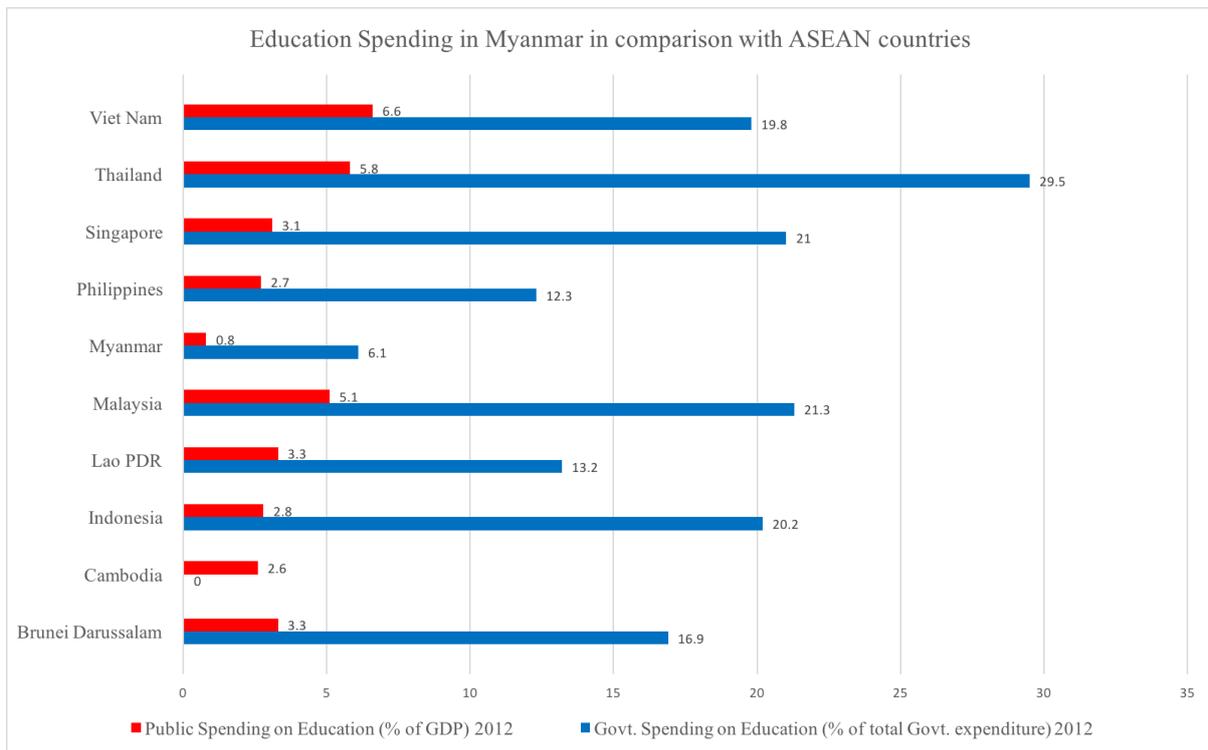

Figure 1   : Education Spending in Myanmar in comparison to ASEAN countries

Source   : ASEAN State of Education Report – 2013 (p.19)

Even in last year, 2017, Myanmar's government expenditure for education was only 8.44 percent of total government expenditure. Although it increases 2.34 percent from 2012, it is still insufficient for educational advancement and reforms. According to the article about 2017-18 Myanmar government budget proposal by Thant (2017), UNESCO recommended developing countries to aim for 20 percent of government expenditure dedicated to education.

According to interview data, universities have insufficient resources regarding infrastructures, human capitals, and budgets. Participant #10 states about his school infrastructure that:

My university's football field was covered with shrubs and bushes. The roads in my university compound were very dusty and bumpy, and university canteens looked like dinners.

Regarding university libraries and book collections, most Myanmar universities are in bad situations. Tun (2016) argues that, "library resources are very scare. Students cannot get the books they want to borrow. Books in libraries are usually very limited and (hard to access) as some books are kept in locked showcases" (p. 85). He continues that library resources are very restricted and thus, universities cannot support students and teachers to conduct researches. Participant #10 adds about poor library resources that "most university libraries are still dead. I still recall that my university couldn't even afford to buy a Burmese encyclopedia". Participant #7 mentions about his university's library that:

Our library seems to be closed most of the time. Instead of being open libraries where students can pick up books directly from bookshelves, students are required to use the catalog (at some universities) to search for books they want to read, and then request librarians to go and pick up the book from the shelves on behalf of them.

