PERCEPTIONS OF STUDENTS AND TEACHERS ON THE ROLE OF EXTRACURRICULAR ACTIVITIES AT A PRIVATE UNIVERSITY IN MYANMAR

By

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DECLARATION

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This thesis entitled: *Perceptions of students and teachers on the role of extracurricular activities at a private university in Myanmar* is submitted in partial fulfilment for the requirements for the Unitec degree of Master of Education.

Candidate's declaration

I confirm that:

This thesis represents my own work;

The contribution of supervisors and others to this work was consistent with the Unitec Regulations and Policies;

Research for this work has been conducted in accordance with the Unitec Research Ethics Committee Policy and Procedures, and has fulfilled any requirements set for this project by the Unitec Research Ethics Committee.

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ABSTRACT

This study examined the perceptions and experiences of students and teachers regarding the role of extracurricular activities (ECAs) at a private university (Liberal Arts Programme - LAP) in Myanmar. It focuses on the impacts of participation in ECAs on students' lives, how the LAP mission statement and learning outcomes can be met through ECAs, the issues of participation in ECAs and strategies to overcome the barriers to participation in ECAs.

A small scale qualitative study was used to examine the perceptions of the students and teachers related to the role of ECAs. The research methodology was a case study which involved semi-structured interviews with students and teachers from LAP and analysis of university documents and newsletters. Ten student interviews and five teacher interviews were conducted to collect the necessary data.

The findings highlight the scope of ECAs defined by the students and teachers, challenges faced in order to participate in ECAs and strategies to overcome them. Benefits of participation in ECAs on students' social life and behaviours, careers, life skills, community and academic learning were identified. There were mostly negative impacts on academic life due to extensive participation in different ECAs and missing classes because of tiredness and the responsibilities of ECAs. At the same time several positive impacts such as gaining confidence to speak up in the classroom, improving English and writing were identified. Students and teachers also noted the impacts on social skills and behaviours such as social and negotiation skills with different types of people, teamwork skills and problem-solving skills to resolve conflicts between each other, opportunities to interact with friends who are outside of their close group of friends and developing sympathy for the lives of unprivileged people.

The experiences students gained from ECA involvement and the reputation of the university students attend helped provide opportunities for students to get jobs more easily. The significant finding of this study highlighted the wider impacts on the community such as helping the needy and poor mostly through internships, sharing and applying knowledge gained from school in

their community or church. The analysis of school documents and newsletters showed that the mission statement, objectives and learning outcomes set by the university are met directly or indirectly through the experiences and learning gained from participation in ECAs.

The findings of this research demonstrated key challenges to overcome in order to participate in ECAs. The significant challenges include money issues, time management issues, negative impacts on study and parental involvement and permission. This research also explored the strategies to overcome the barriers to participating in ECAs. Strategies students and teachers employed include getting financial support from the university, organising the activities according to most students' availability, giving parental education on ECAs and receiving academic credits for ECAs.

This study established a step in understanding the role and impacts of ECAs perceived by the students and teachers in a Liberal Arts Programme by presenting the impacts on students' lives, the challenges students have to face in order to participate in ECAs and strategies to overcome the challenges.

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CHAPTER - 1
INTRODUCTION

INTRODUCTION

Education is important for everyone in this world to upgrade their standard of living, to be able to deal with problems and challenges, to get good jobs, and overall to live fully as good and responsible citizens. Since the beginning of the 20th century, education has been not only about the collection of knowledge but also has emphasised the understanding of the value of knowledge, critical thinking, creativity, motivation, social and life skills. In order to develop education sufficiently to encourage the growth of an individual's emotional, spiritual, social, intellectual, creative and artistic potential, studying academic subjects alone is no longer enough. Classroom learning activities and extracurricular activities (ECAs) have come to play an important role for students and other stakeholders. I am convinced from my personal experience in an American university that having opportunities for every student to take part in diverse ECAs helps them to grow into a person with leadership, management, decision-making, communication and creative and critical thinking skills and prepares students to fit in and achieve in working life after school.

EXTRACURRICULAR ACTIVITIES (ECAs)

ECAs are offered alongside the regular traditional curriculum at all levels of the education system, mostly in western countries. Emmer (2010d) explains "the terms extracurricular activities, co-curricular activities, and non-classroom activities have all been used interchangeably to mean experiences and activities such as debate, athletics, music, drama, school publications, student council, school clubs, contests, and various

social events" (as cited in Lunenburg, 2010, p.1). The definitions and terms used as synonyms for ECAs and the activities considered as ECAs vary according to the scholars and their scope of studies. However, the term ECA is used in this study because it has a broader meaning as mentioned in the above definition including co-curricular activities such as community, religious and volunteering activities. This definition will be discussed in detail in the following Chapter two.

There are sports and non-sports related ECAs offered at all levels of school. Sport ECAs include activities such as soccer, basketball, aerobics, sports competitions and dance. Many studies have shown that such sports-related activities improve students' Grade Point Average (GPA), probability of college attendance, develop educational aims and team spirit, broaden peer networks, and reduce problem behaviours such as alcohol and drugs consumption (Peguero, 2011, Garcia, 2012, Turner, 2010). Non-sports related ECAs include such activities as school government, publications, choir, band, school clubs, competitions, drama, debate, volunteerism, community services and internships (Turner, 2010). Among ECAs, some are school-based activities which are organised by school clubs and organisations and some are in the category of out-of-school activities. Researchers such as Peguero (2011) have shown that involvement in such school-based ECAs lead to greater educational achievement. Therefore, as Lunenburg (2010) states "extracurricular activities, by whatever name they are called, are an essential, vital, and extensive part of education" (p.1).

ECAs offered at schools are categorised alongside the academic curriculum. Such activities outside of the school curriculum are an extension of the education program which encourages the development of the students (Turner, 2010). Cassel, Chow, Demoulin and Reiger (2000) mention that ECAs should be practised at high schools as a requirement for graduation because these extra-curriculum activities are as essential as the traditional academic curriculum. They also explain that providing ECAs for students enhances the student-centred approach school environment since it focuses on the

individual as a person for development (Cassel et al., 2000). Since Myanmar educational reform started in the 1990's with the implementation of a student-centred approach, providing well-organised ECAs at all levels of school may be seen as a support for these reforms.

RATIONALE

The educational vision set by the Ministry of Education (MoE) in Myanmar is "to create an education system that can generate a learning society capable of facing the challenges of the knowledge age" (Tin, 2004). In order to face challenges and live as well-rounded beings, an education system can be modified to promote critical thinking, creativity and social skills not only through academic subjects but also through well-organised ECAs.

ECAs discussed in this section are based on the Myanmar educational context. There are two main sectors in the Myanmar education system: the basic education school system and higher education institutions. The basic education school system provides a 5-year primary program, a 4-year lower secondary program and a 2-year upper secondary program, which in total is an 11-year general education program, one year shorter than other ASEAN countries (UNESCO-IBE, 2011). At the end of the last year of high school, students sit the matriculation examination from which the marks are used to determine which university each student will attend. Matriculation examination is known as both the graduation exam of upper secondary school and the entrance examination to higher education. For all levels of schooling, there are two examinations, one mid-year and another at the end of the year in addition to the regular chapter-end tests (MOE, 2004).

Besides the marks and grading from those tests and exams, a student's Comprehensive Personal Record (CPR) is also taken into consideration in order to be promoted to another

Grade. CPRs record the students' activities such as helping at home, participation in aesthetic education, sports, clubs, associations and school activities, offering voluntary service for community work, sitting regular chapter-end tests, abiding by school rules and regulations and having a minimum of 75% school attendance (UNESCO-IBE, 2011). These data are recorded by the students' parents and the class teachers and are sometimes not accurate. This is because most of the parents fill in their children CPR card as 'good' even if their children are not doing anything listed on CPR. These are the only types of test or exam used in all school levels of Myanmar education which places a great emphasis on marks and grading. As a result, the students have little time and are not actively encouraged to emphasise, or participate in, ECAs.

Based on my own experience, the Myanmar education programme, primary through tertiary does not provide well-organised ECAs for students. Some of the consequences are that students lack general knowledge and the current education programme does not encourage the development of social, leadership, communication, creative and critical thinking skills. It also affects the students' lives and work after school. The report of the Comprehensive Education Sector Review (CESR) comments on this issue as "the current education system does not have a mechanism to continuously upgrade itself to respond to the needs of the world of work... school curricula and teachers competencies have not been upgraded to respond to the changing needs of the labour market" (JICA, 2013, p. 10).

On the other hand, there are several registered private schools and universities which mostly emphasise English language. In contrast to Myanmar public education, these private schools and universities offer an array of ECAs such as trips, clubs, organisations, charity events, special speakers and competitions for the purpose of extending learners' education and learning experiences across various contexts and beyond the classroom (Total learning academy, 2011). Thus, most parents who can afford it start sending their children to private schools at least for weekends in order to learn English language and

participate in ECAs. One of the private universities in Myanmar offers a Liberal Arts Programme (LAP) which includes various in-school and out-of-school ECAs. This study explores the impact of participating in well-organised ECAs through the views of the students and teachers at LAP.

With the growth of private schools and universities that offer opportunities for involvement in ECAs, the Ministry of Education (MOE) has been concerned about the education offered at public schools (Tin, 2004). Thus, education in Myanmar is now entering an education reform period through the Comprehensive Education Sector Review (CESR) (JICA, 2013). According to the report of the Data Collection Survey of The Education Sector in Myanmar, some of the prioritised issues in Basic Education and Higher Education towards the next National Development Plan which hint at the potential implementation of ECAs include:

- Effective implementation of a Child-Centred Approach (CCA) in basic primary level education
- Awarding prizes to well-rounded students and forming scout and Red Cross Organisations in schools (Supplementary education activities in the basic education sector)
- Participation of the private sector in education services and systematic supervision of establishment of quality private schools
- Development of Quality Assurance Systems and extension of cooperation with International Universities and Educational Organisations
- Revision of the University Entrance System
- Promotion of education to the international level
- Strengthening networks with International Universities (JICA, 2013).

Through the above plans for National Development in Basic and Higher Education, it is hoped that ECAs will be widely introduced and well-organised in the future of Myanmar

public education, especially in the course of cooperation with private schools, international universities and educational organisations.
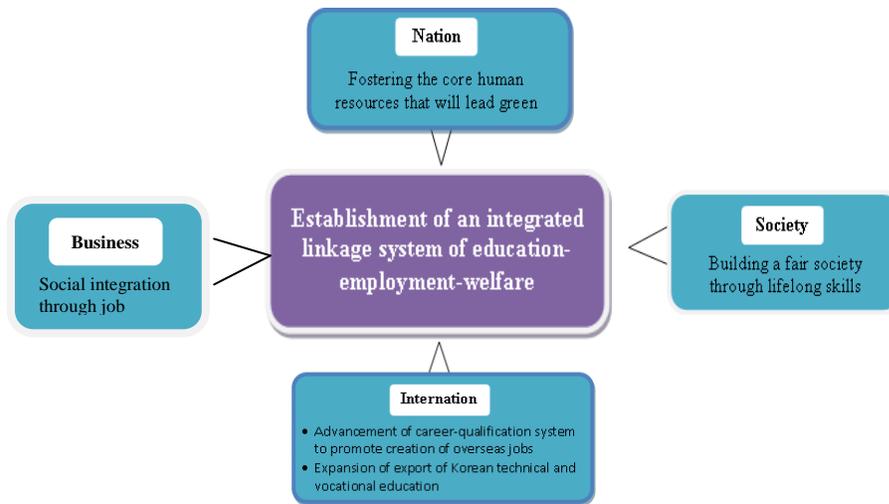
Figure 1.1 Establishment of an integrated linkage system of education-employment-welfare

Source: Htay, 2013, slide 5

The establishment of such an integrated system of education-employment-welfare in order to foster the core human resources, to build a fair society through lifelong skills, to increase social integration through jobs and to promote overseas jobs requires changes in Myanmar education system. As many authors have pointed out, involvement in ECAs develop different life skills for jobs and for social life (Peguero, 2011, Garcia, 2012, Turner, 2010). Thus, implementing ECAs alongside the school curriculum in Myanmar education system would be part of the establishment of such an integrated linkage system of education-employment-welfare. This study explores the issue of whether experience of participating in ECAs develops different life skills and social skills for the labour market in the Myanmar context.

Recently, Institute of International Education (IIE) delegations discussed with Myanmar government ministries educational reform in the near future - "Myanmar government has made reform of the entire higher education system a priority, recognizing the important role of human capital to the country's economic development goals in order to produce skilled labour and prepare students for the job market. Information knowledge alone is not enough but social, leadership, critical and creative thinking skills..." (IIE, 2012, p. 9). The discussion also included future plans to engage faculties, to make connections with Myanmar universities, to bring US students to Myanmar, and to develop international relations offices in order to make better connections with higher education in other countries which can gradually lead to the introduction of liberal arts education in Myanmar. Therefore, ECAs would start to play a role as part of liberal arts programmes in future Myanmar education.

Some of the recommendations from the discussion are to modify the current academic curriculum and to help "inform the vision of Myanmar higher education through cooperation in curriculum development and basic research methods, totally integrated living-learning academic experience that generates fertile discourse and critical academic engagement outside as well as inside the typical academic classroom" (IIE, p.17). Thus, the findings of the perceptions and experiences of students and teachers regarding the role of ECAs in the Myanmar educational context may be a support for such living-learning experience.

This research concerns the perceptions of students and teachers of the role of ECAs at a private Myanmar University. From my own experience and informal discussions with teachers, we believe that in-class learning activities and ECAs play a supportive role in education alongside the implementation of a student-centred approach. Most private and public schools and universities in Myanmar have well-written mission statements, expected learning outcomes, programme activities and curriculum. Private schools and universities even publicise the learning outcomes set for ECAs. This discussion led me to

reflect on whether ECAs in the Myanmar context can have impacts on the academic and social life of students and how well educational institutions can achieve their overall statements and learning outcomes through the role of ECAs.

According to my personal experience of being a student at Myanmar public schools from kindergarten to high school, I know that students' participation in ECAs is at a very low level. The school time-table includes one class period of physical education, aesthetic education and participation in school activities (UNESCO-IBE, 2011). However, these activities are not well-organised. For example, during the physical education (PE) class period, students go to the PE hall and play whatever they like. There are no gym or sports facilities. There is no supervision for sports activities. Participation in school activities such as school band, traditional dance and singing competitions is very limited. Furthermore, students who participate in such activities are chosen by the teachers to participate. Students are also not motivated to participate in ECAs, but consider these PE class periods as free time to relax and play around. Lwin (2000) asserts that the variety of elective subjects and ECAs are neglected in many Myanmar schools and this gap may reduce the potential contribution of this form of education.

Moreover, there is only a small amount of literature focusing on the topic of ECAs at Myanmar schools in general. Most of the literature on the Myanmar education system overlooks the role of ECAs. Therefore, it is important to raise awareness and wider implementation of ECAs at Myanmar schools. It would inform the Ministry of Education, teachers, students and parents about the understanding of the importance of ECAs, benefits of participating in ECAs for learning outcomes and academic achievements and how ECAs have a potential to meet learning outcomes set by the schools.

The findings could be informative to Myanmar public schools for considering whether it would be possible to start an ECA programme as an aspect of a student-centred approach

implementation. The perceptions of students and teachers of the role of ECAs and their impact at a private university, Liberal Arts Programme (LAP), which offers ECAs, may raise the possibility of implementation of ECAs in the Myanmar educational context. This study aims to raise awareness and wider implementation of ECAs at Myanmar public schools. Thus, it will explore the value of ECAs and their relevance to Myanmar public schools as a way of promoting a more holistic education. The findings of this research may be of value to the private university involved in this research for further development or adjustment of their ECA programme. Examining the barriers to participating in ECAs would enable the institute to find possible ways to help further development of ECAs.

RESEARCH AIMS AND QUESTIONS

This research study aims to identify the benefits of participation in ECAs for students' academic achievements, social life and life skills by examining students' and teachers' perceptions of their experiences of ECAs. It will examine the mission statements and expected learning outcomes set by the selected institute in order to analyse how well an educational institution can achieve these outcomes through the role of ECAs. It will also discover the barriers to and the reasons for participation in ECAs. Its aim is to give a voice especially to the students and their views on the role of ECAs in order to contribute to the wider research on the future implementation of ECAs as part of the Myanmar education system especially through higher educational reform.

Research Aim

To investigate students' and teachers' perceptions of the role and educational potential of ECAs

Research Questions

1. What is the nature of extracurricular activities in a Liberal Arts Programme?
2. What are the teachers' and students' perceptions of the role and impact of extracurricular activities?
3. How are Liberal Arts Programme mission statements and expected learning outcomes achieved through extracurricular activities?
4. What factors help and hinder participation in extracurricular activities?

In particular, this study addresses the role ECAs play in students' lives, how the LAP mission statement and learning outcomes can be met through ECAs, the barriers against participation in ECAs and strategies to overcome them.

THESIS ORGANISATION

This study consists of six chapters, each discussing specific stages of the research process. The main content of each chapter is briefly outlined as follows.

Chapter one describes the context in which the research is set, along with the rationale followed by the research aims and questions.

Chapter two presents a critical literature review of the research topic. The trends of ECAs and liberal arts education programmes are presented. Then, there follows a discussion of the impacts of participation in ECAs on students' social life and behaviours, careers, life skills, community and academic learning, challenges faced in order to participate in ECAs and strategies to overcome the challenges.

Chapter three outlines the methodological approach adopted within this study. It presents the rationale which underpinned the decision to use a case study qualitative methodology to explore the perceptions and experiences of students and teachers in LAP. An explanation is provided of the research tools used for the collection of data and how the data are analysed. Ethical principles and issues are also examined to ensure participant protection.

Chapter four presents the research findings of the data collected from the semi-structured interviews and documents. The findings are organised into five key themes: (1) document findings, (2) the scope of ECAs, (3) the impacts of ECAs, (4) the mission statement, learning outcomes and the role of ECAs, (5) reasons and challenges to participate in ECAs and strategies to overcome them. The findings presented in Chapter four lead to discussion and analysis in Chapter five.

Chapter five discusses and analyses the significant findings of this study in relation to the literature, with reference to the key themes identified in Chapter four through the research questions which are used as a guideline.

Chapter six discusses the summary of the study, a list of recommendations, the limitations of this study and suggestions for further study.

CHAPTER – 2
LITERATURE REVIEW

INTRODUCTION

This chapter outlines the review of the literature pertaining to extracurricular activities (ECAs) in educational contexts. The following section presents the role of ECAs and Liberal Arts Education in an international context, followed by the issues and impacts of participating in ECAs on students' academic achievements, social life, life skills, careers and community. The last section highlights the barriers to participating in ECAs and strategies to overcome those barriers.

