

*Readiness of School Administrators in Developing and
Managing Thai Schools for AEC*

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Abstract

The commitment of Thailand to being a part of the ASEAN Economic Community (AEC) by 2015, school administrators have to more proactively adjust themselves in preparation for the AEC. The study aimed to determine the readiness of the school administrators at local regions in developing and managing the schools and explore the difficulties and needs of school administrators in developing and managing their schools at local regions. The study yields the Office of Educational Area Services in providing the explicit school handbook for the AEC, supporting the teachers teaching aids, medias and educational tools. Creating the curriculum for the ASEAN Economic Community course, making connections among the schools in nations and school partnership of the ASEAN Economic Community members are necessity.

Keywords: Readiness of School Administrators, Developing and Managing Thai Schools, ASEAN Community

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Introduction

Education plays a key role in building the ASEAN Community (AEC) and it is as a mechanism instilling values, and concepts of understanding among ASEAN members. It is also important for building up a strong foundation and the economic prosperity of the region. The ASEAN for ASEAN Socio-Cultural (ASCC Blueprint) (ASEAN Secretarial, 2009:2) has determined human resource development as a primary goal of enhancing the livelihoods of the population in the region. The emphasis is on education and the creation of educational opportunities, the investment in human resource development and lifelong learning, and the promotion of employment where appropriate as well as facilitating access to science and technology applications. Recently, the Office of Basic Education in Thailand has operated the project on managing learning to ASEAN community under the project title ‘Spirit of ASEAN’. Sixty-eight schools were piloting to be the center of ASEAN studies and for the development of availability and capacity in managing teaching and learning, on the ASEAN community member. To spread out the knowledge on the ASEAN community, the three different models of school were named to separate the school groups in preparation for the ASEAN community as Sister Schools, Buffer Schools and ASEAN Focus School. These schools were generally led the neighboring schools in different activities, boosted students' awareness about the AEC, and getting them to know ASEAN community more deeply. This preparation helps school administrators and teachers beware of adaptation and education shift away from its tradition.

According to the report, the competition on the world stage (The Global Competitiveness Report 2012-2013) of the World Economic Forum presented the figure comparing the quality of education in Thailand on the world stage, especially in ASEAN countries. It was found the quality of Thailand's education system in the world was at 78 from 144 countries. When comparing with the ASEAN countries, Thailand is on the 8th ranked below Singapore, Malaysia, Brunei Darussalam, Philippines, Indonesia, Cambodia, and Vietnam. (Schwab,2013 : 436) This led to the urgent need of action for the development on education in preparation for Thai schools in managing teaching and learning for the ASEAN community. Therefore, it is important for educator in all levels; Ministry of Education, local educators, and particularly school principals realized the readiness in development and managing Thai schools for the ASEAN community.

The purposes of the study were to explore the readiness of school administrators in developing and managing Thai schools for AEC in central region of Thailand; and determine the problems and needs in developing teaching and learning management in schools for AEC in central region of Thailand. 160 school administrators in educational in central region of Thailand were participated in this study. The research instrument included the questionnaire related to the readiness of in developing and managing schools towards the ASEAN Community.

Theoretical Framework

The rationale of this study is based on the analysis of documentation from the previous research studies and intensive literature review on developing Thailand education system in recent years. First, the Regulations Rules and how to decentralize the administration and management of education in 2007. It comprised of 4 areas; Academic Administration, Financial Management, Personnel management, General Administration (Ministry of Education, 2007:29) Secondly, the development of the ASEAN Community Schools Board of Basic Education.

It consists of four main aspects; management and administration; development of teachers; the involvement and participation of people for promoting, and supporting for the ASEAN, and last is on quality of students. (Office of the Basic Education Commission, 2011) In addition, it also looked into “Knowledge Management” for the Office of Academic and Educational Standards Committee which consisted of eight areas; appointing the committee member in workforce planning, supporting for resources, planning of teacher development; establishing an educational networking; exchanging their activities; setting the supervision system; encouraging teachers and staff in schools to be a member of the AEC association or AEC teacher club; and summarizing and reporting the results of operational activities. (Office of the Basic Education Commission, 2012 : 15) By the three, it can conceptualize as a following figure.

