

Chapter 7

LIS Education ASEANization: An Inchoate Plan?

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ABSTRACT

Although ASEAN integration commenced in 2015, achieving its goals is a work in progress. New opportunities for growth and prosperity are likely to emerge, but the colossal challenge is to ensure quality. This chapter discusses the mechanisms, procedures, and processes towards desired quality of LIS education to be globally competitive and regionally recognized. It further explains the qualifications framework and quality assurance compliance and its impact on developing competencies and recognition in the ASEAN labor market. The discussion puts emphasis on the status of LIS education in the Philippines as an empirical case, and further discusses the future directions towards achieving a system-wide evaluation of quality, articulation of a system of pathways and equivalencies, quality assurance and harmonization of LIS curriculum.

INTRODUCTION

The Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN) integration in the global context can be gleaned as part of the spectrum of emerging regionalism and regional economic architecture illustrated in Bower's (2010) "A New Paradigm for APEC?"

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As embodied in the 1967 Bangkok Declaration, in recognition of the existence of mutual interests and common problems among countries of South-East Asia, ASEAN countries were convinced of the need to strengthen further the existing bonds of regional solidarity and cooperation. Thus, a firm foundation for common action to promote regional cooperation in South-East Asia was established in the spirit of equality and partnership contributing towards peace, progress, and prosperity in the region.

The goal of strengthening regional solidarity for deeper cultural understanding and economic growth is always tied with educational quality. In terms of updates on the progress in ASEAN educational programs, the most recent report was provided by the British Council in 2018. Some of the key findings are:

1. Internationalization is in the strategic planning framework for higher education in the majority of ASEAN countries. However, the commitment to extending internationalization sits within the broader higher education planning framework. It sits there in contrasting positions which also reflect the different drivers behind extending International Higher Education (IHE) within the region.
2. The collection and publication of data on IHE are inconsistent within ASEAN countries. In some cases where data is collected, it may not be published and its use is not clear.
3. All of the ASEAN countries already have, or are trying to develop, significant levels of inbound transnational education and are aiming to grow their HE systems. But this does not imply that monitoring systems are in place to specifically deal with foreign (non-ASEAN) providers. For most countries, monitoring is part of the overall system of accreditation and quality assurance that new providers in the country need to comply with.
4. Differences between countries in ASEAN in the program and institutional mobility are significant. While Malaysia and Singapore especially are global leaders in terms of the domestic international provision, it is a very early stage in Myanmar, Lao PDR, Vietnam, and Cambodia. With regard to the entry of foreign higher education providers, it appears that links with a domestic partner are important, and in some cases essential.
5. Support for international students in the form of scholarships is less common in the region primarily because countries do not have the funding to do this. Interestingly, the support that does exist tends to focus more on students from ASEAN nations.

In this initiative by the British Council, the team of experts devised a framework by which the national higher education policies in various countries assessed and compared against each other. Using its National Policies Framework, it examined

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