In 1967, the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN) was established to address political security concerns in Southeast Asia. Three decades later, the ASEAN Vision 2020 (subsequently accelerated to 2015) was formulated; it envisions closer economic, political, and socio-cultural integration among ASEAN nations. The ASEAN Vision 2015 identifies the ASEAN community as “conscious of its ties of history, aware of its cultural heritage, and bound by a common regional identity.” ASEAN leaders aim to develop and strengthen an “ASEAN citizenship” that will facilitate economic and socio-cultural integration within the context of member countries’ cultural and political diversity. Increasing ASEAN integration posits demands and challenges to education systems of the region which include ASEAN 28 Agenda Points on Education which are captured in the four main priority areas in the 5-Year Work Plan on Education (2011-2015),

A two-part regional research forum was held in the Center from 27 to 29 June 2018 as part of the research projects on increasing ASEAN regional integration. (Photo courtesy: SEAMEO INNOTECH)
namely: (1) Promoting ASEAN Awareness; (2a) Increasing Access to Quality Primary and Secondary Education; (2b) Increasing the Quality of Education – Performance Standards, Lifelong Learning and Professional Development; (3) Cross-border Mobility and Internationalization of Education; and (4) Support to Other Sectoral Bodies with an Interest in Education (ASEAN Secretariat, 2012). These entail a more serious investment in teaching and learning in a multi-cultural society, language and socio-cultural issues, citizenship education, and the common approaches guiding regional education initiatives in the area. More importantly, successful ASEAN integration also challenges the education systems in the region to provide individuals with requisite skills needed in a changing labor market.

These challenges and demands have significant implications for basic to higher education. It will impact upon issues and concerns on curriculum and instruction as well as system-wide policy and planning. The former includes, the content being
taught in education systems, the ways in which such content is delivered, the development of technical and vocational education and training, qualification recognition arrangements, and the latter includes issues such as investment in education, human resource management, and balance and priority for subsector development.

In preparation for increasing ASEAN regional integration, each SEAMEO Ministry of Education (MOE) is engaged in various change management initiatives involving strategic educational planning, educational policy and curricular reforms, programmatic development, human capacity building, and other system improvements. A regional research into the status of these interventions, the challenges being faced, the innovations being pioneered, and remaining issues to be addressed, would be a timely input to support MOEs as they move forward with their ASEAN integration initiatives. The research project is also fully aligned with SEAMEO INNOTECH’s own strategic programmatic priorities (detailed in its 8th and 9th Five-Year Development Plans), of assisting the education sector play its role in moving the Region towards increased economic, socio-cultural, and political integration in support of the ASEAN 2015 Vision.

This research brief presents a summary of the findings of a wider research project that aims to document and analyze the change strategies implemented by selected MOEs in the ASEAN region in response to the demands and challenges of increasing ASEAN regional integration. It features case studies describing change management responses relevant to increasing ASEAN regional integration, employed by MOEs in seven countries: Brunei Darussalam, Cambodia, Indonesia, Lao PDR, Malaysia, Philippines and Thailand. The case studies were developed through the conduct of interviews among key MOE officials in 2016, supplemented by publicly available information on country statistics pertinent to education and ASEAN integration. Country data were likewise validated during a regional workshop conducted in the Philippines in June 2018.

The ASEAN Work Plan on Education (ASEAN WPE 2011-2015) was used as a reference to review MOEs’ ASEAN regional integration initiatives. The findings from the seven country case studies can provide valuable inputs to the development of initiatives to realize ASEAN integration, through education which cuts across economic, political, and socio-cultural pillars.

**Conceptual Framework**

This research adopts John Kotter’s (1996) change management model, which he developed from studying organizations undergoing varying change processes. Kotter’s model, which represents eight critical steps organizations go through during change processes, is a helpful guide for understanding change in response to meeting the demands and challenges of increasing ASEAN regional integration among relevant education ministries in the seven countries earlier identified.

Change in education is rooted in the need for constant improvement of learning as ensued by external and internal development. Emerging needs of time posit problems, issues and concerns which can be the core bases for change and require change management strategies. Thus, Kotter’s 8-step model (1996) of change, being an exemplar of a problem-centered model is considered as appropriate for the study.

Kotter’s 8-steps are clustered under overarching categories: (1) creating a climate for change; (2) engaging and enabling the organization; and (3) implementing and sustaining change. Creating a climate for change involves three steps: (i) increase urgency, (ii) build the guiding team, and (iii) get the right vision. Climate for change focuses on the opportunities that ensue from increasing ASEAN
regional integration; the strategies identified by the MOEs to hurdle the issues and concerns within their context; and specifies the creation of a vision and strategies for the implementation of the identified vision.