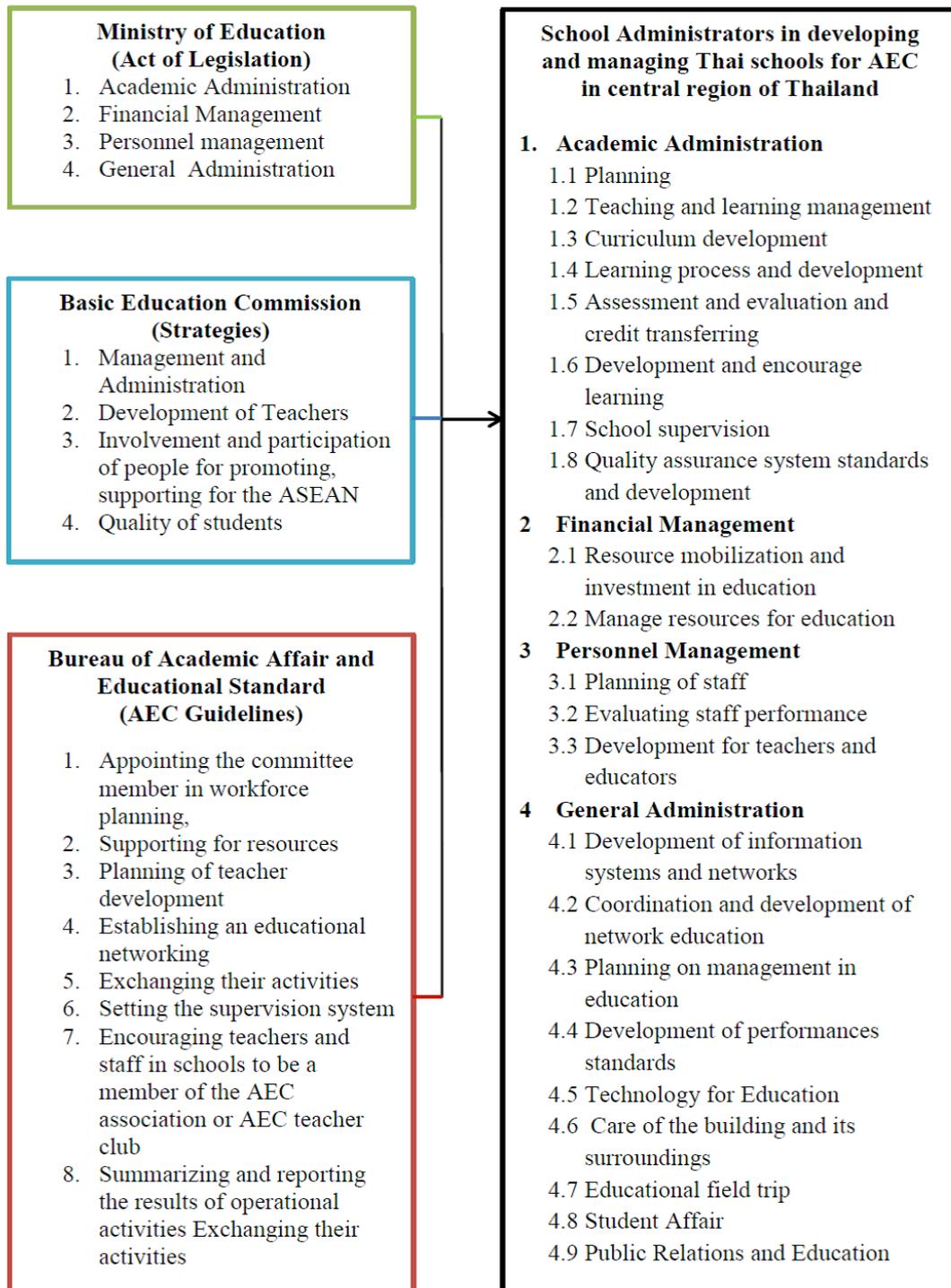


Figure 1: Theoretical Framework of School Administrators in Developing and Managing Thai Schools for AEC

Methodology

Research design

This research study utilized the descriptive research in order to get the large-scale phenomena on the readiness of the school administrators in developing and managing schools towards the ASEAN Community in central region of Thailand and what problems and needs of school administrators in developing and managing schools towards the ASEAN Community. The sample was 160 school administrators who currently worked as a school principle in different provinces and districts in Educational Area Services central part of Thailand. Stratify random sampling techniques was used to select the sample. The questionnaire related to the readiness of in developing and managing schools towards the ASEAN Community was administrated during six months. The data obtained was analyzed to find out the readiness, problems and needs in developing teaching and learning management in schools for AEC in central region of Thailand.

Variables

Four variables in the study were focused. It included 1) academic management; 2) budget management; 3) personnel management; and 4) general administrative management on the readiness of the school administrators in developing and managing schools towards the ASEAN Community in central region of Thailand.

