
Constructing the ASEAN Image through the Educational Curriculum of Selected National Network of Normal Schools (3NS) in the Philippines and Teacher Education Institutions among Members of ASEAN

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Abstract

Education is an important agency in building the ASEAN community. It is the main vehicle to raise ASEAN awareness, inspire the “we feeling” and create a sense of belonging and understanding of the richness of ASEAN history, languages, culture and human values. Education among young people is seen as the fastest and most effective means to create awareness and pride in being part of ASEAN. The logical promoters of this consciousness are the teachers who will transmit this need to be nurtured by the institutions that shaped their identities as teachers. Are these institutions responsive to ASEAN’s demands for an integrated socio-cultural community?

An examination of the Vision Mission Goals (VMGs) of selected ASEAN teacher training institutions indicates their efforts towards national development and internationalization - recognition and leadership in the region. Their respective curricula, particularly in the Humanities and Social Sciences show a strong promotion of national identity and a moderate focus on ASEAN, even though co-curricular or extra-curricular activities on ASEAN are rare. Interviews and discussions with students show a low level of consciousness as members of an ASEAN community. The faculty however has a clear understanding of belonging due to their multilayered social experiences in the ASEAN. All the participants however expressed their openness to constructing an ASEAN identity given the time for familiarization and more people to people engagements and interaction.

Keywords:

ASEAN image, ASEAN identity, Culture, Heritage

Authors’ Notes

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Introduction

The Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN) was established on August 8, 1967 in Bangkok, Thailand, with the signing of the ASEAN Declaration by the Founding heads of state from Indonesia, Malaysia, Philippines, Singapore and Thailand (Lakritis, 2011 p. 5). Then on January 7, 1984, Brunei Darussalam joined the association followed by Vietnam on July 28, 1995, Lao PDR and Myanmar on July 23, 1997, and Cambodia on April 30, 1999, making up what is today the ten member countries of ASEAN.

ASEAN became a successful organization throughout its existence specifically in when he said "...the fastest and most terms of economic cooperation and cultural exchange."

During the 9th ASEAN Summit in 2003, the ASEAN Leaders resolved that an ASEAN Community shall be established. To accelerate the establishment of ASEAN Community by 2015, the ASEAN leaders signed the Cebu Declaration on the Acceleration of the Establishment of an ASEAN Community by 2015 (Severino, 2007). The ASEAN Community is comprised of three pillars, namely the ASEAN Political-Security Community, ASEAN Economic Community and ASEAN Social-Cultural Community. Initiative for ASEAN Integration (IAI) Strategic Framework and IAI Work Plan Phase II (2009-2015), they form the Roadmap for the ASEAN Community 2009-2015 (www.asean.org).

In the 13th ASEAN Summit on November 20, 2007 the ASEAN Leaders signed the ASEAN Economic Community (AEC) Blueprint (ASEAN Economic Community Scorecard, 2012). This blueprint serves as the framework for ASEAN 2015. In the same summit, the ministers agreed to develop a blueprint on ASEAN Socio-Cultural Community (ASCC) (ASEAN socio-cultural community blueprint, June, 2012). The blueprint characterizes the cultural and societal values necessary to develop ASEAN citizens who will cooperate, collaborate, interact, and share in ASEAN Community.

To promote the ASEAN Socio-Cultural Community Blueprint, the ASEAN Education Ministries identified four priorities that ASEAN cooperation on education would address, namely: (i) Promoting ASEAN Awareness among ASEAN citizens, particularly youth; (ii) Strengthening

ASEAN identity through education; (iii) Building ASEAN human resources in the field of education; and (iv) Strengthening ASEAN University Networking (ASEAN Education Ministers Meeting, 2012). Secretary Jesli Lapus, the former Secretary of the Department of Education, emphasized the importance of educating for ASEAN identity effective means towards integration is to build awareness and pride in being part of ASEAN among the young people, particularly those of school age.

A true ASEAN Community can only be realized if the citizens of each member state feel a sense of belonging. And that can happen, if we begin building forging the ASEAN community in school ...” (<http://www.deped.gov.ph/cpanel/uploads/issuancelmg/may4-asean.pdf>) :

Certainly, the most effective conduit for developing awareness and eventually strengthening a feeling of being integrated into a community is through the teachers. In turn, these teachers have to be led towards the same by the institutions that trained them.

