Harmonisation of Higher Education: A Call for Policy Infrastructure

Prof. Dr. Supachai Yavaprabhas
Director, SEAMEO RIHED
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Southeast Asia is a region of diversity.
Diversity in many aspects

- Population Size
- Religious
- Political System
- Economic
Southeast Asian Countries

Area: 4,523,000 km²
Countries: 10
Regional GDP per capita: $1,584
Southeast Asian Countries

From small countries such as Brunei and Singapore to a very large countries like the Philippines and Indonesia.
Southeast Asian Countries

From Landlocked countries like Lao PDR to a country of more than 17,500 island like Indonesia
Southeast Asian Countries

From Military Dictatorship to Presidential Democracy and Constitutional Monarchy and Parliamentary System.

From Unitary State to Federation System
Southeast Asian Countries

From Buddhist countries like Myanmar, Lao PDR, Thailand, and Cambodia to Muslim Countries like Brunei, Indonesia, and Malaysia and to big Christian Country like the Philippines, as well as those mixed religions like Singapore and Vietnam
Southeast Asian Countries

From the very poor country to the very rich country in the world
Southeast Asian Countries

**Total** population is 566 million.

**Total** student population is 12 million with Indonesia as a biggest-2.7 million, the Philippines-2.6 million, and Thailand-2.0 million.
Southeast Asian Countries

Total number of HEIS is more than 5,000.

3,000 HEIs in Indonesia,
1,800 HEIS in the Philippines and
580 HEIs in Malaysia.
Southeast Asian Countries

Literacy rate is more than 90% in most countries, except Lao PDR and Cambodia.
We may be diverse

But we belong to the same community
Harmonization and networking is needed to "connect" us together.
1. Background of SEAMEO RIHED’s Initiatives on Harmonisation Process

On-going

EHEA in 2010

BP Observer

NONE

On-going

Moving to AHEA

BP Observer

Process of HE Harmonisation: Global Landscape
What is Higher Education Harmonisation?

(1) ‘...a process that recognises the importance of establishing an ‘area of knowledge’;

(2) ‘... a process that recognises diversity of higher education systems and cultures within the region while promoting common practices and guidelines for cooperation’;

(3) ‘...a process that encourages continuous mobility of students/manpower across the region’
Harmonisation: A long and complex process and key success factors

- consensus building at the national level
- active participation from HEIs and employment sector
- a mutually accepted ‘roadmap’ consisted of a vision/goal of the harmonisation process, areas for framework development, methods and key players
Harmonisation of Higher Education in SEA and Asia: What has been lacking?

‘a loosely and voluntary policy mechanism leading to the development of agreed sets of higher education infrastructure within the region.’
The lack of HE harmonisation process in Southeast Asia has led to SEAMEO RIHED’s attempt to:

- **Raise awareness** among key stakeholders in SEA about the changing HE contexts
- **Promote** the harmonisation process leading to Southeast Asian Higher Education Area
- **Emphasise** the importance of HE as an engine for social and economic growth
1. Background of SEAMEO RIHED’s Initiatives on Harmonisation Process (con’t)

2007
• Proposal on the structured framework for regional integration in higher education in Southeast Asia: the Road towards a Common Space was submitted to the 15th GBM, 30th HOM and 2nd DG Meeting and endorsed by the 43rd SEAMEO Council Meeting

2008
• The 1st step to ‘raise awareness’ was translated into an 8-month Conference Series on Raising Awareness: Exploring the Ideas of Creating Higher Education Common Space in SEA, which was supported by the Japan Foundation and DEEWR (Australia)

2009
• The next step to ‘identify priority areas’ for guideline development was discussed among high-ranking officials during the 3rd DG Meeting in January 2009.
• QA development is likely to be the first area launched under the newly established AQAN
2007: SEAMEO RIHED’s proposal

‘The Structured Framework for Regional Integration in Higher Education in SEA: the Road towards a Common Space’

to the Ministers of Education during the SEAMEO Council Meeting in March 2008

ENDORSED
The Proposal on the structured framework for regional integration in higher education in Southeast Asia: the Road towards a Common Space

