Jump over the visa obstacle. We show you how.

Studying Abroad
How to apply and win a place at a prestigious university
Students enjoy a multitude of study, learning options

By Juliet Shwe Gaung

SAVVY young Myanmar students should choose their careers with great care, and keep a close eye on the changing education and employment situation in order to position themselves, say experienced educators.

High-school graduates face three possible scenarios: further study overseas, further study in Myanmar, or getting a job—and different preparation is required for each option, said U Aye Kyaw, principal of Myanmar Human Resources.

Students wishing to study abroad can attend pre-university or university foundation courses, as well as learning about the language and culture of the country in which they will be studying.

"Some students fail to do well because they don’t know what kind of subject they are going to study abroad. The preparatory course should match the major," said U Aye Kyaw.

As for language preparation, some teachers at foreign universities have complained that some students who arrive with good marks in TOEFL or IELTS still have language difficulties, he said.

Information on the status of the university can be accessed on the internet through government websites such as ministry of education or recognition of university’s recognition council as well as just checking the school’s website, he said.

"A course that an American university said it planned to offer in Myanmar was still listed as ‘pending’ on the Colorado state government website, where the university was located," said U Aye Kyaw.

The student should research which universities are well known for which subjects. "The university’s image is really important if you are applying for jobs abroad in that field, or pursuing further study at a different university," he said.

Those who intend to study at local universities should beware of applying for courses just because they earned high marks in those subjects at school.

"If a student applies for a course just because of the marks, it affects two applicants – the applicant, who doesn’t have a clear vision of his or her future profession, and the person who really likes the subject but fails to get enough marks to be admitted," said U Aye Kyaw.

Youngsters weighing up which career to pursue should consider what professions might become popular in the future, he said.

Students can broaden their appeal to universities and future employers alike by extracurricular activities such as social work, even if the student intends to study locally. "At least you get to know more people," said U Aye Kyaw.

Daw June, a 20-year veteran of high-school teaching, who now tutors English privately, said the two-month break before high school should provide time for a thorough study of the syllabus.

She gave the example of a medical student who worked hard despite financial difficulties.

"He would take along a sewing machine during the semester and do sewing work for friends, and sell vegetables during the evening, and study at the same time. Concentration can really work wonders, coupled with hard work," she said.

Wide reading also helps in preparation for English, she said.

Students abroad have the chance to take “student employment” to pay for college, Daw June said. "Not many companies offer paid work for students, but these jobs do exist," said U Aye Kyaw.

This year’s education supplement shines a light on the rapidly evolving educational system in Myanmar. In an era where education has the ability to shape lives, we are aiming to illustrate the overall scope of Myanmar’s educational system.

In 2005 UNESCO estimated that Myanmar’s overall literacy rate stood at 89.7 percent, a legacy no doubt of the country once the finest educational system in Southeast Asia.

The nation has developed substantially since the days of monastic education acting as a primary educator, now it fills a void in an advancing system of both government and private institutions.

At junior levels, children enjoy a diverse curriculum in all streams of the education sector. Mandalay has 130 pre-schools focusing on language and child development. International schools flourish in Yangon, which has many schools and institutions teaching a variety of internationally recognized curriculums.

Tertiary students are increasingly looking abroad in their quest for knowledge. The umbrella of a globalised education system is clearly evident and students are benefitting from a huge network of overseas universities looking capitalise on Asia’s new wealth.

Educational agencies have sprung to life all throughout Yangon. Industry insiders are estimating their numbers to be in the hundreds, a promising prospect for students wishing to study abroad. Obtaining a student visa can be challenging and embassies are warning applicants not to make any financial commitments until a visa is issued.

Myanmar has a wealth of educated professionals. If you are struggling to find inspiration then our interviews with the nation’s business, entrepreneurs and industry experts will surely work wonders, coupled with hard work," she said.

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Dubious agents entice students short of visa

By Tom Hunter

EMBASSIES in Yangon are warning students to be cautious of visa-traps that entice them to take all necessary steps to ensure they meet the student visa requirements.

A spokesperson for the Department of Immigration and Citizenship (DIAC) in Yangon told The Myanmar Times that students should be wary of educational agents looking to profit from student visa schemes.