THEMES FROM LITERATURE

From my reading of the literature, three main themes regarding ECAs arise:

1.   Trends of ECAs and Liberal Arts Education Programmes
2.   Issues and Impacts of ECAs
   - Social Life and Behaviour
   - Careers
   - Life Skills
   - Community
   - Academic Learning
3.   Challenges to Participation in ECAs and Strategies to Overcome them

LITERATURE BACKGROUND

Trends of ECAs and Liberal Arts Education Programmes

One essential component of the education program includes designing creative learning environments which promote leadership, social and life skills through learning outside the classroom. The scope of ECAs used in this particular research is based on the report of the Institute for Studies in Industrial Development (n.d.) stated as "Extracurricular activities are those activities that do not fall within the scope of a regular curriculum and usually carry no academic credits... activities pertinent to student life, but not part of the regular classroom study" (p. 3). Emmer (2010d) explains "the terms extracurricular activities, co-curricular activities, and non-classroom activities have all been used interchangeably to mean experiences and activities such as debate, athletics, music, drama, school publications, student council, school clubs, contests, and various social events" (as cited in Lunenburg, 2010, p. 1). ECAs are activities organised or participated in by the students that are outside the area of the normal curriculum of school in which some activities are not part of students' school obligations. ECAs usually exist at all levels of school, from primary to tertiary.

There are sports- and non-sports-related ECAs at schools. Sports activities include soccer, basketball, aerobics, sports competitions and dance. Peguero (2011), Garcia (2012) and Turner (2010) point out sports-related activities have been shown to improve students' Grade Point Average (GPA), increase the probability of college attendance, develop educational aims and team spirit, broaden peer networks, and reduce problematic behaviours such as alcohol and drugs consumption. Turner (2010) indicates that non-sport related ECAs include such activities as school government, publications, choir, band, school clubs, competitions, drama, debate, volunteering and internships. Involvement in such academic, school-based ECAs shows greater educational achievement (Peguero, 2011). Therefore, Lunenburg (2010) states ECAs as "by whatever

name they are called, are an essential, vital, and extensive part of education in America" (p.1).

The current world is demanding that an "educational system that prepares graduates with the international knowledge and skills to work and live in an increasingly diverse and interdependent world is essential to our future" (Manitoba Council for International Education (MCIE), n.d). Turner (2010) asserts that ECAs outside of the school academic curriculum are an extension of the education program which encourages the all-round development of the students. Cassel, Chow, Demoulin and Reiger (2000) mention that ECAs should be practiced at high schools as a requirement for graduation because ECAs are as essential as the traditional academic curriculum. According to Yoshihito and Maiko (2009), ECAs are considered as one of the learning areas every student should be involved in in Japanese education. Moreover, the scholars explain that providing ECAs for students helps the student-centred approach school environment since it focuses on the individual as a person for development (Cassel et al., 2000). However, Lunenburg and Ornstein (2008) argue that ECAs are usually voluntary, organised by school officials and not associated with academic credit. Wilson (2009) also adds in the argument that ECAs usually do not offer credit for students, but mostly for personal growth and contribution to the school or community.

Although there are studies showing the benefits of participating in ECAs, some questions still remain. Gholson (1985) postulates the idea of school as a place for academic pursuits only and the studies of ECA involvement questioned the appropriateness in the school curricula during 1950's and 1960's. Marsh (1992) claims that ECAs become competition for academic pursuits which then affects students' academic performance because of time spent on such ECAs (non-academic activities). O'Brien and Rollefson (1995) theorise that there is no clear evidence to support whether involvement in ECAs provides advantages or whether already successful students are more likely to participate in ECAs or both. Since there are different types of ECAs, the particular type of ECA may also

influence the outcomes and benefits (Eccles & Barber, 1999). McNeal (1995) also points out that the impacts on students might be varied depending on their racial group, gender, socioeconomic status, age and level of their participation in ECAs.

On the other hand, some empirical studies of students with different age groups, backgrounds and ethnicities have confirmed that participation in ECAs have resulted in greater academic achievements, social and other life skills (Cassel et al., 2000, Wilson, 2009, Turner, 2010, Garcia, 2012, NCES, 2012). Marsh and Kleitman (2003) also assert that many educational practitioners and researchers have shown a more positive perspective by arguing that ECAs may have positive effects on life skills and may also benefit academic achievements. McNeal (1998) notes that "students with higher standardised test scores are significantly more likely to participate in most ECAs except athletics, cheerleading, and vocational activities; high-ability students are significantly less likely to participate in cheerleading and vocational activities and no more likely to participate in athletics than are lower ability students" (p. 188). Therefore, the study conducted at four urban middle schools located in an upstate New York urban area points out that positive student outcomes were not related to individual activities or the total of students' involvement in any type of ECAs, instead both positive and negative outcomes were linked to unique patterns of involvement (Metzger, Crean & Forbes-Jones, 2009).

In the United States, Lawhorn (2008-2009) identifies the learning outcomes of various ECAs as the following:

- Academic clubs provide students with a chance to discuss topics beyond the extent of the classroom and students who participate in athletics ECAs develop a sense of friendship and learn to work together with others.
- Debate clubs develop students' analytical and logical reasoning skills with the ability to think and speak which are valued by the employers.
- Performing arts provides students with an opportunity to work toward the shared goal.

- Service organizations "allow students to meet other socially conscious people and perform rewarding work with them". (p. 20)

- Student government develops leadership skills.

- Student publications "allow students to practice writing and editing, learn basic publishing methods, and, in the process, produce a source of information for their classmates" (p. 20).

Education and teaching approaches have been changing according to the demands of the fast changing world. A "liberal arts education" is one form of the lifelong education which can teach the students to be prepared for the real world with critical thinking skills, social skills and an understanding of the world. During the past few decades, the world has become more competitive, challenging students to have broader knowledge and skills in the job market. Liberal arts education can be defined as an "academically prestigious brand" which every university desires to practise and could also be implemented without changing the current educational practices (Glyer & Weeks, 1998, p. x).

Liberal arts education teaches beyond the knowledge and skills acquired to make a living; it also teaches how to live well and use freedom wisely. Moreover, Dunn (1999) points out that liberal arts education teaches us the ability to rule ourselves, in other words, self-rule, taking responsibility for our duties as human beings. The report of the task force on general education shows that liberal arts education also prepares students for the rest of their lives through being good citizens in making informed decisions which may affect others' lives (Kosslyn, Liu, Menand, Petersen, Pilbeam, Simmons, Spector, Waters & Kenen, 2007). Thus, liberal arts education is not all about receiving information, knowledge and skills at schools. It is a bigger picture of how people learn to live, make choices and decisions to become the fullest human beings and ECAs and co-curricular activities within a liberal arts education assist the students to achieve those.

Liberal Arts students are capable of discussing general knowledge in different subject areas and conducting, organising and leading different ECAs. David Kearns, former CEO of Xerox Corporation once stated that a liberal education is the form of education which prepares us to adapt to this changing world and it does not focus on a narrow specialization that might make us inflexible but rather assists us to solve problems and continue as lifelong learners (Association of American Colleges and Universities (AAC&U), 2005). Sorgner (2004) concludes one of the significant values of liberal education is that it provides the students with lifelong freedom, "the society helps the individual to find what is in his own interest considering the whole of his life" (p. 107). In this sense, ECAs allow the students to continue to be involved in the activities related to their subject interest area outside of the school curriculum (Wilson, 2009). Altbach, Reisberg and Rumbley (2009) postulate that the potential need for liberal arts education is becoming a global trend because it emphasises a broad curriculum including critical thinking, creativity, problem solving, communication skills, life skills and cultural awareness.

Research shows that a liberal arts education "uniquely fosters a broad range of empirically substantiated good practices in undergraduate education" (ASHE higher education report, 2005, p. 87). This report also indicates the good practices gained from liberal education such as students' interaction in the classroom, involvement in ECAs, motivation, active learning, student-teacher relationship, high expectations, quality of teaching and pleasant campus environment (ASHE higher education report, 2005). Glyer and Weeks (1998) claim that a liberal arts education is a strong foundation that individual students build up themselves to achieve maximum employability through ECAs, internships, community involvement, volunteering and study aboard. The goals set by the liberal arts education are mentioned by Blaich, Bost, Chan and Lynch (n.d.) as:

> thinking critically or possessing broad analytical skill, learning how to learn, thinking independently, empathizing, recognizing one's own assumptions, and seeing all sides of an issue, exercising self-control for the sake of broader

loyalties, showing self-assurance in leadership ability, demonstrating mature social and emotional judgment; personal integration, holding egalitarian, liberal, pro-science, and antiauthoritarian values and beliefs and participating in and enjoying cultural experience (p. 4).

As ECAs are a component of liberal arts education programmes, the essence, structure of liberal arts education and experiences gained through ECAs provide the above-mentioned qualities and skills in students' lives.

Some ECAs can be considered as supplements of academic subjects in order to reinforce learning. Lunenburg (2010) highlights the fact that ECAs serve the same goals and function as the elective courses offered as requirements in the curriculum. Historically, Millard (1930) states that "Extracurricular activities supplement and extend those contacts and experiences found in the more formal part of the program of the school day" (p. 16). There is a large volume of published studies describing that "when managed properly, the extracurricular activities program allows for a well-rounded, balanced program by (1) reinforcing learning, (2) supplementing the required and elective curriculum (formal courses of study), (3) integrating knowledge, and (4) carrying out the objectives of democratic life" (as cited in Lunenburg, 2010, p. 2). Lunenburg (2010) states "the activity is used to enrich and extend the work in the classroom… clubs associated with a subject-matter discipline have considerable reinforcement value" (p. 2). For example, participating in a language club can have positive impacts on students who attend language classes. Students can practise speaking and learn more about that particular language and culture through different activities organized by the club.

ECAs can be one form of elective subjects such as dance and theatre which cannot take place in a traditional classroom setting (Lunenburg, 2010). For example, liberal arts colleges offer a wide range of subject matters such as philosophy, humanities, literature, fine arts, music, cultural history, physical education, astronomy, social science,

economics and sociology (Langenbach, 1988). In such cases, ECAs become supplementary coursework which are counted as academic credits towards graduation. The report of the task force on general education also mentions that student organisations, the performing arts and athletics which are part of ECAs, develop the intellectual, ethical and personal growth of students (Kosslyn et al., 2007). The report shows that ECAs is a success story at Harvard College where the college "provides means for students to enrich both their classroom and their extracurricular experiences by forging an intellectual link between them" (Kosslyn et al., 2007, p. 19).

ISSUES AND IMPACTS OF ECAs

Many researchers share Coleman's (1961) negative view of participation in ECAs. According to his zero-sum model of time allocation, students struggled with their time management in which they had a limited time to divide between academic and structured and unstructured ECAs. Coleman (1961) argued that spending time on ECAs resulted in poorer academic outcomes. However, even though Coleman's thinking has dominated in the past, Swanson (2002), on the other hand, argued that there are many positive impacts resulting from participating in ECAs.

Social Life and Behaviours

Numerous studies have attempted to explain that students who participate greatly in ECAs at school have more tendencies to stay away from the use of alcohol and drugs. Garcia (2012) has conducted a study using data from the 2002 Educational Longitudinal Study which has a sample of 752 public, Catholic and other private schools. The findings indicate that students learned a sense of responsibility, fair play and honesty which encourages them to stay away from alcohol and drugs usage (Garcia, 2012). Turner (2010) agrees that participation in ECAs constructs positive perception of peer groups which reduces alcohol use. On the other hand, Peguero (2011) mentions that aggression

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and the usage of alcohol can be related to involvement in sports ECAs. Lutz, Cornish, Gonnerman, Ralston and Baker (2009) also suggest that not all the students, mostly male, who have participated in sports activities, develop positive impacts on their lives but have reported on the level of alcohol consumption, drunk driving and violent activity.

Zill, Nord and Loomis (1995) also claim that students who participate in high school sport ECAs increased their likelihood of drug use, dropping out and other risky behaviours. Students' increased use of alcohol is related to interscholastic sports involvement (Zill et al., 1995) although participating in classroom-related ECAs such as student government, decreased the possibility of alcohol consumption (Peguero, 2008). Gilman (2004) found that students who were involved in sports were almost twice as likely to remain in school as students who did not participate; nevertheless, it was also concluded that participation in sports teams enhanced the chance of greater rates of alcohol consumption and drug use.

The latest findings from the National Survey on Drug Use and Health (NSDUH) show that "22.4 million adolescents aged 12 to 17 (89.3 percent) participate in ECAs and that those who participate in these activities are less likely to have used alcohol, cigarettes, and illicit drugs in the past month. In particular, adolescents who participated in these activities were half as likely as nonparticipants to have smoked cigarettes" (Joiners, 2010, p.1)
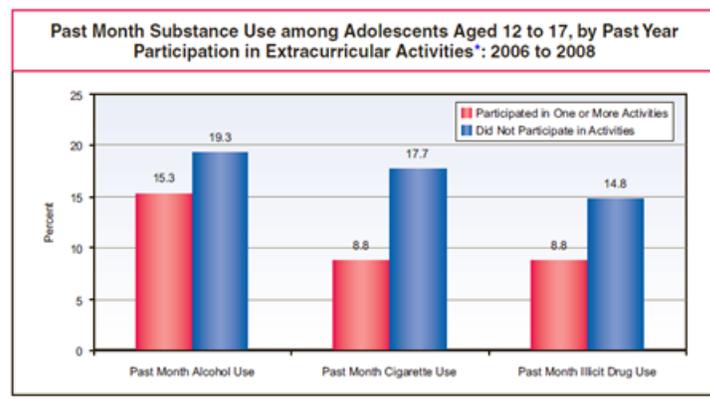
Figure 2.1 Past Month Substance use among Adolescents Aged 12-17, by past year participation in ECAs: 2006-2008, National Survey on Drug Use and Health (NSDUH)

Source: Joiners, 2010, http://alcoholselfhelpnews.wordpress.com/2010/09/13/teen-drug-use-and-extracurricular-activities/

Vygotsky (1978) also points out the importance of learning in cultural context through social interaction. Kaupapa Maori theory also agrees that "such positive, inclusive interactions will lead to improved student engagement in learning" (Bishop, 2008, p. 447). Such a comfortable and interactive environment fosters learning and social skills through understanding different points of view from others.

Careers

Do students who actively participate in ECAs at school have better opportunities in the job market? Rodriguez, Kesenne and Humphreys (2011) mention that non-cognitive skills which are self-discipline, motivation and trustworthiness, are as important as cognitive skills such as perceptions, thinking, learning, for life success. The scholars state that such non-cognitive skills can be learned over a long period of time and developed

through ECAs (Rodriguez et al., 2011). Such non-cognitive skills are part of the demands in the labour market.

The research of Lutz et al. (2009) points out how the involvement in high school sports ECAs has an impact on higher incomes in adult life. The authors also discuss the connection to being employed full-time and to a higher quality of job and working life with the evidence of National Education Longitudinal Study (NELS) stating "eight years after high school elite athletes were 49 percent more likely to be employed than those who did not participate in sports during high school" (as cited in Lutz et al., 2009, p.9). This is because those students are considered to have better concentration, team spirit, soft skills to improve productivity, the ability to work more efficiently and leadership skills (Rodriguez et al., 2011).

In a research study conducted at four institutions across the United Kingdom during a one year period, full-time second year students were studied at four different institutions: a Russell Group institution in the North of England; two 1960s campus institutions, one in Scotland and one in the South of England; and a post-92 institution in the capital were surveyed. In order to explore students' views of ECAs in more depth, 33 participants were involved in focus groups and interviews and telephone interviews were conducted with alumni from the 'class of 2001', at three of the four institutions about what impact ECAs had had on their careers (Stuart, Lido, Morgan & May, 2007-2008). The findings from the interviews with alumni indicate that their engagement in ECAs provided real opportunities to develop themselves and enhance their career prospects. Moreover, the results show that ECAs can add value to the students especially for their future job hunting through gaining skills for employment and helping with their courses, personal and social development (Stuart et al., 2007-2008).

Students who participate in non-sports ECAs also had improved attitude and values, better social interaction and psychosocial adjustment, leadership skills, creativity and real life situation experiences which are essential for the job market (Turner, 2010, Peguro, 2011). Thus, being actively involved in school ECAs provides quality skills for students to prepare them to access quality jobs.

Life Skills

Students who participate in ECAs offered by school are not limited to learning academic skills but they also develop social and life skills through experience. This is highlighted in the research conducted by Wilson (2009) stating that "participation can give adolescents confidence about their physical and perhaps social selves… social competence, often have greater opportunity to interact with others, develop friendships, and to develop social confidence… participation might be interpreted as a sign of maturity and as a self-affirming behaviour" (p. 11). Such life-long benefits of participation in ECAs shape students to become well-rounded beings. ECAs such as community service, voluntary and internships promote a greater sense of community and belonging for students. Rodriguez et al. (2011) reveal that participation in ECAs also helps to provide happiness in life. Impacts of ECAs on students' life such as good health, quality job, self-confidence and good social life increase the happiness throughout their life.

Hong, Lin and Veach (2008) investigated students with single-parents in Taiwan, in ECAs such as field trips, speeches, hands-on workshops, team competitions, peer mentoring and evaluative exercises. The findings show that some of the students experienced positive feelings of self-worth and recognised noticeable progress after the extracurricular science intervention (Hong et. al, 2008). ECAs are complementary with respect to students' development where ECAs often provide such skills as problem-solving, strategic planning and organising and leadership training which cannot be

developed through normal classroom activities (Mahoney, Larson & Eccles, 2005). Some ECAs provide opportunities for students to develop their own identities by realising their interests, finding adults and friends with whom they feel commonality and taking leadership roles (Mahoney et. al, 2005).

The environment provided by ECAs can enhance students' interaction among each other. Lawhorn (2008-2009) highlights that "The opportunity to form friendships also gives students a chance to develop social skills. For some students, social interaction in extracurricular activities is their first experience working with others toward a common goal. And teamwork is an important skill that most instructors and employers view favourably" (p. 17) which continuously develop students' leadership skills. Stuart et al. (2007-2008) indicate that friendships developed through ECAs provide a mechanism for the growth of useful social networks in the future. By creating such a social environment, the students learn from each other and realize the ideas and views presented by others which are different from theirs through interaction (Schunk, 2000).

Participation in ECAs can also develop good life habits and a sense of belonging. Gilman, Meyers and Perez (2004) point out that active engagement in school and community activities can enhance a sense of belonging and is important for students' academic achievement. Davalos, Chavez and Guardiola (1999) suggest that by strengthening a student's sense of identification at school and by providing the school environment that may enhance the student with a greater sense of belonging and satisfaction it may lower students' dropout rate. Garcia (2012) claims that students who participate in ECAs become more attached to their school and have better attendance which develops the greater sense of belonging. In particular, involvement in ECAs has been related to increased interest in school, strengthening students' sense of identity, and providing students with a sense of self-satisfaction (Davalos et. al, 1999).

However, some scholars argue that if participation is overloaded or has no adult supervision, it can have negative impact on students (Eccles, 2003). Metzger et al. (2009) mention that volunteering and sports activities can reduce identity development, social capital and college attendance, and there are more chances to engage in more risk-taking behaviours and to experience more stress. Other studies, on the other hand, reveal how participation in ECAs develops life-long good habits, good character, self-respect and self-worth, greater level of communication and self-esteem (Turner, 2010, Garcia, 2012, Peguero, 2011). Such life-long good habits as being on schedule, honesty, fair play, exercising, respect rules and regulations can be gained through ECAs. However, positive and negative developmental outcomes often depend on the types of ECAs students are involved in (Metzger et al., 2009).

Community

There is a very limited amount of literature on the impacts of involvement in out-of-school ECAs on the community.

