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HIGHER EDUCATION POLICIES IN PROMOTING ASEAN COMMUNITY: THE CASE OF MYANMAR

Abstract:

The purposes of this paper were to present a general overview of the background of Myanmar higher education, the higher education policy formulation, and the faced challenges related to its higher educational policies for promoting ASEAN community. In order to achieve the purposes, two research methods; documentary research and in-depth interviews were employed. The purposive random sampling was used to select the participants. The key informants were the executives in higher educational policy setting and the stakeholders. The data were analyzed by content analysis. The study demonstrated that higher institutions in Myanmar have been under the supervision of 13 ministries and are allocated budgets by Ministry of Education. At the same time, the universities are concerned with their own governance, administration, and respective ministries. The findings showed that the policy development process of the higher education has gradually transition from the highly centralized to be the part of the participation of many relevant groups from educational stakeholders. The research also revealed the faced challenges related to Myanmar higher educational policies for promoting ASEAN community. The major challenges were concern with student equity, access, autonomy and choices; language; information technology and facilities; human resource; financial; research; and quality assurance and credit transfer.

Keywords:

higher education policy; ASEAN community; Myanmar

Introduction

After 48 years of the ASEAN formation, there is still no common education policies among the ten ASEAN countries because each country has struggled with its own growth. Therefore, it has become difficulties among ASEAN countries to have common policy for the education from the perspectives of historical background, political, cultural, and socio-economic, and environmental conditions (UNESCO, 2014). In the 13th ASEAN summit in 2007 in Singapore, ASEAN leaders had signed in ASEAN Charter which is like ASEAN constitution including the framing of law and organizational structure in order to increase ASEAN efficiency in 2015. As a result, all 10 ASEAN countries have to access to ASEAN community with the aims to create cooperation among these countries in terms of the free flow of goods, services, investment capital, and skilled labor by 2015. That will bring various benefits to ASEAN people such as the transfer of knowledge, language, and culture in the ASEAN region, especially the cooperation and mutual assistance in education and research arena.

In order to has a collaborative framework for ASEAN studies graduate program development, a study was developed by five Open Universities (OU5) in ASEAN regions, namely Open University Malaysia (OUM) from Malaysia, Universitas Terbuka (UT) from Indonesia, Sukhothai Thammathirat Open University (STOU) from Thailand, University of Philippines Open University (UPOU) from Philippines, and Hanoi Open University (HOU) from Vietnam. This collaborative research has conducted so as to identify the higher educational policies for promoting ASEAN among the ten ASEAN countries as well as assess the readiness of the ASEAN countries for the higher educational integration of ASEAN. Each research team from those OU5 is responsible for reviewing the higher educational policy of their own countries, including one of the other five ASEAN countries, namely Lao, Brunei, Myanmar, Singapore, and Cambodia.

STOU from Thailand is responsible for the study of higher education policy of Thailand and Myanmar in terms of the background of higher education system, the higher education policy formulation, and the challenges faced related to its higher educational policies for promoting ASEAN community. In this study, it emphases the higher education policies in promoting ASEAN community in Myanmar. Its findings can contribute to the enrichment of the ASEAN studies and the program improvement. It also increases awareness on ASEAN community.

Research Questions

This study focused on the following research questions: 1) What is the background of the higher educational policies in Myanmar? 2) How are the higher educational policies formulated? 3) What are the challenges faced related to its higher educational policies for promoting ASEAN community?

Purposes of the Study

This study explored the background of the higher educational policies in Myanmar. It also investigated how the higher educational policies formulated and studied the challenges faced related to its higher educational policies for promoting ASEAN community.

Literature Review

The relevant literature about the educational policy was reviewed, including The ASEAN community and the situation and trends in the higher education in the global perspectives.

1. The educational policy

The development process of national policy

The development process of national policy suggests the documents in the various forms related to the policy process. The three key words usually appear in the policy documents are policy, strategy, and plan (UNESCO, 2013, p. 6). A national education *policy* establishes the main goals and priority perused by the government in matters of education – at the sector and subsector level – with regard to specific aspects such as access, quality and teachers, or to a given issues or need. A *strategy* specifies how the policy goals are to be achieved. A *plan* defines the targets activities to be implemented and the timeline, responsibilities and resources needed to realize the quality and strategy. All three forms of policy documents are interrelated as shown in Figure 1.

