

Thailand's Educational Strategic Plan in Preparation for the ASEAN Community

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Abstract

This research aimed to study Thailand's Educational Strategic plan in preparation for the ASEAN Community in 2015 A.D. The question of this research is how Thai government determined and proceeded educational strategic plan in preparation for the ASEAN Community after the ASEAN countries have officially established the ASEAN Community. This research is a qualitative study which the data was collected from various documents such as international agreements, joint communiques, textbooks, government policy, and academic articles. The data was analysed using descriptive analysis.

The research result was found that Thai government determined and proceeded educational strategic plan in preparation for the ASEAN Community with two strategies, National Economic and Social Development plan and Cha-am Hua Hin Declaration on the Roadmap for the ASEAN Community. The research result indicated that the important reason of educational reformation for the ASEAN Community of Thailand Ministry of Education was to produce the human resources with knowledge of Southeast Asia region for the official establishment of the ASEAN Community.

Keywords: Thailand, Educational Strategic, ASEAN Community

1. The ASEAN Countries towards ASEAN Community

Association of Southeast Asian Nations: ASEAN was established on August 8, 1967. It was first consist of five countries namely including Republic of Indonesia, Malaysia, and Republic of the Philippines, Republic of Singapore, and the Kingdom of Thailand on

Later, Negara Brunei Darussalam became the 6th member in 1984. Socialist Republic of Vietnam became the 7th member in 1995, Lao People's Democratic Republic and the Republic of the Union of Myanmar as the 8th and 9th member in 1997, and the Kingdom of Cambodia as the 10th country in 1999.

The development of the ASEAN region resulting in a change from efforts to create economic group within the ASEAN region to cope with the changing international situation and the rapid stream of economic integration in the other regions. So, in the 1992 4th ASEAN Summit in Singapore, ASEAN government leaders decided to establish the ASEAN Free Trade Area, ASEAN.

Then, the Bali Concord II was sign in the 9th ASEAN Summit in Bali, Indonesia. The Bali Concord II requires the establishment of ASEAN Community by 2020 and three pillars as ASEAN Political-Security Community: ASPC, ASEAN Economic Community: AEC, and ASEAN Socio-Cultural Community: ASCC are included.

Regarding to the 12th ASEAN Summit in Cebu, Philippines , on 13 January 2007, the meeting agreed that the establish of ASEAN Community must be quicker by the year 2015. Then, the ASEAN Charter had been approved in the 13th ASEAN Summit in Singapore on November 20, 2007 as a mechanism to improve the effective functioning of ASEAN. ASEAN Charter acts as the ASEAN constitution to set up the framework and the organizational structure to manage working system and cooperation, in particular the merger of the ASEAN Community by the year 2015 .

In the ASEAN Charter mentioned to education in Chapter 1, paras 10 as “develop human resources through closer cooperation in education and life-long learning, and in science and technology, for the empowerment of the people of ASEAN and for the

strengthening of the ASEAN Community” The meeting agreed that the cooperation in education is the key to increase the capacity of member countries.

In addition, Declaration on the ASEAN Economic Community Blueprint: AEC Blueprint was signed in the 13th ASEAN Summit and for the ASEAN Political. - Security Community Blueprint: APSC Blueprint and the ASEAN Socio-Cultural Community Blueprint: ASCC Blueprint have been approved and signed at the ASEAN Summit 14th at Cha-am - Hua Hin in March, 2009 .

This important development influenced to the merger of ASEAN Community in 2558 and will have an impact on education, especially higher education. Many ASEAN countries have been preparing and developing the capacity of human resources to support the ASEAN Community such as Singapore encourages students’ English development and the study of third language, Malaysia provides teaching mathematics and sciences in English, and Philippines encourages teaching English as a second language.

2. The Development of Thailand’s Higher Education towards the ASEAN Community

Higher Education in different Southeast Asian countries has different historical backgrounds, and through the various stages of development.

