

Review Paper

Tourism Education and Regional Integration: Is the European Union (EU) Model Applicable for ASEAN?

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Abstract: In the current age of globalization, regional alliances have become the norm, strengthening economic, political and social ties. These alliances are also shaping new regional integration and cooperation among member nations. Integration consists of harmonization and standardization of different systems into one. In higher education, this integration has been spearheaded by the European Union (EU) and by the Bologna agreement in 1999. In Southeast Asia, cooperation started in 1967 with the foundation of the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN) which consists of 10 different countries and draws together nations with different levels of development, where integration has become a priority. The roadmap for the ASEAN blueprint set a target for 2015. In ASEAN, the need for education has risen and this awareness can now be found in all the countries. Research on this process, however, has remained limited. This research paper aims to study the regional integration process in the field of higher education in ASEAN and its implications. This paper studies the history of ASEAN development in comparison with the EU education integration. It aims to draw a clear picture of the current stage of integration in education. It also aims to expand the knowledge on ASEAN and its impact on member countries' higher education. This research uses a qualitative approach, relying on official documents and secondary data gathered from various sources. The methodology used in this paper is comparative case studies from the EU and ASEAN. Findings show that the EU and ASEAN integration processes share many common denominations but also differ due to cultural and governance differences. The ASEAN education integration process is still in its beginning stages with limited achievements, mostly in the field of higher education in tourism, a pioneer in integration.

Key words: ASEAN, education, EU, integration, policy, student mobility, education system, recognition of qualifications

Suggested citation: Mustajarvi, J. & Bouchon, F. (2014). Tourism education and regional integration: Is the European Union model applicable for Asean? *Asia Pacific Journal of Innovation in Hospitality and Tourism*, 3(2), 215-237.

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Introduction

In the recent Roadmap for an ASEAN Community and Master Plan on ASEAN Connectivity, education is stressed as one of the key pieces for regional integration; consequently in this context, higher education is one of the most important fields in the whole integration process. Most of the academic research into ASEAN integration development is focused on economic factors like trade agreements (Acharya, 2009; Taguchi, 2013) and social development such as human rights (Crossette, 2006; Manea, 2009). ASEAN is an international organization established in 1967 with the goal to promote peace. In the era of its founding, Southeast Asia was at the center of the ideological struggle of capitalism and communism which was destabilizing along with colonial borders that instigated conflict in the region (Nesadurai, 2008; Moon, 2013).

In order for ASEAN to maintain its position and role in the region, its enlargement was a natural course of action for the association. The opportunity for expansion came with the end of the Cold War in the early 1990s as this gave the authoritarian countries of the region more freedom in their foreign and economical policies. These factors led to new members joining with the first being Vietnam (1995) followed by Laos and Myanmar (1997) and Cambodia (1999), forming the current membership (Moon, 2013). These new members are commonly addressed as CLMV countries to distinguish them from the more established members; subsequently, some of the policies are aimed directly for their needs.

The higher education systems of the region owe a large part of their history to the various colonial masters (excluding Thailand, which was not colonized) that created them or whose example was later emulated in the development of the higher education systems. In recent years, economic growth combined with a large pool of people lacking tertiary education has caused the development of higher education to become imperative for the success of the region (Altbach, 2004; Kuroda, 2009). Increasingly, developing countries are cooperating together in education to better position themselves in the world, reflected in the increase of resources and importance placed on the issue (NTK, 2010). The development of higher education has been recognized as a field where participating countries benefit from cooperations.

The higher education integration is a process which aims to harmonize the educational practices of different countries in order to form a system that is similar, thus producing results which are comparable. This process usually involves mobility of students and faculty, research collaboration, common diploma supplement, recognition of qualifications, sharing resources, quality assurances and creation of common qualification structures. Sugimura (2009) concluded that Asia has a lot of prospects in higher education cooperation especially in mobility and common quality assurances. However, there are many challenges in cooperation efforts since countries

are reluctant to lose complete control over their higher education programmes and are afraid of immigration issues related to mobility. The development towards higher education integration is encouraged by regional organizations in order to create a system that helps member countries grow closer in the social dimension and facilitate economic cooperation. According to Woldegiorgis (2013, p. 21), “*Knowledge becomes the driving force of economic growth and development in addition to physical capital. To improve the quality of higher education, its relevance and accessibility, to facilitate transferability and comparability of degrees among nations, to facilitate the mobility and employability of students, regions have been engaging in various cooperation schemes to face common challenges and attain greater excellence*”. In order for this development to be successful, it requires support from influential organizations, citizens and governments.

Moorthy and Benny (2012) conducted a study on the opinions of ASEAN people regarding obstacles that hinder integration and found that lack of education was seen as the largest impediment for the process. CLMV countries, especially, were lacking in tertiary education as only 1.4% of Cambodia’s citizens had a degree compared to Singapore’s more than 24%. The less developed CLMV countries are looking for other members to help them build their human capacity (Tin, 2006). ASEAN has played its role in higher education cooperation and integration with the creation of various plans and institutions.