“We would certainly advise any potential student visa applicants to obtain information from DIAC directly, rather than obtain their information through agents. There are many dubious agents and companies in Yangon providing false information to their clients,” Danial Gelper said.

In a statement released to the media Australian Minister for Immigration, Senator Chris Evans said that students wishing to study in Australia should also be aware of new visa regulations.

“Students will need to demonstrate that they have access to at least AUS$18,000 a year to fund their living costs in Australia, instead of the 2009 amount required for a student visa,” Senator Evans said.

Prospective students are encouraged to conduct their own research so they can make an informed decision about what study in Australia will cost,” he said.

Students wishing to study in the United States, like all non-immigrant visa applicants, must overcome the presumption under US law that they are intending immigrants.

The Assistant Public Affairs Officer, Drake Weisert told The Myanmar Times, that in order to gain a US student visa, students should present evidence that they have strong ties to Myanmar which will compel them to return after their studies have concluded.

Weisert also stressed that students should not make any financial commitments to studying abroad, such as airline tickets, until a visa has been granted.


By Tom Hunter

IN Australia a rise in violent crimes against international students threatens to destabilise the countries lucrative university market which has become a favored destination for international students from Myanmar.

The Australian Department of Immigration and Citizenship granted more than 320,000 international student visas in the 2008-9 period mostly to India and China, with 448 of those going to students from Myanmar. The industry is reported to be worth close to AUS$12 billion each year to the Australian economy.

Myanmar’s students say that while safety is an issue for them, it would not dissuade them from travelling to Australia to study.

“We may be facing a lot of discrimination when we travel abroad, but we have to go abroad to study, so for us it is not an issue,” Myanmar student, Aung Ko Minn said.

“I think that as long as I go abroad to study and not to work then I won’t have a problem like Australia where he doesn’t speak the language could be a problem,” he said.

“For me it’s worth it. The facilities in Australia are so great that I would still go there to study,” he said.

There have been no reported attacks against Myanmar students in the latest spate of Australian assaults.

The rise in attacks however has led the Indian government to increase its official travel advisory, urging its students to be cautious in Australia. “The Ministry of External Affairs cautions Indian students who are planning to study in Australia that there have been several incidents of robbery and assault on Indians in Australia, particularly in Melbourne, which has seen an increase in violence on its streets in recent years,” the government advisory states.

“Increasingly, the acts of violence are often accompanied by verbal abuse, fuelled by alcohol and drugs,” the advisory adds.

PM Kevin Rudd, hosted a community ‘think tank’ in the Australian city of Adelaide, January 20, looking to address public concerns about the issue, which remains largely in the public eye.

Deputy Prime Minister Julia Gillard told reporters in Australia that despite the recent spate of violence, generally the feedback received from the nearly half a million Indian students was positive towards the country, but that did not excuse the incidents.

She acknowledged that parents whose children are studying in Australia must be worried about their children.

“We’re absolutely disgusted with some of the violent incidents we’ve seen involving Indian students,” she said to loud applause from the crowd.

“There have clearly been policing problems and the Victorian and NSW police particularly have been responding.”

She said the government was working with the police and various education outlets to educate students before they came to Australia and to ensure there is regulation of the outlets that send students to the country.

Immigration Minister Chris Evans said while the international education system was very important in Australia, migrants were chosen based on Australia’s needs and what would help the economy.
Garden school sews new hope

Mingun “Garden School”, is a testament to how one person can make a real difference in their community and meet needs the public and private sector cannot or will not.

By Thomas Kean

IN the shadow of Mingun Pagoda – dubbed by one early traveller “the world’s largest pile of bricks” – is a privately run school.

Known as the “Garden School”, it is testament to how one person can make a real difference in their community and meet needs the public and private sector cannot or will not.

Ko Thant Zin was just a 21-year-old English-language student when he founded the Garden School in 2002. From his house he provided free English tuition to 20 students from the local school.

He points proudly at a faded picture of that first class pinned at a faded point in his office.

“They were so eager to learn... my first class,” Ko Thant Zin says.