Figure 1: The relationship among policy, strategy and plan

Source: UNESCO. (2013). UNESCO Handbook on Education Policy Analysis and Programming. Bangkok, Thailand: UNESCO Bangkok, p. 6.

The significance of the policy

As can be seen in Figure 1, the relationship of policy, strategy and plan suggested by UNESCO (2013), the policy is significantly crucial since it is the determination of direction of management and the important information. The senior executives or the policy-makers have to use that information for decision making about goals and priorities as well as the strategic statements specifying how the policy goals and priorities are to be attained. Then, the development and the operational plans are set up.

However, UNESCO (2013, p. 7) suggests that in specifying the policy, it is necessary to consider the important factors that may limit their feasibility, such as, "Are their sufficient institutional capacity and human resources to implement the policy?"; "Are the management structures appropriate?"; "Are their sufficient financial resources to enable achievement of the policy goal?"

The above mentioned factors, including the capacity of organizations, human resources, organization chart and budget also have influence on the decision in the policy level which specify projects and activities which can lead to the successful implementation. However, the effective policies have to be built on evidence, politically feasible, financially realistic, and agreed to by the government and relevant stakeholders (UNESCO, 2013, p. 7).

The educational policy process
The educational organizations can develop the policy by means of the application of policy process (UNESCO, 2013, p. 8-9) as illustrated in Figure 2.

Figure 2: The policy process
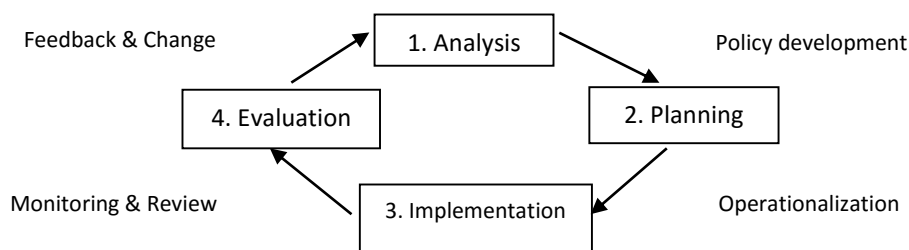
Source: UNESCO (2013). *UNESCO Handbook on Education Policy Analysis and Programming.*
        Bangkok, Thailand: UNESCO Bangkok, p. 8.

In the stage of preparation (specifying visions) before initiating the policy, the government has to specify the nation vision in terms of education, such as "increase the opportunities for the youth coming from the family who has the low economic and social status to have the higher education" (UNESCO, 2013, p. 8).

The significance of the context and education policy
Since the beginning of the 12th century, the concepts related to internationality are more distinctive and have an influence on the policy for developing the nation in all aspects, particularly in terms of education (Chapman, Sackney & Aspin, 1999). As can be seen, many countries have applied the policies and the educational management patterns from the countries which have successful educational management in their own contexts. For this reason, it can be shown that the educational departments have to dependably work with other relevant organizations in various fields. The educational reform policy of each country has an unavoidably influence among another departments.   Since the world is more globalized, the global and regional society have an influence on the educational policy formulation of each

country as the view of UNESCO (2013) in the following issues: 1) the focus of the global society; 2) agreement at the regional level; and 3) the context of policy formulation at the national level needs to derive from the basis of the various contexts, especially geography and population, national economy, society and culture, and national politics.

The ASEAN Community
Since ASEAN countries cooperate with each other after Bangkok Declaration and the contribution of ASEAN in the 8th of August 1967 which is renamed as The Association of Southeast Asian Nations, ASEAN countries gain the benefits of cooperation in that they can solve all crises and can enforce more bargaining power with other communities. Although it is only the loosen cooperation after the legalization "ASEAN Vision 2020" in 1997 in order to develop ASEAN into ASEAN Community successfully in 2020.

ASEAN department, Ministry of Foreign Affairs (2013) states that member countries "Association of Southeast Asian Nations" or ASEAN have the mutual goals to be ASEAN Community in 2015 by emphasizing the three pillars; *ASEAN Political-Security Community*; *ASEAN Economic Community; and ASEAN Socio-Cultural Community.*

The situation and trends in the higher education in the global perspectives
The global situations are moving from the information age to the age of new society. In the borderless globalization, the dynamics with more practical approaches in learning the culture and shared values are passed through all media, including computers. Due to the technology and communication development, there is an increasing competition. The measuring index of the survival degree depends on the knowledge, capabilities and quality. This can be called as the knowledge-based world or the access to the knowledge-based economic society. On the other hand, the natural resources are destructively exploited because of the outcomes of the past industrial expansion. The consciousness of natural and environmental awareness is lessened. The turbulent society with the changes in economics, social, politics and governance, science, technology and communication, including the population which have impact on the higher education management both in the ASEAN and global level. Those changes have the strengths, the weaknesses, the opportunities and also the limitations for developing the permanent educational management (Sukhothai Thammathirat Open University, 2014).