In the ASEAN context, higher education integration has been accepted into the general framework of agreements. The main agents for integration are Southeast Asian Ministers of Education Organization Regional Centre for Higher Education and Development (SEAMEO RIHED), ASEAN University Network (AUN) and ASEAN Education Ministers Meeting (ASEM), which meet on an annual basis (ASEAN Secretariat, 2012a). Currently, this goal utilises strategies identified in three major plans: Master plan on ASEAN Connectivity, Roadmap for ASEAN and ASEAN 5-year Work Plan on Education. These plans outline how the goals of the ASEAN Community in 2015 is to be achieved in these sectors. These plans have some similarities with those made in Europe, a region that has had a long history of cooperation in higher education.

In the European context, higher education cooperation between countries really started after the Second World War. Although Europe has had a long tradition of informal cooperation through the practice of student mobility between universities and countries, these were not based on official agreements or policies. The catalyst of two world wars demanded a permanent peace solution in Europe and social development was seen as an effective way of reconciliation. In order to further these objectives, various forums and agreements were formed from the late 1940s till this day; these often overlap partially with each other, culminating in the Bologna

agreement in 1999 that created the European Higher Education Area (EHEA) and started the integration of the higher education systems in the region (Pépin, 2006).

Objective, Plan and Methodology

This study aims to review the ASEAN higher education integration process. These findings are reviewed in comparison with that of the European development. Information gathered will be valuable for future research and policy makers since it takes stock of achievements in a neglected field of academic research.

The research analyzes and interprets ASEAN using various official documents and past critical research done on this topic. The main findings are presented in a timeline of general ASEAN cooperation but focusing on the higher education aspect. The European Union (EU) development is included into the timeline, highlighting some common denominations and differences of the cooperation that is necessary for comparative research.

This research is treated as a case study since it is a good way to research topics which require deep and profound information on specific subjects such as ASEAN. It allows the researcher to examine the issue from different angles, and is used when there is a need to have an analytical insight on the research subject. The case study methodology fits into the research of ASEAN cooperation as it offers a good way to study a social phenomenon that is ongoing and cannot be affected by the researchers (Wong, Mistilis & Dwyer, 2011). In order to review the process of ASEAN higher education cooperation in the light of similar developments in Europe, this research used the comparative case method.

A comparative case study is a middle way approach into the research of regions — it combines quantitative data and qualitative information together. This methodology avoids the problem of having too ethnocentric a view on the region which is dangerous when choosing a single region as a research target. A cross-regional approach is used to compare different regions of the world with each other; this requires understanding of the region (De Lombaerde, Söderbaum, Van Langehove & Baert, 2009; Acharya, 2009). In the case of ASEAN and the EU, this has to be acknowledged as although they are similar on a rhetorical level, they are still culturally very different. The Asian culture places more emphasis on personal relationships over institutions and governments, which affects regional integration and makes it a markedly different process from the European one (Langhammer, 2007; Poon, 2009). For this reason, special care has to be taken when comparing these two regions and organizations.

Rüland and Jetschke (2008) pointed out that using terms coined in the EU framework may not be correct in the ASEAN integration context as this creates the possibility of misunderstanding. It is also significant to highlight that the EU and

ASEAN are inherently different types of organizations as ASEAN countries are more divided on many issues than their European counterparts, thus it is unlikely to evolve into an Asian version of the EU. If the case study does not take into account the variety and background of the region, it can lead to findings that are not relevant.

This research used secondary data which is material collected from various documents found on the Internet such as academic journals, databases, official documents and other publications. Using multiple sources allows for a wide perspective on the research, thus making it more comprehensive; this data has been studied and analyzed to provide a clear picture of the process from various sources.

ASEAN Process of Integration

The founding of ASEAN was predated by two important cooperation organizations of Southeast Asia that specialized in the higher education field. The first was the Association of Southeast Asian Institutions of Higher Learning (ASAIHL) founded in 1956, followed by SEAMEO founded in 1965. Both of these organizations have been active in the field of higher education cooperation, and SEAMEO was later included into the workings of ASEAN as a partner (SEAMEO Secretariat, 2006; The Association of Southeast Asian Institutions of Higher Learning, 2013).

The EU shared similar prehistory with ASEAN in higher education cooperation as there were other organizations that were initially influential in the higher education field. The Council of Europe (COE) was the first pan-European organization that was concerned with social development since its inception in 1949. However, as an organization with limited power, its biggest achievement was nurturing ideas in its expert think tanks and offering forums for discussion, which proved to be important in generating understanding and cultural cooperation between various countries. These efforts were critical for the later stages of cooperation in Europe for the experience gathered in the workings of COE. Some key concepts of higher education integration such as mutual recognition of diplomas and similar length of university studies were pioneered by experts and educational specialists in forums organized under the COE umbrella (Pépin, 2006).

ASEAN education cooperation is only an idea (1976 to 1992)

Regional cooperation in Southeast Asia successfully started with the foundation of ASEAN, which followed several failed attempts such as the Association of Southeast Asia (ASA) and the Asia Pacific Council (ASPAC). The founding declaration known as Bangkok Declaration outlined a need to promote regional peace and economic growth, thus laying the provision of cooperation in various fields such as economy. In this early declaration, education and research were mentioned with the promise of

providing assistance between member countries. The idea of specific Southeast Asian studies at university level was also mooted in the declaration (ASEAN Secretariat, 1967). It has been pointed out that ASEAN in its foundation was influenced by the example set by the European Community (EC), which was created in the previous decade (Sandhu *et al.*, 1992). While ASEAN was launching its cooperation, the European cooperation was already more established.