Some out-of-school ECAs involve volunteering services and internships in the community. Wilson (2009) indicates that volunteer and service-related activities help improve the local and worldwide community. Edwards, Mooney and Heald (2001) argue that community-based learning (CBL) initiatives are practised at several liberal arts colleges in the United States where the community becomes a partner in the students' learning process, called service learning. However, the research on the impacts of CBL programs and service learning on the communities and organisations where students provide their service has been overlooked (as cited in Edwards et al., 2001).

Barrientos (2010) highlights a few impacts of service learning - "Student commit to understanding and serving the needs of the community… to build strong linkages to

improve services and improve the quality of life for community members" (p. 13). Grimm, Spring and Dietz (2007) show how volunteering strengthens the community and improves the life of people being served as part of their research. The report of Volunteer Now (2011) indicates that volunteering "offered a vital link to the community, reinforced their ability to cope with day-to-day life and had been instrumental in helping them to develop skills, build confidence, self esteem and make new friends" (p. 8).

Volunteering and service learning programs not only have impacts on the community but also have impacts on students' individual psychological development, social and life skills.

Academic Learning

Total extracurricular activity participation (TEAP), or participation in ECAs in general, is associated with an improved grade point average, higher educational aspirations, increased college attendance, and reduced absenteeism (Broh, 2002). Peguero (2008) asserts that students' outcomes such as academic achievements, self-esteem and perception of life chances have increased by involvement in such scholastic-related ECAs as honour societies, plays, sports, school bands and clubs. However, different types of ECAs producing different types of outcomes for students are supported in the argument made by Bush (2003) stating that many effects of participating in ECAs depend on the type of ECAs which students are involved in.

A number of studies have found the benefits of participating in ECAs at school have a positive impact on students' learning outcomes and academic achievements (Turner, 2010, Garcia, 2012, Peguero, 2011, Wilson, 2009). Turner (2010) carried out a study which shows that the average Grade Point Average (GPA) of students who are actively involved in ECAs is 3.201 (p. 4). However, since many ECAs are not academic, some

may argue that they are disadvantageous, such as an argument against ECAs by Coleman (1961) who concluded that "students' subcultures focus on such features as athleticism and popularity, which take away from academic responsibility" (As cited in Bush, 2003, p. 5). In contrast, a study done by Marsh (1992) examining the effects of total extracurricular activity participation (TEAP) during the last two years of high school by using large, nationally representative High School and Beyond data notes that there are correlations between the total number of ECAs a student is involved in and the many different outcomes such as a positive social and academic self-concept, taking more advanced courses, spending more time on homework, higher GPA, educational aspirations, more parental involvement, less absenteeism, higher college attendance, and higher occupational aspirations.

As mentioned above, participation in ECAs leads to higher Grade Point Average (GPA) and also greater educational success. Wilson (2009) states "benefits of participating in extracurricular activities included having better grades, having higher standardised test scores and higher educational attainment" (p. 1). Garcia (2012) points out that improved GPA and higher post-secondary aims as one of the significant benefits of involvement in ECAs. Fredricks and Eccles (2006) claim that active participation can be tied to positive academic outcomes, including improved grades and test scores, more school engagement, and enhanced educational aspirations.

The research conducted with 89 high school seniors in the United States shows that students who are actively engaged in more hours in sports ECAs statistically had significantly higher GPAs (Field, Diego & Sanders, 2001). Additionally, the findings from the survey conducted with over 50,000 ninth graders on ECAs, sports participation highlight that students who participate in ECAs have greater chances of doing more than three hours homework per week (Harrison & Gopalakrishnan, 2003). Conversely, Fisher, Juszczak and Friedman (1996) performed the study with 838 high school students in gym

classes through questionnaires show that involvement in Sports ECAs was not statistically related to academic performance.

On the other hand, Roland (2010) mentions that participating in ECAs sometimes consumes more time and energy than students can handle which then affects their academic performance. Anderson (2011) also agrees that involvement in ECAs can be overwork for students mentally and physically and take away the time which can be used for study. In this case, ECA participation can lead to negative effects on academic achievement. Thus, even though a number of studies show various benefits and positive effects of participating in ECAs, it is important to have a balance between academic and activities to have better impacts (Wilson, 2009).

The investigation done by Hong et al. (2008) on the efficacy of extracurricular science intervention for at-risk students who live with single-parents in Taiwan shows that "it is particularly encouraging that the academic performance of boys and girls from single-parent households might be enhanced by an extracurricular intervention… the intervention appears to have lessened some of their risks for poor academic performance and improved their psychosocial functioning" (p. 565). According to the 2010 National Survey of Student Engagement (NSSE) (2010), 77% of freshmen and 75% of seniors at Purdue University in Indiana State, USA, participate in ECAs. NSSE noted that the most satisfied students at Purdue are also the ones who are most heavily engaged in ECAs as it is shown in Figure 2.3. The first table below (Figure 2.2) shows the hours of students' participation in ECAs per week.

Chart 1
Participation in Co-Curricular Activities
Hours per Week

Source: 2010 NSSE
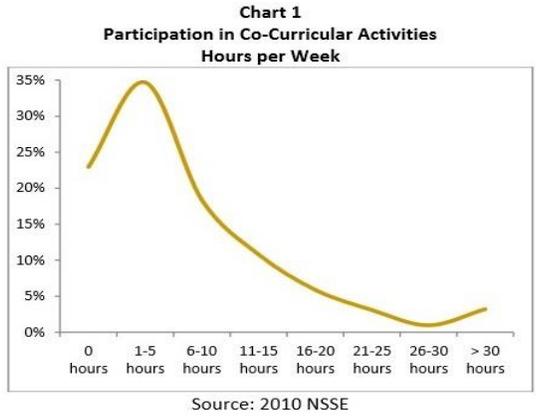
Figure 2.2 Participation in Co-curricular Activities: Hours per week,

Source: Zehner, 2011, p. 1

Chart 3
Students' Satisfaction with Their Entire Educational Experience
by Hours of Co-Curricular Activity

Source: NSSE
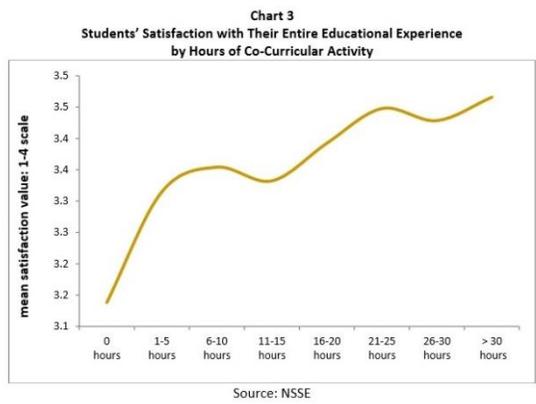
Figure 2.3 Students' satisfaction with their entire educational experience by Hours
of Co-curricular Activity

Source: Zehner, 2011, p. 3

Figure 2.3 indicates the increased student satisfaction with their overall education experience as the number of hours they spent in ECAs increased.
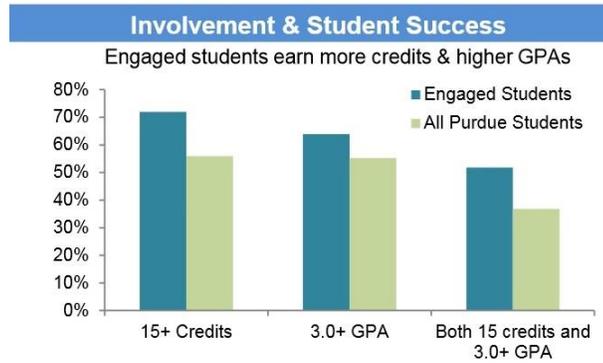
Figure 2.4 Involvements and Student Success

Source: Zehner, 2011, p. 1

Figure 2.4 shows the study conducted at Purdue University, Indiana, USA of student involvement in five ECAs across six semesters which resulted in higher GPA and academic performance for those who are engaged more in ECAs.
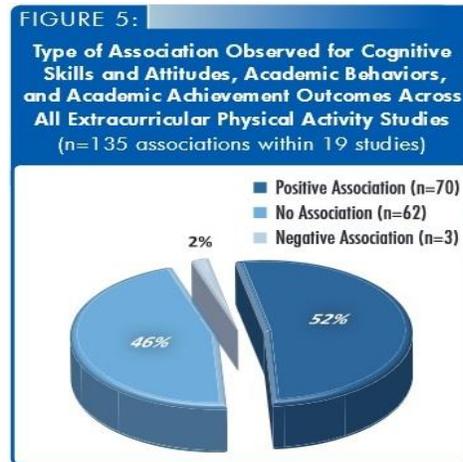
Figure 2.5 Type of association observed for Cognitive skills and attitude, Academic behaviours, and Academic achievement outcomes across ECAs studies

Source: USDHHS, 2010, p. 24

The report written by the US Department of Health and Human Services (USDHHS) on the review of the analysing the findings of nineteen articles, shows significant positive association of participating in ECAs with very few negative effects.

Figure 2.6 indicates the positive, negative and neutral effects of participating in ECAs on self-esteem, educational aspirations, positive academic attitude, school attachment, school attendance, dropout rates and GPA.

Table 5b: Extracurricular Physical Activity Nonintervention Studies: Summary of the Outcomes of Cognitive Skills and Attitudes, Academic Behavior, and Academic Achievement

| Variables in Extracurricular Physical Activity Intervention Studies (N=12 Studies)*	Total # of Performance Outcomes Across the 12 Intervention Studies	Type of Relationship Observed Between Extracurricular Physical Activity and Academic Performance		
		Positive	None	Negative
Cognitive Skills and Attitudes (N=7 Studies)	48	28	18	2
Self-esteem/self-efficacy/self-concept	19	5	4	0
Academic self-concept/competence	3	2	1	0
Locus of control	5	4	1	0
Educational aspirations/potential	4	4	0	0
Interest in class	4	3	1	0
Mood	8	1	7	0
Positive academic attitudes	3	3	0	0
School value	4	0	2	2
School attachment	4	4	0	0
Resiliency	4	2	2	0
Academic Behavior (N=3 Studies)	34	15	19	0
Conduct (discipline)	4	0	4	0
Enrollment in academic track/science class	4	2	2	0
School completion	1	1	0	0
Attendance	6	2	4	0
Prepared for class	4	0	4	0
Homework completion	2	2	0	0
Attend college	4	2	2	0
Dropout rates/graduation	9	6	3	0
Academic Achievement (N=10 Studies)	24	13	10	1
Achievement test scores (e.g., math, reading, language arts)	4	1	2	1
Grade point average/grades	16	11	5	0
Academic ability	4	1	3	0
Total	106	56	47	3

Figure 2.6 ECAs Intervention Studies: Summary of the outcomes of Cognitive skills and attitude, Academic behaviour, and Academic achievement

Source: USDHHS, 2010, p. 26

Regardless of positive views, most studies pinpoint that any benefits which result from participation in ECAS are heavily dependent on the nature of the activity (Eccles, Barber, Stone & Hunt, 2003, Metzger et al., 2009, Bush, 2003).

BARRIERS TO PARTICIPATION IN ECAs AND STRATEGIES TO OVERCOME THEM

There is limited literature discussing the barriers which prevent students from participating in ECAs and strategies to overcome those barriers. A few literature and articles indicate some challenges as negative effects of involvement in ECAs.

Managing time commitments becomes a challenge for most students who are weak at time management and who take longer to finish homework and study (Roland, 2010). Roland (2010) also notes that some after-school ECAs involvement consumes extra time and energy, more than students can handle which leaves them with insufficient time to finish their house chores and homework. Anderson (2011) presents a similar view that participating in ECAs takes away time for homework, increases spending extra time of both students and parents, and sometimes causes overwork which drains students mentally and physically. Roland (2010) suggests that one of the strategies is to get involved only in one or two ECAs which do not take much time after school. The scholar continues to advise choosing ECAs which are according to the students' interest and which leave enough time to finish homework, house chores and other priorities (Roland, 2010).

Some students choose not to participate in ECAs because of the potential stress they encounter when balancing schoolwork and ECAs. Reynolds (2010) claims that involvement in different ECAs can cause stress not only for the students but also for the parents when both have to make time in their tight schedule. Moreover, busy students may not have enough time to spend with their family which may later affect the parents' and children's relationship (Reynolds, 2010). Wilson (2009) claims that "Not only can over-scheduling impact academics and level of commitment, it can also impact the student emotionally and physically which could lead to stress, fatigue and bum-out" (p.

16). Anderson (2011) also points out that being involved in sports and performing arts competitions can put pressures on students which sometimes can be overwhelming. Roland (2010) mentions that if the student is stressed or overloaded with activities, he or she should drop a few activities and allow some time for leisure or unstructured activities with family and friends.

Some students find that ECAs can sometimes be expensive. Anderson (2011) indicates that the cost can vary according to the type of ECAs and can be a great amount. Reynolds (2010) indicates that organised sports ECAs and music-related ECAs are costly for students and parents because of the registration fees and purchase of uniforms, equipment and musical instruments. Wilson (2009) highlights the fact that performing arts ECAs such as a band may cost a certain amount of money to buy instruments and to have private lessons which cannot be afforded by certain students with parents on a limited income. Wilson (2009) also points out that

> It is hard for the average-income student to compete with the athlete who has had additional training, top-notch equipment, and enjoys the opportunity to play sports year-round. This economic disadvantage can bring disappointment and frustration to the student, or even prohibit some from even trying the sport in the first place (p. 18).

One strategy to overcome this barrier suggested by Reynolds (2010) is for the school to offer to supply parents with equipment and instruments for students to use for school-organised sports and music ECAs. Turner (2010) also indicates that schools may arrange many activities with low cost and well managed budgeting.

Parental support and involvement can be seen as one of the challenges for students not to participate in ECAs. Turner (2010) notes that some teachers have difficulties to get students to participate in ECAs because of the lack of parental involvement. Some

students are not able to participate in ECAs because of parents' lack of support or limited income (Reynolds, 2010). On the other hand, Wilson (2009) highlights that students who have to work in order to help with the family income are not able to participate in ECAs. Therefore, students' socio-economic status can be considered as one of the barriers. Transportation also plays a part of the challenges preventing students from participating in ECAs. Anderson (2011) asserts that students who use public or school transportation may be discouraged from being involved in ECAs. Regarding parental involvement, teachers must encourage the parents to be involved and give permission to their children to participate in ECAs (Turner, 2010).

In summary, the main challenges preventing the students from participating in ECAs are discussed in a few studies as time management, stress, financial issues, parental involvement and encouragement and transportation. Some of the strategies to overcome those challenges are also discussed.

CONCLUSION

ECAs programme such as sports-related ECAs and non-sports related (in-school or outside school) ECAs are discussed. Each ECA offers significant experience and development for students. However, positive outcomes depend on the type of activities students are involved in and the unique patterns of involvement.

Different research studies and literature show that ECAs help students attach to school with better attendance, to develop a sense of identification/ belonging and life-long good habits through in-school and outside school activities. Students gain and learn good character, self-respect and self-worth, greater level of communication, self-esteem, honesty, fair play, exercising, respecting rules and regulations through participating in ECAs. The findings of much research, and many studies and reports indicate that ECAs

produce positive impacts on students' learning outcomes and academic achievements. The findings of different empirical studies prove that participating in physical or sports ECAs has an association with healthy lives, good physical and mental health, lower risk of suffering from various diseases and development of life-long healthy habits.

Many literature and studies clearly show that ECAs promote different sets of life skills and other essential skills in order for students to develop into well-rounded beings and prepare them for the job market. In contrast, some researchers have argued that unstructured ECAs with no adult supervision could bring negative aspects to participation in ECAs. Even though there is a very limited amount of literature on the impacts of participating in ECAs on the community, there is some evidence that volunteering and service learning have positive impacts on the community and the beneficiaries. Some of the challenges preventing students from participating in ECAs are presented as time management, stress, financial issues, parental involvement and encouragement and transportation. Some of the strategies to overcome those challenges are also discussed.

ECAs which promote the above mentioned skills in addition to the knowledge and learning gained from school can be considered for implementation in Myanmar public schools. Moreover, future implementation of well-organised ECAs in Myanmar public schools might bring more advantages to the students' and country's development.

CHAPTER - 3
METHODOLOGY

INTRODUCTION

Choosing the most suitable methodology and data collection methods is one of the important aspects of research. An appropriate choice of methodology and data collection methods are made to explore the teachers' and students' perceptions related to the role of extracurricular activities (ECAs) and experiences in participation of ECAs with a critical examination of various literature. In this chapter, an epistemology and a qualitative research methodology is justified. Two key data collection methods, document analysis and individual interviews, are addressed with key issues arising from the literature with the discussion of a choice of sampling. Moreover, data analysis strategies are identified and discussed. Reliability, validity and ethical issues are addressed and discussed within the context of this research.

BACKGROUND OF RESEARCH

This research is concerned with exploring the perception of students and teachers regarding the role of extracurricular activities (ECAs) offered at a private university in Myanmar. Understanding the perception of the participants allowed the educators to reflect on the importance of ECAs in order to raise its role in tertiary education. This study examined the mission statements and expected learning outcomes set by the selected institute in order to analyse how well this educational institution achieved these outcomes through the role of ECAs.

This research study aims to identify the impact of participation in ECAs on students' academic achievements, social and life skills by examining students' and teachers'

perceptions of their experiences of ECAs. It also investigated the barriers to and the reasons for participation in ECAs alongside the strategies to overcome them. Its aim is to give a voice especially to the students and their views on the role of ECAs in order to contribute to the wider research on the future implementation of ECAs as part of the Myanmar education system especially through higher educational reform.

The following research questions are raised to explore the chosen topic:

1. What is the nature of extracurricular activities in a Liberal Arts Programme?
2. What are the teachers' and students' perceptions of the role and impact of extracurricular activities?
3. How are Liberal Arts Programme mission statements and expected learning outcomes achieved through extracurricular activities?
4. What factors help and hinder participation in extracurricular activities?

EPISTOMOLOGY AND METHODOLOGY

In order to understand the nature and purpose of educational problems and the related methodologies of research, the educational and social science research traditions cannot be overlooked. Educational research is often related to an individual or an organisation conducted in educational settings. Freebody (2003) noted that educational research is used to "inform, advance, or obstruct policy and practice in education" (p. 20). Anderson and Arsenault (1998) also stated that educational research tries to deal with questions or solve problems through the data collection and analysis for the purpose of description, explanation, generalisation and prediction. Educational research is concerned with broadening knowledge within research traditions and approaches besides improving educational practices (Cohen, Manion, & Morrison, 2007). Findings of educational research can help educators to be more effective professionals and that effectiveness turns

into the better learning of students (Creswell, 2012). That is why educational research is important and worth conducting.

When choosing the methodological approaches and data collection methods, it is essential to consider the underpinned epistemological and ontological understandings. Epistemology raises the question of what knowledge is and how it can be acquired (Cohen, et al., 2007). Bryman (2008) noted the aspect of epistemology as "an epistemological issue concerns the question of what is or should be regarded as acceptable knowledge in a discipline" (p.13). Ontology, on the other hand, is based on theory of being; questions related to the kind of things exist in the world (Cohen, et al., 2007). The authors also mentioned how different cultures hold different beliefs which sometimes affect the way one perceives and engages in the situation. As this research dealt with the perceptions and experiences of students and teachers regarding the role of ECAs at a particular university to investigate an individual's worldview, it stands on the epistemology position of interpretivist approach Even though each individual comes from a similar background, it is not necessary to be identical in their views and experiences.