Research Design
To answer the research questions, the qualitative research methodology was employed. The documentary research was used by collecting primary data from related public documents, relevant research reports, journals, including academic information searched by the electronic media or websites. Additionally, the in-depth interview was the appropriate way to collect data from the key informants which were the executives in higher educational policy setting and the stakeholders. In this study, a purposive sampling technique was employed. The significant data concerning higher educational of Myanmar come from Myanmar Department of Higher Education, Ministry of Education

and from the higher educational institutions as well as from ASEAN study centers in Thailand. Qualitative data were analyzed with content analysis.

Findings

This section revealed the findings that were highlighted the three research purposes based on the data collection taken from the documentary research and the interviews.

1. The background of the higher educational policies in Myanmar

As a basis for admiring the present situation, it is significant to have an insight on the history of Myanmar's higher education system. In 1878, as an affiliated college under the University of Calcutta, Rangoon College was constructed. It became Government College in 1904 and then University College in 1920. Moreover, in 1920, it was merged with a Baptist-affiliated college, and Judson College in order to formulate Rangoon University. In 1925, Mandalay College was combined. In 1930, a Teachers Training College and a Medical College were added and then an Agriculture College in Mandalay was added in 1938. In 1949, the year after the national independence, the Government re-constructed Rangoon University by changing its relatively autonomous colleges into faculties of the university administered with its own system of affiliated colleges.

There was a crucial changing point in 1963 in which Rangoon and Mandalay Universities were directly positioned under state control since they followed a military coup the previous year and adopted General Ne Win's Burmese Way to Socialism. In 1964, they comprised many professional faculties, such as faculties in education, economics, and medicine. They are removed and granted independent degree-conferring status as profession-specific technical institutes. Programs in the liberal arts, science and law were delivered by Rangoon and Mandalay Universities. The following situation was further codified by a University Education Law of 1973: universities were specified as consisting of arts and science universities (Rangoon University and Mandalay University) or technical institutes developed from the former profession-specific faculties of Rangoon and Mandalay Universities. Universities and technical institutes were allowed to confer degrees, and were administered by the MOE. However, the state is still reserving the right to permit other ministries to established universities (Office of Comprehensive Education Sector Review (CESR), 2013c).

Since then, there have been many other crucial developments. In 1976, as a financially self-reliant initiative, a university correspondence program was initiated by the MOE. The basis for the National Centre for Human Resource Development (NCHRD), which was established in 1998, was subsequently given by this university correspondence program. In 1982, as the institutional medium in universities, English was re-introduced and had been replaced by Burmese in 1962. After the official name of the city of Rangoon had been changed, Rangoon University turned into Yangon University. During the late 1980s and the 1990s, in order to expand periods following student protests against the military leadership of the country in Yangon, universities were closed for 10 of the 12 years from 1988 to 2000. During the late 1990s, the Government approved the foundation of a great

number of new higher education institutions which belonged to various ministries in order to be against a backdrop of official concern about student protests. Since these new institutions were often located far away from large urban centers, students in these universities unlikely engaged in important political protest. To propose undergraduate program, the right of Yangon and Mandalay Universities was removed by the Government. This decision currently seems to have been reversed (Office of CESR, 2013c).