As a result of social and demographic developments in Europe, there was an increase in student numbers and spending for education. This aligned education more closely with economic and social goals, further influenced by students demanding change in education systems. In the 1969 Hague Summit in which heads of governments, the Commission of the European Communities and the European Parliament participated, a decision was reached about the need for universities and higher education. This represented the European aspiration of forming more than just an economic community and paved the way for facilitating progress that would be implemented by higher education stakeholders, students, faculties and institutions (Corradi, 2006; Pépin, 2006). The First Bali Concord in 1976 committed ASEAN to a wider range of regional development, specifying many goals in the economic, political and cultural fields. Member nations set specific priority areas for cooperation and one of them was education; however, implication towards higher education did not exist directly. The ASEAN Secretariat was created with a permanent seat in Jakarta, Indonesia; thus creating the first permanent institution for the organization (ASEAN Secretariat, 1971, 1976a, 1976b, 1976c, 1977a, 1977b). Following this development, the first official meeting of education ministers of member countries took place and the tourism field also started seeing some initiatives.

The ASEAN Sub-Committee on Education (ASCOE) was created to propose ideas and projects for ASEM in 1976. However, the first actual ASEM that took place in 1977 had limited implications towards higher education with the main focus being on primary education (ASEAN Secretariat, 1977c). While ASEAN was setting up the first meetings, EC was launching its first plan in 1976 whereby a long process of discussion and planning led to the first community action programme. It was not aimed at integrating education intrinsically but to help countries increase cooperation while at the same time, respecting their independence and traditions. The programme included student guides, mobility and study visits (Council of European Communities, 1976; Pépin, 2006; Corradi, 2006.) Although Europe was moving forward, the ASEAN development stagnated for almost two decades.

ASEAN continued to function, although not yielding much tangible results with regard to education as it was only seen as a way to increase people's awareness of ASEAN (ASEAN Secretariat, 1987a, 1987b). Aziz (1992) explained that the early years of ASEAN education cooperation was devoted to building awareness of ASEAN in the minds of its elite, thus making them view cooperation in education

more favorably. In Europe, new programmes were launched including those that were designed to further increase cooperation through industry connections, mobility and reaching out to universities outside of EC (Comett (1986), Erasmus (1987) and Tempus (1990)) (Pepin, 2006). The first years of ASEAN focused on other matters, but nevertheless, references to education indicates that the seed of education cooperation was planted early on.

Initial steps for higher education integration (1992 to 2000): European influences

The ASEAN Summit of 1992 in Singapore introduced the idea of ASEAN student mobility for both secondary and tertiary level education (ASEAN Secretariat, 1992). Creating the post of the ASEAN Secretary General was an important decision as this provided the ASEAN Secretariat more power in its governance role (Beerrens, 2004). Nesadurai (2008) explained that the ending of the Cold War that reduced the importance of the security function of ASEAN, forced the organization to look for new fields of cooperation that would justify its existence. The European development also saw major changes with the Maastricht Treaty in 1993 which established EU as a new entity, replacing EC; this implicated the education cooperation as it led to the official recognition of education in its legal framework (Pépin, 2006).

Following the Singapore Declaration's encouragement of networking between universities, the first tangible evidence of progress was the creation of AUN, which in 1995 brought together 13 universities from all the ASEAN countries at that time and later expanded to include universities from new member countries (ASEAN Secretariat, 1995a, 1995b). AUN was considered to be a substitute for the ASEAN university which never materialized due to difficulties in reaching an agreement between countries on issues such as financing, management and location. AUN focused on education cooperation through mobility, collaboration in research, scholarships and information exchange. AUN's work was characterized by a top-down approach with high-level university officials being key people instead of faculty level staff, thus leading to a situation whereby the actual achievements did not reach people at the university implementation level (Beerrens, 2004). The Hanoi Summit was the next major meeting for ASEAN countries; however, it did not mention education at all but resulted in the Hanoi Action Plan which promoted strengthening of human resources in member countries by promoting accessibility of higher education to all, especially disadvantaged groups. The other new feature was mutual recognition of arrangements (MRA) as part of the education cooperation for professionals of various fields such as tourism, which would allow these groups to have their qualifications accepted in other member countries (ASEAN Secretariat, 1998a, 1998b). At the same time, Europe was moving towards something that would have a large impact on its higher education.

EU started a trend of true higher education integration by supporting the Bologna Declaration in 1999, which set the tone for higher education integration in Europe. The scope of agreement was centered on a 6-point programme, with the first aim being creating two cycles of higher education — undergraduate and graduate. Secondly, it was decided to create a common diploma supplement for the EU countries to compare and understand issued degrees. Thirdly, the European Credit Transfer System (ECTS) was adopted for the programme in order to harmonize the credit system. The fourth point was promotion of mobility based on the experience of the Erasmus Programme. The fifth point tackled the building of trust through quality assurances of education with the cooperation of the European Network of Quality Assurance (ENQA) in higher education. The last point concerned with the European dimension of higher education by encouraging universities to develop European content. The goal of the Bologna agreement was to create a new European Higher Education Area (EHEA) and an integrated education zone (The European Ministers of Education, 1999). Europe was shaping up to be a model of integration.