Davidson and Tolich (2003) stated that "paradigm is used in social science to describe an entire way of looking at the world" (p. 26). The two classical paradigms in educational research are described in different ways such as a positivist or scientific approach and a post-positivist or interpretive approach (Tolich & Davidson, 1999). Tolich and Davidson (1999) define the interpretive paradigm as "the systematic analysis of socially meaningful action through the direct detailed observation of people in natural settings in order to arrive at understandings and interpretations of how people create and maintain their social world" (p. 26). In the interpretive paradigm, the researcher tries to understand the reality through participants' perspectives and realises how participants interpret the world around them (Cohen, et al., 2007).

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My study is based on the research questions that understand and interpret the nature and aims of current ECAs practices, interactions and seek experiences of the participants through document analysis and interview data collection. This research attempted to investigate an array of perceptions of a group of people to create a meaning of a particular situation which Cohen, Manion and Morrison (2007) indicate is part of the interpretive paradigm. Thus, I carefully chose this appropriate paradigm for this research in order to provide clear, strong and valid theoretical underpinnings and findings.

The plan of action which a researcher uses to relate methods to outcomes while studying theoretical arguments of the research is known as research methodology (Cohen, et al., 2007). Research methodology is important as it establishes the approaches, methods, and strategies to be used by the researcher (Creswell, 2012). Following the interpretive paradigm, the term used to describe it is referred to as qualitative analysis. A qualitative form of research is used in this study to investigate the perceptions, attitudes, feelings and experiences of the participants. Qualitative research is "the collection, analysis, and interpretation of comprehensive narrative and visual data to gain insights into a particular phenomenon of interest" (Gay, Mills & Airasian, 2009, p. 7). Thus, qualitative research helped me to understand the world in which students perceive ECAs to develop meanings from their experiences. By engaging in in-depth interview conversations about ECAs, the meaning of participants' perceptions was understood. Therefore, the focus of this research is on interpreting, describing and analysing the data.

In educational research, when choosing a method or methods of inquiry for a particular research problem, the researcher has to consider the nature of the problem, their own research skills and the disciplinary perspectives (Keeves, 1997). Qualitative research methodology is best suited for this study rather than a quantitative methodology as "certain kinds of educational problems and questions do not lend themselves well to quantitative methods, which use principally numerical analysis and try to control variables in very complex environments" (Gay et al., 2009, p. 8). Since this was small

scale research, it was quite difficult to attain the statistical requirements of quantitative research (Bryman, 2008). Therefore, qualitative research methods were one of the key tools for the researcher who uses the interpretive paradigm.

A basic assumption of the qualitative research methodology is that a deep understanding of the world can be achieved through conversation and observation in natural settings instead of gaining them through the experiments and artificial conditions (Anderson & Arsenault, 1998). Qualitative researchers examine things in natural settings in order to make sense of or interpret the situations based on the meanings participants bring to them (Denzin & Lincoln, 2005). In this research, scientific objectivity was impractical as I brought my own experiences and worldview regarding the role of ECAs. Thus, this particular research was conducted in a real-world situation with an acknowledgement of my own experiences and background using qualitative research methodology.

My personal background knowledge and experiences had shaped my research topic and questions which I aim to study. I studied at a public school which did not offer any particular ECAs and practised a teacher-centred approach in the classroom. I grew up as a person with little confidence in critical thinking and social skills. When I studied my bachelor degree at an American Liberal Arts College for four years with an involvement in a variety of ECAs, I personally developed such skills as social interaction, leadership and creative thinking. Thus, my interest in the role of ECAs played in students' lives was aroused when this particular private university in Myanmar started to offer ECAs for students. Since this private university is not under the control of the Ministry of Education instead developing their own educational philosophy and objectives as a liberal arts college, they are able to offer a variety of ECAs for students.

Qualitative case study research is a type of in-depth interpretive enquiry which tries to describe, explain and discover more about real world contexts. Case study research takes

place with the desire to understand the social circumstances and allows the researcher to maintain the holistic and meaningful characteristics of real-life situations (Yin, 2003). Merriam (1988) also states "a qualitative case study is an intensive, holistic description and analysis of a single instance, phenomenon, or social unit" (p. 21). A case study provides contextual data with "commitment to the overwhelming significance of localised experience" in order to support the qualitative research methodology (Freebody, 2003, p. 81). Since this study focused on the process of ECAs, the understanding of students' experiences and interpreting views, a case study is the most suitable choice because of the importance of context.

The two data collection methods selected for this particular study are in-depth interviews and document analysis which are "the best-known representatives of qualitative research studies and... most embody the characteristics" (Bogdan & Biklen, 2003, p. 3). Since this is qualitative research, it is necessary to use methods which allow intensive and close interaction with the participants during the research and time-intensive data collection (Gay et al., 2009). Morse (2003) points out that the researcher can gain a more complete picture of participants' behaviours and experiences by using more than one method. The semi-structured interviews helped me to gather rich data with an opportunity to explore the perceptions of students and teachers around ECAs shaped by the interview questions. Using two methods of data collection allowed me to reflect on how well educational institutions can achieve their overall statements and learning outcomes through the role of ECAs. Both data collection methods are discussed later in this chapter.

SAMPLING

The sample size was limited in this research according to the length of time-period to finish the research and the scope of this study. A sufficient sample is necessary to represent a wider group related to my research interest (Powney & Watts, 1987). Participants in the sample should be willing to participate and give time to express their

views and experiences during the interviews (Powney & Watts, 1987, Tolich & Davidson, 1999). A key issue with the choice of sample is to choose the participants carefully to match the research area and questions, contacting them carefully to receive approvals and access (Powney & Watts, 1987).

According to the limitation and the size of this research, the sample size is important to take into consideration. As the purpose of this study is to explore the students' and teachers' perspectives and experiences of participation in ECAs and their views on the values of ECAs, one of the private universities in Myanmar was selected as the research field. Since my research was an in-depth case study research, I invited a private university in Myanmar, which offers an ECA programme. The dean of the university was contacted through email to invite their participation in this research. After a week, he sent an organisational consent letter indicating that I am warmly welcomed to conduct this research at their university.

Bryman (2008) highlights the necessity of purposive sampling needed to select the participants with the essential expertise and role to answer the research questions. Therefore, ten students and five teachers, who were participating in ECAs during the time of this study, were invited out of approximately 550 students from that particular institute. The students were invited from third and fourth year groups (Junior and Senior students) because these students have a reasonable amount of ECA experience to discuss. Oppenheim (1992) claims that we need "a good spread of respondent characteristics" to have different possible kinds and backgrounds (p. 68). Thus, the participants were carefully invited to match the investigation.

The invitation of the students and teachers to volunteer in the interview is as follows. I firstly contacted the class teachers teaching in third and fourth year in order for me to make an announcement on the information of my research and an invitation to participate

if they are interested. My invitation included all the third and fourth year students who were currently taking part in any ECAs during the time of study. Students who showed a willingness to take part in my research were provided with an information sheet and asked to provide more information on their participation in ECAs in order for me to select the most suitable participants. According to Bryman (2008), I considered age range, gender balance and individual backgrounds to maximize the diversity.

There were more than ten students who volunteered to participate. The class teachers also pointed out some students who actively participate in ECAs and leaders of students' committees among the students who wanted to volunteer. Therefore, I selected the participants according to my proposed criteria. I wanted to choose six students who had leadership roles in student organizations, two in sports activities and two in any type of ECAs. However, there was only one student who was involved in sport activities in my volunteer list. Thus, with the help of that student, I recruited one more student from the sport committee. I also achieved a reasonable cross-section of students in terms of gender and age.

I invited the teachers who supervise or are involved in the planning of ECAs who were interested in my research. Similar to the student participants selection, their age, gender, backgrounds and years of experience were taken into consideration. Since most of the student organisations were run by the students, there were only a few teachers who were involved in ECAs. I talked to those teachers individually, explained my research and invited them to participate. There were four teachers who showed interest in my research. As I planned to interview five teachers, I invited the Dean of students to participate in an interview as she was willing to discuss the ECAs offered at the institute.

I sent out the information sheet after receiving the confirmation from participants who were willing to be interviewed for my research. All the participants were interviewed

individually (face-to-face) with the interview schedule and questions. Participants were given a consent form to sign before the interview on the scheduled day. Since all the participants understand English well, both information sheet and consent form were provided in English instead of translating into Burmese. The challenge of scheduling the interviews was that most students were very busy and had a tight schedule with their classes and activities. Since this institute is an evening university, some students attended full-day public university or some students worked full-time. Therefore, interviews could be scheduled only in the evening before the classes started. As a result, the interviews took more than two weeks.

DOCUMENT ANALYSIS

Merriam (1998) states "documents are, in fact, a ready-made source of data easily accessible to the imaginative and resourceful investigator" (p. 112). In order to find out whether the mission statements, aims and learning outcomes set by the institute are met directly or indirectly through the role of ECAs, analysing the available documents played a crucial part.

According to Bowen (2009), document analysis is defined as "a systematic procedure for reviewing or evaluating documents, both printed and electronic material (p. 27). Document analysis is a useful tool in qualitative research methods as a means of triangulation (Bowen, 2009). Cortazzi (2002) asserts that documents are regarded as evidence of past and current realities or future plans. Thus, by analysing the documents, the researcher can understand the degree of truth coming from interviewees. The researcher acts as a primary instrument for gathering data which makes their skills to find and interpret the data from documents important (Merriam, 1998).

The university was asked to provide copies of their policy papers, student handbooks and reports related to ECAs since finding relevant documents was the first step in the process. The main documents used for this research were official documents which were produced by the institute such as newsletters, files, reports, meeting minutes, memos and yearbooks, kept as a record (Bogdan & Biklen, 2003). The documents provided important contextual, philosophical and background information which can assist other data collection methods (Bowen, 2009). Analysing the documents before the individual interviews helped me understand the role ECAs played in education and served as a foundation for the perceptions of the participants.

There are some drawbacks of using document analysis data collection methods. Merriam (1998) points out that documents can give incomplete information as they were not written for research purposes. Therefore, the data obtained from some documents might not be useful or might lack some details for the research (Bowen, 2009). Yin (1994) also mentions that an incomplete collection of documents may lead to biased selectivity. One of the main limitations of document analysis is verifying their authenticity and accuracy (Merriam, 1998). However, document analysis is an efficient method in research as it is less time-consuming for the researcher. Bowen (2009) highlights the stability of the documents which can be reviewed repeatedly. Document analysis was a good combination data collection method for the interviews since it allowed me to compare and contrast what interviewees said to the standards set by the institute. Thus, data collected from documents was a good source for such a qualitative case study because "they can ground an investigation in the context of the problem being investigated" (Merriam, 1998, p. 126).

INTERVIEW DATA COLLECTION METHOD

In order to have deep understanding of the participants' views, attitudes and experiences, a face-to-face interview data collection method was most appropriate for this study.

Fontana and Frey (2005) stress that when we try to understand other people the interview method is one of the most popular ways. Huseyin (2009) asserts that conducting interviews is a good research tool for getting the information in detail by asking direct questions to participants who are chosen as sample for a particular research topic. Bryman (2008) also suggests that interviews are a useful data collection method when looking in-depth at participants' views and attitude. This research focused on the insights and experiences of participants of their involvement in ECAs, so the interview data collection method was chosen.

I used semi-structured interviews which included a series of open-ended structured questions followed by probing questions to achieve additional required information. The literature points out the interviewer's ability in asking questions such as wording, consistency and the flow of the questions (Oppenheim, 1992). Tolich and Davidson (1999) also mention that it is necessary to avoid dead-end or closed questions which can only produce such answers as 'yes', 'no', and 'kind of'. The authors also assert that it is important to consider how to use prompting for interviewees to elaborate, but not to use leading questions which can prompt a specific kind of answer which the researcher hopes to get (Tolich & Davidson, 1999).

As suggested by Yin (2003), data-collecting instruments have to be piloted with a similar population to the participants. Thus, it was good practice for me to conduct two pilot interviews with cousins, studying at private high schools which offer ECAs, before conducting them in the field in order to raise my ability to ask questions and follow the interview rules. Conducting pilot interviews assisted me to focus on the wordings, the flow of the questions and time limit for the actual interviews.

I was very careful not to impose my own perspectives and biases on the interviewees while conducting the interviews. This is one key issue which the literature has discussed

because "the interviewer's perspective is also limited by knowledge and experience as the interviewee's" (Powney & Watts, 1987). Moreover, some literature points out that not having enough social skills and active listening skills, which are essential in conducting interviews, can be a concern in generating reliable data (Tolich & Davidson, 1999, Powney & Watts, 1987). Having good social and interaction skills made the interviewees feel comfortable to open up with me and be interested in my research topic. Thus, it was important for me as an interviewer not to hear only what I hoped to hear according to my research interest. Additionally, I was aware of the language used by the interviewees when transcribing and translating the interviews from Myanmar to English.

Interviews were recorded with a digital recorder and some note taking by me. I firstly asked the permission from the interviewee to record the conversation digitally. Even though I recorded each interview with the digital recorder, I also took some notes while the participants were responding to help with the data analysis later on. Note-taking can also record the non-verbal communication such as body language (Tolich & Davidson, 1999). However, Huseyin (2009) argues that note taking during the participant talk can "disrupt the effectiveness of the communication between interviewer and respondent… note taking may distract them from giving information they otherwise might have given" (p. 205). Thus, I gave full attention to the interviewee during their talk and made a minor note after they finished talking. I only jotted down the highlights of their response.

DATA ANALYSIS

Data analysis is a careful examination of the data that result from single or multiple interviews (Powney & Watts, 1987). Neuman (2000) defines data analysis as "examining, sorting, categorizing, evaluating, comparing, synthesizing, and contemplating the coded data as well as reviewing the raw and recorded data" (p. 448). Cohen et al. (2007) claim that qualitative data analysis includes organizing, interpreting the data, constructing the meaning of the data in terms of participants' definitions. Thus,

the data analysis process started with transcribing the interview conversation, followed by coding and categorizing into themes in order to compare and contrast them. When categorizing into themes, it was necessary to analyse the data critically for the similarities and differences in order to find out the actual meaning of the data (Yin, 2003).

The transcribed raw data from interviews were coded according to the themes. Numerical and coloured coding was used for the interviewed participants as S1-S10 and T1-T5. This was helpful in facilitating analysis. When analysing the data, I used the hand analysis of qualitative data mentioned by Creswell (2012) reading the transcribed data, marking it by hand and dividing into different categories. Notes and remarks were also written down in the interview transcripts while reading. Not only the positive comments but also the negative comments were discussed under each theme. Key features, relationships, patterns, themes, categories, and regularities were noted in analysing the data (Cohen et al., 2007). Bassey (1999) declares "every enquiry is unique and so any attempt to generalise on analytical methods is a problematic venture" (p. 84). Thus, I was aware of generalisation when analysing the data. A large amount of collected interview data was reduced and interpreted in order to put it into different themes and patterns to create meanings (Creswell, 1994). Thus, I used my research questions as a guide in the reduction of the collected data.

Document analysis involves "skimming, reading and interpretation" (Bowen, 2009, p. 32). According to Bowen (2009) I determined the relevance of the documents to my research problem and aims among the selected documents. In the same manner, I used the research questions as a guideline when I read the collected documents. I also used the coloured coding for the key points related to different questions. I looked for clues into the phenomenon under study since they were important to look for and examine (Merriam, 1998). Then, I put the different coding into the categories and themes developed in interview data analysis according to the content analysis process (Bowen,

2009). I re-read the documents again to review the data in case I had missed out essential information in the first place.

RELIABILITY

Reliability refers to "the degree to which study data consistently measure whatever they measure" (Gay et al., 2009). Qualitative researchers need to consider the reliability of the techniques which are used to collect the data (Gay et al., 2009). Tolich and Davidson (1999) point out that a measure is reliable only if it produces the same results when the tests are repeated in different places at different time. Reliability is considered a match between the researcher's interpretation and presentation of collected data and what is actually happening in the natural setting which is being researched (Cohen et al., 2007). Therefore, reliability can be described in two different words 'repeatability' and 'consistency'.

Since this particular research was qualitative research, "there are many interpretations of what is happening, there is no bench-mark by which one can take repeated measures and establish reliability in the traditional sense" (Merriam, 1988, p. 170). In this case, reliability can be interpreted as dependability in which researcher needs to check whether their findings are dependable or not with the participants (Cohen et al., 2007, Neuman, 2000). Thus, I provided the transcripts of the interviews to the participants for checking and clarification of the interpretation in order to raise the level of reliability.

Oppenheim (1992) asserts that follow-up questions can be used for reliability checks to confirm with an interviewee's previous answer. Thus, follow-up questions were added during the semi-structured interviews whenever it was necessary. Moreover, I formulated the questions carefully which conveyed clear meaning, to be aware of the possible problems and to conduct practice interviews with a sample group in order to reduce biases (Cohen et al., 2007).

The reliability of documents raised a question because of the multiple meanings of the documents depending on the view of the researcher which may vary the interpretations of the wordings. Therefore, the dean of students and teachers were asked some questions related to the mission statement, aims and learning outcomes of the students to confirm or discard my interpretation. As a researcher, I was careful not to pick some words and passages from the analysed documents and instead established the meaning to contribute to the research problem (Bowen, 2009).

VALIDITY

In qualitative data, Winter (2000) states "validity might be addressed through the honesty, depth, richness and scope of the data achieved, the participant approached, the extent of triangulation and the disinterestedness or objectivity of the researcher" (as cited in Cohen et al., 2007, p. 133). There are different types of validity to take into consideration in research. In this particular research, interpretive validity was what I must be aware of such as original meaning, terms and interpretation of the participants (Cohen et al., 2007) when conducting and transcribing the interviews. As a qualitative researcher, validity simply means being truthful (Neuman, 2000). The interviews in this research were conducted in Myanmar language in order to reduce the participants' misinterpretation of the questions and to increase the ability to express their thoughts and feelings, to ensure the data validity.

Validity is addressed through authenticity, credibility, trustworthiness, and integrity besides the use of data triangulation in order to guarantee the validity of data collection and analysis (Bryman, 2008). The two data collection methods – interviews and document analysis, were used to inform the results of the research, which is also known as triangulation. By using multiple methods or sources of information, the credibility of

the research was strengthened (Cohen et al., 2007, Bryman, 2008, Yin, 1994). When findings from both methods showed the same things, the researcher can say that the findings were valid (Tolich & Davidson, 1999). In order to gain validity in the result, I used the above two methods to justify my findings.

ETHICAL ISSUES

Ethical principles and reasoning are important to consider when conducting research. Ethics is a primary consideration and all the researchers need to engage in ethical practices throughout the research period. Ethical issues should be addressed in each step of the research such as when designing, choosing methods, analysing the data and presenting. Both quantitative and qualitative research methods have ethical issues which arise during the data collection and interpretation/ distribution of findings in qualitative research (Merriam, 1988). Issues are mostly related to confidentiality of data, getting the consent of the participants, interpretation and publication (Merriam, 1988).