The study of SEAMEO entitled "A Situational Analysis of Higher Education Reforms in South-. East Asian Countries " in 2005 found that although higher education in Southeast Asia will have the difference and diversity historical background. However, most countries in the region face the similar challenges. First, there is the increase of the chance in which young people entering higher education because the young people has increased in number and demand for higher education institutions. The university will have to consider the quality of education at the same time.. Secondly, there are a variety of courses to meet the diverse needs of learners. Open and distance education is a form of education that would have been more popular because it can

increase the chances of access to education, especially to people who are in the working age. In addition, transnational education tends to increase.

Another challenge is the development of the internationalization of higher education. During the past decade, the international exchanges of students and scholars around the world have increased and will increase further in the future. This is because the educational experience in an international environment and the skills to communicate across cultures are desirable features of graduates in the domestic and international labor market. The growth of the global multinational education and the establishment of the university campus in the foreign country have shown a trend of the higher educational relationship between developed countries and the countries as U.S., UK, Australia, etc.

Education plays a vital role in supporting the mission of ASEAN to achieve the goals and principles of ASEAN towards the ASEAN Community, both in the political and economic stability, and social and cultural aspect. The decrease of the economic and developmental gap between the previous members of ASEAN and the new members of ASEAN becomes an important issue in the ASEAN Community.

Thailand is one of the ASEAN member countries, which need to prepare for the significant changes of ASEAN. Thailand has a significant impact of free trade to Thailand education. The issue of long-term framework for higher education 15 years (2008-2022) featured the ASEAN community as a factor that directly affects higher education management. Integration into ASEAN will facilitate educational manpower and students' movement resulting in the transfer of knowledge. Thus, Thailand is required to qualify for a higher production capacity of the country to be ready for the change after the merger of the ASEAN Community.

3. Thailand's Higher Educational Strategy in Preparation to ASEAN Community in 2015

According to the long-term framework for higher education 15 years (2008-2022) Thailand's educational strategies to prepare to enter the ASEAN countries can be classified into the following 3 strategies.

Strategy 1 To increase the quality of graduates with international standards

Strategy

1. To develop English language usage competency in Thai students until they can use English in working.
2. To develop cross-cultural professional and working competency

Possibility of Implementation

1. To promote the effective English teaching and assessment from basic education to higher education.
2. To promote the production and development of English teachers including the languages of the member countries both in basic education, vocational, and higher education.
3. To promote the teaching of language and knowledge of ASEAN and ASEAN from basic education to higher education, including ASEAN research in higher education institutions and the development of learning and teaching Asian studies using information technology.
4. To promote the student exchange by supporting the credit transfer between Thailand and ASEAN higher education institutions.
5. To promote the activities to provide the opportunity to the students to the international level, particularly ASEAN, including activities to build up awareness of ASEAN citizenship.

Strategy 2 To develop the strengthening to higher educational institution for the development of the ASEAN Community

Strategy

1. To develop the international competency to teachers.
2. To promote the creation of knowledge and innovation concerning ASEAN in higher education institutions.
3. To develop the curriculum development and teaching in international quality standard.
4. To develop the infrastructure development in international quality standard.
5. To develop academic and research excellence.
6. To develop higher education system of ASEAN.

Possibility of Implementation

1. To encourage higher education institutions with higher Ph.D. teacher ratio including teachers' academic position promotion.
2. To create research networking between the centers of excellence in Thailand 's higher education institutions / agencies / organizations, both public and private sectors in the country and in the ASEAN region
- 3 To support the scholarship of PhD study, staff development , research and research publication such as the conference, regional and international academic journals, etc.
4. To encourage the dissemination of academic research in Thailand and ASEAN.
5. To promote the development of international programs in Thailand's expertise fields
6. To encourage higher education institutions to provide bilingual teaching such as English and Thailand.
7. To promote / support / allocate budget for foreign teachers with the knowledge and expertise to transfer knowledge to Thailand's Higher Education institutes or research in higher education institutions to improve the quality of Thailand's Higher Education.
8. To promote academic cooperation between institutions in Thailand and ASEAN to enhance the quality and academic standards of the institution.
9. To encourage higher education institutions to develop information and communication technology systems, including various kinds of facilities.
10. To promote the development of infrastructure in higher educational institutes.
11. To promote harmonization of the higher Education in Asia, especially in terms of quality and educational qualification through the existing cooperation such as SEAMEO RIHED, AUN etc.