Inadequate Materials

Since universities have inadequate budgets, they cannot afford to use latest textbooks, technologies and equipment. Participant #6 mentions about his university experience with scarce materials that:

Although I have attended a computer university, I didn't have a chance to use a computer. When it came to learn programming language, students memorized coding with rote learning. There was no actual programming code writing with computers.

Regarding textbooks and curricula, participant #10 claims that:

The curricula and textbooks which universities are currently using, are from the long, long ago. I believe that these are the curricula prescribed 20-25 years ago. If universities cannot update their curricula, they cannot update the knowledge and skills of their teachers and students.

Participant #9 also argues about the poor textbook condition that

My university used very old curriculum and textbooks, and the quality of the papers were not good. My university just photocopied the original textbooks recklessly, piled these up, and sold these to us. Sometimes, several papers were upside down, sometimes, there were ten continuous blank pages. We had to pay about 22,000–35,000 Ks for eight photocopied textbooks.

Participant #2, #8, #7 and #10 all mention about the outdated and poor-conditioned textbooks. They mention that since the contents in the sciences and technological disciplines are always innovating and changing with new technologies, universities seriously need to update their textbooks. Participant #2 reflects his personal experience with old textbook that:

Industries and technologies in my discipline, Petroleum Engineering, are developing rapidly, and we need to have knowledge of the high-end technologies. Our curriculum is the same as the curriculum what teachers have been teaching ten years ago. Although I understand that the fundamental theories are very similar and essential for us to learn, it is just a waste of time learning some technologies which are not even used nowadays.

If universities cannot update their curriculums prescribed 20-25 years ago, they cannot provide advance knowledge and skills to students. Without proper knowledge and innovation, it will be very challenging for students to have successful careers after graduation. Universities should have adequate budget to upgrade their curriculums and provide students proper knowledge.

In recent years, Myanmar MOE extends one academic year for all students enrolled in undergraduate Engineering programs. Due to the lack of resources and budgets, universities do not have enough preparations for that extension. When the extended year began, universities have neither properly structured the curricula nor the courses. Most courses which technological universities are offering for that extra one year, are related to humanities and social sciences. But, with the lacks humanities and social sciences faculty at these universities, teachers from the engineering disciplines are teaching these courses with no advance learning and preparation. Participant #10 reflects his learning experience that;

The education ministry mandated technological universities to extend the period of academic years from five years to six years by adding an extra year of humanities and social sciences courses. But, sadly, there was no training or arrangement provided for teachers. Thus, these teachers with engineering degrees are now conducting new humanities and social science subjects just by relying on textbooks and their prior teaching experiences.

Slow Growth of Human Resources Development

The insufficiencies of infrastructures and resources at universities also have a negative effect on university teachers and staff. To achieve successful outcomes for educational implementation and reforms, it is crucial to prepare faculty members develop new knowledge and skills (Hall & Hord, 2002; Fullan, 2007; Joyce & Showers, 2002; Kotter & Cohen, 2002). Hallinger (2010) also reflects his experience that, "however, with the exception of Singapore and Hong Kong, the other Southeast Asian countries have been slower to commit necessary resources towards the preparation and development of teachers and principals. This means that the capacity needed to foster effective implementation is often absent at the school level" (p.19). Since teachers encounter many challenges such as inadequate salaries, long career upward mobility, being forced to teach courses which they are not skillful, etc., they can become more stressed, depressed and unethical along with experiencing decreased motivation and job satisfaction.

According to the announcement from the Office of President, Myanmar (2018), the salary faculty members ranges from $161 to $412. Even the head of university, university presidents, only earn $412 per month. These salaries can be considered insufficient for a teacher to support him/herself or a family since the average rent for an apartment in cities like Yangon and Mandalay ranges from $225-400.

No.	Rank	Salary in USD (per month)
1	Tutor	$161
2	Assistant Lecturer	$175
3	Lecturer	$ 210
4	Associate Professor	$232
5	Professor	$255
6	Pro-Rector	$313
7	Rector	$412
8	Deputy Director General	$313
9	Director General	$412

Table 2   : New Pay-scale of Department of Higher Education, Myanmar (1st Apr 2018)

Source   : Office of the President, Myanmar (2018)

Participant #10 mentions about insufficient salary that;

Teachers have difficulties to support themselves since their salaries are very low. For example, if a teacher wants to buy a computer, s/he may need to save a portion of salary for months.