Engaging and enabling the organization likewise identifies three steps: (i) communicate for buy in, (ii) empower action, and (iii) create short term wins. In this cluster the possible vehicle in communicating the vision, strategies to empower the stakeholders, and plans for improvements or wins for increasing ASEAN regional integration serve as the foci. The final cluster, implementing and sustaining change involves two steps: don’t let up and make it stick. This refers to the mechanism implemented by the MOEs in ensuring the sustainability of strategies for increasing ASEAN regional integration.

Brunei Darussalam

The climate for change of the education sector in Brunei Darussalam has been given impetus by the country’s National Vision, Wawasan 2035. The Wawasan 2035 articulates a well-defined goal that by 2035, Brunei Darussalam will be recognized for the “accomplishments of its well-educated and highly skilled people as measured by the highest international standards; a high quality of life that is among the top 10 nations in the world, and; a dynamic, sustainable economy with income per capita within the top 10 countries in the world.” (Brunei Darussalam Ministry of Education, 2013). To realize the Wawasan 2035, the Brunei Darussalam MOE formulated a vision of quality education towards a developed, peaceful and prosperous nation along with its mission of providing holistic education to achieve fullest potential for all.

In line with this, there are specific responses through its policies and strategic directions, as well as through programs and activities pertinent to international cooperation with other ASEAN member states, coherent with the priorities of the ASEAN Work Plan on Education. Moreover, with the Wawasan 2035 articulating a specific education strategy geared towards preparing "the youth for employment and achievement in a world that is increasingly competitive and knowledge-based" (Ministry of Education Brunei Darussalam, 2013), MOE is geared towards excellence by providing appropriate skills, knowledge, and values for 21st century learners.

The MOE’s change strategy is evident in the creation of its restructured curriculum, instructional strategy and assessment system known as Sitem Pendidikan Negara Abad 21 (SPN21), or the National Education System for the 21st Century. The MOE has also responded to the ASEAN curriculum sourcebook developed by the ASEAN Secretariat by embracing the notion of rising together as a region by supporting ASEAN neighbors. To engage and enable the MOE, fostering ASEAN awareness through integration of concepts that would facilitate a greater understanding of the ASEAN region was identified as necessary.

Given the needs and contexts of Brunei Darussalam learners, enhancing the teaching and learning processes aided by teacher professional development; looking at best practices in other countries, and; identifying offices that would pursue the implementation of desired changes, are all deemed necessary to improve the quality of education. Moreover, enabling students to be mobile and gain exposure in the international arena are also needed for promoting Brunei learners’ competitiveness in the national, regional, and global contexts. This is being made possible through the Discovery Year Program which supports continuous improvement in learning and using the English language to minimize the language barrier in interfacing with ASEAN member countries.

To implement and sustain change, the MOE developed follow-through measures to monitor and evaluate the implemented changes. These measures include the identification of focal offices that set Key Performance Indicators (KPIs); monitoring and
evaluating the changes, and; taking the necessary steps if further changes are needed, or if existing mechanisms need to be refined.

In anticipation of future opportunities or problems, Brunei Darussalam MOE ensures that the organization will be aligned with increasing ASEAN regional integration through its programs and strategies. Their strategies entail a gradual process of continuous frame bending. (Hayes, 2010) As mentioned by a key informant, Brunei in the aspect of ASEAN integration is “progressing”, not by dramatic leaps and bounds, but by small incremental changes. The policies, strategies, programs, and activities that they have are therefore open to improvement or changes in order to continuously respond to the demands and challenges of increasing ASEAN regional integration.

Cambodia

The Ministry of Education Youth and Sport (MoEYS) of Cambodia created a climate for change triggered by the National Vision 2030, which led them to create a clear vision for education. In developing its Education Strategic Plan (ESP) for 2014-2018, the MoEYS took into consideration the national context by looking at both the National Strategic Development Plan (NSDP) 2014-2018 and the evaluation of the ESP for 2009-2013. Moreover, in formulating the ESP 2014-2018, there was a conscious effort to respond to the challenges brought about by ASEAN Integration being coherent with the National Vision 2030 of the Royal Government of Cambodia.

In engaging and enabling the MoEYS, importance was given to attaining universal access to primary education; expanding access to secondary education, and; improving the overall provision of quality education in order to develop human resources, which can contribute to national development and increase the country’s competitiveness. Strengthening programs for science, technology, engineering, and mathematics (STEM), technical and vocational education and training (TVET), and higher education became key focus areas, in line with enabling learners to become competitive in the region and in the world.