Slow road to integration: 2001- 2008

The ASEAN structure went through a major change through the 2003 Second Bali Concord, which introduced three pillars of ASEAN that form the ASEAN Community. The first pillar is the ASEAN Security Community (ASC), second is the ASEAN Economic Community (AEC) and third is the ASEAN Socio-Cultural Community (ASCC). The agreement grouped together different fields of cooperation. Previous education plans were continued and they were tied with AEC (MRAs) and ASCC (ASEAN Secretariat, 2003). An action plan was released for ASCC, laying out a more detailed guide for cooperation. Educational goals were focused on raising ASEAN awareness, networking and teaching ASEAN languages. The goals were concentrated in the ASCC although some were also mentioned in the other two pillars (ASEAN Secretariat, 2004). This development clearly borrowed from the EU context with similar goals and rhetoric (Jetschke, 2009).

The ASEAN Summit of 2005 reintroduced ASEM as an annual meeting starting from 2006, giving education a more formal gathering than previous subcommittee meetings (ASEAN Secretariat, 2005; 2008). ASEAN went through another major change in 2007 when the ASEAN Charter was ratified, making ASEAN a legal entity. The ASEAN Charter included integration into the treaty as a term used in conjunction with economic development, which covered movement of professionals and talents. Cooperation in education was highlighted with an emphasis on ‘Lifelong Learning’. The structure of ASEAN was set up such that decisions were made in various ministerial meetings, with the ultimate power lying in the hands of the ASEAN Summit where all heads of state meet twice a year (ASEAN Secretariat, 2007). The ASEAN charter marked a change in the thinking of ASEAN

and paved way for more ambitious agreements, and with it ASEAN was reborn as an organization aimed at integrating the region into a true community (Narine, 2009). SEAMEO had been working for decades in the education field and ASEAN teamed up with them and launched a joint meeting with a new ASEM in 2006. ASEM meetings that were conducted did not have implications towards higher education, and left this aspect to AUN (ASEAN Secretariat, 2006, 2008, 2009a; SEAMEO, 2007). The cooperation for higher education with ASEAN was handled by SEAMEO RIHED, which started its task in 2007 by launching a project titled Project on Harmonization of Higher Education in Southeast Asia, commencing with a review of the Bologna Process (SEAMEO RIHED, 2010). This development led to the launch of the ASEAN Quality Assurance Network (AQAN) which aimed to bring together all the higher education quality agencies of the region. AQAN was assisted by ENQA, which was to provide an example for ASEAN (Yap, 2012). This development was important as ASEAN started reaching out to cooperate with other organizations which had experience in the higher education field.

Meanwhile, in Europe, higher education had become vital to the economic and social plans for the future of Europe; but there was great challenge in actually putting the various higher education systems in place. Country specific education systems started to be replaced by transnational organisations as a result of implementing the Bologna Process in Europe. While the power of the national system was reduced, they still remained an important part of the education system (Munar, 2007). Reinalda (2008) concluded that progress was positive but the Bologna Process still lacked the power to implement changes and was dependent on the will of individual countries to make actual changes, which was further affected by the fact that not all countries involved in the process were members of the EU.

