

Pre-service Teacher Preparation: Enhancing Teacher Quality in Response to Increasing ASEAN Integration

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ABSTRACT

Pre-service teacher preparation is one of the most critical aspects in equipping teachers for increasing ASEAN integration and generally, in molding effective teachers. This study was conducted to identify the different policies, laws, programs, and initiatives of participating ASEAN Member States that promote components of pre-service teacher preparation as they respond to increasing ASEAN integration. A descriptive case study design on the educational policy implementation of pre-service teacher preparation was utilized in this research. In line with this, the nature and context of pre-service teacher preparation in the seven Ministries of Education (MOEs) of ASEAN Member States were presented to highlight their uniqueness and benchmark practices as strategic and intentional responses toward national development and simultaneously to the increasing ASEAN integration. The study revealed that various pre-service teacher preparation initiatives were established and implemented by the participating MOEs to respond to the demands, challenges, and needs for increasing ASEAN integration.

Keywords: Pre-service Teacher Preparation, ASEAN Integration, Teacher Quality

INTRODUCTION

With education at the heart of development (ASEAN Secretariat, 2009), teachers remain as critical player for the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN) integration to be realized. Srinivasacharlu (2019) stated that education is one of the prerequisites for the development of a country, considering that teachers serve as the backbone of the education system and architects of society. Meanwhile, Linda Darling-Hammond (2006) noted the significant role of increasing education levels to attain success for both individuals and nations. There is also growing evidence that demonstrates teachers' abilities are critical contributors to the learning experiences of students. Moreover, Musset (2009) argued that the economic and social changes worldwide create a high-quality environment for schooling which is more important than ever, hence, it is crucial for countries to reflect on developing ways to have better school systems. In line with this, teacher quality should be given importance as the quality of education depends on it as an organization progresses (Srinivasacharlu, 2019). Education policies that do not consider teachers are condemned to ineffectiveness (OECD, 1998 as cited in Musset, 2009). Hence, improving teaching quality should be prioritized by all education systems (Lavonen, 2020). In order to improve learning, teaching must be further enhanced through the professionalization of the teaching career.

Further, according to Bruns and Luque (2015), it is the teacher's quality that drives learning. They pointed out that once children get to experience going to school, there is no single factor as important as the quality of teachers since it is crucial to student learning outcomes. Teacher quality is composed of different indicators of teacher qualifications such as teacher education, personal characteristics, teaching experience, and participation in professional development (OECD, 2005; Darling-Hammond, 2006; Bruns & Luque, 2015). Thus, teacher preparation and continuing professional development are essential for sustaining teacher quality (OECD, 2005; Darling-Hammond, 2006; Musset, 2009; Bruns & Luque, 2015; Srinivasacharlu, 2019).

In recognition of the important role of teacher preparation to promote increasing ASEAN integration within the region, SEAMEO INNOTECH has undertaken this research to identify the initiatives for teacher preparation of the ASEAN Member States in response to the demands of ASEAN integration. This study supports one of the sub-goals in the Association of Southeast Asian Nations Work Plan on Education (ASEAN WPE) 2016-2020 which is to "provide capacity-building programs for teachers, academics, and other key stakeholders in the education community" (Association of Southeast Asian Nations, 2016, p.19) Furthermore, it is also responsive to one of the focus areas of SEAMEO INNOTECH in its 10th Five-Year Development Plan (FYDP) of strengthening teacher and school head preparation for the future of learning.

Moreover, ASEAN WPE aims to prepare the teachers as ASEAN advocates for the advancement of ASEAN integration. In line with this, a group of experts will be established and trained for the promotion of the ASEAN context to teachers who would advocate the diversity of ASEAN Member States for greater understanding, knowledge, and appreciation. The cross-border partnerships and collaborations through exchange programs will also be strengthened to promote exchanges of ideas, professional training of school leaders and teachers, networking for research collaboration, and even teacher and student mobility.

ASEAN integration intends to unite Southeast Asian countries to promote better opportunities for member countries in terms of various aspects such as economics and education. In line with this, the Philippine Normal University (PNU) led the establishment of the Association of Southeast Asian Teacher Education Network (AsTEN) to promote collaboration with ASEAN countries and improve programs for teacher education. The formation of AsTEN creates the impetus to explore possibilities for the internationalization of teacher education programs among the ASEAN countries. Therefore, the Project Teacher Exchange for ASEAN Teachers (TEACH) was initiated by the Institute of Teaching and Learning of PNU (Agustin & Montebon, 2018).

However, some challenges were identified in the regional cooperation in the education sector. The challenges encountered include the diversity of education systems, building trust and establishing information-sharing, varying priorities at the national level, and the language of instruction used. According to Lanceta (n.d.), to address these concerns, the following should be taken into consideration: strengthen or build frameworks and mechanisms, build partnerships among the different sectors, and continue support for educational agenda at all levels.