More than seven years later, the Garden School has 240 enrolled students. From a larger but still modest four-room building, Ko Thant Zin and 13 other teachers provide tutoring in computer studies, mathematics, physics, chemistry, economics and biology as well as English.

Classes are held in the morning, evening and on weekends, and are designed to complement, rather than replace.

In a small building on Mingun’s main road, near the jetty where tourists disembark after arriving by boat from Mandalay, the school also runs sewing classes for young women in rural communities like Mingun.

“I dropped out of school because my family couldn’t afford to send me any more money,” says Ma Thet Thet Moe.

In the workshop, which has about 20 sewing machines, students like 12-year-old Ma Thet Thet Moe produce various garments, including shirts, ties and longyis, that are then sold in Mandalay. The women are paid per piece and the school supplies the material.

In rural villages around Mingun, she says, “Now, at least, I can make a little bit of money.”

It is not only women who lack opportunities in rural communities. But, when he started the Garden School, Ko Thant Zin recognised that the villages around Mingun had one asset that could be harnessed: a small but relatively steady stream of foreign tourists.

While many tried – and still do – to earn a few thousand kyats a day selling souvenirs or guiding foreigners around Mingun Pagoda, he instead appealed to visitors for funds to purchase equipment, the equivalent of about US$20 a month.

“This is an opportunity for me,” says 19-year-old Ko Ye Min Kaung, who tutors economics students. “I can earn some money while completing my course at Shwebo University.”

The students are aged from four to 20 years and the oldest are usually “repeaters”; those who have failed their matriculation and are attempting to pass for the second and sometimes third time. Most of these students come from poor families.

For them, the Garden School provides a vital chance to get their education back on track.

Others are happy to have the opportunity to learn new skills, like 13-year-old Ma Hla Su Po, who had just entered the eighth standard when I talked to students at the Garden School last year, my fifth visit since I arrived in Myanmar in 2007.

“I enjoy learning how to type, in both English and Myanmar-language. We use programs like Microsoft Word and Excel, Paint. Now we’re learning how to use [Adobe] Photoshop,” she told me.

Judging from the comments in the book where foreign visitors log their donations, most are surprised at finding a facility like this in Mingun.

“We’ll need about $15,000 for the whole project but we don’t have enough space in our present building for classrooms. It will also give us the chance to host foreign visitors, who can help teach the children English,” he says.

The extension has got the approval of the local authori-
Music facilitates learning
where it’s most needed

By Aye Aye Myo

ASK any child what their favourite time at school is and nine times out of ten they will tell you either play time or music. Whilst most children will quickly dismiss any informative material forced on them during such times, music class is different. The performances mainly focused on issues concerning health, hygiene and self improvement using entertainment as a tool to lift peoples spirits," U Su Tin, President of Social Vision Services told The Myanmar Times.

In combination with UNICEF, SUV set up huge stages and held education seminars comprising of traditional dance, song and humorous educational dramas. We managed to attract huge audiences in rural areas and people took pleasure in watching the performances whilst absorbed important information regarding health and well being," he said. The performances mainly focused on issues concerning health, hygiene and self improvement using entertainment as a tool to lift peoples spirits," U Su Tin, President of Social Vision Services told The Myanmar Times.

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Pre-schools boom in Mandalay

By Khin Su Wai

THE market for pre-school education in Mandalay is set to boom over the next few years, industry insiders predict. The expansion will be fuelled by lifestyle changes and shifts in the nature of education for the very young, they say. International preschool companies are already investing in Mandalay. Ten years ago there was only one international preschool, but now there are four. There are signs of competition amongst the international preschools (both private and government run) as they advertise their different teaching techniques and syllabuses.

"Things are different now from when we were children. When I was young, there were no preschools. We had many brothers and sisters, and the older ones would look after the younger ones. Most families now may have only one or two children, but if both parents work they don’t have the time to look after them properly. That’s the cause of the preschool boom," said Dr Phyu Phyu Win, principal of the Australian Institute of Technology (AIT).