The Organization of the Myanmar Higher Education System

There are three main organizations supervising the higher education sub-sector, including the National Education Committee (NEC), Universities' Central Council (UCC) and Council of University Academic Bodies (CUAB). The Universities' Central Council and the Council of University Academic Bodies organize the meeting at least quarterly or semiannually in order to ensure the National Education Committee. The subsector is still largely as specified by the University Education Law of 1973. In contrast, since 1973 there has been an extremely increasing number of higher education institutions. Furthermore, the nature of the institutions recently composing of the subsector has turned to be more complicated. During 1974, the MOE was only responsible for all universities and institutes, whereas by 2012, 13 ministries are responsible for their management. The MOE are still the distinct ministry whose 66 higher education institutions account for 77% of all higher education enrolments. However, accounting for 18% of all higher education, 61 universities, technological institutes and computer universities are recently managed by the Ministry of Sciences and Technology (MOST). By the Ministry of Health (MOH) and the Ministry of Defense (MOD), 15 and 5 higher education institutions are respectively administered. Apart from the liberal arts and science universities and colleges, most of higher education institutions are extremely specialized, whether in economics, teacher education, foreign languages, engineering, computer studies, maritime studies, defense, agriculture, forestry, medicine, nursing, veterinary science, fine arts, or some other fields (Office of CESR, 2013c).

A centralized framework of governance were formulated by the University Education Law of 1973, which gives the legislative basis for the higher education system. Within this framework, various issues traditionally made a decision by universities themselves turned to be matters for making decision by either a Universities Central Council (UCC) or a Council of University Academic Boards (CUAB).

Myanmar Higher Education Legislation and Reforms

The laws and legislation comprise the seven sectors of the Myanmar Education Law -- Basic Education Law, University Education Law, Industry, Agriculture, Technical and Vocational Education Law, Myanmar Language Commission Law, Myanmar Education Research Bureau Law, Myanmar Board of Examination Law, Applied Research Organization Law. Updating in line with recent needs is required for all of these above-mentioned sectors.

The University Education Law 1964, which was replaced in 1973 and further amended in 1983, 1989 and 1998, are still effective. Nevertheless, some phrases of the University Education Law are irrelevant to the current situation since this law was enacted several decades ago. These situations are the serious issues for the development of higher education in Myanmar to be part of the expanding of the social and economy change so the University Education Law needed to be improved. A deputy-General Director in higher education department who has responsibility in higher education policy setting, viewed that *"The higher education law is now under reconstruction and still has not been approved yet. However, the law draft and data have already been finished but we have to consult with other people, so we are still processing. It can be already done in the next new government…2-3 months later." (Interview data on the 24th of November 2015)*

Future strategic plan/policy and monitoring
The 30-Year Long-Term Education Development Plan, initiating in 2000-01, offers the indispensable planning framework for the higher education subsector. The adoption of 36 action programs, across six priority areas are involved in this plan. The priority areas entail: human resource development, the technology application, the research extension, the lifelong learning development, the quality enhancement, and the preservation of national identity and national values.

The Thirty-Year Long-Term Education Development Plan has also been implemented for the development of the higher education sub-sector. The main task of the plan is Promoting Accessibility, Quality and Diversity. In September 2012, for the higher education subsector, a National Development Plan for higher education prescribed 13 specific priorities as follows: (a) re-establishing and expanding the number of faculties in MOE universities; (b) evolving a QA system; (c) readjusting the present university admission system; (d) improving TVET courses for delivery as human resource development (HRD) programs provided by universities; (e) increasing the quality of administrative officials, teachers and laboratory technicians; (f) developing the quality of students; (g) amending a law for private higher education; (h) supporting the quality of education up to an international level; (i) forming a livable academic community at universities; (j) enlarging networks between Myanmar and international universities; (k) raising English language teaching to higher standards; (l) developing the instruction of international relations, law and economics; and (m) enhancing exceptional talent by offering scholarships across the arts and sciences.

For monitoring the plan, a team called CESR (Comprehensive Education Sector Review) was led by the Government and also relies on the participation of numerous education stakeholders. The role of CESR is to monitor those plans. A deputy-General Director in higher education department stated that *"We have a team called CESR that sets and monitors the plan. So we are trying to establish a full plan for the next 5 years. To monitor the plan, we're establishing a team composed of relevant persons, based on the MOE." (Interview data on the 24th of November 2015)*

It can be noticed that CESR has the responsibility to get and analyze the important feedback from the policy implementation so as to report some essential data to the central for education reform. The officer added *"CESR started around 2011 and Phase One finished in 2013. Based on the reports from Phase One, we needed to reform the education sector and are trying to reform it now…CESR reviews each educational context, submits its reports to the MOE, then the MOE arranges any education reforms, if necessary."* (Interview data on the 24th of November 2015)