In implementing and sustaining change MoEYS Cambodia is monitoring progress at different levels of the Ministry. Key Performance Indicators (KPIs) have been set to serve as guide in determining the extent of achieving set goals and targets. Cambodia looks at ASEAN integration as an opportunity for broadening horizons for collaboration between institutions, joint research, and quality standard setting.

While the change strategy is not about doing things in fundamentally different ways or about doing fundamentally different things (Nadler et. al., 1995 as cited in Hayes, 2010), the MoEYS of Cambodia has acted both for national development goals and improving readiness for increasing ASEAN regional integration. The programs and strategies identified by the MoEYS are aligned with and deemed necessary for national development and the priorities required by increasing ASEAN regional integration.

Indonesia

Indonesia’s Ministry of Education and Culture (MoEC) has considered the different developments and initiatives brought by the challenges of globalization and the increasing levels of integration in the ASEAN region. This is particularly true in the areas of economics, political security, social and cultural integration. In providing a climate for change, the country context is viewed as paramount, while international initiatives like ASEAN regional integration are likewise recognized. The priority areas for ASEAN integration are consistent with the perceived development needs of the country.
The MoEC’s understanding of their national and educational contexts paved the way for the development of the Ministry’s Vision and Strategic Plan 2010-2014. In developing this Plan, the MoEC became mindful of the performance outcomes of their students against different international assessments and standards; the need for developing competitive human resources for their progressing economy, and; their diverse geographical context and culture. Incidentally, the vision and strategies of the MoEC address the concerns of increasing ASEAN regional integration.

A National Long-Term Development Plan divided into medium-term development plans, namely *Rencana Pembangunan Jangka Menengah Nasional* (RPJMN 2005-2009; RPJMN 2010-2014; RPJMN 2015-2019; and RPJMN 2020-2025) along with programs and activities at all levels of education, *enables and engages the MoEC* and other education stakeholders. The MoEC recognized the need for improving access to education, given Indonesia’s diverse geographical context, by providing programs that reach out to underprivileged children and families. *Bantuan Operasional Sekolah Daerah* (BOSDA), *Bantuan Operasional Sekolah* (BOS), *Bantuan Siswa Miskin* (BSM), are examples of such initiatives targeting Indonesia’s underprivileged population.

Inasmuch as developing high-quality, competitive human resources that would build a self-reliant, advanced, just and prosperous nation was identified as a concern, learners’ needs are given due importance through different mechanisms to improve the quality of education. These include improving the quality of teachers, developing the needed skills and competencies for the world of work, and programs that strengthen internationalization of education. It is in developing a globally competitive workforce that Indonesia has put its educational reform efforts and finances to work.

Indonesia’s MoEC has made significant gains through time, but a greater sense of improvement is desired. To *implement and sustain change*, varied forms of assessment, monitoring, and evaluation processes were put in place. Small gains were targeted to improve educational outcomes. In this context, incremental changes for improvement were introduced. Continuous improvement, fine-tuning, and adaptation to the challenges within and outside Indonesia have always been part of the country’s strategy.

Indonesia MoEC likewise responded to change by adjusting the curriculum in order to develop the character, basic literacy, and skills and competencies of the students and to prepare them for the challenges in the international context, including increasing ASEAN regional integration. Further change is being done so as to make the students competitive, making improvements along the way, but not fundamentally doing different things. The strategies of Indonesia’s MoEC involve seeking better ways to achieve and/or defending the strategic vision. MoEC’s strategies show minor adjustments, in order to maintain alignment between internal policies and the external environment. The changes implemented are responses to pressing external demands for change, while also taking into consideration the national context.

**Lao People’s Democratic Republic (Lao PDR)**

The Education and Sports Development Plan (ESDP 2011-2015) of the Lao PDR Ministry of Education and Sports (MoES) demonstrates that the national context, through the national goals, served as the trigger for the Ministry to improve education provisions. Through the ESDP, the MoES created a *climate for change* that addressed their national context and led them to create a clear vision.
A unique process in Lao PDR is the involvement of the community in the change management process, through the Village Education Development Committee (VEDC). This mechanism encourages increased commitment and accountability at the micro level since the village leaders themselves are part of the decision-making body in charge of overseeing the status of education in their respective communities. This strategy is suitable in the context of Lao PDR because of the large presence of villages and ethnic communities in the country.