Given the challenges of increasing ASEAN integration in the education sector, this study aims to identify the different policies, laws, programs, and initiatives of participating ASEAN Member States that promote components of pre-service teacher preparation as they respond to increasing ASEAN integration, specifically in the multi-level exchanges and international cooperation during

pre-service training. Moreover, this research aims to provide recommendations to ASEAN Member States in preparing and improving their own teacher education programs.

METHODOLOGY

A descriptive case study design on the educational policy implementation of pre-service teacher preparation in response to the demands of the increasing ASEAN integration was utilized in this research. Further, an analysis of the pre-service teacher preparation and country data was conducted.

This study highlighted the nature and context of pre-service teacher preparation in the seven Ministries of Education (MOEs) of ASEAN Member States which presented their practices as strategic responses toward national development and simultaneously to the increasing ASEAN integration.

To further characterize the nature and describe the pre-service teacher preparation initiatives, data was gathered from country representatives of the Ministries of Education in seven ASEAN Member States (Cambodia, Indonesia, Lao PDR, Malaysia, Myanmar, Philippines, and Thailand) who agreed to participate in the study. Each country representative answered a survey questionnaire that included the identification of laws, policies, programs, and initiatives on pre-service preparation of teachers in response to increasing ASEAN integration from May to June 2018. Moreover, they presented their country's pre-service teacher preparation initiatives during the Regional Research Forum: Response to Increasing ASEAN Integration held on June 27-29, 2018, at SEAMEO INNOTECH, Quezon City, Philippines.

Essential documents relevant to the study were also analyzed to validate the responses from the survey conducted. These include a wide range of relevant studies, meta-analyses, literature reviews, and reports with regard to teacher preparation programs of the selected ASEAN Member States. Official websites in line with the context of teacher preparation were also considered and consulted for data triangulation. Further, a cross-case analysis was used to point out commonalities and explore distinct practices of implementation.

Data validation was also conducted by country content validators from October to November 2021 by reviewing and providing comments and additional inputs on the case studies. Additional references and updated policy documents were also provided and added to further understand the case studies. The data validation was only conducted remotely through online meetings due to the travel restrictions brought about by the COVID-19 pandemic.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Cambodia

In Cambodia, the Ministry of Education, Youth and Sport (MoEYS) commenced an important teacher policy reform to provide a highly qualified and goal-driven teaching workforce. The Teacher Policy Action Plan (TPAP) adopted in January 2015 requires all teachers to hold at least a bachelor's degree or equivalent in education from 2020 onwards (Ministry of Education, Youth and

Sport Cambodia, 2014; UNESCO Phnom Penh, 2018). The Committee for Teacher Development was also established in June 2017 and chaired by the Minister with vast representations from senior leadership of MoEYS, central technical departments, Higher Education Institutions (HEIs), Teacher Training Colleges (TTCs), and Development Partners (DPs). It includes three sub-committees: 1. Pre-service, 2. In-service, and 3. Teacher Management (Dy, 2018).

The implementation of TPAP is a significant milestone in the advancement of teacher education programs to develop and produce quality teachers. From only having a 12+2 program before the implementation of TPAP, teachers are now required to have a bachelor's degree or 12+4 qualification. This notable change provided more thorough training for teacher trainees who were equipped to deliver 21st century teaching and learning and improved the competitiveness of teachers in line with ASEAN standards.

Further, teacher standards were also implemented to ensure the quality of education. In line with this, it was stated in the 2016 National Curriculum Framework that teacher education providers should ensure the delivery of the competencies on literacy and numeracy; foreign languages; Information, Communication, and Technology (ICT); communication; analysis and creativity; applying knowledge; personal, family and society development; and entrepreneurship. The teacher education program should also be able to exhibit that teacher graduates are meeting the standard on the required teacher competencies as stated in the Cambodian Professional Standards for Teachers and ASEAN Teacher Professional Standards for the 21st century skills (Ministry of Education Youth and Sport Cambodia, 2016).

The MoEYS highly acknowledges that the Cambodian Professional Standards for Teachers will serve its purpose as a main guiding document for other significant reform aspects which focus on teacher recruitment and development, specifically, the quality of the graduates in providing expected children's learning outcomes. It also aims to guide all educators in the preparation of teacher training programs and courses in order to further develop and enhance teachers' capacity in using ICT that could help in meeting the demands of the progressing digital society. Moreover, it is composed of four components which are: 1.) Professional Knowledge, 2.) Professional Practices, 3.) Professional Study, and 4.) Professional Ethics (The Phnom Penh Post, 2021). Considering that the requirements are met based on the set standards, there will be significant improvements in developing and producing quality teachers in ASEAN countries who can professionally help address education concerns of the digital age while remaining in line with the expectations of society.