Myanmar Higher Educational Standards and Quality Assurance

It is shown by Institute of International Education (IIE) (2013) that little or no standards of accreditation or accountability, for instance, performance measures or assessments have been operated. It is also emphasized by Office of CESR (2013c) that no formal mechanisms is organized for determining the extent to which higher education institutions in Myanmar meet the needs of their students, staff, stakeholders and the society. There has never been the approval of legislation regarding the quality and academic standards of the higher education subsector. The data from the executive officer in higher education department when he was asked about the students' employment rate after their graduation *"It depends on the education area and job market. Currently we do not have such data from the other ministries. Since some institutions are under the other ministries, we don't have their data yet because of the fact that our universities are all autonomous."* (Interview data on the 24th of November 2015)

Report form SEAMEO RIHED (2012) also stated that Myanmar does not currently have a national external quality assurance system. Councils within individual universities are responsible for the institutions quality assurance. All quality functions are delegated to individual higher education institutions, which have responsibility for reporting to the Minister of Education. As viewed by a rector of a university said about the quality assurance *"We have seminars on that matter, on developing many quality assurance and accreditation practices and index to monitor. Up to now, we cannot practice the quality assurance system yet, but our chairmen of our departments meet for seminars to discuss how to upgrade their curriculum."* (Interview data on the 26th of November 2015). One pro-rector added that *"People from all universities in Myanmar come to our university for the meeting to review curriculum for their subject and find out whether it needs to be upgraded or not. So this is the centre of upgrading of the curriculum and syllabus for the country. For example, for chemistry, all the students of chemistry in Myanmar will study the same curriculum, because this seminar will fix the curriculum for every university."* (Interview data on the 26th of November 2015)

2. The higher educational policies formulation in Myanmar
The policy development process of the higher education

It is revealed by Office of CESR (2013a) that the policy implemented by the respected bodies is top-down approach, partly because of the highly centralized and top-down nature of the educational system. The Government together with the officials (Heads of Department, Pro-Rectors and Rectors) assigned by upper administrative bodies from higher education institutions are responsible for allocating education budgets. More than

that, it is reported by Office of CESR (2013a), the organization that manipulates the higher education quality derives from the Government. Additionally, there is no formal laws or policies congruent with education stakeholders. It is also recommended that a mechanism for cooperation among education stakeholders is a must.

However; there is currently some changes when one of the executives who is responsible for higher education inform that the policy formulation in Myanmar is now gradually transition to be part of the participation of many relevant groups from the bottom up. He indicated that *"Regarding the national education law, we have a lot of consultation meetings at the low level: with universities, schools, other people communities, representatives from agencies concerned with education and stakeholders then submit it to the Ministry of Education (MOE) and government." (Interview data on the 24th of November 2015)*

For the policy implementation among many different ministries, the same officer said that all universities in Myanmar, whatever they were under the responsibility of any ministries, have to follow the national education law *"We have to implement based on the national education law and after that, we have higher education law based on these laws. Every university must implement activities by the higher education law." (Interview data on the 26th of November 2015).* In terms of the financial allocation for policy implementation, the government by the MOE has responsibility for providing the budget to all universities. One pro-rector of a well-known university said that *"MOE is doing some plan for the education system….so, you can see that different institutions are under different ministries, but the MOE is responsible for the overall budget for all the institutions. They calculate and submit the educational budgets to the parliament and government. So the MOE is responsible for all the budget allocations for all the institutions...Generally speaking, the MOE takes responsibility of the organization and arranging of the budgets for all institutions. But the universities are concerned with their own governance, administration, and respective Ministries." (Interview data on the 26th of November 2015)*

The policies promoting of being ASEAN community

Office of CESR (2013a) proposes that in terms of the policy promoting of being ASEAN community, the education system should be connected with the economic system and employment opportunities. It is estimated by Office of CESR (2013a) that more potential influence of the economic sector appeared in Myanmar in that more skilled experts and employees will be more required in the Myanmar economic sector and these people should be supported from the education sector. Related academic subjects taught in universities and colleges comprise knowledge and techniques for economic development, natural resources, environmental conservation and cultural preservation. Human resources can be encouraged for establishing the post-2015 ASEAN economic and cultural community with the aims to enhance free trade and labor employment.

Noticeably, ASEAN community is willing to organize a free trade association to encourage labor market flows among member countries. Design of a Regional Qualification Framework (RQF) has been introduced. In the same way, in Myanmar there

is the initiation of a National Qualification Framework (NQF) and the coordination meetings commensurate with international standards. There has been the establishment of a Department of Labor under the Ministry of Labor, Employment and Social Security. The National Skills Standard Authority (NSSA) is responsible for evolving new laws, prescribing norms/standards and awarding certificates for high-skilled personnel.