Participant #3 also argues that;

Money is the primary motivation for every person. In our country, all government staffs in the bureaucracy do not receive enough money which is the first factor that decreases their motivation. Being a teacher is very challenging.

Participant #8 states about the minimal salary of teachers that "they have little amount of salary which makes them have hard time surviving and thus have to teach outside of school". As Participant #8 describes, some teachers open tutoring sessions at their houses (called tuitions in Myanmar) which are against government's regulations. At universities, these teachers teach their subjects just by scratching the surfaces.

Teachers have long career upward mobility since they cannot jump ahead positions, based on their skills. Seniority is a major organizational issue at Myanmar universities. As

teachers know that they will not be promoted regardless of their skills and experiences, they have low motivation to work hard. Moreover, some teachers cannot quit their work whenever they want to. Participant #8 states that, "teachers have to work for 20 years straight (for those who have contracts with government)". Teachers who pursued their degrees abroad either with government funding or with non-governmental funding, have contracts to work for the government upon their return. For example, in early 2000s, Myanmar government sent most of its scholars to Russia emphasizing on the emerging disciplines such as defense, information technology and computer sciences. Most scholars returned to the country around 2009 and have 20-year contract to work for the government.

Teachers can neither choose their own curricula nor courses. Universities assign courses for them to teach. In such situations, most teachers are not confident about what they are teaching, and start feeling stressed and depressed. This also decreases their motivation in teaching. Moreover, teachers have to perform many administrative and social duties such as attending governmental meetings and other social ceremonies. Participant #8 mentions that;

Another challenge is that teachers are not just teaching. They have to do other works too.
They don't have assistant teachers. They have to check students' homework and grade
these. Aside from teaching, teachers are required to do other works. E.g., since my
department doesn't have workers, you will see your teachers cleaning the departmental
library or offices.

Moreover, Myanmar universities fail to provide teachers both pre-job training and on-job training. When universities recruit teachers, they usually do not require applicants to have specific years of teaching or research experiences. Universities should provide necessary training or workshops for selected applicants so that they can learn more about their roles and responsibilities, university's regulations and resources etc.

These applicants (who applied to be teachers) have no prior teaching experiences even as

teaching assistants. They do not have knowledge about teaching pedagogies,

methodologies and classroom management. There is no special teaching training program

for new teachers.

Participant #1, a Burmese professor from a U.S. institution, mentions about the important of teacher training that:

Teachers need training for their professional development. The reason why I am saying is

that most teachers from Myanmar haven't learned about teaching methodology throughout

their careers. Since they haven't learned teaching techniques, they are just trying to see

which teaching techniques will be effective for them by emulating those of their teachers.

As a consequence of lacking faculty developmental programs, most people are concerned that a lot of teachers are not fully qualified to teach or require more skills and knowledge about the subject matters. Participant #10 reflects his university experience that;

During my four years at university, I didn't meet a teacher who is capable to get my

attention and motivate me learning the discipline. There was also no teacher whose answer

could satisfy my question.

According to Participant #4, most faculty members are educated in late 1950-60s and went through the education system under the socialist and military regimes. She states that:

Unless for some teachers who self-taught themselves, they couldn't just rely on the

education system for self-advancement. Most of them admitted that they are not experts in

their respective fields since they didn't have chances to conduct as many researches as

they want (due to the research topics sensitivity of the previous military government)

She also mentions the impacts on students' career success by having unqualified teachers that;

> *Having unqualified teachers severely affects students' career success. If teachers are not fully qualified, how can they train their students? And also, students know that if they are ambitious, they have to go to private tuitions (tutoring classes) outside universities. Although students spend so much time in classes, they are not learning anything.*

Other dysfunctions in education regarding slow growth of human resource development include the lack of incentives and opportunities for outstanding teachers, the absence of recognition for their achievements, etc. Moreover, there is no equal opportunity of scholarship or fellowship available for teachers. For instance, teachers from the remote cities do not receive the same opportunity as those from major cities such as Yangon and Mandalay do. Participant #4, a Burmese professor at a U.S. institution, states that:

> *There are few career development opportunities for teachers from those universities outside of Yangon, Especially, teachers with low ranks and who cannot speak English well have very few benefits.*

Fundamental Attribution Error

Fundamental attribution error, also known as correspondence bias, is one of the most fundamental phenomena in social psychology. Gilbert and Malone (1995) define correspondence bias that, "(it) is the tendency to draw inferences about a person's unique and enduring dispositions from behavior that can be entirely explained by the situations in which they occur" (p. 21). Attribution theories are also largely defined by Ajzen & Fishbein (1975); Bem (1972); Hilton & Slugoski (1986); Jones & Davis (1965); Trope (1986), and Weiner et al., (1972).

According to Gilbert and Malone (1995), the psychological state is a reflection of the physical state; and both are believed to have the same logic. They claim that, "ordinary people seem to believe that others behave as they do because of the kinds of others they are and because of the kinds of situations in which their behavior unfold; thus, when a person makes an attribution about another, she or he attempts to determine which of these factors-the other person or the other person's situation-played the more significant role in shaping the other person's behavior" (p. 22).

The fundamental attribution error is derived from the evolutions of several bias and attribution theories. Social blindness, a psychological phenomenon, is first mentioned in the 1940s and 1950s by researches such as Ichheiser (1949), Heider (1958) etc. At that era (the end of World War II), no one was interested in that field which demonstrated that social situations could be powerful determinants of actions.

The interview results indicate that most participants, those who have studied several years at Myanmar universities, have correspondence bias. When it comes to students' professional development, participants place undue emphasis on the internal characteristics of themselves (e.g., their own behavior, actions and achievement), rather than external factors such as government policies and funding in educational sector. They believe that if a student wants to succeed, he or she needs to study harder and smarter, rather than relying on good education system or university. Participant #7 states that;

When it comes to educational reform, some suggest to change the system first. However, before we change the system, we need to change the people involved in the processes first.

Participant #8, a former student at a Myanmar university claims that;

Whether you become successful or failed, it depends on you. Universities are more likely

to provide services and perform their duties, and the rest is upon you. Students

themselves should study hard to have successful careers.

Gilbert and Malone (1995) states that, "the correspondence bias has been a problem in social psychology since its inception and has been described by some as the central problem of the field" (p. 22). We may have seen that most participants are unaware of attribution errors.

Participant #9 mentions that;

Student professional development depends on individual student. Universities and

teachers cannot do anything to develop them. Students need to fix themselves first.

From the participant's argument, this study can conclude that most stakeholders have correspondence bias about students' professional development by believing that it depends solely on student. This is important because the correspondence bias can attribute most stakeholders not to focus on changes to the education system. This will lead to the deeper downturn of the educational development as there will be no change initiatives believing students are responsible to develop themselves.

Table 3: Example quotations for central organizational behavior themes in this study

Central Topic	Representative Quotations
Power Distance	When students ask questions in class, some teachers traditionally consider those behaviors to be rude. Professors should be more open and accessible to students. (Participant #7) Since students are not encouraged to question further or argue with teachers in class. As teachers are also being taught with that system and weren't encouraged to discuss or argue in class, they don't like students who ask questions or argue with them in classrooms. The whole generation of teachers doesn't know or notice the importance of engaged learning. (Participant #5) We don't need to be afraid of our teachers instead of paying respects. If teachers do not respect students, they should not expect to be respected back by students. Thus, I encourage all teachers and students to have mutual respects. (Participant #3)
Resource Dependence	Although I have attended a computer university, I didn't have a chance to use a computer. When it came to learn programming language, students memorized coding with rote learning. There was no actual programming code writing with computers. (Participant #6) Most university's libraries are still dead. I still recall that my university couldn't afford to buy a Burmese encyclopedia. (Participant #10) During my undergraduate years, students didn't have knowledge about MLA/APA citations. Only one of my later undergraduate papers can be said to be 100% plagiarism free since I started to know the citation formats (Participant #8) Graduates from engineering universities can barely work as qualified engineering in real-world. They are not ready yet for careers (Participant #10) Government, university and industry should have strong partnership as a triangular bond. Aside from the internships offered by companies, there are no other forms collaboration between university and industry. (Participant #10) Teachers have difficulties to support themselves since their salaries are very low. E.g., if a teacher wants to buy a computer, s/he needs to save a portion of salary for months. (Participant #10) Aside from teaching, teachers are required to do other works. E.g., since my department doesn't have workers, you will see your teachers cleaning the departmental library or offices. (Participant #8)