Indonesia

In Indonesia, the regulations for the implementation of the National Education System (Act No. 20 Year 2003) which is based on the 1945 Constitution of Indonesia are defined in Government Regulation No. 19 Year 2005 and recently reformed as Government Regulation No. 57 Year 2021 replacing the previous regulation (National Education Standards). One of its main goals is to establish education standards with a nationwide scope by identifying the roles, responsibilities, and scope of various educational institutions. Ultimately, it aims to respond to the challenges of an ever-changing era by empowering Indonesian citizens through education.

The Educational Standards, Curriculum, and Assessment Office under the Ministry of Education, Culture and Technology has the primary role of assisting the Minister in developing and

monitoring the national education standards. To maintain and evaluate the national standards, the government mandates external accreditation bodies such as the National Accreditation Board for Schools/Madrasah (BAN-S/M), National Accreditation Board for Early Childhood Education and Non-Formal Education (BAN-PNF), National Accreditation Board for Higher Education (BAN-PT), to do the evaluation. Meanwhile, the Institute for Education Quality Assurance (LPMP) is mandated for internal quality control.

Article 40 of Government Regulation No. 57 Year 2021 requires that the curriculum for all levels be developed by considering the dynamics of global developments. Specifically, the curriculum of each level of education must cover courses on religious education, citizenship education, and languages such as Bahasa Indonesia and other foreign languages. The inclusion of English or other foreign languages in the curriculum supports the empowering role of education to encourage and enable cooperation within the ASEAN region and the world.

The Law on Higher Education (Act No. 12 Year 2012) stipulates the strategic role of higher education in the national education system. Its goals include the development of students in accordance with a set of values and moral standards, harnessing the national competitiveness of Indonesia through science and technology, and further provision of public education based on evidence-based research. One of the deemed success indicators of the implementation of the Higher Education Law is the increase in the number of qualified and internationally competitive educators.

The Presidential Regulation No. 8 Year 2012 mandated all sectors to implement the Indonesia National Qualifications Framework (KKNI/IQF). The IQF presents in detail the qualification levels from year 9 to higher education. It also specifies the equivalencies between Indonesian education and foreign qualifications in its efforts of increasing international competitiveness and mobility. Thus, the curriculum structure of each program should be based on IQF which both the education sector and industry should comply with. There are nine levels of qualifications with three layers of expertise in IQF: Level 1 – 3 (Operators), Level 4-6 (Technicians), and Level 7 – 9 (Experts).

Moreover, as part of the efforts in ensuring quality education as stipulated in the National Education System Law, the Teachers and Lecturers Law (Act No. 14 Year 2005) was established. It is a comprehensive law that covers significant issues in teacher management and development that would help improve the national education system (Chang et al., 2014). The law and the ministerial regulations that were formed based on it identified the: a) required competencies for teachers (pedagogic, personal, social, and professional); b) integration of these competencies in the national teacher standards; c) roles of various ministries and agencies in achieving these teacher competencies; d) process and qualifications for teacher certification; and e) conditions for the provision of special and professional teacher allowances. To further execute this law, portfolio assessment, training for teachers, direct certification, and professional education for teachers are required to ensure quality education. Based on the law, the following are the essential requirements to become a teacher: 1.) completing a 4-year university degree, 2.) obtaining a teacher certification, and 3.) demonstrating professional, pedagogical, personal, and social competencies. With the major reform brought about by the Teachers and Lecturers Law, there was an increase in the percentage of teachers having bachelor's degrees, starting from 37% in 2006 to 90% in 2016 (World Bank, 2020).

Meanwhile, as part of the major reform under the Teacher and Lecturer Law (Law No. 14/2005), the requirement for teachers is not only to gain a university degree but also a teacher certification as part of improving teacher qualifications. The model for teacher certification had already undergone a series of modifications. It was modified in 2012 wherein the *Pendidikan dan Latihan Profesi Guru* (PLPG) model required a 90-period (60-hour) teacher training course. In 2018, the model was further modified through the *Pendidikan Profesi Guru* (PPG) model which requires a one-year training for new teachers and 6-month training for existing teachers (World Bank, 2020).

The teacher certification process has led to pay increases that doubled the income of certified teachers. Such has relatively increased the status of the teaching profession, making them at par with other professions such as medicine and law. Pre-service lecturers, principals, and teachers report that there is an increase in the number of students who are interested in entering the teaching profession with the introduction of these policies (World Bank, 2020).

With the goal of producing teachers who are professional educators, a set of national teacher education standards is implemented with the enforcement of the Minister of Research, Technology and Higher Education (MORTHE) Regulation No. 55 Year 2017. The students who are the future educators are the target beneficiaries of this regulation while the higher education institutions and universities are tasked to ensure that the standards and provisions are being met.