According to Tolich and Davidson (1999), there are five principles related to ethical issues such as "do no harm, voluntary participation, informed consent, avoid deceit and confidentiality or anonymity" (p. 70). The researchers should not harm the participants in any way, mentally, emotionally and physically. All the participants should give consent to take part voluntarily and knowing what is involved in the research. Since this research included conducting interviews, the participants were given an information sheet (informed consent form) with the objectives and explanation of their role which they were requested to sign to show their consent (Wilkinson, 2001). Firstly, the information sheet was provided to the Dean of the university as an invitation besides explaining the potential benefits for the university through this research. The Dean had agreed to welcome me to conduct my research at the institute by providing me with an organisational consent form. This form was only for gaining access to the project site and

was not used as the individual consent form. I did not interview the Dean of the institute who provided me organisational consent.

Mutch (2005) mentions that participants have rights to withdraw from the research at any time, without any consequences. As mentioned above, the research objectives were clearly informed to the participants as deceiving them is very unethical. The collected data from the interviews and documents were correctly analysed and reported without leaving out any data or interpreting more than what was originally said. All the names of participants and the school where I conducted the research were kept confidential, not even indicating anything that could be linked to them (Tolich & Davidson, 1999). The collected data was coded accordingly not to reveal the identities of the participants and any quotation which can lead to the participants and the institute. Cardno (2003) mentions that transparency is important and needed to make sure that all the participants are fully informed about the objectives of the research and their role in it. Since these are the core of ethical issues in research, I, as an educational researcher, was fully aware of each principle while conducting the research.

Since the primary research methods were interviews and document analysis, I considered all the ethical issues related to those methods. The interviews were semi-structured using open-ended questions with some follow-up questions. As there were both risks and benefits to the participants, I ensured that they felt comfortable to share their perspectives and were not pressured or embarrassed (Merriam, 1988). I arranged the interview questions and environment not to harm the participants in any way, mentally, emotionally and physically. The consent to the study was unlikely to stimulate or cause anything harmful to the participants. It is important to consider how researchers should treat the participants before, during and after the research (Wilkinson, 2001). Transcripts were given to the participants to check on the correct interpretation, to make any clarification and for further explanation of their perspectives.

For this particular research, different ethical issues were taken into consideration before contacting the participants and conducting the research.

CONCLUSION

With a careful analysis of a range of literature, the qualitative research methodology was the most appropriate for this particular research in looking at the perceptions and experiences of students and teachers of the role of ECAs and how it affects the institute mission statements, aims and students' learning outcomes. The use of a case study approach provided validity in findings to obtain an understanding of the significant events, views, behaviours, actions, interactions or contexts constructed by the meanings given by the participants. Two data collection methods – interview and document analysis - were used to provide rich data for the research with a thoughtful consideration of data analysis, reliability, validity and ethical concerns.

CHAPTER – 4
FINDINGS

INTRODUCTION

This chapter presents the findings from the research study on the topic of the perceptions of students and teachers of the role of ECAs at Liberal Arts Programme (LAP) at a private university in Myanmar. This programme is being run by the Private University situated in Myanmar. In the following sections, the findings are discussed. The chapter begins with the presentation of the backgrounds and demographic data of participants and is followed by a section on the scope of extracurricular activities (ECAs) discussed in three different areas: in-school activities, subject-related activities and outside school activities by the participants. The next section presents the positive and/or negative impacts on students' social, academic and development of different life skills beside the wider impacts on the community. Then the chapter focuses on the role of ECAs in Myanmar education, the mission statement and objectives set for the programme and the comparison of the public and private universities' ECAs' role. In the last section, the reasons and barriers to participation in ECAs are highlighted. Key findings presented in this chapter lead to the discussion and analysis in the following chapter.

PARTICIPANTS' BACKGROUND AND DEMOGRAPHIC DATA

Two groups of participants took part in the research, one group included the lecturers from the Liberal Arts Programme (LAP) at the private university and the other group includes the 3rd and 4th year students from the same programme.

Students

Ten students who were undertaking Bachelors' degrees in English, Business, Social Studies and Music, volunteered to take part in the research. These included 3rd and 4th year students, currently participating in extracurricular activities (ECAs) offered at the school. Student participants were aged between 18 – 25 years old and included five females and five males. Most of the student participants were currently taking leadership roles in ECAs. Nine out of ten students indicated that they were attending, or had finished, a Bachelor degree at the public universities, either through distance education or as full-time day students. Student participants' current year, major and attendance at the public universities are shown in Table 4.1.

Table 4.1 Liberal Arts Students' Academic Backgrounds

Students Code	Year	Major	Public University Attendance
S1	3	Religion	Yes (Distance)
S2	4	Business	Yes (Day)
S3	4	English	Not Yet
S4	3	Music	Yes (Day)
S5	3	Business	Yes (Distance)
S6	4	English	Yes (Distance)
S7	3	Music	Yes (Distance)
S8	4	English	Yes (Distance)
S9	4	English	Yes (Day)
S10	4	Social Studies	Yes (Distance)

Codes were used to protect the anonymity of participants

Teachers

Teacher participants selected for this study were from the LAP which includes both full-time and part-time teachers. Four female and one male teacher took part, among those are one part-time and four full-time teachers. They are aged between 23 – 40 years old. One of the interviewees is the Dean of students, who is also a lecturer in the English Department. Four out of five teachers were senior teachers who have teaching experience over seven years and three out of five teachers were former students at LAP. All of the teachers indicated that they are not actively involved in ECAs unless they are invited to participate. Table 4.2 shows the lecturers' teaching experience and the department they belong to.

Table 4.2 Liberal Arts Teachers' Academic Backgrounds

Teachers Code	Teaching Experience	Department	Part-Time or Full-Time
T1	Over 7 years	Social	Full-Time
T2	1 year	English	Part-Time (Assistant Teacher)
T3	Over 9 years	English	Full-Time
T4	8 years	English	Full-Time
T5	Over 7 years	English (Dean of Students)	Full-Time

Codes were used to protect the anonymity of participants

The following section presents the findings based on the perceptions of ten students and five lecturers regarding their experiences of participating in ECAs. Key findings include the scope of ECAs, the role and impact of ECAs on students, challenges and barriers to

participating in ECAs, and the comparison of ECAs experiences offers at the public and private universities.

DOCUMENT FINDINGS

Documents, including the policy handbook, students' reports and newsletters, also show the positive impacts of ECAs. The main activities indicated in the student handbook are as follows; worship Vesper service, Music choir, sports, gospel team activities, LAP family day and fun-fete.

According to the student handbook, internship is part of the graduation requirements and students can choose the place where they want to intern. Then, students propose to their teachers and Dean of school in order to receive approval to intern at their chosen places. Both students and teachers noted the importance of the trips to the community and work with the community which help students develop community development skills and to provide opportunities to apply what they have learned in the class in their communities.

Fun-fete activity mentioned in the student handbook provides opportunities for students to develop leadership and organisational skills besides developing their sense of sharing responsibilities, working in teams, having fellowship and understanding each other. Reaching out to students' homes and sometimes to underprivileged people' homes in the community during trips, visiting the families, all help the students to have fellowship with them and to understand the different families' lifestyles and struggles. Internship reports also unveil the fact that most of the students chose to help the children in the villages and needy people or community. Students taught children English language, school subjects, handicraft, Bible and songs. Some students even came up with ways to help the community and reported to the responsible organisations.

The Dean of school stated the part of the impact of ECAs as follows in a Newsletter article.

"Newsletter will also touch each of the students' heart, mind and whole being to change ones' life to become a great leader one day."

THE SCOPE OF ECAs

According to the findings from interview results, there are three areas to consider as ECAs which are in-school activities, subject-related activities (credited and non-credited) and outside school activities. The majority of students mentioned their involvement in subject-related credited activities and outside school activities when asked about their participation in ECAs.

Some participants highlighted a range of views on different areas of activities by the following comments.

"Concerning with ECAs, there are lots of it. Activities that are conducted by the student body for the whole school, and also there are activities conducted by small groups or committees... We also connected with district associations and churches for the gospel trips conducted by Evangelist and Mission Committee (E&M)... The importance of E&M short trips is to have fellowship with the community." [S1]

"We have many groups. We have religious and major groups which do not concern with studies. For example, social major has a group which strike for social major activities." [S10]

"We allowed students to form their own society and organise activities. For example, social studies students formed S3F (Social Studies Student Family). Beside school ECAs,

they have their own activities. Other majors have their own groups and activities. Thus, a lot of activities are there because committees and groups also organise. Annually, school holds only two activities, Family Day and Christmas Fun Fair. For English major, they have to hold Burmese Drama for class credit." [T1]

In-School Activities

In-school activities mainly involve the activities organised by the Student Body and different committees. They can be clearly defined as ECAs which are non-credited activities and have no connection with the subject areas conducted outside of the curriculum. There are ten committees which organise activities for students, namely, education and knowledge sharing committee, women's committee, Buddhist students association, evangelist and mission committee, finance committee, information and communication committee, sports committee, newsletter committee, social committee and student care and concern committee. The findings indicated that -

"Student Body mainly performs school activities... for example, song competition is organised by Music Committee. But for Family Day, fund raising is run under Student Body." [S2]

"I am involved in song competition, Family Day retreat once a year, school talent shows, farewell, senior nights organised by Student Body... In those activities, I am responsible for games and backdrop setting." [S1]

"Sports committee aims the students to be able to work together and gain unity. As for example, there is football and basket ball matches for men. For women, there is tennis and volley ball." [S4]

All of the committees' activities are organised by the students with very little support from the teachers which is evident in the following quotes.

"Teachers' involvements are very less. It has almost none. Students had to take things upon themselves." [S3]

"Not much. It is because full time teachers have family affairs and they could not participate much in activities." [T1]

Subject-related Activities (Credited and Non-credited)

Subject-related activities such as major field trips and performances can be credited and non-credited. According to the findings, subject-related activities are organised by the teachers as well as the students. There are class activities which are compulsory and accredited, most include performing dramas, going on field trips and attending talks. These activities are usually led by the teachers. For example, English major students are required to participate in performing dramas each semester in their 3rd and 4th year as their final exam. Teachers give guidelines and lead the practice sessions. One student noted as follows:

"I am in fund raising for Musical Drama. Previously, I was in setting design for Burmese Drama. I also involved in a group to sell things to raise fund… English major organises it." [S3]

On the other hand, activities such as attending activities held by others and participating in activity are organised by each major group. These activities are non-accredited and organised by the students. For example, students majoring in social studies have their own major group to organise the activities related to their major or activities which support the compulsory activities. Non-credited subject-related activities, such as attending music concerts, operating the school shop and participating in trips, are highlighted by the range of comments.

"As a Music major group, we go and join other activities. Teacher encourages us to take experience like this. We went to music concert as a music group to gain experience. We did not get credit for going there." [S4]

"We manage the small shop at school as Business major students. It is to practice our theory of business in reality. It is not for class credits. Business Student Fellowship members manage the shop, not the whole major students. However, all the Business major students are invited to the meeting related to the issues of the shop." [S5]

"Social major has a group which strike for social major activities. These activities concern with producing T-shirts and raising funds for social major trips... More or less, they get marks for social field trips... usually, they have to participate even if they have work." [S10]

"ECAs in social major include community participation, field trips and work, and community development. Combined workshop is hold with the relevant students and people from the community."[T1]

Out-of-school Activities

Out-of-school activities can be differentiated into two categories. The findings show that students are involved in outside school community-based or church-based activities. Students are involved in such activities with their own consent during their free time.

This is illustrated by the following comments about ECAs which students participate in outside of school activities with their own consent.

"Choir group from outside school that occupied most of my time. Every Saturday and Sunday I go to the group and teach music... This group is trying to become a professional group... I do not get any pay or anything but I get experience." [S7]

"Outside, I volunteer at Anglican Young People Association... Once in two years, work camp is held with all the youth from around the country... We build tanks and roads." [S8]

"I also share my knowledge at two monasteries every weekend." [S9]

Moreover, some out-of-school activities are connected to school, such as internship and committees' or majors' organised trips which help, work with, benefit and are conducted in the community. These trips to the communities are usually arranged by the students, where they help and have fellowship with the community, less-privileged society and people. The findings indicated that –

"We connected with Hin Tha Da District Association... although we called it a gospel trip, our trips are much focused on fellowship with the community." [S1]

"I think internship program is very useful for the students when we read their reports. When they interned at certain places around the country for one or two months taught them a lot of things. Internship provides benefits to both the students and also native people who live in that area. Students have learned a lot of lessons and values from those native people. When we read their reflection papers, we have read that they are really happy to do internship and gained a lot of experiences. It is very good ECAs." [T4]

According to the student handbook, internship is part of the graduation requirements and students can choose the place where they want to intern. Then, students propose to their teachers and Dean of school in order to receive approval to intern at their chosen places. Both students and teachers noted the importance of the trips to the community and work

with the community which help students developed community development skills and to provide opportunities to apply what they have learned in the class in their communities.

IMPACTS OF ECAs

Both student leaders and students who participated in the activities noted a number of positive impacts such as great experiences which develop their social life, academic life and other skills. Student participants were asked to provide positive and negative impacts of participation in ECAs, both on their social life, academic life, future careers and developing different life skills. Teachers were also asked to provide their perceptions on the role of ECAs in Myanmar education and impacts they have seen on students' lives. According to the findings from interviews with students and teachers, participating in ECAs offer positive impacts, especially on students' social lives with the development of different life skills One student described the impact of participation in ECAs in a simple way as −

"When one participates, one can learn a lot from the leaders. When one has to lead, one will get a lot of experiences." [S9]

Social Life and Behaviours

All the students mentioned that participating in ECAs had a positive impact on their social lives. They had learned to improve their social skills through interaction with different types of people. Being on different trips also taught them how to work with others effectively. They gained new friends and built closer friendships between each other. Some of the student leaders mentioned how taking a leadership role in ECAs widened their social space and offered an opportunity to work with professionals in the business market. The findings highlighted the social experiences and learning students gained from ECAs.

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"We get experiences from activities. What we learned from associating with others cannot be experienced in classroom. Mainly, we get this knowledge from ECAs." [S1]

"Through these activities (ECAs), we learned social dealing skills and group work... we improve in negotiation skills... We gained professional experiences." [S8]

"After involving in ECAs, they were able to come out of their ethnic groups. They gained social dealing skills. There is less discrimination. They are able to mix with others from different ethnic groups." [T1]

Careers

The majority of students and teachers suggested that ECAs were useful as part of their preparation for future jobs and careers, including the ability to apply what they have learned from participating in ECAs to their work environment.

A number of students and teachers commented about this impact on their future career of how experiences and learning from ECAs would be useful and for some, how they were already able to apply them in their current jobs.

"It is more than what they can learn in the classroom and from textbooks and assignments. They gain a lot of experience for their future career as well, which they can apply in the real world... In NGOs field, this school is well-known because of academic and ECAs and students are automatically impressed." [T2]

"We have a lot of feedbacks from alumni about how experiences from ECAs have positive impacts on their working life." [T5]

"The strength for me is that I became more mature, developed leadership skills. Because of that, I believe that I can work well in my future job based on these experiences." [S5]

"It (involvement in ECAs) will be helpful a lot. I have so many links now. I get many personal link links. It is easy for me to find sponsor in the future." [S8]

"If we learn and participate in the activities, the school can write good recommendation for us when we apply jobs." [S9]

Life Skills

Most student leaders stated that they had gained all or some of the following: social skills, management skills, communication skills, leadership skills, teamwork, decision-making skills, intrapersonal and interpersonal skills. The findings indicated that –

"Especially in this year, acting as co-president, I gain leadership and decision-making abilities... I also came to understand how to motivate people... As for selling things, they (students) are practising how to relate with people and how to persuade people. These skills are developed." [S2]

"I have learned how to be a good leader and how to manage. I have also learned what they want, how to negotiate with them to reach the goal. I have learned to deal with people with different types and personalities." [S5]

"I gained leadership skills and associating skills." [S8]

"When I worked as President for Newsletter committee, I had to smile and talk to people. Then, my social space is widening... I learn how to relate with leaders. Now, I know how to arrange appointment with Dean and Vice Principal. I know how to write official letters." [S9]

"Some students, who are in leadership roles learn to manage, work in a team and organise events... some students have developed different skills." [T2]

Not only the leaders and members who organised the activities, but also students who participated in the activities developed their social skills, teamwork, intrapersonal and interpersonal skills.

A range of positive experiences and developed skills, such as interpersonal, intrapersonal and team work, is evident in the following quotes.

"Involving in those activities (ECAs), bring relationship closer between friends... I am more patient and have more understanding now. I know how to relate with others." [S3]

"I was able to work with team as well." [S4]

"I think ECAs offer here is good. They get offer experiences such as leadership skills, how to deal with others, and how to adapt oneself while attending school." [T4]

Community

A number of participants thought that experiences and learning gained from involvement in ECAs had a wider impact, even on the community. There were positive impacts when the students go on field trips and community participation. The students revealed that participating in ECAs encouraged them to have the spirit of helping the community. When students went on trips organised by the committees, they served the community by looking after the needy and poor.

The quotes which hint at the ECAs impact on the community such as benefits gained by the community are as follows.

"I have been leading Choir group from outside that occupied most of my time. Every Saturday and Sunday, I go to the group and teach music... When my church called me to lead some programs, I was able to lead them as well." [S7]

"I also share my knowledge at two monasteries every weekend." [S9]

"Other students, parents and relatives are invited to the Drama performances so it has effects to the wider community." [T2]

"Internship provides benefits to both the students and also native people who live in that area." [T3]

"When the students go back to their home town after graduation, they can lead their community and churches. These results are not only because of what is taught in the classroom, but also because of internship programs and ECAs." [T5]

Academic Learning

Students are asked for their perception of the positive and/or negative impacts on their academic life and grade because of their involvement in ECAs. Teachers were also asked if they had noticed any impacts in the classroom. However, a few students cannot link effectiveness of participation in ECAs to their academic life which is evident in the following comment made by two students.

"As for academic life, I think it is not much connected." [S1]

"There is no relation to apply what I have learned in the classroom and what I have learned in Music committee." [S7]

Some of the comments are rather neutral, which they mentioned no positive or negative impacts on academic results, which can be seen in the following quote.

"As for me, no marks went down. This is because I manage my time well, time to study and time to do ECAs." [S5]

On the other hand, some of the students noted that they are too involved in ECAs which makes them tired physically and mentally, sometimes led them to miss classes and not being able to focus on study. Some students and teachers highlighted a number of negative impacts on students' academic life such as decreasing in marks and missing classes because of their involvement in ECAs as is evident in the following quotes.

"It does affect my study. It is because I had to go around each class to make announcement and so I was late for class... When I was too tired, I cannot study anymore... I have to cancel my classes for the meetings." [S2]

"I have missed some classes. As for me, I prioritised lesson. If these coincide (ECAs and class), I choose study. As for my friend who belongs to Social committee, got 40 marks for Chinese class as she has to go for announcements and all for activities. Then, the teacher asked her to reduce social work." [S3]

"There are students whose marks are decreased as they spent too much time on activities. But I think it concerns with personal attitude and doings. As for me, I feel positive." [S4]

"There are only a few student leaders who participate in ECAs actively and at the same time, hold their academic standing, good grades." [T4]

"On negative side, some students who are outstanding academically, but they have never participated in any ECAs except the ones with credits. On the other hand, there are some students who participate actively in every ECAs but when looking at their GPA, they graduated with minimum required GPA. Most of the students who participate in ECAs, however, have lower marks." [T5]

However, a few students and teachers thought that their involvement in ECAs had a positive impact on their academic life. It is shown that the positive impacts happen when the ECAs are relevant to their courses or majors. Class-accredited activities are also helpful for their academic results. For example, when students have an opportunity to practise what they have learned in the classroom by the Business major students operating a shop at school. Another example is that when English major students improve their English by participating in debates, talks and Newsletter committee.