Cognizant of the need to contribute in defining the identity of the ASEAN community and the need to involve its people, this study explored how teacher education institutions construct ASEAN identity.

The Philippines' commitment in making the ASEAN community successful is based on our cultural heritage as Asians. The past decade would also show that quite a number of Filipino professionals, artists, and technical workers are now working in major cities of ASEAN. ASEAN community projects the mobility of citizens from its member countries. Hence, there is the necessity of understanding ASEAN identity.

Conceptual Framework of the Study

The blueprint towards ASEAN identity has been established through ASEAN 2012 Roadmap. ASEAN Socio-Cultural Community (ASCC) Blueprint aims to achieve common identity and a caring and sharing society in ASEAN, lift the quality of life of ASEAN people, cultural regional resilience, respect diversity of cultures, and bridge the development gaps among member states (ASEAN socio-cultural community blueprint, June 2012).

To build the ASEAN identity, the ASEAN Socio-Cultural Community (ASCC) Blueprint provides specific strategies as follow (Blueprint for the ASEAN socio-cultural community (June 2012):

1. Promotion of ASEAN awareness and a sense of community

Strategic Objective: Create a sense of belonging, consolidate unity in diversity and enhance deeper mutual understanding among ASEAN Member States about their culture, history, religion, and civilization.

2. Preservation and promotion of ASEAN culture heritage

Strategic Objective: Promote the conservation and preservation of ASEAN cultural heritage to ensure its continuity to enhance awareness and understanding of the people about the unique history of the region and the cultural similarities and differences between and among ASEAN Member States as well as to protect the distinctiveness of ASEAN cultural heritage as a whole.

3. Promotion of Cultural Creativity and Industry

Strategic Objective: Enhance ASEAN identity and togetherness through cultural creativity and the promotion and cooperation on cultural industry.

4. Engagement with the Community

To inculcate an ASEAN identity and build a people-oriented ASEAN where people are at the centre of community building, through the participation of all sectors of society.

ASEAN is set to promote a common identity among its citizens. Is it possible for one region to have one framework of identity? Pertierra (2002) has this to say:

“While the forces of globalization often lead to homogenization of the world, these same forces also simultaneously encourage

an awareness of cultural difference. Culture is generated by the modern condition. This is a manifestation of cultural paradox.”

Culture varies from one context over the other. Despite the dominance of English language in Information technology, cultures of countries have differently constructed ideas and concepts in the web. While it is true that some aspects of culture are universal, others were nationalized and localized (Bernardo, 2007, pp.1-26; Franco, 2007, pp. 189-229). Despite efforts to look for similarities of culture, it is as well recognized that there exist cultural differences (Pertierra, 2002, p. 21-4. 1-16).

Moreover, identity is a product of a process attached to individual context or experiences. For instance, a person of a specific cultural background, social class, birth order or gender will have varying construction of identity. This is further constructed by societal forces such as political, economic, and environmental forces. The first identity -biological and cultural background -is somehow static. But with the societal forces, communities go through constructing their identities in their everyday life.

C. Wright Mills (in David, 2002) clearly explained how identity can be understood through his idea of “sociological imagination”. According to him, an individual can view ones reality within the context of the biological circumstances, history and societal processes. Identity therefore in a product of interplay of oneself with societal, cultural, and historical processes from local, national, regional and international levels.

Hall (1994) expanded the concept of identity when he explained that:

“...rather

“...thinking of identity as an “already accomplished fact, which the new cultural practices then represent” (392), we should think instead of “identity as a ‘production’ which is never complete, always in process, and always constituted within, not outside, representation” (392).

Besides the traditional notion of cultural identity as shared culture which is anchored on shared historical experiences and cultural heritage, Hall (1994) points out that modern individuals “re- tell”

their identity or “position” themselves at a certain context. He further stressed that the second identity is the diaspora identity and this means that:

“...Diaspora identities are those which are constantly producing and reproducing themselves anew, through transformation and difference.”

Asians have varied layers of identities. Is it possible to have an ASEAN identity? How do schools shape their citizens as regards ASEAN identity? Is it possible for teacher education institutions to instill ASEAN identity where shared meanings may evolve?