As part of maintaining quality education, the qualifications for appointment, certification, workload, roles, and rights of teachers are defined in Government Regulation No. 74 Year 2008. Its legal context comes from Article 5, Paragraph 2 of the State Constitution of the Republic of Indonesia in 1945 and Law No. 14 of 2005 concerning Teachers and Lecturers. The law includes the minimum competency standards for teachers in the areas of professionalism, pedagogy, social skills, and personal behavior. Further amendments were made through Government Regulation No. 19 Year 2017 with regard to the workload and qualifications of teachers. Moreover, it identifies and establishes academic qualifications, assessment, and required teaching experience.

The national policies reveal that pre-service teacher preparation is being highlighted through the establishment of teacher education standards which involves certain qualifications, competencies, certification, training, and level of education. There have been many actors involved at different levels of the government as part of the decentralization efforts since 1999 for the implementation of these policies. Considering the different contexts, institutional capacities, socioeconomic, and geographic conditions of the districts and the local government, there are still challenges encountered in the implementation in view of the decentralization efforts.

Lao PDR

In Lao PDR, the relevance of human resource development in implementing standards for quality education is highlighted in the Education Law. In relation to this, the 8th Education and Sports Sector Development Plan (ESSDP) 2016-2020 recognized the significant role played by education and Human Resource Development (HRD) in achieving the country's social and economic objectives and identifies educational development as a priority. By 2030, the government's vision for the cultural and social sectors is to establish a strong workforce that can contribute to socio-economic development and meet regional and international standards. It is envisioned for Lao citizens to at least obtain upper secondary education and have improved access to quality health services to further

prolong the average life span to over 75 years old. Socio-cultural development has been considered the highest priority for development by focusing on improving the livelihoods of people, reducing poverty rates, initiating cultural and educational development, and developing labor force skills.

Specifically, the Ministry of Education and Sports (MoES) envisioned equitable access to education for the Lao population “to become good citizens, disciplined, healthy, knowledgeable, highly skilled with professionalism in order to sustainably develop the country, to align and be compatible with the region and the world” by 2030. In order to achieve this vision, it is essential to focus on ensuring that graduates have the necessary competencies to enter the workforce by improving the quality of higher education and technical vocation education and using ICT in teaching and learning and promoting quality education. Further, the MoES serves as the main organization responsible for overseeing the implementation; the formulated policies and programs are then cascaded at the provincial, district, and village levels for local implementation.

In the *Education Strategic Vision Up to the Year 2020*, one of the identified policies under the program of quality improvement is the enhancement of the quality of the teaching workforce. One of the strategies specified is to strengthen pre-service training by upgrading trainers’ qualifications and competencies in Teacher Training Colleges (TTCs) and the Faculty of Education through conducting action research, improving and upgrading the curriculum of TTCs to make it more relevant and consistent with the improved general education curricula and matching the needs that can be linked to regional and international standards, and producing teachers of some subject areas with few teachers. Among the expected outcomes of these strategies include an improvement in the quality of teaching and learning and an increase in the number of qualified teachers. Another strategy is to improve teacher competencies through training the trainers of primary school teachers, multigrade teachers, and foreign language teachers. It is expected that there will be more qualified trainers for teachers at different levels (national, provincial, and district levels). Further, teachers are also expected to be capacitated in terms of content knowledge, pedagogy, use of textbooks, and implementation of the current curriculum. These are all in response to the identified issues on the quality of education which include high percentages of unqualified teachers, and a lack of appropriate teaching and learning methods at the classroom level due to the insufficient content knowledge and pedagogical skills of teachers.

Exchange programs also play a crucial role in enhancing the quality of teachers. In 2016, a student exchange program entitled ‘Exchanging the Practice of Teaching and Learning at Secondary Education Level’ was implemented on cost-sharing terms through the collaboration of Dongkhamxang Teacher Training College, Lao PDR, and Kasetsart University, Kamphengsaen Campus, Thailand. Its primary objective is to share techniques and further develop activities to be incorporated into the teaching and learning process for various subjects such as Mathematics, English, Physical Education, Agriculture, and Environment. The program also aims to improve English language skills, strengthen teamwork, and enrich creativity among the teacher-students. Furthermore, it facilitates the strengthening of cooperation between different countries through academic and cultural exchange. The exchange program is initiated at the level of teacher training colleges and other universities and is reported to the MoES.

Another student exchange program is being implemented through a partnership with Vietnam. Students can practice teaching in each other’s countries through this program. There are approximately 10 English teachers and students from Vietnam who can do their practice teaching at

the university level and primary level in TTCs.

However, while such an exchange program for the sharing of student-teacher experiences and exchange of culture and knowledge exists, there is still no established mechanism for credit transfer in teacher education programs with any other university in other countries. Teacher mobility in Lao PDR is therefore limited given the lack of a credit transfer system. It is essential to have a credit transfer system through cooperation and collaboration among universities in the region to facilitate and encourage more exchange programs that would be instrumental in promoting a better understanding of ASEAN and the different cultures and values in the region. In turn, this would further improve the integration of the ASEAN context in the education sector.

