

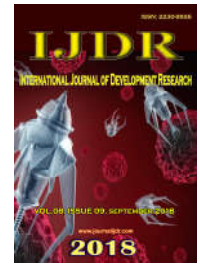


ISSN: 2230-9926

Available online at <http://www.journalijdr.com>

IJDR

International Journal of Development Research
Vol. 08, Issue, 09, pp.23106-23109, September, 2018



ORIGINAL RESEARCH ARTICLE

OPEN ACCESS

ASEAN INTEGRATION: STUDENTS' INITIAL EXPERIENCE IN A STATE FUNDED UNIVERSITY

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ARTICLE INFO

Article History:

Received 11th June, 2018
Received in revised form
16th July, 2018
Accepted 22nd August, 2018
Published online 30th September, 2018

Key Words:

ASEAN Integration,
JRMSU,
Initial experience.

ABSTRACT

This study aimed at identifying the different perceptions of the Jose Rizal Memorial State University System during the academic year 2016-2017. Specifically, it endeavored to find out the rating of the availability of the educational services in JRMSU vis-à-vis ASEAN Integration and their degree of agreement on the perceptions of the initial adaptation of ASEAN Integration. The descriptive survey, which is a descriptive method of research, was utilized in the study. The chosen respondents were given equal chance to contribute data in the study through random sampling. Results show that majority of the respondents rate the availability of educational services in JRMSU vis-à-vis ASEAN Integration available and it shows that they have positive response on the initial adaptation of ASEAN Integration. It also shows that there is a significant relationship between the availability of educational services in JRMSU vis-à-vis ASEAN Integration and the perceptions on the initial adaptation of ASEAN Integration, as rated and perceived by the respondents. The study reveals that the perceptions of the students on the initial adaptation of ASEAN Integration depend greatly on the availability of educational services in JRMSU vis-à-vis ASEAN Integration. To increase the degree of agreement of the respondents, there should have greater educational services in JRMSU that are available, in line with the blueprint of ASEAN Integration. In the end, the respondents believe that the initial adaptation of ASEAN Integration has a positive impact on education, particularly to their lives as students and future professionals. This implies further that the university is ready to adapt the ASEAN trend.

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Citation: Rosenda B. Borre and Rochel A. Ranes, 2018. "Asean integration: Students' initial experience in a State Funded University", *International Journal of Development Research*, 8, (09), 23106-23109.

INTRODUCTION

This is ASEAN's time. In the geographic heart of the world's premier growth corridor, ASEAN is poised to "seize the moment" on the fulfillment of the goals for the ASEAN ECONOMIC COMMUNITY (AEC). At stake is a long-standing commitment by the ten Member States of ASEAN to "hasten the establishment of the AEC by 2015 and to transform ASEAN into a region with free movements of goods, services, investment, skilled labor and free flow of goods" (ASEAN 2014). Hence, 2015 is the big year for ASEAN-a year of one vision, one identity, and one community-the ASEAN integration. The Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN) is a political and economic organization of the ten Southeast Asian countries.

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It was formed on August 8, 1967 by Indonesia, Malaysia, Philippines, Singapore and Thailand (ASEAN Secretariat, 1967). Since then, membership has expanded to include Brunei, Cambodia, Laos, Myanmar and Vietnam (ASEAN Secretariat, 2008b). It aims include accelerating economic growth, social progress, and socio-cultural evaluation among its members, protection of regional peace and stability, and opportunities for member countries to resolve differences peacefully (ASEAN Secretariat, 1967). This ASEAN community is expected to bring magnanimous changes in the political, economic, and socio-cultural arena of the present ten members states of the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN). Education is one of many industries that will be affected by AEC. Educational institutions are incorporated as non-profit organization; however, the earnings of these institutions make significant contribution to the county's economy. Universities finance like normal businesses, deals with profit and loss, balance sheet, and cash flow statement (Louangrath, 2013). Revenue of a university depends on

enrollment. Therefore, education is an industry and deserves to be analyzed as an economic sector like any other service industries. Education underpins the development of ASEAN Economic Community. Education is the key factor that will help create knowledge-based society and will contribute to the overall enhancement of the AEC (ASEAN Secretariat, 2014). Since one of the purposes of education is learning and the first concern of learning are the learners, then knowing the nature of the learners is considered. In all learning environments, individuals interact with others who are in some way different from them. This diversity comes from the factors like gender, racial, ethnic or cultural background. Some other factors are the socio-economic status, thinking/learning styles, and exceptionalities.