Preschool establishments can be government-run preschools, international preschools or private preschools, with fees ranging between K30,000 to K150,000 per month. We have three levels in our preschool: nursery for 3-4 year-olds, pre-kindergarten for 4 to 5 year-olds and kindergarten for 5 to 6 year-olds. Each level has a different curriculum. Our motto is ‘Play and Learn,’ said Daw Thwet Thwet Yin Su, pre school principal of Horizon International.

Early childhood education is extremely important. It is the foundation for children’s development, not just in education, but also in social and emotional skills. Our plan for 2010 is to open a summer school program at the first and biggest preschool in Myanmar, which is situated in Mandalay," said Daw Thwet Thwet Yin Su.

In this file photo taken at a temporary UNICEF school in the Ayerwaddy Delta children enjoy everyday classes after their school was destroyed by Cyclone Nargis. Students throughout the nation are benefitting from innovative learning techniques helping to promote development.
By Ei Ei Mar

TEACHING the business of business is a big business in itself. And the study of business – to become a Master of Business Administration – is attracting more and more students who want to know how the world of business works.

Any business professional will develop practical knowledge about the field in which they work, as well as various aspects of running a company. But this is not the same as understanding the theory of management, and knowing how to apply its lessons to any situation that might arise, in companies large and small.

Experience is enormous but it should be combined by theoretical knowledge and here comes the importance of the subjects taught at the Master of Business Administration.

The Yangon Institute of Economics offers an MBA course – full-time or evening – that has so far produced about 1200 graduates – not many in a country with more than 40,000 companies.

In many firms, managers get through the day without having studied the principles of management, economics, marketing, finance, control techniques, international business management and so on. This doesn’t mean they don’t know what they’re doing. These companies may well be successful and prosperous. But in a rapidly changing domestic and international environment, something more than practical on-the-job experience may be required.

Most MBA students at the institute are entrepreneurs, senior executives or ambitious and energetic youngsters eager to start up their own businesses. Despite their varied backgrounds, what they have in common is the urge to manage their businesses systematically and to forge useful connections with their fellow students.

The three major accrediting bodies which provide external bodies which provide students and employers with an independent view of their quality.

Students looking at studying for an MBA outside on Myanmar should be aware that MBA programs are accredited by external bodies which provide an independent view of their quality.

The professor was not just talking about money and raw materials when she used the word “resources”. She was also referring to time and people.

But awareness of the basics of management is a key requirement, especially in this information age. The point is to give effect to clichés like ‘Our people are our most important resource’.

By Myo Lwin

ECONOMICS is the study of how human beings allocate their limited resources to satisfy their unlimited needs and wants. That statement, made by Professor Daw Tin Hla Kyi of the Yangon Institute of Economics teaching an Executive Master of Business Administration course, sums up the entire discipline.

The professor was not just talking about what to do with money and raw materials when she used the word “resources”. She was also referring to time and people.

In Myanmar we have plentiful natural resources. But our supply of human resources is not at all abundant, even though these may be the most important – and the most at risk of waste.

Only if we make the best use of the abilities and competencies of each and every one can an organisation or community remain competitive and its members motivated and productive.

Managers may grumble about how hard they find it to manage people with different levels of competence and varying needs and wants.

Thayar Industrial Zone, Yangon.

Pic: Myo Lwin

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Pic: Myo Lwin
By Aye Thidar Kyaw

SPAN the rod and spoil the child, or so many parents believe – or, to put it in Myanmar terms, if you want to make a good pot you have to bang it hard and often when you make it.

But many disagree.

Parents are a child's first teachers. They convey to their children not just the values they seek to promote, but also the way they actually behave and sometimes, an awareness of the difference between the two.

"The best way to start a house is by building strong foundations. It's the same with early childhood care and development, particularly until the age of six," said U Atta Kyaw, who writes about family, marriage and children.

He added that children should learn to acquire good habits without constant admonitions from their parents.

Some parents take the advice about making pots too seriously, he says. They seem to think children grow up to be clever, obedient and successful only if regularly hit.

And some parents are overly ambitious for their children. Not content with hitting their children themselves, they tell schoolteachers: "Hit my children as often as you like," he said.

"Parents and teachers can admonish children, or even punish them. But this can be done without inflicting pain," said Daw Khin Aye Win, retired professor of psychology department at Yangon University.