Aside from student exchanges from country to country, Lao PDR has ties to a regional network of schools which can promote better collaboration and cooperation in areas such as student exchange. Through the National University of Laos (NUOL), the country joined the Association of Southeast Asian Teacher Education Network (AsTEN) in 2014. AsTEN, is a notable network of leading Teacher Education Institutions (TEIs) in the region that aims to foster collaboration among its members and develop teacher education initiatives. It also endeavors to promote faculty and student exchange programs, joint research and publication, academic programs, access to the collection of resources of members, teacher education conferences, ASEAN integration, and a quality standard framework for teacher education. NUOL is also part of the ASEAN University Network (AUN) which is an association of higher education institutions that works on 1) advancing curriculum and learning approaches, 2) assuring quality in higher education, 3) developing student skills through cross-border exposure and experience, 4) promoting and cultivating academic and research cooperation, and 5) serving as a platform for networking.

Malaysia

In Malaysia, the National Education Blueprint 2013-2025 has been established in the context of developing standards in international education and producing citizens who are equipped with 21st century skills. Teacher quality is an essential factor in a student's success; therefore, appropriate training is crucial to facilitate better student learning and improve performance.

Pre-service teacher education programs in Malaysia are designed for teaching at the primary and secondary levels. These are being offered in both Institute of Teacher Education (ITE) and public universities with the entry qualification for admission and duration dependent on the requirements for the courses offered. There were 27 Teacher Training Colleges (TTCs) upgraded to Institutes of Teacher Education (ITEs) in 2007.

A 4-Year Teaching Degree or the Bachelor of Teaching (PISMP) program was designed for primary teachers and is characterized by five basic principles such as 1) outcome-based, 2) coherent, 3) spiral and developmental, 4) holistic, and 5) practical and contextual. The first enrollees of the program had 3,725 students (UNESCO-IBE, 2011). Further, ITE has developed a thorough admission procedure to select the best candidates for the Bachelor of Teaching Program. As a requirement, the interested applicants must at least acquire 5A's in the SPM examination. They are also required to take the Teacher Candidate Qualification Test, which comprises the following sections: Teacher Personality Inventory, Self-Tracking Index, and Physical Fitness Test. An additional test such as a practical test is required for those applying for Physical Education, Music

Education, Islamic Education, and Arabic Language programs. As part of the final selection process, applicants undergo an interview. ITE is also offering a postgraduate diploma in education which can be completed in one year. The program delivery approaches vary from on-campus full-time teaching and learning to distance learning, and school-based training (Mullis, Martin, Goh, & Cotter, 2016).

Moreover, the teacher curriculum in the country was further designed to achieve learning outcomes as required by the Malaysian Qualifications Framework (MQF) to align with the 21st century skills achievement and become world-class teachers. The students are taught in an integrated approach with practical application of the theoretical knowledge that they learn. A compulsory course, “Technology in Teaching and Learning” is taken by students which would help them prepare and create instructional materials with the use of ICT (Jamil, Razak, Raju, & Mohamed, 2011). Further, there is also a program assessment being administered by ITEs to give points of improvement for the program implementation (Mullis et al., 2016).

The Malaysian Teacher Standards (MTS), formulated in 2008, was formally launched in 2009 to establish the required professional competencies of teachers. It guides the training institutes to help achieve the prescribed levels of competency of the teachers. Further, MTS is comprised of three standards, these are: 1.) Professional Values within the Teaching Profession; 2.) Knowledge and Understanding of Education, Subject Matter, Curriculum and Co-Curriculum; and 3.) Skills of Teaching and Learning. The first standard supports the development of cultural values and a sense of patriotism while the second and third are required for teachers to develop students in accordance with the expected learning outcomes (Choo & Wong, 2015).

Moreover, there are teacher education programs in Mathematics and Science which are also being offered in ITEs. The learning outcomes and objectives of these programs are in accordance with the eight domains as indicated in MQF which are the following: 1.) knowledge; 2.) practical skills; 3.) social skills and responsibilities; 4.) values, attitudes, and professionalism; 5.) communication, leadership, and team skills; 6.) problem-solving and scientific skills; 7.) information management and lifelong learning skills; and 8.) managerial and entrepreneurial skills. Each program has eight semesters, and it includes a total of 133 credits with an entry requirement of a one-year foundation program. Specifically, there are 48 credits on the discipline core courses, 16 credits on the professional practice courses, and 24 credits on the education foundation courses or pedagogical courses (Mullis et al., 2016).

The country recognizes the importance of providing appropriate teacher training programs in pre-service to achieve quality education. Further, there are other programs and projects being implemented by the Ministry of Education (MOE) in partnership with other ministries and development organizations. The programs and projects focus on the development and implementation of Global Citizenship Education (GCED) and Education for Sustainable Development (ESD), training in improving English language skills, and digitalization to meet the challenges of the 4th Industrial Revolution of the education sector.