Correspondence Bias	Student professional development depends on individual student. Universities and teachers cannot do anything to develop them. Students need to fix themselves first.(Participant #9)
	Student professional development depends a lot on individual student. (Participant #8)
	When it comes to educational reform, some suggest changing the system first. However, before we change the system, we need to change the people involved in the processes first. (Participant #7)
	Whether you become successful or failed, it depends on you. Universities are more likely to provide services and perform their duties, and the rest is upon you. Students themselves should study hard to have successful careers. (Participant #8)

DISCUSSIONS

The main objective of this study was to find out how organizational behavior factors in Myanmar universities affect students' career success. This interdisciplinary study on organizational behavior and educational development also aims to provide recommendations for educational reforms in Myanmar. The qualitative data from this study exemplifies the prevalence of challenges and how universities are operating in a such arduous environment.

In order to improve the quality of education and provide suggestions to universities to cultivate appropriate organizational behavior, this study explores several concerns: the declining quality of education in Myanmar, the crisis in students' career readiness after graduation, and the ineffectiveness of current educational reform processes. To answer these concerns, we analyzed interview data from the perspectives of faculty and students in Myanmar and in the United States.

The main findings revealed the prevalence of three organizational behavior topics in this context: power distance, resource dependence theory and fundamental attribution error. Regarding the power distance, the findings indicate that the intensity of power distance between Myanmar teachers and students, also known as the Power Distance Index – PDI, is very high. It leads to inequality of power distribution and workplace relationship. Having a high power distance between teachers and students is one of the major challenges for achieving student-centered learning. Living in the devoted Buddhist nation, Myanmar people culturally respect teachers as one of the Holy People and consider that teachers are always right. Consequently, students are afraid to approach teachers, and ask them questions in and outside classrooms. The data from the interviews show that the pedagogical approach at Myanmar universities is one-way; instead of a two-way interactive approach between teachers and students. The interviews also indicate that teaching sessions are usually boring

and not interactive due to the lack of student-centered learning approach. Concerning power distance, the study concludes that having teachers who do not encourage students to ask questions in classes and applying one-way pedagogical approach hinder students' learning processes and impede students' academic achievements.

When it comes to resource allocation, all Myanmar universities are still relying solely on the government's supports. Because of the scarce budgets, universities have very limited infrastructures and resources such as computer labs, departmental laboratories, libraries etc. Despite the modern infrastructures and buildings, most universities still fail to provide students with basic needs for their learnings: good libraries, classroom multimedia: computers and projectors, and campus-wide Wi-Fi.

Resource insufficiency is also one of the main causes for the rote learning system in Myanmar universities. Several participants express that the curricula which their universities are currently using are the same curricula prescribed 20-25 years ago. They continue that most students have financial hardships to attend universities. Thus, universities cannot require students to purchase original textbooks; but rather to photocopy the whole original textbooks and resell these to students.

The data points out that teachers do not have enough teaching materials and resources to enhance students' learning process. Most participants suggest that universities should have both short-term and long-term faculty training tracks to continuously improve teachers' professional development. Tun (2016) mentions that, "developing the capacities of teaching staff(s) is crucial to (enhance their) pedagogy as well" (p. 84). In his study, Tun (2016) states that, "teacher training programs are rare in Myanmar universities, especially in computer or technological universities" (p. 84).

Regarding resource dependence theory, this study concludes that government should allocate more and more budgets so that universities can afford to supply more classroom multimedia, and upgrade their libraries and infrastructures. Second, teachers need to avail themselves to students by setting designated office hours and encouraging in-class discussions. Third, universities need to upgrade not only their curricula but also the skills of their faculty members.

