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The Development of Teachers in the ASEAN Economic Community (AEC) Era

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ABSTRACT

The integration of ASEAN countries bring about tremendous changes in the region and the way it interacts with the world. Teachers had certain sets of conduct to follow. It is of importance to accept new perspective for teaching. This research aimed to examine teachers' opinions regarding their perspectives on the necessary changes in their job and the work-related supports they need for their adjustment for entering AEC era. Focus group interviews were performed with new teachers in various educational institutions in order to elicit their opinions regarding the issues they consider could help them to develop themselves in the AEC era. Findings revealed their expectations towards leadership, duties and responsibilities, opportunities for advancement, physical facilities, compensations and relationships with colleagues. These factors could enable teachers to develop in the direction to meet the requirements imposed on them in the AEC era.

Key words: ASEAN, teachers' duties and responsibility, human resource development

ASEAN Economics Community

Countries in Southeast Asia are integrating to create a single market in a similar manner to countries in Europe which established the European Union (EU). Although Asian's single market still does not go to the level of integration that Europe is doing, the aims are similar. That is, to integrate the capabilities and resources of member countries and become one economy in order to compete with other countries. The integration of Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN) creates a market that has higher than USD2.2 trillion GDP with a population of 620 million people (Office of the United States Trade Representative, 2014). The size of the market places ASEAN in the focus of the world because ASEAN becomes the third largest market after China and India regarding number of population. This provides bargaining power to ASEAN as a trading bloc which is much stronger than each single country in the region can be (Wei-Yen, 2005).

ASEAN is founded on 3 pillars namely ASEAN Security Community (ASC); ASEAN Economics Community (AEC); and ASEAN Socio-cultural Community (ASCC) (King Prajadhipok's Institute, 2012). The ASC promotes an ASEAN-wide political and security cooperation to ensure that countries in the region live at peace with one another and with the world at large in a just, democratic and harmonious environment (ASEAN Secretariat, 2014a). The

AEC envisages the following key characteristics: (a) a single market and production base, (b) a highly competitive economic region, (c) a region of equitable economic development, and (d) a region fully integrated into the global economy. The AEC areas of cooperation include human resources development and capacity building; recognition of professional qualifications; closer consultation on macroeconomic and financial policies; trade financing measures; enhanced infrastructure and communications connectivity; development of electronic transactions through e-ASEAN; integrating industries across the region to promote regional sourcing; and enhancing private sector involvement for the building of the AEC. In short, the AEC will transform ASEAN into a region with free movement of goods, services, investment, skilled labor, and free flow of capital (ASEAN Secretariat, 2014b). The ASCC aims for a community of cohesive, equitable and harmonious societies, bound together in solidarity for deeper understanding and cooperation (ASEAN Secretariat, 2014c). The three pillars have different timeframe whereby the economic and social issues are more emphasized than politics and security. Moreover, some issues are yet to be determined whether they should fall into which the pillars, for example, human trafficking can be considered a societal or economic or security issues (Thepchatree, 2009a).

AEC will become enforced in 2015. The movement of workforce will be relatively easier than before. However, there is a problem in inequitable human development among ASEAN countries (Chia, 2014). ASEAN is the region which has a lot of diversity. People residing in the region have different root and hence different cultural values and perspectives. Countries in the region have a blend of Chinese, Hinduism, and Islamic culture. Vietnam is more towards Chinese. Islamic and Hinduism are evident in Malaysia, Indonesia, and Brunei. Cambodia, Myanmar, Philippines, Lao, Singapore, and Thailand have different mixture. Some cultural values are similar or a mixture of neighbor countries but some are different. The long history of ASEAN countries was full of wars and territorial seizure. Hence, ASEAN countries are rather protectionists against each other (Thepchatree, 2009b). ASEAN countries still look at each other with suspicious. Currently, the influence of world economy and globalization force countries in the region to seek for co-operation in order to survive from the competition imposed upon them by other powers in the world (Thepchatree, 2009c). ASEAN member countries started to lower their shields and turn to each other in 1967 to form the Association of Southeast Asian Nation (ASEAN Secretariat, 2014d). ASEAN have to increase the level of co-operation with each other and with other countries in the world such as ASEAN + China, APEC (Asia Pacific Economic Co-operation) and etc.

The changing of the perspective requires people to change as well. Together with larger market, there also are stronger competitions because goods, services, and skilled-workers can cross border to work in member countries comparatively easier than before. Countries that have better and cheaper goods and services as well as quality workers have the advantage to export their goods, services, and personnel to other member countries. The production of goods and services is possible because of human factor. Hence, ASEAN integration calls for a large scale human resource development. In fact, one of the priorities of AEC is to promote human resource development. People in the region need to change their perspectives and improve their quality. They should see the world from the eyes of an ASEAN, not a Thai or Singaporean or Indonesian anymore and compete internationally, not locally. Education system is the important tool for such purpose. Among other education system component, this research focuses on the changing duties and responsibility of teachers and important work related factors that would help them to adjust and function effectively in the AEC era.

Duties and Responsibility of Teachers

Teachers are important ingredient in the human resource development process. Teachers have the responsibility to find new knowledge and transfer it to students. The duties include not only teaching in front of



the class and over. Ware County Board of Education Personnel Handbook (2006) suggested teacher duties and responsibilities as follow:

Follow professional practices consistent with school and system policies in working with students, students' records, parents, and colleagues

By following the professional practices, they should have communication and interpersonal skills to interact with stakeholders such as students, parents, colleagues, and administrators. Moreover, they should manage times for advising students and parents. They should contact parents to inform them the school's policies or news. They also have to keep students' records confidential. They should co-operate with school administrators and colleagues to contribute to the schools.