"I can learn the mistakes that I have made in grammar… I have improved my English, the usage and writing style… those class credited activities become a practice for English and public speaking." [S6]

"So it (experience from ECAs) also affects in the classroom. Students here are more confident to talk to teacher compare to the students from other universities." [S10]

"By doing the activities, they become more responsive especially in their second year… they gained confidence for presentation… Students are smart and capable. They actively involved in activities and we do not allow academic to loosen. Student leaders are more intelligent." [T1]

"From ECAs experiences, they have come to learn who is good at what and they can give the roles and responsibilities according to each other strength. They know how to make presentations interesting, how to manage the time, etc." [T2]

However, students noted both positive and negative impacts of participation in ECAs on students' academic learning, the majority of the students and teachers pointed out that it depends on each student, how they manage their time effectively. Time management between their study and participation in ECAs play a crucial part of student life.

STUDENTS' AND TEACHERS' PERCEPTIONS OF THE ROLE AND VALUE OF ECAs

The following section presents the general aspect of ECAs' role in Myanmar education, how experiences and learning gained from participating in ECAs met the mission statement and objectives set by this particular school (LAP).

LAP Teachers' Perceptions of Potential ECAs' Role in Myanmar Public Education

There are two types of universities in Myanmar, one is public which is run by the government and the other one is private, run by independent organisations. The question concerned with the role of ECAs in Myanmar education in general was asked of the teachers. All of the LAP teachers presented their knowledge that there are no ECAs at Public schools. The perceptions of LAP teachers on the potential role and importance of ECAs in Myanmar education is evident in the following extracts.

"From my perspective, theories that we taught in the class need to practice. ECAs open a chance for students to practise their lessons." [T1]

"Not having such ECAs can make students not willing to go to school. Since Myanmar education system is teacher-centred approach, it is quite boring. If the school provides ECAs, students can have more interaction among each other and they can also develop other skills, such as leadership, creative and critical thinking skills. It is important because most students, seven out of ten, attend public schools." [T2]

"ECAs provide variety of experiences to the students. It will be good to offer ECAs at Myanmar public schools so that students will have fun. In Myanmar education as you know, students only think about study, study and study. We cannot teach social skills

practically in the classroom. Thus, when they participate in ECAs, they learn a lot about social dealing and interaction." [T4]

The Mission Statement and Objectives of LAP and the Role of ECAs

The mission statement set by the school for LAP stated in the student handbook can be summarised as follows: an open environment where students can develop creative and critical thinking individually, students become qualified to work in various fields and students are able to bring impact and changes in the communities. The objectives are to provide a learning atmosphere that promotes participatory thinking, creativity, and problem-solving, to enable students to master skills relevant to their fields and prepare them for life-long learning and to empower students to become highly educated and liberated through a broad-based liberal arts program.

Firstly, LAP indeed is a place for student to develop creative, critical thinking and problem solving skills by organising a variety of ECAs.

"I believe that it meets at least indirectly. Students develop mentally, spiritually and socially through participation in ECAs brings good image to the school." [T3]

"I think some experiences meet the mission statement directly. One of the mission statements is to nurture the future leaders. When we talk about leaders, being outstanding academically does not make a good leader. I think learning and experiences gained from ECAs, how to manage and deal with others, and being good academically would only make a good leader. Students might not know what they have learned from ECAs right now, but they will eventually realize the value of it when they enter the work force. This is because we have a lot of feedbacks from alumni about how experiences from ECAs have positive impacts on their working life." [T5]

Secondly, the comments of students, teachers and alumni about the experiences and learning through ECAs have shaped them to master their jobs.

"It (participating in ECAs) also opens up the job opportunities for the future. In NGO field, this school is well-known because of academic and ECAs and students are automatically impressed." [T2]

Thirdly, students are able to bring minor or major transformation to the communities through internship programs, community participation and field trips.

"Main vision is to provide good and education for the students... So, those learning or experiences might not be in the vision but still students have got more than what is stated in the mission statement." [T4]

Comparing the Public and Private Universities on the Role of ECAs

The majority of the students and teachers noted that there are no ECAs offered at public universities where the students focus only on their study. One LAP teacher commented on general Myanmar public education as follow.

"In Myanmar education as you know, students only think about study, study and study." [T4]

One of the LAP teachers mentioned that public schools do not involve any class-credited activities to their curriculum and some of the major subjects offered at LAP cannot be studied at the public universities as follows.

"ECAs open a chance for students to practice their lessons. This is rare in government schools. For those who do not get a chance for practical work, they will be weak in future practical work... In Myanmar, there is no group in Education Ministry that evaluates the

curriculum. I want the board to evaluate the curriculum and they should go into the community to find out more in order to effectively critique the curriculum... This kind of subject (Social studies) should be implemented in government schools." [T1]

"Nowadays, we have heard a lot about whole person development in the government... I think ECAs focuses a lot more on personal development of each student. Government schools should consider those as well." [T5]

Most of the students stated that they do not attend public day universities - instead they chose distance education. Therefore, they did not have many comments to make on the comparison of public universities and LAP on ECAs' role.

One of the students highlighted a few ECAs were offered at public school through his experience. However, he stated that there is too much teacher-control over the activities and a lot of restrictions as opposed to LAP where students mostly lead the activities with little help from teachers. On the downside of being a liberal arts school providing opportunities to experience things through ECAs, it sometimes led students to have too much freedom and challenge the teachers. He commented as follows.

"I found differences in teachers' control. Teachers told students how much they should pay, treat and buy presents for them. Teachers led those activities. As the government schools are controlled by the government, they could not hold many activities... There were lots of restrictions... I think class presentations need to be added... As LAP is a liberal school, it is very liberal. It is because too liberal; some cases are out of control. Guidance is needed." [S2]

One LAP teacher highlighted the value of ECAs and why it is important to implement in the public school.

"It is important because most students, 7 out of 10, attend Public schools. So, it would be great to provide such ECAs since different students have different talents." [T2]

REASONS AND BARRIERS TO PARTICIPATION IN ECAs

The following section presents the students' and teachers' perceptions on what help and hinder students participating in ECAs. There are a number of factors why the students decided to get involved in ECAs and why some students are not able to participate although they wish to. Students and teachers also revealed the possible strategies to overcome the challenges which stop some students from participating in ECAs.

Reasons to Participation in ECAs

Students noted the reasons for participating in ECAs as their personality and desire to contribute to the school community and other students. The reasons to enrol in ECAs such as team work and leadership skills, enjoy being in a group, social and committee involvement, opportunity for friendship, developing English skills and gratitude towards their school, are shown in the following quotes.

"Since I was young, I do not like to stay alone. I am happy when I am in a group." [S1]

"Since I was young, I would like to do something best for the school... The main thing is that I would like to see some improvement in my surrounding." [S2]

"As a youth, I want motivation and close friendship with friends. Involving in these activities motivated me and gained close friendship with friends. I was able to work with team as well. As a youth, I want to live freely and do things together with friends. Thus, I joined these ECAs." [S4]

"The main thing why I am interested (to be on Newsletter committee) is that I believe it is a place to develop my English skills since I am E-major student." [S6]

"First of all, it is because of my desire to get involve. I want to gain experiences. I want to learn team spirit, leadership and to do things that seniors did." [S8]

"Honestly speaking, I could apply the methods that I learned here in the outer world. Thus, I wanted to do something for school in gratitude. So I involved." [S9]

"Involving in activities gives us an opportunity to experience workplace. It is like in the workplace. We have to relate to other students and teacher." [S10]

Barriers to Participation in ECAs

Both students and teachers noted a number of barriers which hinder the students from participating in ECAs. Both students and teachers believed that money is the biggest hindrance followed by the time availability of students. Two of LAP teachers pointed out that some of ECAs (both credited and non-credited) cost quite a lot of money to participate.

"The main barrier is money. Participating in certain ECAs or class credited activities cost quite a lot of money... Some students do not want to work with a lot of people. Some students are shy to participants in activities in which they have to speak or act in front of others on the stage. These are the biggest barriers...Some parents don't understand the aspect of ECAs. And some students don't participate in ECAs because of their parents." [T2]

"The first barrier is time... second barrier is money... third barrier is their personality." [T5]

Both students and teachers stated that the school do not provide any financial support to run those activities. Regarding time availability, most of the students attend Public Day University or other courses and some of the students work full-time. It is commented as follow –

 "One reason is because some students attend public day university. They cannot participate in activities which are conducted during day time. The main reason for most students is their interest." [T4]

One student pointed out the challenge to make a decision to participate when the commitment and responsibilities they have taken in outside school activities collide with ECAs at school.

"And sometimes, church activities and school activities collided. Then, I had to cancel school choir practice which is not important compare to church activity." [S2]

One of the most significant challenges facing students in participating in ECAs is study. Some students think that ECAs take too much of their time and are afraid that their marks would go down if they participated in ECAs. A few students noted as follows.

"Mainly, study. People in Myanmar focus on study whether it is right or not. Second barrier concerns with parents... Permission of parents is needed... But her parents do not allow her to be a Chairperson of committee because they are afraid that she will face troubles in exam." [S3]

"Students who do not participate in ECAs are the one who think that these are extra work which is not important... Some students only focus on study and they think if they participate in ECAs, it might affect their study." [S5]

Another barrier is not getting permission from parents to become involved, sometimes, even to go on class-credited field trips. For some students, it is their nature and

personality that they do not wish to do things together in a group, but prefer to stay alone by themselves.

"For some, they like to do things alone. They cannot work in groups." [S4]

"They (students) were told by their parent that learning does not need to go for a trip. Some parents think trips are just for fun." [T1]

The main findings related to the challenges for students to participate in ECAs presented above will be analysed and details discussed in the following Chapter five.

Strategies to Overcome the Challenges

Students and teachers highlighted the possible strategies to overcome the challenges they have mentioned in order for students to participate in ECAs. Regarding the money issue, most of them pointed out the school is not able to provide financial support.

"Concerns with class-credited activities, if the school cannot support financially, they should support other things." [S3]

"Now, United Board has opened a way for us. We can write proposal and seek their funding so that we can financially support those (students) who have financial difficulties to go on class-credited field trips." [T1]

"Students should understand, help and support each other when working together in groups... The school should listen to the problems and find a way to solve them such as money and place issues." [T2]

"For the money issue, it would be better if the school can provide certain amount to conduct those activities." [T5]

Big activities are held during weekends rather than weekdays in order to have more participation. However, some activities still need to be conducted during the weekdays. A few students suggested a number of ways to overcome time issues as follows.

"There are students who could not join the activities because they had some problems. So, the leaders should consider about them and think of ways for them to participate in activities." [S4]

"Related to time issue, we try to choose suitable time for all students to be able to participate." [T5]

One of the students and teachers highlighted the need of parental education for whole person development and education. One student commented that it would encourage students to participate more if they get some marks for participating actively in ECAs.

"Parental education is also needed. For them, achieving 1st, 2nd, 3rd grades is important. They think that if their children involved in activities, the children grade will be affected... As for changes, I hope that collecting money from students would be reduced and supports from school would increase." [S2]

"What I want to add is that there should be grading for those who involve in ECAs. It is because they give time and energy for the activities." [S10]

SUMMARY

In this chapter, findings from semi-structured interviews with ten students and five teachers from LAP and analysis of school documents are presented. The interviewees are third and fourth year LAP students majoring in different subjects and participating or leading in ECAs. The teacher interviewees include Dean of students, three full-time teachers and one part-time assistant teacher. The main themes concern the scope of

ECAs, the impacts of ECAs, the role of ECAs and encouragements and challenges to participating in ECAs.

The overall results indicated that there are three different areas to cover when looking at ECAs. Both students and teachers defined the scope of ECAs based on different views such as what activities are in the category of ECAs and how wide the scope of ECAs is according to the participants' perceptions.

The findings showed that there are impacts of ECAs in different areas of students' lives such as social, academic, different life skills and skills necessary for future jobs and careers. The major findings included the positive learning of how to deal with others, how to solve problems and conflicts and overcome the challenges and team work. The majority of students and teachers highlighted the negative effects on grades when participating in ECAs actively. However, most of the class-credited and subject-related activities are considered a big help for students' academic life. The findings on the impact on their future career showed that what students learned and experienced in ECAs would prepare them for future jobs. Some students who are currently working also stated how useful these experiences and skills gained from ECAs are and how they can apply them at their current jobs. Moreover, the findings pointed out that ECAs not only have impacts on students but also bring positive impacts to the community around them. Lastly, one of the major findings indicated that students gained social skills, management skills, communication skills, leadership skills, teamwork, decision-making skills, intrapersonal and interpersonal skills.

The results showed that ECAs provided a variety of experiences and helped students to enjoy school. ECAs can provide skills and experiences which students cannot gain from studying in the classroom. The findings also highlighted that experiences and learning from ECAs meet the mission statement and objectives set by LAP directly or indirectly.

There is also evidence that no ECAs are offered at Public schools with teachers' suggestions to implement if possible at Public schools. Both groups suggested that ECAs should be part of school learning and students' experience.

The majority of participants stated the reasons to be involved in ECAs such as team work and leadership skills, social and committee involvement, opportunity for friendship, developing English skills and gratitude towards their school. The findings addressed the barriers to participating in ECAs such as money and time issues, getting parents' permission, focus on study and other commitments. Both teachers and students suggested the possible strategies to overcome those challenges.

Overall, the results highlighted the value and important role of ECAs and the detailed analysis and discussion of these major findings will be presented in the following Chapter five.

CHAPTER – 5

DISCUSSION OF FINDINGS

INTRODUCTION

This chapter will analyse and discuss the significance of the findings of this study for the perceptions of students and teachers of the role of extracurricular activities (ECAs) at a Myanmar private university, Liberal Arts Programme (LAP) in relation to the literature.

The scope of ECAs defined by LAP students and teachers was identified, including in-school activities, subject-related activities (credited and non-credited) and out-of-school activities. Both positive and negative impacts of ECAs on students' academic and social life, future career, wider impacts on the community and the development of different life skills are discussed. In addition, the relationships between the LAP mission statement, learning outcomes and ECAs experiences are discussed. The last section looks at the issues and challenges encountered in ECAs participation, and strategies to overcome those challenges.

THE SCOPE OF ECAs IN LIBERAL ARTS PROGRAMME (LAP)

This section explores the scope of ECAs defined by students and teachers at LAP. Each group was asked to describe their involvement and experience of ECAs. Their answers indicated three different areas of ECAs in-school activities, subject-related activities (credited and non-credited) and out-of-school activities. Students mentioned their participation in class-related activities such as performing a drama and going on field trips as part of class credits. Out-of-school ECAs were described as religious activities

organised by their churches and participation in private clubs and organisations with their own interest. According to various scholars and the literature, the scope of ECAs is defined in slightly different ways. For example, Anderson (2011) states that ECAs are broader than what students do in a course; ECAs include participants finding something they enjoy doing and are passionate about.

For students and teachers from LAP, ECAs included in-school activities which are not related to subject areas, yet are organised by various student committees, and out-of-school activities such as community-based and/or church-based and activities participated in through their own interest. This is supported by Halloway (1999), who highlights the fact that ECAs are part of informal education, which includes learning activities that are voluntary, self-directed and motivated mainly by interests, curiosity, exploration, task completion and social interaction.

Moreover, the participants in this study also included subject-related activities, accredited or non-accredited activities organised by class teachers or major committees as part of ECAs. This is in contrast to Anderson (2011) stating that ECAs are activities which are not part of the regular school curriculum, are not graded, receive no credit and do not take place during class time. Therefore, students' and teachers' perceptions on the scope of ECAs including class-credited and subject-related activities are not considered as ECAs according to the above definition of ECAs.

Several articles state that most schools allow a free choice for student participation in these activities. However, according to Stoltzfus (2007) many private schools make it compulsory for students to participate in one or more ECAs, in order to nurture 'well-rounded' students. Subject-related and credited activities mentioned by the participants in this study can be considered part of ECAs. This finding is also supported by Lunenburg

(2010) highlighting one of the functions of ECAs as a reinforcement of the required subject matter which can be used to enrich and extend the study in the classroom.

Principally, students and teachers in this study also designated community-based, church-based and personal interest activities as out-of-school ECAs. A few students mentioned that community-based and church-based activities were organised by student committees as part of their activities or field trips conducted by the major committee as part of the course. There was evidence that students connected with different communities, organisations and churches in order to have fellowship, share knowledge, observe and learn for their related courses and help the community during their internships. Some of the field trips which are part of the course and internships are counted as class-accredited out-of-school ECAs. This challenges the early research conducted by Turner (2010) which found that involvement in any activities outside of class room is considered as a distraction and thus, cannot be considered as one of the benefits.

However, the findings from this study showed out-of-school ECAs as having a positive impact on students' social life and academic learning. According to this finding, out-of-school activities not only had positive effects on individual students but also on communities, especially underprivileged ones where students' involvement became a useful help for those communities. This is supported by recent research and evaluations which indicated the positive results of involvement in out-of-school activities (Turner, 2010). This finding is significant because it revealed the understanding of LAP students and teachers of the scope of ECAs which was presented as broader than in most of the previous and recent literature.

IMPACTS OF ECAs

Questions were posed to reveal the positive and negative effects of participation in ECAs in various parts of students' life. This study has highlighted the impact of ECAs on a range of areas including:

- Social life and behaviours
- Careers
- Community
- Life skills
- Academic learning

In general, these findings concurred with current literature. In the areas of social life, careers, community and life skills, students highlighted the benefits; however, the picture is more complicated in relation to the academic learning area.

Social Life and Behaviours

This study has highlighted the benefits for students' social life and behaviours arising from involvement in ECAs. All the students mentioned that they had an opportunity to develop their social skills and identities. The significant findings showed that students gained social and negotiation skills with different types of people, teamwork skills and problem-solving skills in order to resolve conflicts with others. Students and teachers stated that participating in ECAs allowed them to meet and interact with friends who are not within their close group of friends or own ethnic group. As Wilson (2009) highlights, students often have more chance to interact with others in order to develop friendships and social confidence when they participate in ECAs. Moreover, Wilson (2009) points out that students develop their team work, better interaction with peers and learn to follow instructions of leaders.

Document analysis of Newsletter articles also pointed out the benefits of participating in ECAs on students' social life. When organising the social gathering activities, students got to know each other more, built closer friendships and enjoyed student life. This is supported by Bush (2003), who asserted that ECAs provide students with an opportunity to integrate with other students through a connection between them. This is consistent with the research done by Blomfield and Barber (2010) where the findings showed that students who participate in ECAs have more friends who support them to do better in school. The study conducted by Turner (2010) discusses the situation in which students do not interact much with each other in person during these days because of the increased usage of online social networks; however, involvement in ECAs enhances their social and societal skills. This finding is important since education is not only about gaining knowledge. Involvement in ECAs helped students to understand how to deal with different types of people, how to adapt to different viewpoints of others and how to work together towards common goals, which may eventually lead them to become well-rounded people.