Related to fundamental attribution error, participants specify that students need to fix themselves first by studying harder rather than to initiate changes in the education system. They argue that if students want to be successful in either academics or professional careers, students need to rely on themselves for those achievements. The participants exemplify the success stories of their friends who have received multiple scholarships and are currently studying abroad. They claim that their friends do not need changes in the education system but instead work harder to have successful careers. Their thoughts attribute the correspondence bias since they largely emphasize on the internal characteristics and strengths of students rather than on the external environment: government expenditure on education, academic supports provided by universities etc. This is significant because the standard and quality of education cannot be improved unless the stakeholders believe it is important to do so. It is essential for them not to have any correspondence bias which can hinder educational reform processes.

Implications

This study is important for stakeholders who are interested in educational reforms. Hallinger (2010) states that, "research on educational and organizational change has found that the change process is characterized by a variety of 'predictable' obstacles. These include shifting goals, unclear goals, lack of communication of the vision, absence of leadership for

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the change, lack of understanding and interest, lack of resources, staff resistance, lack of knowledge and skills, lack of institutional support, mistrust, and more (Druker, 1995; Evans, 1996; Fullan, 2007; Hall & Hord, 2002; Kotter & Cohen, 2002; McLaughlin, 1990; O'Toole, 1995)" (p.12). This study tackles several obstacles mentioned by Hallinger (2010), such as lack of resources, lack of knowledge and skills, unclear and shifting goals etc.

This study has sought not only to explore the organizational behavior of Myanmar universities but also to provide several recommendations to enhance students' career readiness. Educational reform is one of the major national development strategies for developing countries such as Myanmar (Carnoy, 2003; Cheng, 1999a, 2003; Hallinger, 1998; Pennington, 1999). Educational reforms in Myanmar started in early 2012 when the conference on educational policy created the Comprehensive Education Sector Review (CESR). The CESR included a series of activities such as policy dialogues to empower higher education sector, forums on educational reforms, etc. The CESR was a good initiative since Myanmar MOE complied three and half years of CESR's data into the development process of the National Education Strategic Plan 2016-2021 (NESP), a comprehensive educational policy framework which covers for every educational sector including higher education.

Despite the radical education system of Myanmar has long been in the decline stage with insufficient resources and unqualified teachers, universities in Myanmar have beengradually losing their roles and participation in the country's development progresses. Paul Watson (2008) states that "since 1988, the government has treated universities not as the sources of higher education crucial to the country's development, but as potential threats to its rule". Myanmar education system mainly focuses on the increasing quantities of infrastructures and graduating students rather than the qualities of these infrastructures and

education that students receive. Additionally, there were many interferences by the military and its regimes along the educational reform processes.

Hallinger (2010) mentions Singapore as an example of pioneer in educational reform that, "as Singaporeans proudly observe, economic prosperity has been achieved without access to natural resources other than their location and people (MOE-Singapore, 2004, 2006)" (p.4). The Singaporeans have attributed successfully their city state's robust economic development. It is a good example of how education and human capital development can advantage to societies (Gopinathan, 1999; Kam & Gopinathan, 1999; Ng, Jeyaraj, Lim, Lee, Goh, & Chwe, 2005). More importantly, we need to note that human capital development can contribute largely to national development. According to Hallinger (2010), Malaysia, an ASEAN country, is a good example of adopting human capital-based approach to national development by implementing Vision 2020, a comprehensive national development strategy (Abdullah, 1999; Bajunid, 2008; Lee, 1999; Chia, 2008; Rahimah, 1998). Current Mrs. Aung San Suu Kyi's government acknowledges that it is crucial for her country to develop more human capitals which can later attribute to the progresses of the nation.

This research offers the following relevant annotations on major issues regarding educational reforms and students' professional development. First, in order to create a good learning environment which allows students for flexibility and collaborative learning (Pennington, 1999), Myanmar MOE subsequently needs to allocate sufficient budget to create advance educational leadership and management, professional learning communities, learner-centered instruction, teaching with creativity, etc., Effective planning and precision of implementation are some important steps in education reform process (Hallinger, 2010).

Next, regarding students' professional development, most participants pointed out that having good libraries is crucial in higher education. Libraries are one of the main pillars for

university students where they can develop their intellectual skills and advance their knowledge. Based on interview results, Myanmar universities urgently need to upgrade their libraries to enhance students' learning process. Additionally, having unqualified teachers and high power distance between teacher-student relationship is also negatively impacting students' career readiness.