Office of CESR (2013a) recommends that students can select specialized subjects by studying labor market demand and offer appropriate degree/diploma programs and raise the current High School Leaving Examination to higher standards so that those students who pass the examination recognize the significance of furthering their study in TVET and for enlarging their employment opportunities.

Due to human resource development in Myanmar depends importantly on the higher education development process and the key policies which contribute to the ASEAN policies strengthens, a key man in higher education department give attention to the forms of standardization as he said; *"We are processing a national qualifications framework (NQF) that will lead to regional qualifications. Basically it has 8 levels, from Certificate to PhD level. It is still under implementation and not finished yet. Under the national qualifications framework (NQF), we will have quality assurance agencies, and also the setup of TVET qualifications. The TVET bill has already been submitted to the parliament. If we have laws and basic education policies for TVET, and when we have an MQA agency, these organizations will work together to encourage cross-border education, and cross-border workers. Some professional trainings are conducted in other Ministries, like the Ministry of Labor and Social Welfare, or Ministry of Tourism…they offer certificates. As far as I know, there are 4 certificate levels. These certificates are regionally recognized, so will be in line with the regional framework and will be very supportive of cross-border workers, trading, etc. So these parts will be very supportive of the ASEAN community."* (Interview data on the 26th of November 2015)

When focus on the Mutual Recognition Arrangements (MRAs) which is a proposed arrangement among ASEAN member countries designed to facilitate the free movement and employment of qualified and certified personnel between ASEAN member countries. One of the Myanmar's executives in higher education department said that *"For MRAs were recently conducted in 8 areas of professional exchange. These MRAs were also supportive of the ASEAN community. We are preparing for NQF and also trying to adopt ASEAN reference framework, a regional reference framework that includes every sector, not just education. As far as I know, regional referencing framework is very important to link with other foreign frameworks, such as European or New Zealand frameworks. These can link to ASEAN for trade, etc., from region to region, to improve the economic sector."* (Interview data on the 24th of November 2015)

A comment from a rector in a famous university noted that *"Not only in our university but also in other ministries and sectors, they are taking steps and thinking about critical issues for the ASEAN community and challenges that will be faced. Myanmar is concerned mainly with the economic pillar, with our resources and trade with Thailand*

and other ASEAN countries. Political issues and other issues can go together with economic challenges, but the largest worry is still economic for us." (Interview data on the 26th of November 2015)

3. The challenges in the implementation of HE Policies to promote ASEAN community

There are some issues that the government of Myanmar have to emphasize on the obstacles that prevents the policy implementation to promote ASEAN community. Some challenges concern with:

3.1 Student equity, access, autonomy and choices. The equity and access to higher education is still problematic in Myanmar due to the geographic distribution of these universities, restrict extensive student mobilization and participation in political demonstrations against the government, the high operating cost for these different units causing the insufficient resources, a lack of autonomy and choice, and the difficulties to access to international fellowships and exchange opportunities.

3.2 Language. Myanmar language is the official language and English as a compulsory second language whereas ethnic-minority children are required to learn their native language at home, and the Myanmar language and English at school at the same time, which can cause impediments for language proficiency. Language barriers are considered as one of the current limitations. Particularly in higher education, English language will be a barrier since it will be the official language of ASEAN. In university, this is still a problem, especially for those in the remote areas in which students' English language proficiency is quite low.

3.3 Information technology and facilities. IT and telecommunications infrastructure in Myanmar have a persistent negative impact on the attempts to upgrade Myanmar's universities and to encourage the learning experience of students. The data from ADB (2012) shows that only about 26% of Myanmar's population had access to electricity in 2011 and similarly, teledensity both fixed and mobile and internet access are among the lowest in the region. Only 1.26% of population have access to fixed telephone lines and 0.03% have broadband internet subscriptions. The lack of high-speed internet connectivity is considered to be a constraint on the efforts to modernize Myanmar's universities.

Furthermore, there is still a requirement for a wider range of teaching facilities and education equipment such as computer training centers, resource centers, multimedia lecture rooms and language labs as well as e-libraries. The data from research also showed that there is the lack of teaching facilities and education equipment. As evidence of universities, regional college and colleges, computer training centers, resource centers, multimedia lecture rooms, language labs, e-libraries and internet are needed.