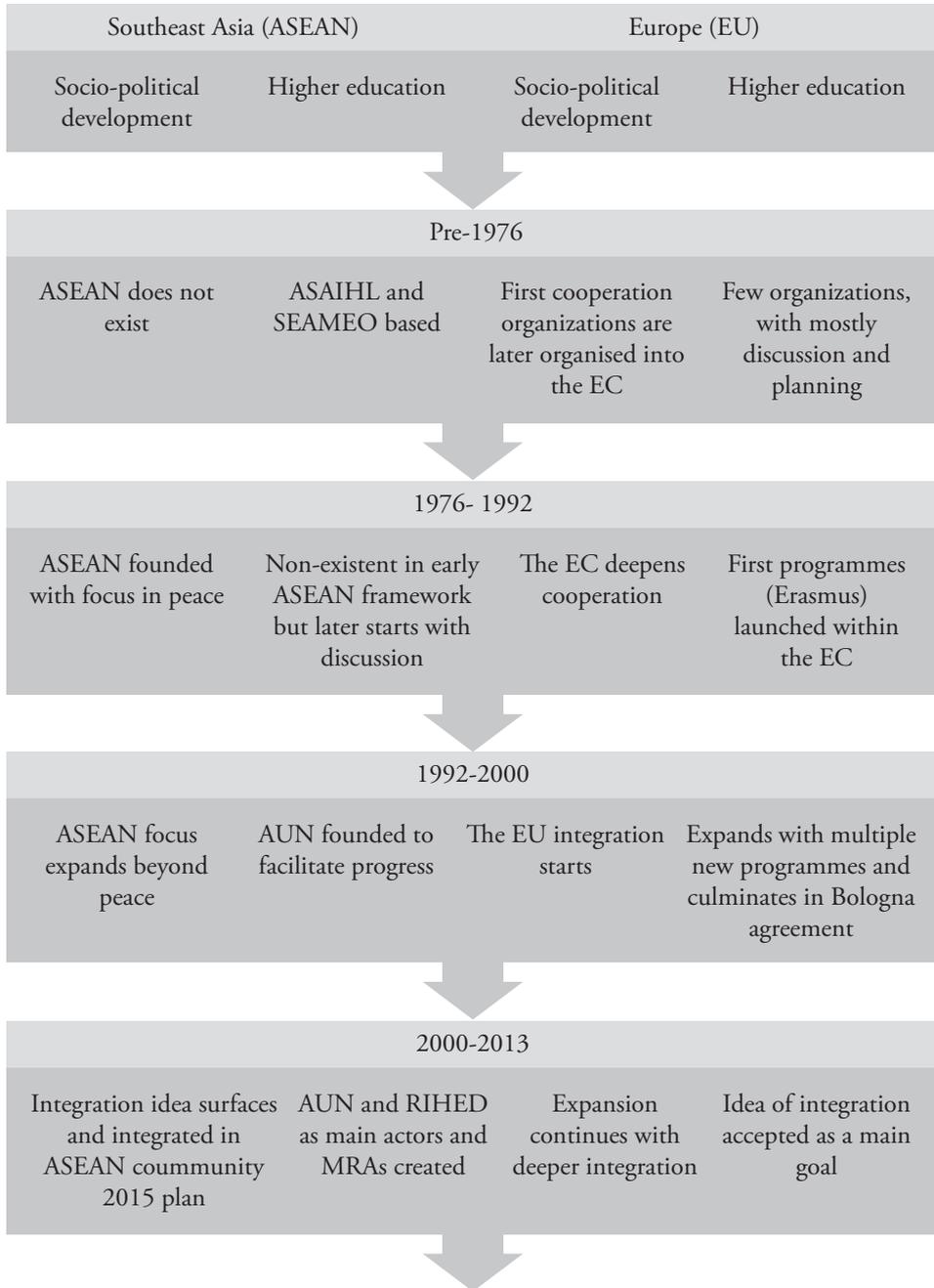


Figure 1. Comparison table

Impact of ASEAN community chart in 2009

The Roadmap for ASEAN Community was adopted in 2009 with more detailed integration plans for achieving further integration in 2009-2015. AUN was given a role in facilitating academic mobility in conjunction with SEAMEO RIHED; this formed part of the free movement of skilled labour. MRAs were given high consideration and were set to be completed and operational by the year 2015 (ASEAN Secretariat, 2009b).

SEAMEO RIHED worked concurrently on many similar issues with AUN and identified three priorities in education integration as student mobility, quality assurances and credit transfer system in 2009, thus developing the first pilot student exchange programme that was launched between Malaysia, Indonesia and Thailand (M-I-T student mobility programme). The M-I-T programme was aimed at five priority disciplines (including tourism) with plans to expand to include all ASEAN countries as well as several East Asian nations. The credit transfer system was inspired by the existing UMAP Credit Transfer System (UCTS) that was used by several universities in the Asia Pacific region, but there was clear focus in creating an adaption of its own within the region (SEAMEO RIHED, 2010; Aphijanyatham, 2010).

The Plan of ASEAN Connectivity was introduced in 2010 which called for integration and cooperation on a large scale ranging from physical to social. The plan also acknowledged that there was a copious amount of work needed and resources had to be channeled into these plans in order to achieve the target of an integrated ASEAN community. ASEAN defined three categories for connectivity: physical connectivity, institutional connectivity and people to people connectivity. Consequently, education was part of people to people connectivity connecting all ASEAN people together. Institutional connectivity was associated with education and inclusion of MRA in its framework. Some of the main obstacles identified in higher education integration were different study cycles, MRQs, quality assurances and quality of education in member countries. AUN was identified as an important institution for mobility of staff and students with two spearheading projects, which were the ASEAN Credit Transfer System (ACTS) and AUN Actual Quality Assessment (AQA), thus mimicking the European development (ASEAN Secretariat, 2010b). The plan has been called idealistic as CLMV members of ASEAN will face difficulties in implementing the plan due to different development levels, and resistance from institutions that are slow to accept change (Han, 2013).

Following the inauguration of these bigger plans, a specific education plan for the whole ASEAN called the ASEAN 5-year Work Plan on Education (WPE) was launched in 2011. Implications towards higher education were scarce. The plan mostly describes how AUN and SEAMEO should look into the MRQ process and research clusters and benchmark the European process in this field. The focus

wa more on ASEAN awareness, which was encouraged through ASEAN studies (ASEAN Secretariat, 2010a).

The Eurydice (2012) report explores results from the education integration. EHEA has been a direct consequence of the Bologna progress, which has expanded to 47 countries. Most countries had implemented a two-year cycle. Most countries practiced ECTS but it has not been successfully linked to diploma supplement as hoped for, thus making credits visible but making it harder to assess subjects that are actually studied. Student mobility had steadily increased but remained unequally divided between countries and target has not been met. Staff mobility was relatively low and some issues still exist, especially for visas and work permits. The Europe 2020 strategy is the latest plan for EU and it also has a higher education component. One of the main goals identified in the plan is to ensure 40% of people aged 30-34 obtain university degrees by 2020. In many ways, the Erasmus Programme has become the most important part of the higher education integration, giving it a pivotal role in EU's overall strategy (The European Union, 2013).

The most recent ASEAN Summit was held in October in Brunei and in its conclusion statement, as is its usual protocol, education was addressed in a broad sense. It highlighted the need to develop human capital and proposed that the ASEAN Qualifications Framework should be strongly developed, consequently promoting student mobility (ASEAN Secretariat, 2013). As of the end of 2013, we can observe that the current stage of rhetoric is pretty much the same as with the previous decade with the same actors involved in the process. Higher education integration was mainly regarded from two aspects: quality assurances and mobility.