Questionnaire

The questionnaire consisted of three sections. In part one, the school administrators were asked about their general information; gender, age, level of education and work experiences. In part two, they were rated their opinions on the readiness of the school administrators in developing and managing schools towards the ASEAN Community in central region of Thailand. There were fifty-five items in this part. The Likert's scale was used to measure their opinions. The scales of 1-5 were as follows;

- 5 = strongly agree
- 4 = agree
- 3 = moderate
- 2 = disagree
- 1 = strongly disagree

The third part consisted of an open-ended section for obtaining the data on problems and needs of school administrators in developing and managing schools towards the ASEAN Community. The questionnaire was examined by the experts. The reliability of the questionnaire was checked using the method of the Coefficient Alpha of Cronbach. The data from the Likert's scale was calculated for the arithmetic means (\bar{X}). These means indicated the school administrators' opinions on the readiness of the school administrators in developing and managing schools towards the ASEAN Community in central region of Thailand. The criteria of means in the questionnaire are from the principle of John W. Best (1970 : 190).

Mean scores derived from this scale were calculated and interpreted based on the criteria:

4.50 - 5.00	= strongly agree
3.50 - 4.49	= agree
2.50 - 3.49	= moderate
1.50 - 2.49	= disagree
1.00 - 1.49	= strongly disagree

The data obtained from the questionnaire in the open-ended section was labeled and coded so that the differences and similarities between all the answers were seen. Problems and needs on academic management, budget management, personnel management and general administrative management would be presented and discussed.

Results and Findings

The present study aims to explore the readiness, problems and needs of the school administrators in developing and managing schools towards the ASEAN Community in central region of Thailand. 160 questionnaires were analyzed and organized into three parts as follows:

Section 1: general information; gender, age, level of education and work experiences

Section 2: Readiness of the school administrators in developing and managing schools towards the ASEAN Community in central region of Thailand.

Section 3: problems and needs of the school administrators in developing and managing schools towards the ASEAN Community in central region of Thailand.

Section 1

In the first section, the respondents to the survey were 127 (79.38%) male and 33 (20.32%) female school administrators and the average of age was 51 to 60 the most (127). The following average of ages was 41 to 50 (29) and the least average of age was between 30 and 40. For the level of education, it was found 108 (67.50) school administrators graduate Master Degrees, whereas 51 (31.88) were received Bachelor Degrees. One (0.62) was Doctoral Degrees.

Section 2

The questionnaire on the readiness of the school administrators in developing and managing schools towards the ASEAN Community in central region of Thailand, was analyzed. The data obtained from the five-point rating scale was calculated for percentage, mean, and standard deviation. The result was presented in the table below.

Table 1: The result of school administrators on the readiness of the school administrators in developing and managing schools towards the ASEAN Community in central region of Thailand.

Readiness of school administrators in developing and managing Thai schools for AEC in central region of Thailand	\bar{X}	S.D.	level	Rank
1. Academic Administration	3.15	0.13	moderate	2
2. Financial Management	2.98	0.27	moderate	4
3. Personnel Management	3.17	0.31	moderate	3
4. General Administration	3.23	0.19	moderate	1
Total	3.14	0.10	moderate	

As can be seen from the table, the data obtained reveals that the total mean score of the questionnaire was 3.14 (\bar{X} = 3.14, S.D. = 0.10). This value indicates that the readiness of the school administrators in developing and managing schools towards the ASEAN Community in central region of Thailand, was in the moderate levels at all aspects. Considering each item, the average of general administration was ranked highest (\bar{X} = 3.23, S.D. = .019), following by personnel management (\bar{X} = 3.17, S.D. = 0.31), academic administration (\bar{X} = 3.15, S.D. = 0.13), and financial management (\bar{X} = 2.98, S.D. = 0.27) were ranked at last.

Section 3

In this section, the data obtained from open-ended questions of problems and needs of the school administrators in developing and managing schools towards the ASEAN Community in central region of Thailand was qualitatively analyzed and presented according to four main areas; 1) academic administration; 2) financial management; 3) personnel management; and 4) general administration. The results in each area were revealed as follows:

1) Academic Administration

The development and management of school academic administration toward the ASEAN Community misled of directions; deficiency of teaching aids, media and educational tools to support the Asian study courses, no language courses of AEC Community members, as well as course credit-transfer manual guidelines for international students. Besides, the internal and external quality assurance in teaching and learning management toward the ASEAN Community was unclear and short of expert supervision in the area of the ASEAN Community. Therefore, the Office of Ministry of Education/ Primary Educational Area Services in central region of Thailand should provide the explicit handbook for school academic administration in leading the school towards the ASEAN Community, support teaching aids, medias and educational tools, build the curriculum for the ASEAN Community courses, arrange the handbook for the course transfer for international students, as well as assist the schools producing media technology to support teaching and learning.