3.4 Human resource. The quality of education has become a key for advancing socio-economic development in Myanmar, especially for human resource development. Higher education institutions have to be confronted with the demand of the changing labor market aiming to supply adequate quality labor (Office of CESR, 2013b). In such a condition, it is necessary for the HE subsector to enhance an increasing adaptability to the changing needs of the labor market deriving from the modern economy including the professionalization of teachers and educational personnel. (Office of CESR, 2013b).

3.5 Financial. It is shown in the data from Office of CESR (2013a) that the budget allocations for higher education institutions are confronted with constraints. There is very low and insufficient budget for Myanmar education sector. The public budget for higher education is evidently (78.3%) allocated to emerged expenditure, on salaries primarily. Many males are reluctant to become the instructors since salaries for university and college lecturers are widely regarded to be insufficient for one parent to support a family. There are also limited financial motivations to promote quality teaching in universities, and funds for the maintenance. Also, there is an extremely limited improvement of buildings.

3.6 Research. When comparing to neighboring ASEAN, the quantitative total of papers and citations in Myanmar is very low.

Table 1: Papers and citations, by country, 2000-2001

Country	No. Of Papers 2000-2011	% Increase 2000-2011	No. Of Citations 2000-2011	% Increase 2000-2005	Citations per Paper 2000-2011	Impact Relative to World
Indonesia	8,240	255.16	68,081	-12.37	8.26	0.73
Malaysia	31,814	878.20	139,890	16.60	4.40	0.39
Philippines	7,130	240.10	65,355	-5.55	9.17	0.81
Thailand	38,500	463.99	307,161	201.88	7.98	0.70
Viet Nam	5,207	421.43	31,959	137.03	6.14	0.65
Myanmar	425	272.22	3,644	176.10	8.57	0.76

Source: Office of Comprehensive Education Sector Review. (2013c). Myanmar Comprehensive Education Sector Review (CESR) Phase 1: Technical annex on the higher education Subsector, p.10.

Nevertheless, it can be evidently noticed that the number of papers and citation increase proportionally (2000-2010, and 2000-2005 respectively). In the same way, as can be seen from the final two columns of the above table, the data relevant with the quality of research is widely comparable with neighboring ASEAN. Finally, due to the few proposals submitted, achievement at EU SEA grant applications is substantially higher than the average effectively. It can be seen from the data that the research furrow, at the same time, is not shallowed. The matter is not only quantitative but also qualitative (Office of CESR, 2013c).

3.7 Quality assurance and credit transfer. In Myanmar, research and documents demonstrated that no standard of accreditation or accountability has been operated. The findings also reveals that there is no formal mechanisms for determining the extent to which higher education institutions in Myanmar meet the needs of their students, staff, stakeholders and the society. Additionally, it is found that the approval of legislation regarding the quality and academic standards of the higher education has not been conducted. In addition, the credit transfer systems need to be enhanced in higher education system. From the interviews, the obstacle that the educational personnel

concerned for the policy implementation to promote ASEAN as noticed by a rector of well-known university that "*Another problem we may face in regards to the formation of the ASEAN community network (AUN) is the exchange of students, like between Myanmar and Thailand and how to manage the credit transfer systems. The systems may be different between the countries.*" *(Interview data on the 26th of November 2015)*

These major's points are currently realized that they have been a big deal for higher institutions to face the challenges to be part of increasing of social and economy development to promote ASEAN community.

Conclusion and Recommendation

As a member within ASEAN community, Myanmar is still being in at a beginning stage in the aspect of the higher education quality improvement and confronting key challenges in its higher education system, not only in the region but also internationally. The crucial hindrances include the lack of institutional autonomy and the slowness of centralized decision-making. These concerns need to address challenges facing the regional integration of ASEAN community now and beyond 2015.

Higher education policies in promoting ASEAN community is very crucial for supporting the pillars of ASEAN community in Myanmar particularly its socioeconomic transformation. To boost the effective and efficient human resource and higher education development requires the collaborative management among the government and the organization concerned with higher education quality development. The education equity and access opportunities with relevance of curricula, the upgraded materials infrastructure for supporting learning, methodologies, and program designs should be considered. In addition, the quality control and accreditation and faculty qualifications and profession support systems need to be focused. Moreover, the financial efficiency management and the learning process management to increase higher education students' competencies for modernizing economy responses are required.

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