Education is an important agency in building the ASEAN community. ASEAN expects education as the main “vehicle to raise ASEAN awareness, inspire the “we feeling”, and create a sense of belonging to the ASEAN Community and understanding of the richness of ASEAN’s history, languages, culture and common values” (ASEAN Education Ministers Meeting. 2012. Retrieved June 28, 2012).

a possibility of hybridity of ASEAN identity. The Teacher Education Institutions in the region can contribute to ASEAN identity through the curriculum. Conscious effort to examine and integrate ASEAN culture, history, religion, and civilization, cultural heritage, creativity and industry, and engagement with communities will enhance the understanding of ASEAN identity (See Diagram below).

The Research Problem

This research looked into the 1). ASEAN identities which were are constructed in teacher education curriculum of selected Teacher Education Institutions (TEIs) in the Philippines and from countries of ASEAN in terms of the vision, mission, and goals, educational objectives of selected courses in the Humanities and Social Sciences, content standards, performance standards and expected outcomes; 2) homogenizing and differentiating ASEAN identities which were constructed in selected TEI curriculum from the selected countries of ASEAN; and 2) possible strategies to promote the ASEAN Community identity?

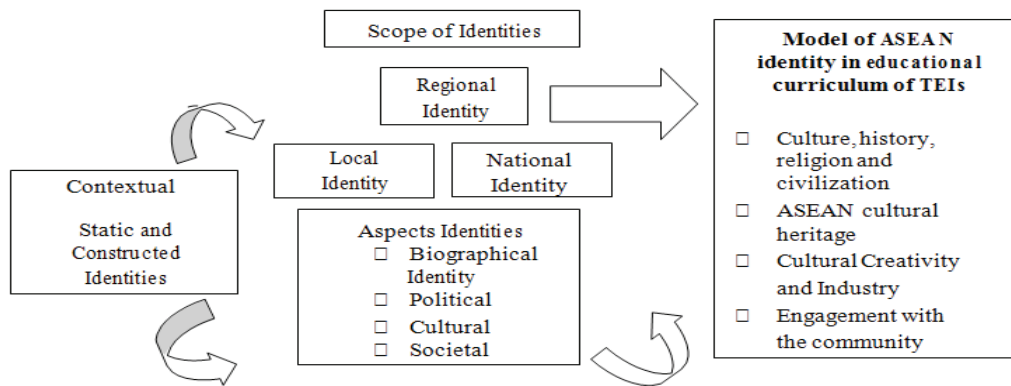


Figure 1. Diagram of Asian Identity in Teacher Education Institutions Curriculum

Identity has different layers: biographical, cultural, political, and societal identities. The layers also include local, national and regional identity, in this case, the Asian identity. Another layer of identity refers to static and constructive identity-identity which is a result of biographical circumstances and identity as socially constructed. Since identities are constructed in these different layers, there is

Methodology

This study utilized qualitative research using case study method. The vision, mission, and goals including the curriculum and activities on ASEAN integration of the Teacher Education Institutions were examined.

Four members of the National Network Of Normal Schools (3Ns) in the Philippines and two teacher education institutions in ASEAN (Vietnam and Indonesia) were selected as participating institutions. These Teacher Education Institutions were selected by convenience sampling. Results of this study are limited to the cases at hand.

Methods of Data Collection

Research methods used were content analysis of documents, interview, and focused group discussions. The social media was explored as initial step to gather information on the whereabouts of possible informants and respondents. Researchers in the field came from the participating institutions.

The documentary data included the VMGs and curricular offerings as well as syllabi and course outlines of the selected courses/subjects from the institutions. Interviews and discussions with students, alumni and faculty were likewise conducted.

Three (3) to four (4) university administrators were interviewed and five (5) to six (6) faculty members participated in the focused group discussions from selected TEIs. About 25 students and alumni from each TEI in the Philippines were interviewed either face-to-face or through social media. Students from two ASEAN TEIs were not interviewed since it was their summer break at the time of data gathering. However, accomplishment reports were analyzed to examine the students' activities about pursuing ASEAN culture or heritage.

Results and Discussion

Vision, Mission, and Goals

The survey of the visions and missions of the selected institutions of the selected institutions show the presence of the word "national" which point to a need to strengthen national identity. Another word common to them is "international", an indicator of a recognition of the institutions' conscious effort to participate in a larger community. All of the institutions envision a respected place in the global community, particularly, leadership in the region, hence an openness

to another layer of identity that may be constructed—the ASEAN identity. Moreover, the goals also project the production of globally competitive graduates and generating knowledge through internationally recognized research.