Moreover, document analysis of the students' internship reports showed that the majority of students had become involved in outreach programmes with underprivileged children, for example, teaching or school-related activities. Furthermore, the findings from the reports pointed out that participating students have learned to be patient and found ways to deal with children with a range of different learning capacities. During their internship, they highlighted one of the biggest benefits as developing problem-solving skills to resolve conflicts between friends. The findings relate to the literature of Lunenburg (2010) stating that students learn to deal with different sides of a problem through ECAs.

In addition, the analysis of internship reports showed that their experience is valuable since they looked after the most vulnerable people and learned to sympathise with their lives and difficulties. They have realised the value of one's life and gained experiences of how some people have to struggle in their daily life. These experiences encouraged them

to find ways to help develop vulnerable people and to work for social development in the future. Some students and teachers also indicated that experience from ECAs has taught students to respect other religions, cultures and different ethnic groups and develop self-identity.

Even though there is discussion in different research done by Garcia (2012), Turner (2010), and Peguero (2011) about how participation in ECAs have positive impacts on students' alcohol consumption, drug usage, behaviour problems and lower drop-out rate (see Chapter 2), the findings of the present study do not indicate any positive or negative impacts on those.

Careers

The study found that experiences gained from participating in ECAs are applicable and beneficial for students' future career. The majority of the students noted that they have gained leadership skills, social skills, management skills, teamwork skills, personal and professional links, good recommendations from LAP and experiences which cannot be encountered in a normal classroom setting. This is supported by the literature of Stuart et al. (2007-2008) stating that ECAs not only improve students' job prospects, but also provide happiness and satisfaction with university life, and increase the sense of belonging through the support of ECAs. The researchers also emphasise that "equally employers valued sociable, outgoing and well-rounded graduates who would fit into the workplace… they felt that experience of leadership in activities was highly desirable" (Stuart et al., 2007-2008, p. 116)

Additionally, one of the significant findings was that not only the experiences gained from ECAs, but also the reputation of LAP related to ECAs opportunity led students to find a job more easily in the Non-Government Organisations (NGOs) field. It showed

that LAP is well-known for its quality of ECAs which are offered. The job market among the NGOs field in Myanmar has started to value the different set of skills gained through ECAs along with academic knowledge. Again, the study conducted by Stuart et al. (2007-2008) showed that students are concerned about the university they attended since it might negatively influence their future job prospects, making them disadvantaged in the labour market. Therefore, the opportunity to get good job prospects depended on the reputation of the university that students attended, with regard to the ECAs aspect. This finding is significant because it provides insights to students on the importance of choosing the right institute for higher education which later has an effect on their career.

The findings from alumni noted by the Newsletter committee also highlighted the current benefits of participating in ECAs for their career. The alumni highlighted how they can apply all their learning from the experiences gained from ECAs, how they have gained critical thinking and reasoned thinking skills, self-confidence and maturity which would be highly valued by human society. Being able to work together in a team with friends from different ethnic groups when participating in ECAs has taught them to understand and empathise with other ethnic people and to have positive thinking towards those people in their real working world.

Two female students claimed the reason for participating in their choice of ECAs was mainly because it helped them with their academic learning and future career. The study of Stuart et al. (2007-2008) also indicates that students often choose to get involved in ECAs which they think would benefit their future career directly. A few students and teachers commented that ECAs provide an opportunity to have a network with professionals which later counts for future job hunting. Through those networks, which they have connected with during their internships, volunteering or organising committees' activities assist them greatly to get a job after school. Thus, participating in in-school or out-of-school ECAs opens up an opportunity to find jobs after graduation. As Stuart et al. (2007-2008) claim, involvement in ECAs allows students to relate

academic knowledge with practical experience which then leads to the realisation of their own talents, abilities and career goals.

Life Skills

This study has highlighted the benefits of participation in ECAs in developing their life skills. All of the student leaders have gained social skills, management skills, communication skills, leadership skills, teamwork, decision-making skills, intrapersonal and interpersonal skills. Two student leaders commented that they have improved in decision-making skills to make the right decisions for the whole committee in the absence of guidance from teachers. They noted that they have learned how to motivate their committee members and other students to participate in the activities. This finding relates to the investigation on the impact of ECAs participation on the personal development of high school students conducted by DeMoulin (2002) and it is significant because that particular investigation showed that students participating in ECAs as leaders had higher decision-making skills, sympathy, higher GPA and credibility. The research based on a literature review conducted by Wilson (2009) states that students who are involved in out-of-school ECAs can learn teamwork skills, leadership skills, and can decrease the potential of being involved with problem behaviours.

The study showed that not only the student leaders but also the student members in the committees gained social skills, teamwork, intrapersonal and interpersonal skills. The significant findings indicated that students have learned to plan and organise different activities and how to arrange trips; student leaders have become more mature and gained courage for public speaking. Such experiences are valuable for their future job and cannot be gained through in-class activities. This result is supported by Wilson (2009) because involvement in ECAs can be interpreted as a sign of maturity, self-affirming behaviour and development of a sense of commitment and obligation. The research conducted by Mahoney et al. (2005) also reveals that participating in ECAs develop skills such as

problem solving , strategic planning and organising and leadership training which cannot be developed through normal classroom activities.

More benefits were highlighted by a few teachers and students who commented that students were learning to take in critical feedback from other students, to overcome challenges, as well as gaining self-confidence and being able to deal with both victory and defeat. More specifically, a few student leaders in this study noted that they have learned how to write official letters, deal with school authorities, plan and organise activities in detail, and assign responsibilities to members. This is supported by Lunenburg (2010) indicating that students who are leaders in a student body have an opportunity to experience "planning, organising, initiating and controlling many aspects of school life" (p. 3). Additionally, Turner (2010) also claims that participation in ECAs teaches time management skills and organisation skills which are valuable in society.

Community

The significant finding of this study highlighted the wider impacts on the community such as helping the needy and poor mostly through internships, sharing and applying knowledge gained from school in their community or church. These positive impacts on the community are mostly through out-of-school ECAs. A number of students commented that they shared and applied what they have learned at school in their community or church as part of their out-of-school ECAs with their own consent. Time they committed to those out-of-school activities was completely voluntary. In this sense, students learned to take responsibility for their community in order to help the needy and to become good citizens. This is consistent with the research conducted by Grimm et al. (2007) showing how volunteering strengthens the community and improves the life of people being served.

The findings showed that apart from internships, most of the out-of-school activities were not related to school. There was evidence that students chose to participate in similar types of ECAs within school and outside of school. A few students expected to gain experience through out-of-school voluntary activities with a spirit of helping others. An internship programme was mentioned by a few teachers as the activity which showed the most positive impacts on the community. As Eccles (2003) claims, participation in pro-social activities, such as church attendance, youth groups, volunteering and community service-related activities, enhanced the enjoyment of school, GPA and experience. Therefore, the benefits of involvement in ECAs were not limited to individual and school development, but had wider benefits for community development.

The findings of this study related to the areas of students' social life and behaviours, future careers, life skills and community concurred with current literature. The benefits of participation in ECAs in all four areas were identified. The findings of this study are important because they provide new insights into the current literature through the specific context, private tertiary education in Myanmar.

Academic Learning

Only a few students and teachers highlighted some benefits of participating in ECAs for academic performance. According to the type of ECAs, those students benefited directly in terms of their academic learning. For example, participating in a Newsletter committee helped English major students improve their English skills. When students chose to participate in ECAs which were related to, and helpful for, their academic courses, they gained benefits through ECAs experiences. The research conducted by Vermaas et al. (2009) with about 500 high school students at State College Area High School (SCAHS) showed that students who were involved in such ECAs as foreign languages, English language, music, school organisation, community, service, religion, science and others consider that their ECAs are more in-line with their curriculum.

A few students and teachers commented that students had gained confidence to speak up in the class and to conduct class presentations and became more responsive to the teacher. One student claimed that the experiences gained from ECAs trips were useful for writing papers in the classroom. Although Reeves (2008) noted that students who took part in three or four ECAs had significantly better GPA than those who participated in no ECAs at all, the responses from LAP students and teachers did not indicate direct positive correlations between higher GPA and involvement in ECAs. However, the National Education Longitudinal Study (NELS:88) Report shows that both in-school and out-of-school ECAs are positively related to higher GPA (as cited in Turner, 2010).

On the other hand, the noticeable findings from a number of students' responses were mostly negative such as missing classes, tiredness from involvement in, or organising, different activities, not being able to focus on study and lower GPA because of their involvement in ECAs. As Bourque and Parmentier (2011) stated in their research on students at a college community, increasing ECAs participation by one hour caused students' GPA to decrease by .018. Moreover, Wilson (2009) also indicated that being more involved in out-of-school ECAs might lead to spending less time on study and homework because of the rehearsals, practices and meetings. Most teachers agreed that students, especially the leaders of the committees, who participated actively and overly in ECAs graduated with the minimum required GPA and they were not able to hold their academic standing. As Thomson (2008) stated, the level of commitment in each ECAs is much more important to consider than the nature of the specific activity. This depends on the available time students have beside their study time, the number of ECAs they are involved in, the level of commitment in each ECAs and their time management skills. The findings of this study showed that students' over- involvement in ECAs caused stress and tiredness which led to lower class attendance and lower GPA.

One teacher indicated that some students, especially student leaders who participated actively in ECAs, tend to have a class attendance lower than 75%, which is the minimum

requirement. Since LAP is an evening program, students involved in ECAs had to split their time between organising the activities and class periods. Therefore, when one student took a leadership role in different activities, it affected their academic life negatively. This is in contrast to the study of Olson (2008) showing that participating in ECAs is consistently and positively associated with good class attendance which is often associated with higher GPA. Moreover, Vermaas, Dijl and Houdt (2009) also state that students who are involved in regular, organised ECAs tend to have fewer absences from school than those students who are not involved. However, most scholars also assert that both positive and negative effects of involvement in ECAs depend on the nature of the activity and the background of the student who participates (Vermaas et. al, 2009).

However, half of the students stated that there was no positive or negative effect on their academic learning because of their involvement in ECAs. They believed that there was not much correlation between their participation in ECAs and their GPA. Having positive or negative effects depends on how well each student manages their time, time to study and time to participate in ECAs. This view is also seen in the research conducted by Daley and Ryan (2000) with 232 students from a private school (grade 8-11), resulting in no significant correlations between academic performance and physical activities. Similarly, Fisher et al. (1996) also found that involvement in sports ECAs was not statistically associated with academic life.

The findings related to academic learning are important because they significantly show positive, negative or neutral impacts of participating in ECAs on students' academic learning whereas LAP students and teachers responses revealed only the benefits related to other four areas, social life, future careers, life skills and community.

The Mission Statement and Objectives of LAP and the Role of ECAs

The questions related to this topic were posed to the teachers where they indicated that Myanmar general education focused a lot on academic knowledge and teacher-centred approach rather than developing other essential skills in student life. Moreover, LAP teachers considered ECAs as one of the needs in Myanmar education. They highlighted its importance and hoped the Public schools would offer ECAs for the students. This is because Myanmar public education, through primary to tertiary, does not emphasise offering ECAs to students. This is supported by Lunenburg (2010) stating "Social events, athletics, clubs, and all the many leisure activities become a part of the values and virtues of the objectives of American education and of democratic life – school mission statements and objectives met through ECAs" (p. 2).

Document analysis of the mission statement in the student handbook reveals an intention to provide an open environment where students can develop individual creative and critical thinking, become qualified to work in various fields and be able to bring impacts and changes in their communities. The objectives are to provide a learning atmosphere that promotes participatory thinking, creativity, and problem solving, to enable students to master skills relevant to their fields, prepare them for life-long learning and to empower students to become highly educated and liberated through a broad-based liberal arts program.

The findings of the impacts of participating in ECAs on social, future careers, community, life skills and academic learning, provide evidence that the mission statement and most of the objectives are met directly or indirectly through the experiences and learning gained from ECAs. Firstly, all students and teachers commented that LAP indeed is a place for students to develop creative, critical thinking and problem solving skills by organising a variety of ECAs. As noted by Turner (2010), students develop analytical skills and problem solving skills from participating in music or acting

ECAs. There was evidence in the document that involvement in ECAs offered students critical thinking and reasonable thinking skills, self-confidence and maturity which is highly valued by society.

This study has highlighted the fact that the experiences and learning through ECAs have shaped students to master their jobs. This can be seen mainly from the document analysis of newsletters. The documents highlighted how ECA experience is valuable and applicable in working life. Keenan (n.d.) points out some evidence to support the perception that being involved in ECAs allows students to attain skills which prepare them for the labour market. As Stuart et al. (2009) highlight, employers look for individuals with skills which equip them to be involved in the job market. The study showed that students were able to bring minor or major transformation to the communities through internship programmes, community participation and field trips. Students' internship reports clearly indicated the advantages to the community such as gaining knowledge and being able to assist at schools where teachers were needed.

The findings on the learning outcomes of ECAs meeting the mission statement and objectives of LAP is critical since it showed that experiences and learning gained through participation in ECAs plays a supplementary role in fulfilling the LAP mission statement and objectives.

Not many significant findings on the comparison of private and public universities related to ECAs were found in this study. Most teachers commented that there were no ECAs offered at Myanmar public universities as far as they knew and suggested that it would be valuable to implement ECAs programme at public universities. In contrast, one of the students noted from his experience a few ECAs were offered at public schools such as debates and teacher honouring activities. However, he stated that there was too much

teacher-control over the activities and a lot of restrictions, contrary to LAP where students mostly led the activities with little help from teachers.

Reasons to Participation in ECAs

This study pin-pointed some reasons for students' participation in ECAs. Students highlighted the reasons to participate in ECAs as their own interest in particular ECAs, in order to gain experience, to have more friends, learn about team work and leadership skills and contribute to their community. A number of students stated that participation helped improve their academic performance.

Barriers to Participation in ECAs

One of the significant challenges identified in this study was money. All students and teachers highlighted lack of money as the biggest barrier for students wanting to participate in ECAs. This was because some ECAs cost more than some students could afford. It is interesting that a few teachers mentioned how class-credited activities require students to spend quite a lot of money and the university did not support these financially. This finding is supported by Wilson (2009) and Anderson (2011), who noted that depending on the type of ECAs, such as music or performing arts and related ECAs, costs can be considerable for students with parents with limited and low income.

Another major barrier was students' time management and time availability. Since LAP is an evening university, most students either attended public day university or worked full-time, which left them with less time to get involved in ECAs. Students mentioned that if the activities were conducted during day time, it was hard for them to participate. A few teachers highlighted the fact that being an evening university meant students have a tight schedule in which to organise a lot of different activities. Most students did not

have time to stay at school the whole day to organise or participate in ECAs which would then interfere with their class periods.

The reason some students chose not to participate in ECAs was because of the negative impact on their study. The study indicated that ECAs took much of students' time and students were afraid that their marks would go down if they participate in ECAs. When the students were involved in more different activities than they could handle, they tended to have lower marks and GPA. This view is supported by Marsh (1992), Wilson (2009) and Anderson (2011), who claim that involvement in many ECAs can decrease the time students spend in their study, cause stress and overwork.

The findings suggested that parental involvement and permission can be seen as one of the challenges. A few students and one teacher emphasised the perception of some parents that it is not necessary to take part in ECAs, which are considered unimportant and fun activities for students. Some parents did not even encourage their children to go on class-credited field trips. Most parents thought that if their child were involved in ECAs, their GPA would go down. One teacher highlighted the fact that this way of thinking was mainly because of the education system in Myanmar where ECAs are mostly neglected. As Turner (2010) mentions, a major reason teachers have difficulties to get students to participate in ECAs is because of the lack of parental involvement.

Strategies to Overcome the Challenges

The findings of this study identified four major strategies adopted by students and teachers to address the challenges they faced in ECAs. The strategies included getting financial support from the university, organising the activities according to most students' availability, giving parental education on ECAs and providing academic credits for ECA

All students and teachers realised that money plays an important role in students' involvement in ECAs. The strategy that students recommended to address this issue included getting financial support from the university and other funding committees. This is supported by the researcher Reynolds (2010), recommending that schools could provide necessary equipment to use for school-organised ECAs. Most of the students who participated in this study remarked that time availability to get involved in ECAs was one of the biggest barriers. The strategy is to conduct important activities during weekends rather than weekdays in order to have more participation. The student leaders also needed to take this time availability issue into consideration and choose an appropriate time for most students when organising the activities. As Roland (2010) comments, for students who cannot participate in ECAs because of poor time management affecting their academic life negatively, the strategy included choosing only one or two activities to participate in according to their own interest.

The issue regarding parental involvement and permission in order for students to participate in ECAs can be overcome by giving parental education. One student and one teacher suggested that parental education should be given on the importance of ECAs, whole person development and education, and encouraged parents to attend the orientation where different committees present their activities and objectives. Turner's (2010) view is that teachers must encourage the parents to be involved and give permission to their children to participate in ECAs. In this study, one student commented that it would encourage students to participate more if they get academic credits for participating actively in ECAs. According to Lunenburg's (2010) point of view, involvement in ECAs allows students to apply knowledge acquired in academic courses and supplement the required and elective courses of study. Thus, some ECAs could be taken into consideration as academic credits.

The findings on the challenges of participation in ECAs and strategies to overcome them are important because understanding the challenges and strategies would help authorities

and responsible people at LAP to give more support to students by providing better opportunities to participate in ECAs.

SUMMARY

Chapter five has discussed the findings of this study by exploring the perceptions and experiences of students and teachers in the Liberal Arts Program (LAP) under a private university in Myanmar with reference to the research questions highlighted in Chapter one with the links to the literature review in Chapter two.

First of all, the researcher explored the scope of ECAs, including in-school activities, subject-related activities (credited and non-credited) and out-of-school activities, based on the views of LAP students and teachers. Secondly, the researcher listed five main areas in which participation in ECAs has positive and/or negative impacts. The areas include (1) social life and behaviours, (2) future careers, (3) community, (4) life skills and (5) academic learning. Moreover, the relationship between the LAP mission statement, learning outcomes and ECAs experiences were discussed. Lastly, the discussion then focused on the issues and challenges encountered in ECAs participation and strategies to overcome those challenges.

The study raised the question of the scope of ECAs. The significant findings showed that the scope of ECAs is more than non-credited clubs, sports and organizations activities, and included activities outside the school and class-related activities.

In relation to the impact on social skills and behaviours, students gained social and negotiation skills with different types of people, teamwork skills and problem-solving

skills to resolve conflicts between each other, the opportunity to interact with friends who are outside of their close group of friends and develop sympathy for the lives of underprivileged people.

The experiences students gained from involvement in ECAs such as leadership skills, social skills, management skills, teamwork skills, personal and professional links and good recommendation from LAP helped students to get a job more easily. Moreover, the reputation of the university students attend was enhanced when students who had participated in ECAs looked for a job.

The development of social skills, management skills, communication skills, leadership skills, teamwork, decision-making skills, intrapersonal and interpersonal skills was part of the benefits of participation in ECAs. The study found that students, especially student leaders, learned to plan and organise different activities, how to arrange trips and become more mature. The significant finding of this study highlighted the wider impacts on the community such as helping the needy and poor mostly through internships, sharing and applying knowledge gained from school in their community or church through out-of-school ECAs.