To help students prepare well for their careers, Myanmar government may reference the 20-year educational reform strategy of Thailand which was initiated in 1997. Thailand which has similar economic and cultural contexts to Myanmar, sets its educational goals of preparing graduates who (1) can use knowledge to solve local problems, (2) are virtuous and moral citizens capable of contributing to the nation's social development, and (3) are happy citizens able to live satisfying lives in harmony with others (MOE-Thailand, 1997a, 1997b).

Thailand's education reform strategy is seemed to be successful as a lot of Myanmar students study abroad at top Thailand universities such as Chulalongkorn University, Thammasat University, Mahidol University, Chiang Mai University etc. By 2017, most public universities in Thailand have successfully gained the trust from the Thailand MOE to have decentralize authority, involve in community engagements and initiative projects, advance university-wide management, enhance the quality of education and create a more active learning environment (Hallinger, 2010, 2004; Hallinger & Kantamara, 2001; Kantamara, Hallinger, Jatiket, 2006; Pennington, 1999; The Nation, 2010; Thongthew, 1999). By analyzing several education reform processes of the neighboring countries, Myanmar government will have the opportunities to emulate the most suitable reforms for the country.

CONCLUSION

This study is a preliminary empirical effort to identify issues and propositions about organizational behavior and its impacts on student careers This study yielded the following conclusions: 1) A major challenge for Myanmar universities is having high power distance, which is related to the cultural context. Teachers should make themselves more accessible to students and should encourage active in-class discussions to foster students' creativity and critical thinking skills, 2) Another challenge is that with insufficient resources and budget from the government, Myanmar universities cannot enhance students' learning process in terms of infrastructure, materials and qualified teachers, and thus, have negative impacts on student professional careers, and 3) most stakeholders such as teachers and students from Myanmar universities, have correspondence bias since they claim that individuals are primarily important to change themselves first rather than to initiate changes to the educational system. This study about Myanmar higher education institutions has valuable implications for the theoretical understanding of organizational behavior existing at these institutions, and for precise recommendations to improve individual institutions.

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APPENDIX A. CONSENT FORM

Organizational Behavior at Higher Education Institutions in Myanmar and

its Impacts on Students' Career Success

Description:

This study is about organizational behavior of Myanmar universities and colleges. In this study, you will be asked to reflect about your experience with Myanmar universities and colleges, think about pros and cons of its strategies and answer specific questions related with student career success.

Informed Consent Statement:

Participants will be asked to participate in an interview, either by phone or in person. The total length of this study will approximately be between 30 minutes to an hour. Your decision to participate in this study is voluntary and you do not have to answer any questions you do not want to answer. Please note that you are free to withdraw from the study at any time. Refusal to take part in this study, or withdrawing from it, will involve no penalty or loss of benefits that you would otherwise receive. There are no risks involved in this study that you would not encounter in daily life. Please note that this study is purely for academic purposes. The results may be made available to the public in research journals, books and other academic publications. Your data will remain anonymous. If you have any questions pertaining to this research, or your rights as a participant, you have the right to contact Ye Pyae Thu at ythu@niu.edu or faculty supervisor Dr. Amanda Ferguson at amanda.j.ferguson@niu.edu. If you have any questions about your right as a research participant, you may also call the NIU Office of Research Compliance at 815-753-8588.

Signature: _____; Name: _____

Date: _____

In addition to agreeing to participate, I also give my consent to having the interview audio-recorded.

Signature: _____; Name: _____

Date: _____

Northern Illinois University

01/23/2018

Approved by NIU IRB

Void one year from above date

1

The following interview questions are translated from Burmese to English.

1. Please tell me about your background and experience related with Myanmar universities?

2. What experiences helped you be successful in your career and what challenges did you have for your career success?

3. Thinking about Myanmar universities more specifically, what benefits and challenges have you experienced in terms of:

    a) academic development?

    b) student professional development?

    c) teacher professional development?

4. What suggestions/advices do you want to give to Myanmar universities in terms of:

    a) academic development?

    b) student professional development?

    c) teacher professional development?

5. Do you have any additional insight overall or any question?

(Question 6 will be optional and will only be asked to those who have extensive knowledge about international and U.S. higher education.)

6. What study/teaching/working experience do you have at foreign institutions? What are the main differences with Myanmar higher education system?

    a) If the participant has experience related with U.S. higher education institutions, what are the pros and cons of U.S. General/Liberal Education? How it is different from Myanmar education system?