TEI Standards

The 3NS standards are embodied in the CMO 30, S2004 issued by the Philippine Commission on Higher Education (CHED) it spells out the competency and content standards of teacher education in the country. The competency standards outlined into eleven criteria stipulates that graduates of the BEED and BSEd programs are teachers who have adequate learning tools and positive attitude and ethics for further acquisition of knowledge, skills, methodologies and approaches as well as ample knowledge of content on the subject matter they are to teach. The teachers are expected to pass the national Licensure examination for Teachers.

In the other ASEAN countries teacher training is largely geared towards supplying the local and national market. Teachers are also expected to be knowledgeable in their fields of specialization, professional, ethical and creative. They are expected to be competent and highly competitive in their fields of study.

The content standards in Philippine TEIs are likewise found in the same Commission on Higher Education Memorandum Order (CMO 30, S2004) which describes the curriculum as "designed to prepare professional teachers for practice in primary and secondary schools in the Philippines. The design features include various components that correspond to the basic and specialized knowledge and skills that will be needed by a practicing professional teacher: foundational general education, (these are prescribed) knowledge and skills, experiential knowledge and skills, and professional and ethical values, and subject matter knowledge appropriate to the level of teaching." Thus the teacher education curriculum must contain the following components (see Table 1),

Courses about ASEAN are found in the BSE program major in Social Science, History, Music and Literature. While culture and history were studied extensively in major courses among students who

specialize in Social Science and History, students in Music Education and Literature focused their studies solely in ASEAN Music and Literature.

For the other Southeast Asian countries, a liberal education grounding is taken along with their major fields of specialization which they have already chosen at enrolment. But these liberal education courses are freely elected depending on the student's interests rather than prescribed. The focus is on the mastery of content courses before the student goes to professional education and pedagogy for specific levels they wish to specialize in. Similar to the Philippine standards, the selected teacher education institutions in ASEAN have very few standards on knowledge and understanding of ASEAN culture, religion, geography, music, dances and literature in the general education courses and those who specialize in Social Sciences. TEIs in the region usually limit their standards to study the culture and religion to neighboring countries with similar cultural background i.e. TEIs teaching Islam expose their students to culture of countries with the same religion.

Educational Objectives of Selected Courses in the Humanities and Social Sciences

A review of the objectives of selected courses in Humanities and Social Sciences reveal that there were attempts to instill knowledge, skills and values in relation to culture and society. Among the General education courses in the 3NS, the mandated courses such as Philippine History, Philippine Government and Constitution, Philippine Literature, Rizal Course (Jose Rizal is the Philippine national hero) and Economics and Sociology instill pride in being Filipino. BEEED students benefit from this segment of the curriculum. However, their specialization or content courses do not include even a slight familiarity with ASEAN culture .

Even among other ASEAN members, national identity is strengthened in mandated courses about their cultural and political systems. For example, Vietnam includes courses on the Vietnamese history and communist party. The same practice happens in Indonesia.

Major courses in the Humanities and social science cluster of specializations also enhance the construction of local and national and cultural identities. These are courses on Philippine Literature,

Music, Theatre, Geography and Issues in Philippine History.

Courses that briefly touch on the ASEAN situations are World Literature, Afro-Asian Literature, World Theatre, Asian Studies, Asian Music, Comparative Cultural Studies, Panitikan ng mga Umuunlad na bansa (Literature in Developing countries). These courses introduce the students to literature, politics and societies of the world, with ASEAN nations receiving minimal focus

Among the professional education courses, Multicultural education and Comparative Educational Management Systems may touch briefly on some ASEAN members' systems. But then again, these are just a small part of a bigger subject matter that includes most of the Western systems.

The selected ASEAN teacher education institutions seem to be in a similar situation in terms of their curricular programs in relation to identity building. They are strong on promotion of national/local cultural identities but quite weak on ASEAN identity promotion. One thing noticeable is the language used for instruction: for the rest of ASEAN, it is the native language, while in the case of the Philippines English is privileged. This research indicates that education plays an important source of information about ASEAN. The same findings was shown in the research of Thompson and Thianthai (2007, p.17)

Homogenizing and Differentiating ASEAN Identities

In the interviews with the 100 students from the selected institutions, it was revealed that their awareness of ASEAN lacked depth. Only a handful was able to identify the ten members of the organization. There was almost nothing they could cite about our common concerns of their country and the other members. Most have not had any personal encounter with peoples of ASEAN except from their own country. This data implies that with scant knowledge of students of ASEAN society and culture, the possibility of cultural differences will more likely to happen than homogenous culture. Since the focus of the TEIs were confined to local and national identities, future teachers will most likely acquire competencies in teaching their own culture rather than understanding ASEAN culture. For instance, discourses about culture in the Philippines revolve around artifacts (e.g. Salazar,

2004), language, texts and identity (e.g. Franco, Reyes, and Salonga in Tupas, 2007).