Differences that exist among us lead to varied views or perceptions. Schacter (2011) defined perception as the organization, identification, and interpretation of sensory information in order to represent and understand the environment. The process of perception begins with an object in the real world, termed the distal stimulus or distal object. By means of light, sound or another physical process, the object stimulates the body's sensory organs. In this sense, a variety of perception can be collected from different individuals with specific situations. As the ASEAN integration in education was adapted in this institution, different ideas might come out from the minds of the students. Varied opinions and commentaries might be heard from them. It is for this purpose, that the study is conducted to find out the perceptions among selected Jose Rizal Memorial State University System students towards the initial adaptation of ASEAN integration.

Theoretical Framework

This study is primarily anchored with the two major theories of European Integration, neo-functionalism and liberal intergovernmentalism. Neo-functionalism (1950) has been described as a synthesis of David Mitrany's theoretical 'functionalism' and is the first, 'classical' grand theory/narrative of European integration. It is a theory of regional integration, building on the work of Ernst B. Haas, an American political scientist and Leon Lindberg, also an American political scientist and the pragmatic approach to management taken by Jean Monnet, the first president of the European Coal and Steel Community (ECSC). Jean Monnet's approach to integration aimed at individual sectors in hopes of achieving spillover effects to further the process of integration. It is also said to be followed by the early neo functional steps. The core of neo-functionalism is the use of the concept of 'spill-over'. The process of 'spill-over' refers to situations when an initial decision by governments to place a certain sector under the authority of central institutions creates pressures to extend the authority of the institutions into neighboring areas of policy, such as currency exchange rates, taxation, and wages. Intergovernmentalism is a term in political science with two meanings. The first refers to a theory of regional integration originally proposed by Stanley Hoffmann; the second treats states and the national government as the primary factors for integration process. Intergovernmentalism is distinguishable from realism and neorealism because of its recognition of both the significance of institutionalization in international politics and the impact of domestic politics upon governmental preferences. Intergovernmentalists see integration as a process directed mostly by the decisions of national governments. Opposed to

neofunctionalists, they do not think that the global economic interdependence stimulates integration, but that precisely because of the competition that global economic system promotes, government are very cautious. Rather than accepting it easily, national governments are mainly opposing integration. Translational cooperation is therefore mostly a question of chance, and not so much of calculated interests (as neofunctionalists state). The most relevant question for intergovernmentalists is whether different countries have similar interests (what would explain integration) or are those interests opposing one another (what explains the tensions, threats to integration).

RESEARCH DESIGN AND METHODS

The researchers employed the descriptive survey method, which is one of the types of descriptive research. In the method, a questionnaire was utilized to find out and gather information about the study to the signified respondents. It aimed at acquiring information on the initial experience of JRMSU on ASEAN Integration. The respondents of the study were selected students from the 5 campuses in JRMSU system. There were 100 student respondents in every campus. They were chosen through random sampling. The statistical tools used in the study were the weighted mean and the Pearson Product Moment Correlation Coefficient.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Table 1 shows the availability of educational services in JRMSU vis-à-vis ASEAN Integration as rated by the respondents. It was observed that item number 5, "offers academic, varsity, and other scholarships" ranked as first, which implies that this is the most available educational service in JRMSU. The item "molds students to become proficient in the English language" ranked as second and the item that ranked third was "conducts extension programs and activities particularly in underserved communities". The three items that got the lowest ratings, although rated as available, were the items "promotes exchange of linguists", develops and offers courses on ASEAN studies" and "promotes university placements through a 'semester abroad' or 'a year abroad' program". This means that the respondents view these educational services as the least available services offered in this institution vis-à-vis ASEAN Integration. According to the International Bureau of Education (2011), the rise in the internalization and globalization of higher education, in particular the rapid development of cross border higher education, has underlined an urgent need to establish robust frameworks for quality assurance and the recognition of qualifications. Moreover, Hoosen, et al. (2009), opined that with the introduction of regionalism, the challenges for the higher education institutions go beyond the concept of globalization. The main concern is how higher education institutions and the national governments of the regional member countries can adjust themselves to cope with regionalized education. The portability of qualifications in higher education is one of the major issues associated with such regional integrations. Table 2 shows the degree of agreement of the JRMSU students towards their perceptions on the initial adaptation of ASEAN Integration. It was observed that item "improves quality of education" ranked as first, in which they agreed the most. This implies that the respondents believe that the initial adaptation of the ASEAN Integration will improve the quality of education.