"If you must hit a child, you have to explain why. But parents should try to find a better way," she added.

"People don't need to be hit. Today's society doesn't allow it, and it is not the sign of a civilised and humane parent," says U Atta Kyaw.

Life may be full of trouble and pain, but parents should not blame their children when things go wrong, he said.

"The right kind of admonition is based on love, without anger," he said.

"It's more important to help the children do the right thing in the right way without hitting them," said Ma Phyu Phyu, who has a three-year old son, he said.

If parents want their children to be brilliant, they must spend time with them – tell them stories and read books with them. Researchers have found that this helps the child's educational development. So does playing with them and talking to them, even for just one hour a day for each parent.

"If you want your kids to do well at school, don't pile too much pressure on them like some parents do. Younger children might comply, but this is not a recipe for life-long learning," said Daw Khin Aye Win.

Of course, this is easier said then done at a time when the strains and time pressures on both parents may be worse than ever.

"Today stress may be greater, and the role of grandparents is declining. The grandparents may not be educated, but they are wise and sensible and experienced, and they can talk about tradition and culture and tell the old stories. Maybe they can sometimes give better advice than some of today's parents," said U Atta Kyaw.

But parents also have to think like children, and understand how their children feel and think.

"Parents should be sympathetic when admonishing their children," said Daw Khin Aye Win.

And today, education is linked to family happiness, experts say, pointing out that strains can arise if there is a mismatch between the educational levels of parents and children.

"In the end, the best guarantee of a good education is the warmth and happiness of the family environment, they say."
Where to study and how
Malaysia and Singapore compete for young brains

By Ye Linn Htut

Myanmars international students often fight a uphill battle of rules, regulations and requirements when looking to study abroad. Students eager to stay abreast of the learning trends are now looking to universities in country’s like Australia, Malaysia and Singapore. These country’s have huge education sectors which are increasingly looking abroad to capitalise on Asia’s new wealth, but for some deciding the best destination can often be a difficult decision.

A spokesperson for Crown Educational Service, U Aung Kyaw San said that whilst Thailand and Malaysia were popular for Myanmar students, Singapore is still the most popular choice.

"Parents want to send their kids to Singapore because it is close in proximity and prosperous from strong economic conditions," U Aung Kyaw San said.

Apart from being a wealthy nation, Singapore has very strict rules and is renowned for being a safe country, he said. Professor and instructors really built up the confidence and helped me with my communication skills," she said.

"Walking into the campus for the first time was very exciting. For hotel management and tourism NTU was great. The quality of educational services offered in Singapore are considered by students chosen field of expertise. These institutions in Singapore are a popular stepping stone into tertiary degrees at universities like NTS and NTU.

"Students should use agencies who have up-to-date information, good advice and genuine intentions of seeing a student graduate from their chosen institution," said. Smart Resources is an educational agency located in Yangon that specializes in sending students to Singapore.

"If the student is lacking some qualifications to attend the school then a good agent will tell them what they need to do to rectify this. Also sometimes parents have an idea for their child's education which is at odds with what the child wants to study. Agents in Singapore help to ensure that both the student and the child are happy with the choice," he said.

By James Hookyaw

KUALA LUMPUR—A few months ago, 10-year-old Ain-an Cawley was looking out for high-powered sports cars on the streets of Singapore. Now the Singaporean youngster is ogling them on the streets of Malaysia, where he has just enrolled for a three-year American degree and inadvertently added to a long-standing tussle for supremacy between two of Asia’s closest but least-friendly neighbors.

Ain-an has a special talent when it comes to subjects like chemistry and physics. He passed a chemistry exam when he was seven that most of his siblings had failed. His parents say they couldn’t find a sufficiently challenging school back home in Singapore.

"We are looking to send our child to help the boy.

The Wall Street Journal
Monastic education

By Cherry Thein

TO Myanmar Buddhists, the monastery is a house of religious learning, formal education and training for life based on the teachings of Buddha. The monastic education system promotes morality and inculcates Myanmar culture in students who, typically, are drawn from a wide variety of backgrounds.