Stage 1: Raising Awareness

Stage 2: Creating an Inter–governmental steering committee to identify priority areas

Stage 3: Organising a Ministerial Summit

Stage 4: Developing frameworks of guidelines for the identified priority areas

Stage 5: Expanding the priority areas and membership of the Common Space
2. Harmonisation Project on Raising Awareness

Stage 1: Raising Awareness about the Process of Higher Education Harmonisation and the Common Space in Higher Education

Table 1: Key Findings from the Conference Series on Raising Awareness

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<tr>
<th>1) Ideal form of Higher Education Area</th>
<th>• A system or an area that become a reference or one that can be fitted into, with strong recognition of cultural diversities and national identities</th>
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<td>2) Priority Areas (to develop guidelines or frameworks)</td>
<td>• QA guideline; Education and research link; Credit transfer system; Mobility system; Lifelong learning system</td>
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| 3) The Role of Key Players | • **Government**: to raise awareness and identify priority areas  
• **HEIs**: to help the government identify priority areas, develop framework and guidelines  
• **Employment Sector**: to help government and HEIs identify priority areas |
| 4) The Role of IOs (ASEAN/SEAMEO) | • Facilitating initial discussions between member governments  
• Dissemination of information  
• Coordinating funding activities with members |
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<td>5) Key Benefits</td>
<td>• Greater student mobility; Widening access and choices for students (quality and cost); Greater opportunity for HEI cooperation; Widening regional pool of human resources; ASEAN or SEA dimension of higher education; Easier to align with other higher education areas in the future; Better understanding in the region</td>
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<td>6) Future Scenarios</td>
<td>• Students spending a year in a receiving institution/country; Mobility of employment; A multicultural workplace; Closer collaboration (knowledge creation and employment); Students from different countries being offered the same quality of education; More adult learners in the system; Curriculum revision</td>
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What do we need to facilitate the harmonization process?

- EU experience indicates that what we may need are
- “Asian” HE Qualifications Framework,
- “Asian” Register of QA Agencies,
- “Asian” Diploma Supplement,
- “Asian” Standards and Guidelines for QA in HE, and
- “Asian” Credit Transfer System
What do we need to facilitate the harmonization process?

- What we already developed......
- “UMAP” Credit Transfer System
- Asean Quality Assurance Network--AQAN
- What we are aiming at now......
- “Asian” Diploma Supplement or Student Passport
- What we may need to develop in the future......
- “Asian” Standards and Guidelines for QA in HE, and
The Result from the Conference Series on Raising Awareness indicates that QA is one of the topmost priorities for guideline development (also agreed by the DGs /SG /Commissioner responsible for higher education in the 3rd DG/SG/Commissioner Meeting)

Existing QA networks in Asia Pacific, e.g. INQAAHE, APQN, AUN–QA (for IQA) or the Brisbane Communiqué are recognised, but...

It was agreed that a sub-regional QA network for SEA countries are also as much significant for the process of harmonisation and QA development in this region
2008–2009: The Establishment of AQAN

- SEAMEO RIHED and the Malaysian Qualifications Agency (MQA) have been coordinating to establish the ASEAN Quality Assurance Network (AQAN) from early 2008

- The 1st Meeting was held in July 2008 and resulted in the Kuala Lumpur Declaration of the ASEAN Quality Assurance Network (AQAN)
3 Policy Infrastructure: the Key Element of the Harmonisation Process

- The 2nd AQAN Roundtable Meeting was held during 20–22 March 2009 in Bangkok, Thailand on the topic of ‘Assessors: Current Practices and the Next Step’
- The 3rd Meeting of Director General/Secretary General/Commissioner responsible for Higher Education agreed that there should be further coordination with the AQAN in developing the ASEAN Quality Assurance Framework and the Regional Qualification Framework
The “Wall” is still there...

"one own inherited system"

"Qualifications Framework"
"Quality Assurance System"
"Degree System"
What we need to consider is to...

"Break the wall and build the bridge"

Freer movement of students and staff
Thank For Your Attention