Table 1. The Availability of Educational Services in JRMSU vis-à-vis ASEAN Integration

The availability of educational services in JRMSU vis-à-vis ASEAN Integration	Mean	Interpretation	Rank
1. Caters Senior High School, grades 11 and 12 applicants.	3.38	Available	19 th
2. Accepts Senior High School applicants regardless of social class, geography ethnicity, background or physical abilities.	3.53	Available	3 rd
3. Offers technical/vocational courses to female and male entrust.	3.51	Available	8.5 th
4. Accepts and sends exchange students.	3.34	Available	20 th
5. Offers academic, varsity, and other scholarships.	3.60	Available	1 st
6. Conducts extension programs and activities particularly in underserved communities.	3.57	Available	4 th
7. Support students and staffs exchanges and professional interactions including creating research clusters.	3.43	Available	15 th
8. Promote equal access to education for women and girls.	3.44	Available	12.5 th
9. Develop and offer courses on ASEAN studies, both in the primary, secondary and higher education levels.	3.19	Available	22 nd
10. Enhance the exchange of best practices on gender-sensitive school curriculum.	3.41	Available	17.5 th
11. Collaborates with other educational organization to enhance the quality of education.	3.52	Available	7 th
12. Includes the teaching of values and cultural heritage.	3.56	Available	5.5 th
13. Develops and offer courses on ASEAN studies.	3.09	Available but inadequate	24 th
14. Conducts Youth Leadership Development Program and similar programs.	3.41	Available	17.5 th
15. Supports learning of ASEAN languages.	3.33	Available	21 st
16. Promotes exchanges of linguists.	3.17	Available but inadequate	23 rd
17. Establishes university games, Peace Corps to promote greater interaction and understanding among youths.	3.43	Available	15 th
18. Implements youth awards program to recognize outstanding individuals.	3.44	Available	12.5 th
19. Establishes Youth Program fund to fund various youth projects and activities.	3.43	Available	15 th
20. Shares best practices on youth development strategies and tools.	3.45	Available	11 th
21. Molds students' talents on cultural performing.	3.50	Available	10 th
22. Promotes university placements through a semester abroad or a year abroad program.	3.03	Available but inadequate	25 th
23. Promotes life-long learning.	3.51	Available	8.5 th
24. Molds students to become proficient in the English language.	3.59	Available	2 nd
25. Promotes students care development through sharing of experiences and capacity building.	3.56	Available	5.5 th
Average Weighted Mean	3.417	Available	

Table 2. Perceptions on the Initial Adaptation of ASEAN Integration

Perceptions on the initial adaptation of ASEAN Integration	Mean	Interpretation	Rank
1. Prepares students to thrive in a fast changing and highly connected world.	4.04	Strongly Agree	15.5 th
2. Equips students with necessary skills and abilities.	4.07	Strongly Agree	9.5 th
3. Improves quality of education.	4.20	Strongly Agree	1 st
4. Improves quality of instruction.	4.16	Strongly Agree	2 nd
5. Develops teaching materials and capability.	4.05	Strongly Agree	14 th
6. Keeps educational standards up.	4.07	Strongly Agree	9.5 th
7. Refines teaching approaches.	4.08	Strongly Agree	6.5 th
8. Refines assessment methods.	4.02	Strongly Agree	18.5 th
9. Improves institutional development.	4.05	Strongly Agree	14 th
10. Improves efficiency of educational services.	4.04	Strongly Agree	15.5 th
11. Improves global competitiveness.	4.07	Strongly Agree	9.5 th
12. Allows exchange of faculty members.	3.87	Strongly Agree	25 th
13. Allows exchange of student scholars.	3.93	Strongly Agree	23 rd
14. Provides subsidy for the accommodation of scholars.	3.90	Strongly Agree	24 th
15. Increases opportunity of Higher Education	4.11	Strongly Agree	4 th
16. Open doors for great job opportunities for graduates.	4.07	Strongly Agree	9.5 th
17. Links education with employability.	4.02	Strongly Agree	18.5 th
18. Produces graduates with international quality.	4.00	Strongly Agree	20.5 th
19. Produces globally competitive graduates.	4.05	Strongly Agree	14 th
20. Produces English-proficient graduates.	3.99	Strongly Agree	22 nd
21. Allows for institutional revisions and improvements.	4.00	Strongly Agree	20.5 th
22. Develops global awareness and cross-cultural skills.	4.03	Strongly Agree	17 th
23. Strengthens collaboration with other educational institutions and organizations.	4.09	Strongly Agree	5 th
24. Gives greater access and understanding to different cultures.	4.08	Strongly Agree	6.5 th
25. Promotes effective and efficient future professionals.	4.14	Strongly Agree	3 rd
Average Weighted Mean	4.045	Strongly Agree	