The discussion with faculty and some administrators on the other hand revealed their understanding of the goals of ASCC. They understand that the vision of their respective institutions is to obtain recognition and leadership in the region and therefore it is almost a mandate to pursue such. They are aware of the efforts made by their institution to link with their ASEAN neighbors. They have also participated in international conferences featuring ASEAN resource persons, participated in joint research endeavors with ASEAN partners, witnessed signing of memoranda of understanding or agreement with ASEAN member institutions, visited ASEAN member universities for benchmarking or just traveled to the countries as tourists. In other words, they had experienced people to people engagements. This sector was also responsible in integrating into their lessons some of the important information on ASEAN in their courses and was instrumental in pushing the awareness further in activities outside the classroom. Despite the limited curricular standards to various ASEAN culture and society, there are efforts from the faculty members to teach the goals of ASCC and integrate in their lessons society and culture of countries in ASEAN. This education practice will somehow forge commonalities among cultures in ASEAN despite diversity.

However, it is important as well to find identities that manifest homogeneity to satisfy the goal for ASEAN integration as shown in ASEAN blueprint and ASEAN Socio Cultural Community.

Grassroots level advocacy and research on pedagogy to develop ASEAN consciousness

Top Down and Bottom Up Strategy for Developing ASEAN Identity through Education

Respect for local and national identities is important and must be recognized by TEIs. This paper offers a strategy for Teacher Education Institutions to promote knowledge and understanding of ASEAN identity. A two-pronged strategy: bottom-up and top-down- to enhance ASEAN identity is proposed. The

top-down process starts from the Ministry of Education of member countries where the ministry formulates policies on the integration of learning outcomes and standards based from ASCC. Policies on governance of TEIs using ASCC framework are important bases for action of school leaders. Moreover, research and community development agenda could be created integrating perspectives on ASEAN identity. On the other hand, the bottom-up process starts from the grassroots toward the school system. Here, faculty members may advocate ASEAN culture through projects in the communities. Research on scholarship of teaching that will develop ASEAN identity may be done. The results of research and advocacy may be integrated in the curriculum to raise the level of consciousness of future teachers about ASEAN. This two-way process may contribute to finding commonalities of ASEAN culture despite its diversity.

Conclusion

It is clear that from the VMGs of the institutions they are conscious of the need to make a mark in the ASEAN community. Their performance standards also try to measure up towards global competitiveness. Conscious effort to integrate ASEAN culture and other concerns in some subjects, particularly in some major subjects of the Humanities and Social Science specializations was also visible. These, however, do not impact deeply into the students' consciousness since they are taken with all other international concerns. On the other hand, the teachers who have had ample layers of social experience with ASEAN issues and peoples have a high level of consciousness towards the ASEAN identity that they may be developing in their curricula.

It is important to note that awareness, familiarization and a conscious effort at internationalization are the requirements for constructing a multi-layered image as the ASEAN identity. A number of participants admitted that their programs are still very much focused on their respective national development agenda. All participants though, expressed an openness to welcome a sense of belonging to an ASEAN socio-cultural community. However they also expressed the need for more information, more familiarity and interaction and engagement with the peoples of ASEAN.

Such findings imply that there is need to enhance the curricular programs for teacher training in the ASEAN to include stronger focus on Regional situations and concerns so that teachers will have the competence and confidence to instill knowledge and attitude towards the construction of a hybridized nationalist-ASEAN image. In these countries where education is a mandate of the government, there is need for a meeting ground between policy makers and the people in the field to craft strategic actions in order to facilitate the realization of the strategic objectives. The top- down, bottom-up strategy may facilitate consciousness raising and development of the ASEAN identity.

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Acknowledgements

This work was supported by the Commission on Higher Education (CHED) of the Philippines.