Myanmar

Since the basic education curriculum was redesigned with an emphasis on developing 21st century skills, the pre-service teacher education curriculum was reviewed, and the new education degree curriculum was developed wherein the 21st century skills are reflected, aligning it with the

basic education curriculum. Since the National Education Strategic Plan (NESP) also aimed to expand the two-year program into a four-year degree program, the new curriculum is now designed for a four-year teacher education course. This curriculum was crafted by the Curriculum Core Team (CCT) from education degree colleges in collaboration with UNESCO and other international experts under the Strengthening Pre-service Teacher Education in Myanmar (STEM) project. The STEM project was launched in 2014 in partnership with UNESCO and the Department of Higher Education (Teacher Education) – STEM team. Until 2021, the Year 1, Year 2 and Year 3 curricula were already developed.

The Ministry of Education (MOE) Department of Higher Education (Teacher Education), in cooperation with STEM, also formulated a policy framework for pre-service teacher education; developed a teacher policy option paper; and improved the system and operations of Education Colleges (ECs).

Seminars on teacher policy which are intended to be in line with the preparation for competency-based teaching and learning including 21st century skills were held in 2018 and 2019. In the policy option paper “Reforming the teacher promotion structure in Myanmar” by Lucy Crehan on behalf of UNESCO Myanmar, 22 recommendations were made based on the feedback of these seminars, and a visit to Education Colleges.

The Department of Higher Education (Teacher Education) also developed human-resource management capacities of Education Degree Colleges (EDCs). With the implementation of the Strengthening Pre-service Teacher Education in Myanmar (STEM) program, UNESCO provides support for pre-service teacher education in Myanmar. The STEM program focuses on important aspects such as the development of a policy framework on pre-service teacher education, including technical support in formulating teacher policies and teacher competency standards framework; improvement of the system and operations of Education Colleges (ECs); enhancement of institutional and human resource management capacities of ECs and mainstream inclusion and equity issues in teacher education (UNESCO Myanmar, 2020).

The four-year teacher education program being implemented in EDCs is aligned with the Teacher Competency Standards Framework (TCSF). The focus of the new curriculum is all the components of a ‘competency’- content, skills, attitudes, and their adequate application, so it is referred to as a competency-based curriculum and provides the opportunity for specializations in primary or middle (lower secondary) school teaching. The curriculum is learner-centered and adaptive to the changing needs of students, teachers, and society. The course was designed with a spiral curriculum, in the sense that students return to familiar concepts, deepening their knowledge and understanding throughout the four years. It also has an increased focus on practicum. Year 1 curriculum in all EDCs was rolled out in the academic year 2019-2020 (UNESCO, 2020). In preparation, a training of trainers for Year 1 was conducted in October 2019. The students as well as the teacher educators from EDCs are provided with all the training on the new basic education curriculum so that they will be able to effectively teach when they graduate, equipped with 21st century skills.

The EDCs also offer programs for teacher educators to improve and enhance their English proficiency. It is a scholarship program of the Southeast Asian Ministers of Education Organization Regional English Language Centre (SEAMEO RELC), Singapore being offered every year through

short-term and long-term courses. Moreover, the teacher educators have also participated in training programs from other SEAMEO Centers (e.g., SEAMEO SEN, SEAMEO RETRAC, SEAMEO INNOTECH) and organizations within the ASEAN region. However, there is no credit transfer or any program supporting credit portability with other institutions in the region as of now.

Apart from the participation of teacher educators in EDC and SEAMEO programs, Myanmar has also contributed various published research works in *AsTEN's Journal of Teacher Education* with topics on the TCSF, emotional intelligence and job performance, job satisfaction, and performance management in mentoring, among others. The Myanmar TEIs also participated in research on teacher mobility wherein they gathered suggested interventions to facilitate mobility and proposed a mobility framework for ASEAN TEIs (Bedural et al, 2017).

Philippines

With the enactment of Republic Act No. 10533 or the Enhanced Basic Education Act of 2013, Philippine Basic Education is now comprised of 12 years of education as compared to 10 years of education. This is to align with the international standards and relieve Filipinos from the challenges in employment and studying abroad due to inconsistency in the years of education (*Enhanced Basic Education Act*, 2013). This reform has opened opportunities for the improvement of teacher training and education to ensure that teachers are equipped with the necessary skills to deliver the K to 12 program. Furthermore, the National Competency-Based Teacher Standards (NCBTS) was revisited and became the basis of the formulation of the Philippine Professional Standards for Teachers (PPST). By establishing the PPST, it is envisioned for teachers to effectively respond to the needs of the K to 12 reform, ASEAN integration, and other international developments (DepEd Order No. 42, 2017).