2) Financial Management

School financial supporting teaching and learning management for the ASEAN Community was needed; however, providing such unplanned financial support to schools was limited and impossible. Co-operation of school net-working for co-financial support was necessary to do. It was suggested that the Office of Ministry of Education should support schools budget on teaching and learning management for the ASEAN Community and assist in building the school connection among the ASEAN school members.

3) Personnel Management

School teachers and staff seemed to lack of deep understanding of the ASEAN Community and their English language ability in teaching students. For example; Math, Science teachers cannot use English as a medium of instruction in their subjects. The Office of Ministry of Education should establish the policy encouraging teachers to improve their English language skills and also provide language learning tools for teachers and staff.

4) General administration

It was found that the strategic planning of the schools was indeed lack of directions and understanding of the ASEAN Community; unplanned financial supporting, and promoting on academic activities. The meeting among the Office of Ministry of Education / Educational Area Services was needed to direct the school strategy planning for the coming of the ASEAN Community and provide the major sources of the ASEAN Community to school, coordinating schools inside and outside countries and outward promoting the ASEAN Community. The leaflet, brochure or other kinds of printed materials of ASEAN Community would be publicized among Thai schools.

Discussions

Based on the findings of the readiness of the school administrators in developing and managing schools towards the ASEAN Community in central region of Thailand overall, was in the moderate levels at all aspects. For each aspect, the average of general administration was ranked highest following by personnel management academic administration and financial management were ranked at last.

The general administration was ranked highest. This is because the general administrative management was the main tasks of school administrators. It comprised of strategic planning / school administrative planning, determining vision of learning management, summarizing the work performance, and publicizing for the public's mind as well as the development of information systems. The school administrators tends to apply these knowledge to their real life school administration including disseminate the knowledge of the ASEAN Community through leaflet, school letter, radio broadcast, local TV broadcast and etc. The findings agreed with many scholars (Renihan, Raham & Phillips,2003) which emphasized the importance of the new era management in strategic planning. Their work agreed with many studies. Suthiwaree (2013) developed the model basic school in the East to support the development of the ASEAN community and found general administration, personnel management, and academic administration were appropriate accordance to best practices in management in schools. Somrukxa (2012) explored the readiness and guided development of teaching and learning for the ASEAN community and found that school administrators have disseminated the knowledge of the ASEAN Community to schools.

The readiness of the school administrators in developing and managing schools towards the ASEAN Community in term of financial management was ranked at the least. This is because Most schools have limited in financial budget and not enough for managing teaching and learning about ASEAN Community, especially the budget providing for the small size school. With these reasons, school administrators could not run activities promoting the ASEAN Community. This result is congruent with

the study of Buayaem (2013) that the financial management preparation for the ASEAN community for Secondary School in Rayong Province had the average at the low level of all aspects.

Conclusion

This study aimed to explore the readiness of the school administrators and determine the problems and needs in developing and managing schools towards the ASEAN Community in central region of Thailand. 160 school administrators who currently worked as a school principle in different provinces and districts in Educational Area Services central part of Thailand participated in this study. To serve the purpose of the study, the four areas of academic administration, financial management, personnel management and general administration were focused. The questionnaire was employed. The study yields the Office of Educational Area Services in providing the explicit school handbook for the AEC, supporting the teachers teaching aids, medias and educational tools. Creating the curriculum for the ASEAN Economic Community course, making connections among the schools in nations and school partnership of the ASEAN Economic Community members are necessity.

Recommendation of the Study

The results and the interpretation of this study lead to many recommendations as follows:

- 1) The result of the readiness of the school administrators in developing and managing schools towards the ASEAN Community in central region of Thailand indicated that financial management aspect was at the lower level of all aspects. Therefore, it was suggested that urgent financial support from Ministry of Education/ Office of Educational Service Area for developing and managing schools towards the ASEAN Community in central region of Thailand is needed.
- 2) The result of the study shows that academic administration was at the moderate level which was lower than general administration aspect. School administrators and supervisors training on ASEAN Community knowledge and activities are suggested to step forward ASEAN Community.

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