Shwe Yoe (Sir J. George Scott) in his book, The Burman: His Life and Notions, said monasteries were open to all alike — to the poor farmer’s son as well as to the scion of princely blood. Thus every Buddhist boy in the country is taught to read and write, and in this respect at least there are but very few illiterate Burmese. Myanmar was formerly known as Burma).

“Monastic education is thought to date back to at least the Bagan era in the 10th century, with historical records indicating that King Mindon was schooled in a monastery. In 1846, Buddhist mission-aries launched a monastic education project with the aim of opening more monastic schools in Myanmar’s remote mountain regions. This program was finally formalised in 1992 with permission from the government and with the expanded aim of opening monastic schools throughout the country using state-run curricula. U Aung Thein Nyunt, the director of the Department of Promotion and Propagation for Sasana under the Ministry of Religious Affairs, said monastic schools played an important role in the daily life of Buddhists in Myanmar.

“We owe our gratitude to the monastic schools for our religious lessons, education, understanding of business, anatomy and above all our way of living as well. They are the place for propagating, preserving and protecting Theravada Buddhism in Myanmar,” he said.

He said monasteries supported our education, culture and customs, and have a good relationship with the laity. They are often more effective than basic education schools because they combine state education with the teaching of Buddhist ethics under the direction of monks. Monastic schools today especially serve orphans and children from destitute families, who can ill afford to pursue formal education. Some well-funded monastic schools also provide students with free food and accommodation, while many others are just normal day schools.

“Buddhist monks are assigned to the border area while they study for their bachelors or masters degree offered by the government. They have to work for the propagation of Theravada Buddhism at the townships where Theravada did not develop. It is one of the reasons why monastic schools still exist,” he said.

Venerable Ashin Nanda Wontha, a patron of the Su-taung Pyae (2) child development and monastic education school in Thanlyin, Yangon Division, said monastic schools especially stood for propagating Theravada Buddhism, but were also concerned to provide education to impoverished families.

“Monastic schools are concerned to teach basic ethical values and morality, and now this approach is extended to teach state-run curricula for the benefit of all poor people,” he said.

Monastic school procedures have remained unchanged, but the use of state-run curricula makes it easy for the children to enrol in state schools, he said.

According to the department, there are now more than 1400 monastic schools in 248 townships throughout Myanmar that have opened under this system.
Harvard imparts its wisdom

By Noe Noe Aung

MEMORIES of your educational experience can last a lifetime – especially if you have the good fortune to go to Harvard.

Renowned the world over as one of the pinnacles of higher education, its 370-year history and its reputation for academic excellence make Harvard University, in Cambridge, Massachusetts, a beacon for students not just in the United States, but from every country. Ten of those foreign students came from Myanmar.

U Win Phe, better known as U Mya Zin, got his MA in English from Harvard in 1958. Now 81 years old, he shared his memories with The Myanmar Times.

Among the things U Win Phe found most impressive was the library, which even contained books from Myanmar.

"I was so glad and proud to find those rare books in the Widener Library. Literary works that we couldn’t easily find in our own country were preserved in the famous library of Harvard," said U Win Phe.

"The Lamont Library played a very big part in my student life. It was known as the Poetry Library, and had a recording room where I could listen to the voices of poets reading their favourite works," he said.

The Myanmar government selected me and U Nyunt Wai as scholar students for Harvard when I was employed as an English tutor at Yangon University. I’d been working there six months. I didn’t find language to be a barrier because I’d already worked as an editor in the English section of the Yangon University magazine since 1948," U Win Phe continued.

If his knowledge of the English language was an advantage, Harvard’s teaching methods also contributed a great deal to his success there. Good and clear teaching methods are one of the characteristics of Harvard, he said. The famous cartoonist Aw Pi Kyeh, U Win Naing, who got an MA in public administration from Harvard in 2002, also commended the Harvard approach.

"As at most universities, students have to rely on their own abilities. Students learn their lessons by themselves. They go to libraries and read the reference books. In class, teachers didn’t read out the lessons from a textbook. They make students discuss world affairs like policy, inflation and so on that are related to the field of study. They make students discuss as guides, leading discussions as a key method of teachings," he said.