In support of further strengthening the education and training of teachers nationwide, the Republic Act No. 7784 in 1994 is enacted to establish Teacher Education Centers of Excellence (COEs) and create a Teacher Education Council (TEC). One of the functions of the TEC is the development of significant and innovative pre-service teacher education programs. It can serve as a resource center for the development of curriculum and instructional materials, and it also conducts collaborative research in teacher education as a foundation for the improvement of teacher education programs. Currently, there are 36 Teacher Education Centers of Excellence (COEs) and 38 Teacher Education Centers of Development (CODs) out of more than 1,500 TEIs which continually demonstrate excellent performance in the areas of instruction, research and publication, extension and linkages, institutional qualifications and exhibit an excellent ability to produce quality pre-service teacher education. Meanwhile, TEC takes its role in formulating policies and standards to further improve the teacher education system, initiate the teacher education curriculum and programs review, formulate collaborative programs for teacher training design, and review existing laws and policies on teacher education, among others. The Philippine Higher Education Institutions (HEIs) actively participate in different mobility platforms in the region and beyond. One of the distinct initiatives supported by the Commission on Higher Education (CHED) is the Pre-Service Student Teacher Exchange in Southeast Asia (SEA-Teacher) Project managed by SEAMEO. It aims to enable participating students to develop teaching skills as they are exposed to wide-ranging regional and global views and diverse teaching and learning situations. Since the country's first year of joining the exchanges in 2016, a good number of Philippine HEIs have participated in the project until the pre-pandemic batch in November 2019. Further, the total number of participating students significantly increased from five in the second batch to 209 in February 2019. However, the succeeding batches

significantly decreased, with physical student exchanges completely halting at the onset of the pandemic in early 2020 (SEAMEO, 2020).

There have been bilateral agreements incorporating teacher education-relevant fields with various countries as of the year 2020. These agreements are created with the participation of countries such as China, Hongkong, Lao PDR, Vietnam, etc.

Thailand

The country's Ministry of Education (MOE) recognizes how crucial teacher quality is in achieving quality education. There are 150 TEIs in Thailand with an estimated 50,000 teacher graduates each year. As part of the country's commitment to quality education, the Teachers' Council of Thailand (TCT) was established in 1945 to manage the development of the teaching profession. Further, there are four main objectives of the TCT, which are: 1) issue teachers' licenses, 2) set up standards for Thai teachers, approve teacher education curriculum of the Teacher Education Institutes based on the Thai teachers' standards, 3) oversee the teachers' ethics, and 4) promote and recognize professional practices of teachers.

Goal No. 3 of the Thailand Strategic Plan indicates the importance of strengthening the capacity of Thai citizens when it comes to cognitive, mental, physical, and environmental development. This goal was adopted in the 2017-2036 Educational Goals which aim to improve Thai citizens' quality of life. With vital importance to the achievement of this goal is having a quality education through improving the quality of teachers (Teachers Council of Thailand, 2019).

One of the initiatives of TCT for pre-service teacher preparation is the establishment of the Thai National Teachers Standards. The Professional Standard Committee was organized for the development of the standards. Through a series of reviews, it was adjusted to align with the Southeast Asian Teachers Competency Framework that was developed by SEAMEO INNOTECH together with the Ministries of Education of the 11 SEAMEO member states in 2017. The three components adopted from the Southeast Asia Teachers Competency Framework (SEA-TCF) include: 1.) knowledge and pedagogy, 2.) practice, and 3.) professional ethics. The standards aim to provide the foundation for the teacher education curriculum in teacher education institutions and universities in Thailand. On the other hand, the Bureau of Teacher Standards of TCT reviews and approves teacher education curricula to ensure that they align with the set Thai National Teachers Standards. Further, the graduates of the approved teacher education program include four-year coursework and one-year practice teaching (4+1) which are required to secure a teacher license (Teachers' Council of Thailand, 2019).

The country also participates in the SEA-Teacher Project. In this program, the pre-service student teachers from 11 SEAMEO member states are given the chance to experience teaching in Southeast Asian schools. Its objectives are to develop the students' teaching skills and pedagogy, provide opportunities to practice their English skills, gain a broader regional and world view, and expose them to diverse teaching and learning situations and opportunities and the value of flexibility. The coordinators and mentors play a significant role in the facilitation process (SEAMEO Secretariat, 2021 ~~and~~). Further, four pilot partner universities such as the Institute Research and Development

for Teaching Profession for ASEAN and Khon Kaen University were included in the SEA-Teacher Project. Other universities included are the University of Tsukuba (Japan), Central Luzon State University (Philippines), and Indonesia University of Education (Indonesia). The number of students in the country who engaged in the SEA-Teacher Project in each batch are as follows: Batch 1 (12 students), Batch 2 (40 students), Batch 3 (85 students), Batch 4 (81 students), Batch 5 (66 students), Batch 6 (84 students), and Batch 7 (83 students).