Supranational Organization Governance

In assessing why achievements between ASEAN and the EU are so different, one of the main factors that comes to the forefront is the governance of the organization. Governance refers to the way power is wielded and decisions are made inside of a state (Bevir, 2013). Marks and Hooghe (2004, p. 15) defined governance in the following way: "*binding decision-making in the public sphere*". Amidst the many different supranational organizations such as the African Union (AU) and the South Asian Association for Regional Cooperation in the world today, EU is the most prominent example of governance in this field that offers an exhaustive description of international organizations whose decisions and governance affect the whole region (Rosenau, 1997, 2004). In order to study the regional integration process in an analytical way, there should be an understanding of governance in the region and the impact as well as the effect of the organization which is being studied.

The debate on which governance theory or system is most suitable for describing EU governance goes on and shows no consensus among the scholars, and this is

reflected in the research carried out. However, the multilevel governance (MLG) approach has been predominant in recent research (Marks & Hooghe, 2004; Piattoni, 2009; Benz, 2010; Schakel, Hooghe & Marks, 2011). MLG is a complex concept of governance, which has been extensively studied by academia since 1990s; it attempts to explain governance in the light of the developments in European integration.

According to MLG, decision-making bodies that create binding agreements called politically independent are however mutually dependent on each another in other ways; these bodies can be public or private (Schmitter, 2004). These interdependent bodies continuously alter and adjust their relationships with each other via negotiations and agreements (Piattoni, 2009). The process of this governance system has been constant since the beginning of the integration and is still ongoing.

The EU by itself exercises governance through its institutions such as the European Court of Law, the Commission of the European Communities and the European Parliament, which have grown from the integration development. The EU is considered to be a system of multilevel governance since decisions are made within the organization, which comprises member countries and the supranational body of the EU itself (Schmitter, 2004). In the EU, decision-making is conducted at three levels: European, member state and sub state, which are connected in the MLG network in a loose manner (Benz, 2010). As some power is transferred into the hands of the supranational body, an inherent conflict emerges now that people have the desire to decide for themselves and manage effectively their organization. Despite this gradual shift, the national state is still the supreme authority (Schakel *et al.*, 2011). Benz and Zimmer (2010) disputed this gradual shift and claimed that members are choosing to share sovereignty with the EU rather than surrender it completely.

Piattoni (2009) identified several issues and benefits of MLG in the EU. Firstly, the decision-making structure has managed to include all the different national political systems successfully, which has avoided situations where the whole entity could be paralysed by the refusal of some parties to cooperate. The EU has managed to create a network of nations that can also connect different actors, including institutional and non-institutional alike, who are involved in regional development, henceforth enabling cooperation in a wider scale. The EU has involved civil society and lower level decision-making into the governance system. Poon (2009) called the EU process a 'bottom-up' process in integration since it involves non-governmental actors in its decision-making. This aspect of participation gives the EU more feasibility as its activities is beneficial to the civil society (Figure 2).

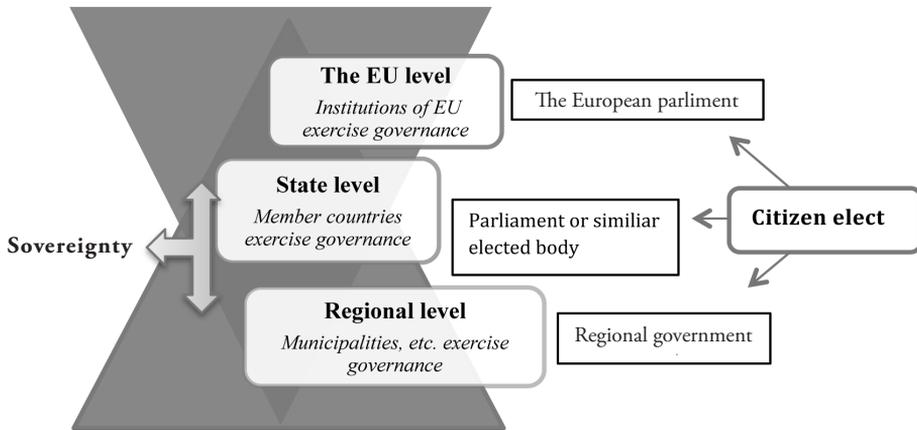


Figure 2. The EU governance

In the case of ASEAN, governance is complex due to the different nature of its member countries with their power structure and decision-making culture ranging over a large scale. ASEAN member states are governed in various ways, and range from one-party states such as Vietnam to a monarchy such as Brunei. The democracy is struggling in ASEAN even as countries like Indonesia and Philippines can be considered as democratic; historical development in Southeast Asia has always favored authoritarian regimes (Hernandez, 2008; Narine, 2009; Urlyapov, 2010). Besides governance differences, ASEAN countries also vary in demographic aspects.

ASEAN countries have large differences in their development levels, which range from developing countries such as Laos to middle-income countries like Thailand and developed countries such as Singapore, therefore making any integration effort challenging. The population and physical size of countries are also greatly varied as Brunei is tiny compared to Indonesia. One common economical denominator between members is that they are all economies that are growing relatively fast. Demographic statistics show that most of the population is young and the need for education is high for all levels as some countries still lag in the provision of primary level education (Table 1). ASEAN countries are fragmented, which reflects on their education systems and the regional integration process.