In this method, the library is a central element. That is where the students research and acquire the data they need to prepare their notes. U Win Phe and Aw Pi Kyeh explained.

"I was taught to answer exam questions with the materials I’d learned by heart. But you can’t do that at Harvard. You have to apply your imagination and express your own ideas. So I had to try harder than the other students, and I got more tired when sitting for exams at Harvard," said Aw Pi Kyeh.

"I was so glad and proud that the Myanmar government had selected me and U Nyunt Wai as scholar students for Harvard. You couldn’t necessarily tell that from their clothes or lifestyle – they enjoyed life – but they also took their studies seriously," said Aw P Kyeh.

"A cartoonist should be friendly with the public, and needs rich experience and wide knowledge. Student life at Harvard was a wonderful experience for me," said Aw Pi Kyeh.

Perhaps his sharpest memory was of the very first day of classes – September 11, 2001. "That’s a day I’ll never forget. The news came through that the World Trade Center had been attacked when we were on class. Fighter aircraft were taking off from Boston Logan airport. The university compound was full of armed soldiers and police – there were fears of terrorism everywhere. I thought classes would be cancelled, but it all went on. I got an email that classes would go ahead."

Aw Pi Kyeh reflects on his Harvard experience for reporter Noe Noe Aung about his grand old days at Harvard University.
By Kyaw Thu

BE prepared – that’s the advice from a veteran education advisor to Myanmar students applying for scholarships to study abroad.

Daw Nang Hom Leik, of the American Center, says students should start thinking about their application a year in advance, and should apply for as many scholarships as they can.

She said getting good TOEFL or IELTS scores, preparing a strong personal statement and securing useful recommendations are all equally important.

“Some students think getting high scores in TOEFL will enable them to get a scholarship and school admission. But it is not true. Personal statements and recommendations are also important,” said Daw Nang Hom Leik.

Pressing that competition for places was fierce, Daw Nang Hom Leik suggested that students should seize any chance to apply for a scholarship.

Ko Soe Lay, a student support service officer, agrees. “Students should apply for all scholarships because they don’t know which one they will get and the process is very competitive,” he said.

He suggests that students basically need to fulfil the general requirements of the scholarship program while they make their applications.

“They should finish high school and their first and second year of university in Myanmar in order to apply for a bachelors degree. If the students are looking for a masters degree, they should finish their bachelor degree in Myanmar,” he said.

Ko Soe Lay said students needed to be aware of the various deadlines of each program, and should try to find out what the program is looking for.

Apart from English skills, the personal statement and recommendations, work experience is also important.

Daw Nang Hom Leik said working for a Non-Governmental Organisation (NGO) cannot guarantee the student will get scholarship, as admissions committees were seeking qualified students keen to pursue higher education.

“If you are interested in something regardless of what you do, you can write down in your personal statement or motivation letter,” she said.

Daw Nang Hom Leik said the American Center had recently introduced a bridging fund program that enabled Myanmar students to get assistance if they could not afford test fees, transportation charges, visa fees and other related charges.

She advised students to research college and universities that offer scholarships, apart from governmental and organisational scholarships.

She borrows a popular acronym borrowed from the Human Resources industry, “KISS” or keep it simple stupid, when helping people write their CV.

“The best CV’s are those that the employer can evaluate it quickly. Bullet points are often a good option to summarise your achievements and personal history,” CES’s Cynda Dunkley said.

The one golden rule of writing a CV is to never talk yourself out of the job, CES said.

It helps to write the first copy initially, just so your personality shows through,” Cynda Dunkley said.

An employer skims through a job hunter’s CV. A strong CV has the ability to really propel your career to new heights.

By Tom Hunter

Writing a curriculum vitae (CV) can often be a daunting task. It’s the first point of contact with your potential employer, a person you’ve never met is now about to know you’re most intimate details.

How does one best portray themselves on paper?

Firstly a CV is designed to show a potential employer that you are the right person for the job. It needs to be positive and leave an accurate impression on the employer, industry insiders say.

Cynda Dunkley, a human resources consultant for Executive Search, Myanmar, said that the best CV should always be brief.

“If is not clear, concise and to the point they (the employer) will lose interest quickly,” she said.