It is evident that there were negative impacts on academic life mostly due to overly time-consuming participation in different ECAs, and missing classes because of tiredness and the responsibilities of ECAs. Teachers raised concerns that students leaders tended to have lower class attendance and lower GPA. However, half of the students perceived that there was no significant impact or correlation between participation in ECAs and academic learning. Moreover, there were such positive impacts as gaining confidence to speak up in the classroom, improving English and writing.

The analysis of school documents and newsletters showed that the mission statement, objectives and learning outcomes set by the university were met directly or indirectly through the experiences and learning gained from participation in ECAs.

This chapter considered the challenges to overcome in order to participate in ECAs. The significant challenges include (1) monetary costs of ECAs, (2) time management pressures, (3) negative impacts on study and (4) parental involvement and permission. This chapter continued to explore the strategies to overcome the challenges faced in participating in ECAs. Strategies students and teachers recommended include (1) getting financial support from the university, (2) organising the activities according to most students' availability, (3) giving parental education on ECAs and (4) receiving academic credits for ECAs.

The findings of this study related to the areas of students' social life and behaviours, future careers, life skills and community concurred with current literature. The findings of this study are important because it provides new insights into the current literature through the specific context, private tertiary education in Myanmar.

In Chapter six, the implications of the research are considered, discussed and some recommendations for future research and practice are made.

CHAPTER – 6
CONCLUSION

INTRODUCTION

This chapter draws conclusions from the findings of the research. It presents research questions and the aim of the study, a summary of the research findings, a discussion of their implications and recommendations for future research and practice, and a consideration of the limitations of this study. The findings add to the limited amount of literature about Myanmar education related to extracurricular activities (ECAs). The findings are relevant to educators who are in both private and public education sectors, the education policy makers who are currently involved in Myanmar education reform and future practitioners in the related area. This study will be of value particularly to LAP leaders, teachers, current students who are interested in improving ECAs programme for the future. Moreover, this study will be of interest to prospective students who want to learn about what LAP can offer.

RESEARCH QUESTIONS

1. What is the nature of extracurricular activities at Liberal Arts Programme?
2. What are the teachers' and students' perceptions of the role and impact of extracurricular activities?
3. How are Liberal Arts Programme mission statements and expected learning outcomes achieved through extracurricular activities?
4. What factors help and hinder participation in extracurricular activities?

In particular, this study addresses what role ECAs play in students' lives, how the LAP mission statement and learning outcomes can be met through ECAs, the issues of participation in ECAs and strategies to overcome the barriers to participating in ECAs. Its aim is to give a voice especially to the students and their views on the role of ECAs in order to contribute to the wider research on the future implementation of ECAs as part of Myanmar education system especially through higher educational reform.

Research questions served as a foundation for this discussion, the experiences and perceptions of students and teachers on the role of ECAs at LAP is explored. The scope of ECAs defined by LAP students and teachers are identified, including in-school activities, subject-related activities (credited and non-credited) and out-of-school activities. Both positive and negative impacts of ECAs on students' academic and social lives, future careers, wider impacts on the community and the development of different life skills are discussed. In addition, the relationship between the LAP mission statement, learning outcomes and ECAs experiences are discussed. The last section looks at the issues and challenges encountered in ECAs participation and strategies to overcome those challenges.

RESEARCH FINDINGS

The participants identified three areas as part of ECAs, in-school activities, subject-related activities and out-of-school activities. Thus, the findings showed that ECAs not only include school clubs, sports and organisation activities, but also class-related activities and out-of-school activities. Social and negotiation skills with different types of people, teamwork skills and problem-solving skills to resolve conflicts between each other, opportunities to interact with friends who are outside of their close group of friends and developed sympathy for the lives of unprivileged people are the benefits of involvement in ECAs. Students and teachers noted that leadership skills, social skills, management skills, teamwork skills, personal and professional links and good

recommendation from LAP helped students to get a job more easily. LAP is one of the rare universities which offers ECAs in Myanmar. Students graduating from LAP are well-known as creative and critical thinkers, out-spoken and well-rounded people in NGOs field. Thus, the reputation of the university students attend was seen as an important aspect when students look for the job.

The participants identified social skills, management skills, communication skills, leadership skills, teamwork, decision-making skills, intrapersonal and interpersonal skills as being an important part of benefits gained through participation in ECAs. Internships and sharing/applying knowledge gained from school to their community or church through out-of-school ECAs was identified as a way to have positive impacts on their community and needy people. The participants have outlined their perceptions of how ECAs involvement sometimes has negative impacts on academic learning because of missing classes, lower class attendance and over-involvement in ECAs which conveys the complexities of experiences of the role of ECAs in students' academic life. However, gaining confidence to speak up in the classroom, improving English and writing were identified as the benefits of ECAs experiences.

The analysis of school documents and newsletters showed that the mission statement, objectives and learning outcomes set by the university are met directly or indirectly through the experiences and learning gained from participation in ECAs.

The significant challenges include (1) money issue, (2) time management issue, (3) negative impacts on study and (4) parental involvement and permission. The strategies to overcome the barriers to participation in ECAs were also identified. Strategies students and teachers employed include (1) getting financial support from the university, (2) organising the activities according to most students' availability, (3) giving parental education on ECAs and (4) receiving academic credits for ECAs.

IMPLICATIONS OF FINDINGS

The study identifies a few key issues. The first issue is the understanding of the scope of ECAs by LAP students and teachers. Since ECAs are not very familiar in Myanmar education, the scope of ECAs is not clearly defined in the Myanmar context. LAP students and teachers have identified class-credited activities which are part of the curriculum as one of the categories of ECAs; on the other hand, a few studies highlight ECAs as activities outside of school traditional curriculum (Huntington Beach City School District, 2007 and Stoltzfus, 2007). This can be considered by education policy makers and curriculum leaders to identify the clear scope of ECAs in all levels of schooling.

Students and teachers highlighted the benefits of participation in ECAs on social life, future careers, community, development of life skills and academic learning. For instance, students gained leadership, creative, problem-solving, organisational and management skills. This significant finding may inform the educators and practitioners of a value of offering ECAs as part of education system in Myanmar. Moreover, it added to a small amount of literature focusing on the topic of ECAs at Myanmar schools in general. Therefore, it was worthwhile to raise awareness and wider implementation of ECAs at Myanmar schools. This finding may contribute to the Ministry of Education, teachers, students and parents about an understanding of the importance of ECAs and the benefits of participation in ECAs on students' lives and academic achievements.

The finding of how LAP mission statement and objectives were met directly or indirectly through the experiences and learning outcomes of ECAs is relevant mainly to education policy makers and LAP leaders. By understanding that ECAs experiences and learning outcomes are one of the support factors of meeting the educational objectives, education policy makers can consider the promotion of ECAs at all level of schooling.

The research findings also highlighted the barriers to students' participation in ECAs such as money issues, time management issues, negative impacts on study and parental involvement and permission. The findings also indicated the strategies to overcome the challenges such as getting financial support from the university, organising the activities according to most students' availability, giving parental education on ECAs and receiving academic credits for ECAs. These challenges and strategies may be taken into consideration by LAP leaders and teachers to support the students with better involvement in ECAs. This recommendation should inform not only LAP leaders and teachers, but also education policy makers and practitioners should be aware of these when considering ECAs.

Regarding parental education, educators could advocate ECAs more widely. LAP leaders and teachers can structure ECAs systematically in order for parents and students to understand what ECAs is and its benefits. It might be necessary for LAP to promote ECAs widely in the community rather than keeping it to themselves within school. Moreover, one important aspect includes advocating to the teachers and educators the importance of ECAs and ECAs as part of the education system.

Perhaps the unexpected source of difficulty in this study is revealing the perceptions of students and teachers on the comparison of the role of ECAs in public and private universities. There was not much information on this area since most of the students who were interviewed do not attend public university but instead go through distance learning. However, it would be worth comparing and contrasting ECAs role in public and private universities for future research.

LIMITATIONS OF THIS RESEARCH

Since this particular study draws upon an interpretive research methodology, the findings have explored the relevance to the Myanmar context and can make only limited statements for generalisations of the findings. One of the main limitations of this study was its scope. This is because the findings came from five teachers and ten students from a private university in Myanmar. Moreover, LAP takes place a largely Christian College; however, the students are well-mixed of different religions. This study was an in-depth qualitative study and its aim was to explore the perceptions of students and teachers on the role of ECAs at a private university, Liberal Arts Programme in Myanmar. It is not aimed at generalising the findings. The findings provide insights into the perceptions and experiences of a small group of students and teachers who brought their own experiences and views to complete this particular research.

According to the documented literature, this is the very first piece of research on ECAs in the Myanmar context. Therefore, rather than carrying out hypothesis testing, this research primarily described all the results and findings based on the exploratory questions. Since convenience sampling was used to conduct this study, the sample population may not represent the perceptions and experiences of ECAs in Myanmar tertiary education. This study was done at one private university in Myanmar with a sample size of ten students and five teachers. Therefore, although the results were not fully representative, it could be assumed that some findings may to some extent reveal the perceptions and experiences of students and teachers about participation in ECAs, ECAs practices, benefits and problems of participation, issues about participating in ECAs and strategies to overcome them in the Myanmar context. For instance, it could be assumed that regardless of the low representation level of the sample, the data indicated that at least some students who attended a Myanmar private university experienced positive effects on their social life and behaviours, future careers, life skills, community and academic learning.

RECOMMENDATIONS

The findings and the implications of this research have highlighted some areas where practice might be improved. The following recommendations that are an outcome of this research may provide a support for LAP and a framework for future research.

Recommendations for Practice

1) It is important to gain a clear understanding of the scope of ECAs which are currently offered at LAP, which activities are considered to be ECAs and which activities are related to a particular course with credits. It should be clearly stated in school policy documents under the section of ECAs.

2) The number of similar ECAs can be reduced in order to have most effective results. For instance, different organisations with the same objectives can cooperate together when organising the activities. This would save students time, energy and would reduce the negative impacts on students' academic learning.

3) Since the guidance received from the school board and teachers is low, it would be helpful to have systematic supervision of different ECA organisations and the student body. However, since this is liberal arts programme which gives freedom to the students, teachers can be at the organisations and student body meetings to offer advice whenever necessary rather than taking a leadership role.

4) The researcher recommends that the strategies to overcome the challenges faced by the students in order to participate in ECAs should be attended to and acted on by LAP leaders to give the most support possible. This can be achieved through listening to the students' voice and an in-depth discussion with student leaders on the issues of participation in ECAs.

5) The university should support and encourage students to take part in ECAs more because of the benefits resulting from participating in ECAs such as social and negotiation skills with different types of people, teamwork skills and problem-solving skills, leadership skills, social skills and management skills.

Recommendations for Future Research

Future research could be conducted on –

1) The issues facing education policy makers to include ECAs as part of the learning at all level of schooling in Myanmar education

2) The issues facing practitioners in implementing ECAs at Myanmar public schools in order to find better strategies to solve the issues

3) Positive and negative impacts of ECAs at other private high schools and universities which offer ECAs in Myanmar

The study provides some useful results for future research. The future research could be done at other private high schools or universities in Myanmar which offer ECAs. Such studies will need to investigate key issues faced mainly by the education policy makers and education board in implementing ECAs. This will give new insights into the area of ECAs in the Myanmar context. This study aims to deepen the understanding of perceptions and experiences of students and teachers particularly of the role of ECAs offered at Liberal Arts Programme at a private university in Myanmar. Moreover, part of this study aimed to advise a better practice for educators or practitioners. In future work, it would be appropriate to investigate whether the results of this study would apply in other private schools and universities in the same context. An extension of the interviews to a larger sample would enhance the validity of the findings.

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APPENDIX

Appendix A – Participation Information Sheet - Student

INFORMATION SHEET (For Students)

Title of Thesis: Perceptions of students and teachers on the role of extracurricular activities at a private university in Myanmar

My name is Hnin Pwint Soe and I am currently enrolled in the Master of Education (M.Ed) degree in the Department of Education at Unitec Institute of Technology. I am seeking your help in meeting the requirements of research for a Thesis course which forms a substantial part of this degree.

The aim of my project is to investigate the perceptions of students and teachers of the role of extracurricular activities at a private university in Myanmar.

I would like your help in the following way.

I will be collecting data using an interview schedule and would appreciate being able to interview you at a time that is mutually suitable. The interview will take about 40-50 minutes I will also be asking you to sign a consent form regarding this event. The interview will take place at a quiet place at your institute.

Your name will not be identified in the thesis. I will be recording your contribution and will provide a transcript for you to check before data analysis is undertaken. A professional transcriber will translate your interview from Burmese (Myanmar) to English. The transcriber will be asked to sign a confidentiality form to keep the interview data confidential. I will provide the transcript for you to check and you can withdraw from the research up to two weeks after receiving the transcript.

If you have any queries about the project, you may contact my supervisor at Unitec Institute of Technology.

My principal supervisor is Dr. Jenny Collins and may be contacted by email or phone.
Phone: (09) 815 4321   Email: jcollins@unitec.ac.nz

Yours sincerely,
Hnin Pwint Soe

UREC REGISTRATION NUMBER: 2013-1032

This study has been approved by the Unitec Research Ethics Committee from June 25, 2013 to June 25, 2014. If you have any complaints or reservations about the ethical conduct of this research, you may contact the Committee through the UREC Secretary (ph: 09 815-4321 ext 6162). Any issues you raise will be treated in confidence and investigated fully, and you will be informed of the outcome.

Appendix B – Participation Information Sheet - Teacher

![Unitec Institute of Technology logo - TE WHARE WĀNANGA O WAIRAKA]

INFORMATION SHEET (For Teachers)

Title of Thesis: Perceptions of students and teachers on the role of extracurricular activities at a private university in Myanmar

My name is Hnin Pwint Soe and I am currently enrolled in the Master of Education (M.Ed) degree in the Department of Education at Unitec Institute of Technology. I am seeking your help in meeting the requirements of research for a Thesis course which forms a substantial part of this degree.

The aim of my project is to investigate the perceptions of students and teachers of the role of extracurricular activities at a private university in Myanmar.

I would like your help in the following way.

I will be collecting data using an interview schedule and would appreciate being able to interview you at a time that is mutually suitable. The interview will take about 40-50 minutes I will also be asking you to sign a consent form regarding this event. The interview will take place at a quiet place at your institute. I will also be collecting data by analysing the school mission statements, policies and curriculum. I would like to request to have access to those documents from your organisation.

Neither you nor your organisation will be identified in the thesis. I will be recording your contribution and will provide a transcript for you to check before data analysis is undertaken. A professional transcriber will translate your interview from Burmese (Myanmar) to English. The transcriber will be asked to sign a confidentiality form to keep the interview data confidential I will provide the transcript for you to check and you can withdraw from the research up to two weeks after receiving the transcript.

If you have any queries about the project, you may contact my supervisor at Unitec Institute of Technology.

My principal supervisor is Dr. Jenny Collins and may be contacted by email or phone.
Phone: (09) 815 4321   Email: jcollins@unitec.ac.nz

Yours sincerely,

Hnin Pwint Soe

UREC REGISTRATION NUMBER: 2013-1032

This study has been approved by the Unitec Research Ethics Committee from June 25, 2013 to June 25, 2014. If you have any complaints or reservations about the ethical conduct of this research, you may contact the Committee through the UREC Secretary (ph: 09 815-4321 ext 6162). Any issues you raise will be treated in confidence and investigated fully, and you will be informed of the outcome.

Appendix C – Consent Form

CONSENT FORM

Research event: Individual interview
Researcher: Hnin Pwint Soe
Programme: Master of Education

THESIS TITLE: Perceptions of students and teachers on the role of extracurricular activities at a private university in Myanmar

I have been given and have understood an explanation of this research and I have had an opportunity to ask questions and have had them answered. I understand that neither my name nor the name of my organisation will be used in any public reports.

I also understand that I will be provided with a transcript for checking before data analysis is started.

I am aware that I may withdraw myself or any information that has been provided for this project up to two weeks after receiving the transcript.

I agree to take part in this project.

Signed: _____

Name: _____

Date: _____

Appendix D – Confidentiality Agreement – Transcription Services

Unitec
NEW ZEALAND
Te Whare Wānanga o Wairaka

CONFIDENTIALITY AGREEMENT – TRANSCRIPTION SERVICES

TO:

FROM:

DATE:

RE: transcription of interview data

I_____ agree to maintain full confidentiality in regards to any and all audiotapes and documentation received from Hnin Pwint Soe related to the research of "Perceptions of students and teachers on the role of extracurricular activities at a private university in Myanmar" . Furthermore, I agree:

1. To hold in strictest confidence the identification of any individual that may be inadvertently revealed during the transcription of audio-taped interviews, or in any associated documents;

2. To not make copies of any audiotapes or computerised files of the transcribed interview texts, unless specifically requested to do so by Hnin Pwint Soe;

3. To store all study-related audiotapes and materials in a safe, secure location as long as they are in my possession;

4. To return all audiotapes and research related documents to name in a complete and timely manner.

5. To delete all electronic files containing research related documents from my computer hard drive and any backup devices.

I am aware that I can be held legally liable for any breach of this confidentiality agreement, and for any harm incurred by individuals if we disclose identifiable information contained in the audiotapes and/or files to which we will have access.

Transcriber's name (printed) _____

Signature   _____

Date   _____

UREC REGISTRATION NUMBER: 2013-1032

This study has been approved by the Unitec Research Ethics Committee from June 25, 2013 to June 25, 2014. If you have any complaints or reservations about the ethical conduct of this research, you may contact the Committee through the UREC Secretary (ph: 09 815-4321 ext 6162). Any issues you raise will be treated in confidence and investigated fully, and you will be informed of the outcome.

Appendix E – Semi-Structured Interview Schedule for Students

SEMI-STRUCTURED INTERVIEW SCHEDULE FOR STUDENTS

Perceptions of students on the role of extracurricular activities at a Myanmar private university

Thank you for participating in this interview and sharing your views and experiences to a better understanding of the role of extracurricular activities (ECAs) plays in Myanmar education.

1. What type of ECAs you are currently involved in?
2. Why did you decide to participate in these particular ECAs?
3. What are your views on the ECAs offered at your institute?
4. Can you tell me about your experiences in the ECAs that you are involved in?
5. How do you think that your ECA experience has affected your academic, social and other skills?
6. Can you tell me what you have learned from participating in ECAs?
7. What have been the biggest barriers to participate in ECAs?
8. How have you anticipated or overcome those barriers?
9. Are there any changes you would like to suggest to the current ECAs programme?
10. Would you like to make any other comments about ECAs?

Appendix E – Semi-Structured Interview Schedule for Teachers

SEMI-STRUCTURED INTERVIEW SCHEDULE FOR TEACHERS

Perceptions of teachers on the role of extracurricular activities at a Myanmar private university

Thank you for participating in this interview and sharing your views and experiences to a better understanding of the role of extracurricular activities (ECAs) plays in Myanmar education.

1. What is your role in ECAs?
2. What are your views on ECAs offered at your institute?
3. How important do you think the role ECAs plays in Myanmar education? Why?
4. Does participating in certain type of ECAs count towards academic credits? Why?
5. Do students' experiences and learning directly or indirectly meet the learning outcomes set by your institute? If so, how?
6. How does ECAs impact on students' academic, social and other skills?
7. What have been the biggest barriers for students to participate in ECAs?
8. Are there any changes you would like to suggest to the current ECAs programme?