Table 1. ASEAN socio-demographic statistics, 2012

Country	Total Population	Below 30 years old	Percentage of under 30 years old	GDP per capita	GDP growth %	Enrollment to primary education %
Brunei	423,000	165,000	39%	38,703	2.2	97.4
Cambodia	14,521,000	6,194,500	43%	879	6.4	94.8
Indonesia	237,67,1000	85,810,600	36%	3,563	6.5	94.8
Laos	6,385,000	2,835,400	44%	1,297	8.0	94.0
Malaysia	28,924,000	11,082,200	38%	9,941	5.1	97.1
Myanmar	60,284,000	22,030,000	37%	875	10.4	84.6
Philippines	95,834,000	38,060,900	40%	2,341	3.9	85.7
Singapore	5,184,000	966,600	19%	50,130	4.9	100.0
Thailand	67,597,000	19,764,000	29%	5,116	0.1	85.7
Vietnam	87,874,000	32,968,900	38%	1,403	6.0	88.3
ASEAN	604,697,000	219,878,100	36%	3,601	4.7	90.7

Source: ASEAN Secretariat, 2012b

ASEAN is asserting itself as an organization that can exercise governance among its members. This diversity has persuaded members to believe that a flexible organization is necessary to maintain cooperation (Rüland & Jetschke, 2008; Jetschke, 2009). ASEAN governance is further complicated because internal nation building is still ongoing as there exist religious, ethnic and social conflict within societies (Nesadurai, 2008). The history of the region also plays a part as all countries except Thailand were once colonies of western powers and were influenced by the controlling colonial powers (Freeman, 2010). In order to navigate within these complicated collection of nations, ASEAN has devised a set of protocols for interaction between countries, consequently, creating its own unique way of conducting itself.

The governance of the organization is explained through the ASEAN Way which is a protocol for cooperation since the inception of the organization. It denominates the principal idea of cooperation in the region and is characterized by an informal system lacking in legal status and a strong organization. These factors have led to a situation whereby the organization has not been able to implement many of the changes outlined in its treaties and agreements. It also often associated with strong non-interference, promoting peace and focusing on attaining regional independence from influence of outside powers. The ASEAN Way has been a diplomatic way of handling regional matters with diplomacy and mutual consensus, thus giving member nations room to exercise domestic policies as they see best fit (Khong & Nesadurai, 2007; Acharaya, 2009; Narine, 2009). The ASEAN protocol of interaction is also dominated by other strong tendencies which have shaped the organization.

In ASEAN, protocols especially the non-interference policy has been highlighted as a guiding principle for the whole organization. Non-interference has been borne out of the member countries' need to support their own social and power structures. The internal forces of individual countries have been able to change themselves and thus influence the whole ASEAN (Nesadurai, 2009; Jones, 2010). Non-interference has been criticized as being one of the key factors for slowing the development of ASEAN integration. Member countries have no way of imposing change on each other as consensus is needed for each decision, leading to a situation where the prospect of the process is bleak (Nesadurai, 2009; Park & Estrada, 2010). Emmerson (2007) further questioned the extent of ASEAN unity when individual countries still place a secretariat in each member nation under the foreign ministry, reflecting their status as separate entities from each other. Narine (2009) further reinforced this by claiming that ASEAN is an organization where national interest is the main motivator. National interests are naturally very different between various countries, as they are influenced by different levels of development.

These different levels of development and governance are causing difficulties among member nations. Agreements have been hampered when CLVM members resist any strong clauses in agreements on sanctions and expulsion from ASEAN which might damage their image and cause them to lose their sovereignty (Urlyapov, 2010). Nathan (2006) asserted that the reason for the weak structure of ASEAN lies in authoritative regimes, whose interest is not in establishing a strong organization. ASEAN has evolved come to a stage whereby conservative supporters of weak structures are being challenged by reformists who seek more effective cooperation (Rüland & Jetschke, 2008; Nesadurai, 2008; Jetschke & Rüland, 2009). However, the civil society is not powerful in ASEAN and any efforts to create unity would prove difficult since there is no sufficient people engagement in governance to associate themselves with the organization (Nesadurai, 2008). Creating a people-oriented ASEAN requires fundamental change in the governance of the countries since people who are not involved in decision-making would not be committed to the goals of the organization (Hernandez, 2008). Higher learning institutes can have an impact on ASEAN in a positive way if they are given the chance to be included by giving ideas and influencing policies (Crossette, 2006). Nesadurai (2009) asserted that cooperation in the ASEAN context is possible and increasing, but domestic issues still remain highly sensitive as the ruling elite are limiting the effect of national governance and consequently, leaving integration in the hands of a few. The ASEAN Secretariat should, in theory, be wielding some power as it serves as the hub of cooperation between ASEAN institutions.

The ASEAN Secretariat has limited resources to act alone and therefore, has limited governance ability. Firstly, it is chronically underfunded as the principle of equal contribution leads the poorest member to contribute as much as the richest

(Emmerson, 2007). Secondly, committees and institutions created by ASEAN are numerous and their work is facilitated by the Secretariat; however, the problem with all of these institutions is that they lack the power to enforce any decision made as there is no working system in place (Berkofsky, 2005; Langhammer, 2007). Some studies claim that ASEAN has emulated the EU development by copying ideas and incorporating them into the ASEAN structure. The problem with this approach is that these ideas are not supported by similar EU-type institutions, thus creating an organization that looks credible to the rest of the world but unable to deliver integration as supporting structures do not exist. This has been used to explain the clear lack of progress in many fields of integration and downplay the importance of ASEAN as an agent for credible integration (Jetschke, 2009; Freeman, 2010).