“The CV needs to be clean, neat and tidy and very easy to read, this reflects that you are organized and efficient,” she said.

The best CV’s are those that can be reduced to one or two pages of worthwhile information, Dunkley said.

Dunkley believes that employers look mainly at your name, age and last position held, followed by any previous positions with relevant experience. Any certificates and relevant documents should always be placed at the back of the document.

She borrows a popular acronym borrowed from the Human Resources industry, “KISS” or keep it simple stupid, when helping people with their CV’s.

Corporate English Consulting (CES), a consulting firm based out of Thailand, said in an article published by the Bangkok Post, that the several rules should be followed when writing your CV.

CES suggests to use a uniformed tense – either past, present or future- and to keep the format simple so that the employer can evaluate it quickly. Bullet points are often a good option to summarise your achievements and personal history.

The present perfect tense is often used in a covering letter and also the follow up interview after the CV has been sent to show the candidate’s employment experiences.

The one golden rule of writing a CV is to never talk badly about your previous employer. CES said.

“The recruiter may think you will do the same about his company if the job doesn’t work out,” CES said.

It may also be a good idea to get some professional help with writing your CV, but you should always write the first copy yourselves.

“It helps to write the first copy initially, just so your personality shows through,” Cynda Dunkley said.
International students share their

Pan Eiswe Star,
25, Webster University
Thailand

In Myanmar I studied Korean language at the Yangon University of foreign languages. I studied there for one year and one semester. The course was a three–year BA course, but I didn’t finish because I wanted to study abroad. I decided that I wanted to go to a university with an American course structure. I chose an American owned institution, Webster University, they have several campuses worldwide but the only one in Asia was in Thailand. This worked out well because it is close to Myanmar and my mother could come and visit me. Also the living costs in Thailand were very affordable.

I used an education agency to help me when I studied abroad in Thailand. The agent submitted all required documents to the university before I left in 2003. I personally requested the agency to take me to Thailand as it was a little daunting traveling to Bangkok alone. I was concerned about safety traveling to a strange country as a girl, it was my first time abroad. For this service I had to pay for a separate airfare for my chaperone. This was fine because I wasn’t sure about traveling by myself.

When I was in Thailand I stayed in a university house which was rented by the university, for international students. The house was 20 minutes drive from the campus and close to the beach. This was nice because every evening I could walk along the beach near Thaksin Shinawatra’s old holiday residence. As soon as I arrived at the University I sat my entrance test and passed. I studied for three years at Webster University. The campus had great facilities and I made a lot of international friends who I still keep in contact with up to this day.

I finished with a Bachelor of Arts and Media Communication.

Ye Linn Htut

Nwe Nwe Oo, 25, Monash University Australia

In Myanmar I studied at Basic Education High School (2) Latha, I finished in 2000. After that I traveled to Singapore to get a higher diploma from AIT Tafe college. I finished in 2000. After that I traveled to Singapore to get a higher diploma from AIT Tafe college. I needed this to help me get accepted into tertiary institutions. I wanted to go study in Australia because I had cousins in Melbourne so my father decided that Monash University would be a good option. Monash is a huge institution and it has campuses all over the world like Malaysia and South Africa, you can even study in Italy.

I did my application through the Monash University website. Nowadays, educational agents are becoming more and more popular but I think it is more than possible to get all the right information ourselves online. I found the application process to be quite through but as long as you have all the right information then its usually not a problem.

I studied in Australia for three years and really enjoyed my academic life, I really enjoyed the teaching style at the university, I was left to my own devices and I felt very independent.

The main problem I had was the cultural difference and the language barrier. At the start of the course I could not understand a lot of what was being taught. The native accent was quite hard for me to understand, though it only took me one month to adjust. I finished with a degree in Business and Information Technology.

I’ve been living in Singapore for one year, it only took me one month to get a job when I got there. I used a job search website to help me find work. I chose Singapore because it has a strong economy and I also wanted to be close to my family. Australia was too far away from home. I am currently working for a Singaporean company called Global Sources as a systems analyst.

– Han Oo Khin

The main problem I had was the cultural difference and the language barrier.