Strategy 3: To promote the role of Thailand's higher education in ASEAN Community

Strategy

1. To promote the leadership role of higher education institutions in Thailand related to the three pillars of the ASEAN Community building , especially in the ASEAN Socio- Cultural Community pillar .
2. To raise the awareness of Thai and ASEAN identity and the role of higher education to promote the friendship activity.
3. To promote Thailand as a center of education in the region .
4. To promote Thailand as an informational centers for higher education institutions in the region .

Possibility of Implementation

1. To public the general information about the ASEAN Community and the movement in negotiations to liberalize trade in ASEAN education services continuously.
2. To promote the awareness of the uniqueness of Thailand and ASEAN countries including promoting friendship activity, community education, and ASEAN youth.
3. To promote cooperation between educational institutions and agencies involved in the preparations for the protection of the effect of the human across the states.
4. To develop mapping a core institution in the field of expertise and the needs of the various economic areas relating to the economic development in the region .
5. To promote Thai teachers in higher education institutions to teach, do research, give academic services and cultural activity in ASEAN.

4. Conclusions and Recommendations

The Thailand higher education should operate the following policy and the implementation for the preparation to ASEAN Community.

1. **The development of ASEAN knowledge** Thailand needs to align curriculum to teach students concerning knowledge about ASEAN as language, culture, politics, economy, and consumer behavior. The other topics are as the consumers' behaviors, characteristics or market conditions , transportation, distribution, the advantages and disadvantages of the integration of ASEAN. This allows the Thailand's entrepreneurs having qualified personnel and can accommodate the potential future.

2. **The development of vocational education** Thailand has developed increasingly sophisticated industry . So, people with knowledge and skills are needed rather than relying on low-wage workers. Nonetheless , in the past graduates in higher education are many. It is to be noted that vocational graduates are also less . Resulted in skilled labor careers . Inadequate to the needs of the market, while entry to the AEC . To induce labor . Are moving. To higher compensation markets such as Singapore, Malaysia , which will be added to shortages of skilled workers are more so Study Thailand have planned to increase the number of workers in the more vocational . Whether it is a craftsman. Industrial . Including computer expert . Expert systems, logistics and transportation , etc.

3. **The development of languages.** The global investment has increased. by the growth of population and the expansion of the free trade area. Therefore, learning foreign language is necessary for interactive communication. English is the universal

language of communication between the people in the region. Thus, any country with the population with the proficiency in English will enhance the competitiveness of the country. The reports of EF English Proficiency Index (2011) by Institute of Language Education First (EF) indexes the data of the population of working age in 44 countries where English is not the official language, found that the English of Thai people was ranked at the 42 of 44 countries and compared to the specific countries in Asia, the study of 13 countries showed that countries that have high capabilities of English were Malaysia, Hong Kong, South Korea, Japan, Taiwan, Saudi Arabia, China, India, Russia, Indonesia, Thailand, Vietnam, Kazakhstan, respectively, it is to be noted that ASEAN countries that are not listed in the survey as Burma, Cambodia and Laos, the English ability is likely to remain high, especially in Myanmar, so the study of Thailand should accelerate English teaching curriculum and also include teaching languages of neighboring countries.

4. The development of technology In the world of competition, modern technology has a greater role such as cell phones, computer, Internet, etc. These technologies facilitate working and communicational convenience. Thus, accessing to technology will support manufacturing process and reduces labor shortage. Therefore, Thailand's education requires the development of curriculum teaching Thai students to learn and understand the rapid change of technology.

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