Moreover, another project that promotes collaboration and partnership with neighboring countries is the APEC Lesson Study Project (2005-2018) which is organized by the Center for Research in Mathematics Education (CRME) and the Institute for Research and Development in Teaching Profession for ASEAN, Khon Kaen University conducted in collaboration with the University of Tsukuba, Japan. In 2005, CRME under Thailand's MOE, proposed a project entitled, "A Collaborative Study on Innovations for Teaching and Learning Mathematics in Different Cultures among the APEC Member Economies" (HRD 03/2005) to the Asia-Pacific Economic Cooperation Human Resources Development Working Group (APEC HRDWG) at Pattaya, Thailand. The proposal included the Center for Research on International Cooperation in Educational Development (CRICED), University of Tsukuba, Japan to serve as a partner for teaching innovations in mathematics and science through Lesson Study. This collaboration of CRME and CRICED consisted of four series which focused on the following themes: "Series 1 (2006-2008): Innovative teaching mathematics through lesson study; Series 2 (2009-2011): Mathematics textbooks, e-textbooks, and educational tools; Series 3 (2012-2014): Emergency Preparedness Education; and Series 4 (2015-2018): Cross-border Education and STEM Education" (Institute for Research and Development in Teaching Profession [IRDTP] for ASEAN Khon Kaen University, 2021).

The four series of APEC HRDWG projects have effectively imparted insights into innovative educational practices in Thailand as well as APEC and non-APEC member economies. Furthermore, relevant innovation for improving thinking skills, specifically in the context of mathematical thinking, served as the foundation of the fifth series (2019-2021) of APEC HRDWG. This is considered an essential skill to respond to the demands of the digital era in the 4th Industrial Revolution (IRDTP for ASEAN Khon Kaen University, 2021).

Lastly, Thailand nurtures collaboration with countries in ASEAN through the cooperation with various development partners such as SEAMEO (i.e., SEAMEO Regional Centre for Science Technology Engineering and Mathematics Education, Thailand and SEAMEO Regional Centre for Higher Education and Development, Thailand) and APEC. These partner organizations have respective programs which aim to develop and enhance the experiences of pre-service teachers by giving them the chance to participate in exchange programs and providing meaningful exposure to promote teaching innovations. While such programs are available, access to these should be further expanded to encourage the engagement of more pre-service teachers for their professional growth and development.

CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

In summary, the Ministries of Education in the seven ASEAN Member States through their national education policies and plans have put emphasis on developing human capital to achieve socio-economic goals. In the attainment of human capital development, education plays a significant role as it equips the citizens with the necessary skills and knowledge to contribute to socio-economic development. Towards this end, teachers have been recognized to play a central role in improving the educational system. Hence, the Ministries have implemented various education reforms, policies and programs that aim towards improving the teaching profession in fulfillment of the end goal and in recognition of the demands of increasing ASEAN integration.

ASEAN Member States are at varying levels in terms of the reforms where certain countries just recently increased the number of years of pre-service teacher education such as Cambodia, Lao PDR, and Myanmar. Meanwhile, other countries have already established the requirement of having a bachelor's degree and are currently concerned with aligning their teacher standards with regional standards. Therefore, to facilitate the strengthening of pre-service teacher preparation in terms of teacher standards, efforts in reviewing and evaluating the alignment of national teacher competency frameworks in relation to regional frameworks such as the SEA-TCF should be continued.

The Member States have also implemented several initiatives such as the promotion of multi-level exchanges and cooperation, exemplified through the various programs and partnerships of each country in response to increasing ASEAN integration. However, there are still opportunities for improvement. Exchanges among teacher education institutions can be institutionalized to ensure teacher mobility and better regional cooperation. This can be done by developing one ASEAN credit transfer system. The establishment of a Mutual Recognition Agreement (MRA) on teaching services can also be considered in order to harmonize the standards for entering the teaching profession and further facilitate academic mobility. More collaborative efforts which include research and sharing of expertise and resources need to be further encouraged. This can be done by creating or reinforcing formal collaborative networks within the region to facilitate greater networking opportunities.

Moreover, ASEAN awareness among teachers needs to be continuously promoted. Courses relating to ASEAN can further be enhanced in the pre-service teacher education curriculum. Their participation in ASEAN events such as conferences and forums can further be increased in order to gain more exposure to other cultures. To improve exchanges and collaboration, the use of the English language can further be developed. Offerings of national languages of ASEAN Member States can also be considered elective courses in the teacher education curriculum to strengthen intercultural communication skills.

The individual policies and plans of the ASEAN Member States are clearly geared towards meeting the different challenges brought by increasing ASEAN integration, increasing engagement in exchanges and cooperation, and improving teacher quality. However, in addressing ASEAN integration challenges, more regional initiatives may be considered, and increased intra-regional collaboration of ministries, teacher education institutions, and other key education stakeholders needs to be sustained.

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