ASEAN governance is a mixture of various protocols that aims to facilitate a group of very different nations together, therefore it has a rather weak organization which lacks institutions that can implement change. ASEAN has been devised mainly out of the need to satisfy each nation's power structure and domestic politics. As member countries can hardly be considered as being people-oriented, except for some, this has led to a situation whereby ASEAN development has been carried out in a 'top to bottom' approach, rendering the commitment of civil society and citizens less important. ASEAN exercises limited governance within its framework due to the reluctance of member nations to share their sovereignty with the organization and its institutions, thus ASEAN resembles more of a loose cooperation network rather than a real integration force (Figure 3).

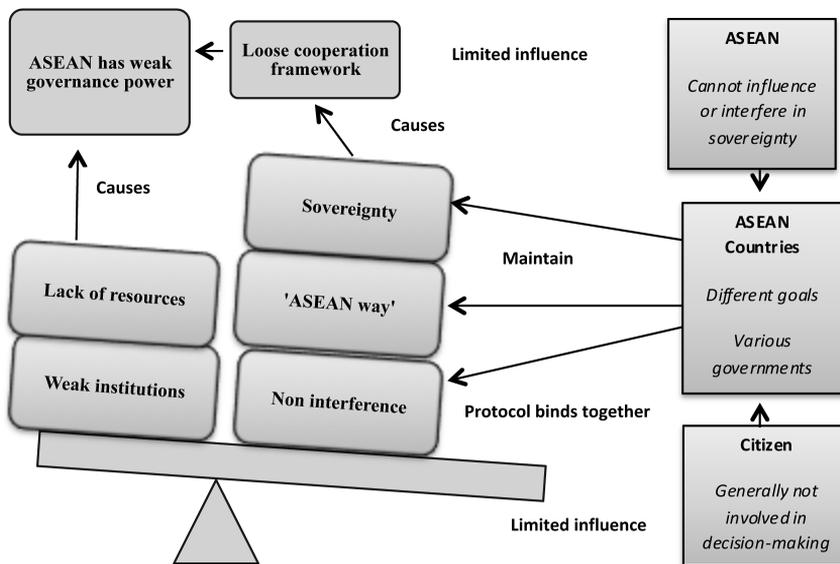


Figure 3. The ASEAN governance

Conclusion

The European and ASEAN integration process share some similarities in general due to historical factors. The initial development in both regions placed emphasis on the peace process, however, the means of achieving them have been vastly different. The European process placed high importance on economic cooperation as it would keep peace by building strong mutual ties between countries, whereas ASEAN focused on creating forums for discussion which emphasized non-interference to suit the needs of newly independent nations. The EU was fast to develop new fields of cooperation and went through many organizational changes. ASEAN, on the other hand, was slow to move beyond peace building and had limited changes in its organization. One common denominator for both organizations is that they both expanded fast after the Cold War ended to encompass most of the respective regions, which created a gap in development as less advanced countries joined. Additionally, it was clear that the EU was moving towards integration slowly but steadily, whereas in ASEAN, it only became a priority much later.

The most important meeting for education cooperation are ministerial-level gatherings which were conducted in both regions; however, while the European meetings continued, ASEAN meetings were discontinued for a long time and were only restarted much later. The leading reason for the different levels of cooperation achieved in education was that ASEAN did not actively pursue it as other fields took priority, whereas in the EC, it was continued notwithstanding emerging problems that were eventually solved. The lack of ASEAN interest resulted in parties that had started development in the Southeast Asia region (SEAMEO and ASAIHL) to continue on their own. Both regions share a common trait education cooperation in that it originated from other parties and then EU or ASEAN expanded their domain into this field and partly included the work of other organizations into their structure. This left both regions with several agents in the field whose influence has affected the development of education integration.

In comparing the approach used by both regions, we can clearly see that ASEAN has similar focus with EU, that is, mobility. The Erasmus Programme and its predecessors were pioneers that enabled the European community to progress beyond talk, with student mobility that gave significance to integration efforts. There have even been similar failures — both organizations attempted to create regional universities that would serve as a focal point for higher education cooperation, and in both instances it failed to gather support and therefore was removed from plans (Corbett, 2006). Looking into clear differences between these two regions, there are a few apparent ones. Firstly, the difference in terms of the initiator of cooperation in the region; in the case of Europe, the development towards integration started from the grassroots level whereas in ASEAN, it was started by decisions in higher

levels of governments. In Europe, the cooperation was not organized around strict membership of a group of universities such as AUN and SEAMEO RIHED but rather was open for all.

In general, both ASEAN and EU have expressed similar goals and development of rhetoric in the last ten years, but due to multiple factors with the main one being difference in governance, the outcome have not been the same. When comparing the level of progress in higher education cooperation, it is clear that Europe is ahead of Southeast Asia by at least thirty years in the development; ASEAN is in the same situation as the EC was in 1970s when it first launched its pilot projects, which include mobility for students and faculty, study visits between countries and quality assurances. Tourism can be a pioneer in this field as it has been included in all cooperation plans and is an important economic factor for ASEAN countries.

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