Complies with rules, regulations, and policies of governing authorities and supervisors

Teachers should observe the government's regulations and Education authorities' policies as well as the school procedures and rules. Classes must be conducted as specified in the schedules. They have the duty to enforce schools' regulations on students. Teaching plans, materials, and records must be filed accurately and adequately. Teachers also have to participate in faculty meetings and other school activities.

Teaching professionally

Teachers' use of language both written and oral should be free of errors so as to be model for students. They must have up-to-date knowledge and maintain lesson plans according to the curriculum and school policy. Teachers should assign reasonable amount of homework and assignments to students. Teachers should seek for professional development and share their up-to-date knowledge with students and colleagues.

Likewise, Zeiger (2014) suggested that teachers play multiple roles as learner, collaborator, planner, assessor, and designer for classes. They act as facilitators for students learning, not just a lecturer. They also have to interact with students and parents and assist all sorts of school activities. It is important that teachers should continually acquire updated information in order to perform the duties and responsibilities required from them.

Methodology

The objective of this research was to investigate teachers' expectations regarding their jobs in the AEC era. Since the objective was to elicit opinions on the changing environment and teachers' opinions regarding the adjustments. Focus group interview technique was utilized because the technique can stimulate discussion among informants and generate ideas effectively (Zigmund, 2011). Ten focus groups were recruited from leading 2 public and 3 private universities in Bangkok. New teachers who are working for less than 2 years were invited to participate in the focus groups. Each focus group consisted of 10 teachers. Topics for discussions were the issues they think can enhance their functions in the AEC era. The researcher facilitated the discussion and motivated teachers to express their opinions and concerns regarding AEC and their jobs.

Results and discussion

Data were analyzed and themes were elicited from discussions from the focus groups. Teachers reported their concerns on leadership, duties and responsibilities, opportunities for advancement, physical facilities, compensations and relationships with colleagues which need to be adapted in accordance to the changing environment of AEC. These themes are discussed in the following section.

Leadership

The participants suggested that in the beginning of AEC, leaders should be able to lead them effectively. During the beginning period, they have limited information about other countries, directions of work are essential. Leaders in the modern era should possess technical, human, and conceptual skills. They should have knowledge about other nations such as culture, law and regulations, and etc. Very importantly, they should continually improve themselves following the changes in the dynamic world. Furthermore, apart from knowledge, leaders should perform the task as an instructor who can deliver knowledge and teach followers to perform well. The participants showed their concern that they might have little knowledge on AEC and they need leaders who are capable to provide them with guidelines and information regarding to how to function in the AEC. Furthermore, modern leaders should be fair and honest.

Duties and responsibilities

Duties and responsibilities of teachers should be expanded. Teaching students to be ASEAN citizens is of the highest priorities. Teachers should seek academic as well as practical knowledge. Teachers in the AEC era should have language proficiency in order to learn the education approach of other countries and integrate with Thailand's education system. Good practices should be learned and shared among teachers in ASEAN. Teachers must be able to teach students about the practices, especially about laws and regulations, in ASEAN countries. Teachers should conduct research study in order to learn more about issues in other countries. Joint research project among universities in ASEAN would contribute a lot to joint learning among teachers in ASEAN countries. Moreover, teachers have the duty to create teaching materials and texts that could be shared among countries.

Opportunities for advancement

The participants reported they feel that they have more opportunities for advancement. However, they are concern with the acceptance of education certificates in other countries. Their certificates should be recognized in other countries. That would help them to transfer to teach in other countries, if they wish to. Education institutions should promote the comparable system and practices for advancement along with the performance index that can measure knowledge and skills regarding ASEAN countries. Common standards and certificates should be available for the free flow of skill-workers.

Physical facilities

Universities should provide physical facilities as well as IT system or teaching media that could enable teachers to seek knowledge about other countries. Education and cultural trips and exchanges in ASEAN could be advantages. Education institutions in ASEAN countries should be linked through effective telecommunication network such as the internet or satellite broadcast. Internet connection such as highspeedwifi spot should be provided as well as access to academic and information database.

Compensations

The compensation systems should be revised. Standards must be set in accordance with the requirements for AEC. The assessment system should be modified to reflect capability to function in AEC rather than in Thailand alone, for example, English skill or job experience in other ASEAN countries should be given merits, etc. ASEAN assessment standards should be created in order to create fair and equitable treatment for works within the region. One more issue that the participants raised was about the medical fees for themselves and families especially when



working in other countries. Their social security or medical insurance might not cover expenditure when worked abroad. They have to buy other insurance policy to cover their medical expenses abroad which usually are high. The government and university should take this into consideration.

Relationships with colleagues

Teachers should open their perspectives to accept diversity. ASEAN comprises of nations of different race, religion, culture, and etc. Without the acceptance for the differences, any co-operations or integrations would be impossible. Teamwork need to be promoted, especially among teachers in different countries. Collaboration, listening, idea sharing skills are required across nations. Without proper English proficiency and human relationship skills, this task might be difficult. Knowledge should be managed in order to share new information and technology to colleagues. Work norms should be followed strictly in order to avoid conflicts and enhance collaboration.

Conclusion

New teachers realize their need supports in several areas to help them entering AEC effectively. They lack experience dealing with people from other ASEAN countries and need strong supports from their leaders and universities to organize some activities which will help them in the matter. Human resource development plans should be devised in order to provide information and practical training programs to cope with the changes. The organizational systems and culture should also be adjusted in order to be more flexible and receptive to the environment. Moreover, information is of importance. Teachers had limited information about other countries. The improvement of information, structure, and human capital could help Thailand to enter AEC effectively. Research funds, IT facility and others should be offered to teachers. Moreover, communication skills must be acquired in order to collaborate with colleagues in ASEAN. Educators and authorities should aim to provide supports rather than keep measuring the performance without providing supports first.

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