Table 3. Test of Relationship between the Availability of Educational Services vis-à-vis ASEAN Integration and the Perception on the Initial Adaptation of the ASEAN Integration

Variables	Mean	SD	Computed r	Computed t	Interpretation	Action
Availability of Educational Services vis-à-vis ASEAN Integration	3.417	0.153	0.959	64.656	Significant relationship	H ₀ was rejected
Perception on the Initial Adaptation of the ASEAN Integration	4.045	0.074				

(α) = 0.05, t.v. = 1.960, df = 365

Ranked as second, "improves quality of instruction", this means that the initial adaptation of ASEAN Integration will also improve the quality of instruction.

The next item, "promotes effective and efficient future professionals" ranked as third in which they strongly agree. This implies that the initial adaptation of ASEAN Integration will promote effective and efficient future professionals.

This corroborates with ASEAN Secretariat (2014) that education lies at the core of AEC's development process, creating knowledge-based society and contributing to the enhancement of ASEAN competitiveness. The three items that had the lowest ratings although interpreted as strongly agree, were "allows exchange of student scholars", "provides subsidy for the accommodation of scholars" and "allows exchange of faculty members". This means that the exchange of foreign students' scholars is visible in the main campus only but limited in number. Table 3 presents the relationship between the availability of educational services in JRMSU vis-à-vis ASEAN Integration and the perceptions on the initial adaptation of ASEAN Integration. It shows that there is a significant relationship between the availability of educational services in JRMSU vis-à-vis ASEAN Integration and their perceptions on the initial adaptation of ASEAN Integration. This further means that the two variables have a significant connection or it both affects one way or another. It implies further that the system is prepared to adapt the ASEAN standardization. According to Licuanan (2014), CHED chairperson, said that there are two basic concerns for HEIs which include the "quality of our college or university students" and "how well we have prepared our college or university graduates for the world of work." In terms of preparedness of HEIs for the world of work, Licuanan said that PH HEIs need to guarantee that the curricula, instructional modalities and standards, assurance of learning and assessments of learning outcomes of students in the different degree programs produce the level of professional skills and competencies vis-à-vis the emerging ASEAN Qualifications Reference Framework to ensure the mobility of graduates within the region under the Mutual Recognition Agreement or MRAs."

Conclusions/Recommendations

Based on the findings of the study, the researchers conclude that the availability of educational services of JRMSU with respect to the blueprint of ASEAN Integration, especially for education do affect the perceptions of the students towards the initial adaptation of ASEAN Integration.

Thus, the respondents strongly agree that the adaptation of ASEAN Integration would be a great help and advancement for them in their careers, to the institution, as well as to the community. One of the great factors that helped them strongly agree with the initial adaptation of ASEAN Integration as their perception was the availability of educational services in JRMSU vis-à-vis ASEAN Integration. The initial adaptation of ASEAN Integration, or ASEAN itself, has a great positive impact to the lives of the students, staffs of the institution and then community. After thorough examination of the findings and conclusions, the following recommendations are given; Job placements for the students and graduate students of the institution should be considered and prioritized; Intensifying of affiliations, benchmarking, and intellectual exchange regarding the ASEAN Integration should be made feasible; Clear implementation policy and/or mechanism on the educators' and administrators' role in the ASEAN Integration should be made and be disseminated and Collaboration and capacity building efforts between and among educational sectors and institutions should be materialized so as to abreast, adapted and synchronized with the educational changes.

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