The top-down flow of communication provides for the executives in Lao PDR MoES the opportunity to give a clear and realistic vision and direction. Cascading the vision, strategies, and projects down to the level of the villages increased the participation of those in the "grassroots". At the same time, the bottom-up involvement of the villagers has contributed to promoting commitment and accountability to the implementation of the ESDP.

The projects and strategies provide an engaging and enabling environment for the MoES to improve access to quality education. These interventions include providing a School Block Grant (SBG)\(^1\), engaging the community in education planning, and the conduct of teachers’ training programs. The plan to develop National Competency-based Teacher Standards (NCBTS) and aligning these standards with other ASEAN standards is also a clear strategy to improve the quality of education in the country.

Importance has been given to attaining universal access to primary education, expanding access to secondary education, and improving the overall provision of quality education to attain the goal of uprooting the country from the ranks of least developed countries by 2020. Moreover, Lao PDR reoriented its educational system by adding a year to lower secondary level to conform to international standards.

Further, to address the low English proficiency of teachers and students, Lao PDR has focused on building the capacity of primary teachers by providing training courses and pre-service trainings for education students. In the area of higher education, internationalization efforts are evident in networking with higher education institutions (HEIs) in other ASEAN countries through research collaboration, quality assurance, mutual recognition of courses, joint degree programs, credit transfer and student mobility through scholarship. In the area of TVET, continuous partnerships with institutions of ASEAN member countries are being strengthened, and cooperation with donor agencies are welcomed to improve access to technical and vocational education, and to ensure the gradual engagement of future graduates in the ASEAN workforce.

In terms of implementing and sustaining change, the case of Lao MoES suggests the need to improve leadership and management, specifically in monitoring what has been planned and implemented, through indicators pertinent to their targets in improving access to quality education.

Prioritizing change strategies that work for the context of the country is evident in the case Lao PDR MoES. Engaging the different communities/ethnic minorities and communicating change through top-down and bottom-up strategies are welcomed by the organization. In this way, changes pertinent to increasing ASEAN integration are planned and implemented in a collaborative way. This entails collaborative leadership and welcoming perspectives of the insights and ideas of the community members.

Inasmuch as communication of change is present, the level of understanding on the benefit of change can be established. This also entails balancing of perspectives among stakeholders. According to Scott (2003), learning how to balance the demands of stakeholders; ensuring good leadership strategies of the management; establishing a common understanding of change, and; foreseeing required

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1 The SBG is a program that aims to help improve education quality. Through SBGs, schools are provided with resources that help facilitate access to quality education in different villages in the country, and enables the participation of those in the grassroots.
enhancements in the system will help institutions implement successful reforms. Constant monitoring and evaluation, while beset with challenges, are also necessary and require appropriate action. Gradual changes are being implemented based on the most pressing need in the national context which coincide with the changes needed for increasing ASEAN regional integration.

Malaysia

The Ministry of Education (MOE) in Malaysia provided a climate for change by looking into their own country context vis-à-vis other countries’ performance and developments in education. The MOE’s assessment of how their educational performance fares with the educational performance of top-performing countries in the region and the world serve as the stimuli or point of urgency to make the necessary and appropriate changes for improvement. In the process, they identified the changes they want to make and why they want to make the various changes in their educational system.

Malaysia has been recently successful in responding to the challenges of globalization and the increasing ASEAN regional integration. Its master plans for basic and higher education show how Malaysia intends to compete in the global economy by forming a global workforce with global talent. In doing so, the Ministry of Education Malaysia engages and enables the entire Ministry by establishing a clear vision and aspiration for individual students through the Student Aspirations and the education system, through System Aspirations articulated in the Malaysia Education blueprint (MEB) 2013-2025 for preschool to post-secondary education and MEB 2015-2025 for higher education.

Also, by encouraging public interest in Malaysia’s Educational Agenda through the National Dialogue Sessions, the MOE engages students, teachers, school leaders, ministry officials, parents, local and international experts, government and international agencies and citizens in making changes in the educational system. Engaging different stakeholders created an open line of communication and established consensus on the proposed reforms in education. The Malaysia Education Blueprint stipulates strategies to transform the education system through the so called “Shifts to transform”. There are 11 shifts indicated in the MEB 2013-2025, and 10 shifts in the MEB 2015-2025.

In terms of implementing and sustaining change, two strategies are evident in MOE Malaysia. These involve monitoring and evaluating Key Performance Indicators (KPIs) and exerting strong leadership and commitment in consolidating gains and producing more change. The designated leaders/focal offices determine the KPIs, lead the implementation of the desired change, and monitor and evaluate the changes, guided by the KPI.

The change management strategy of Malaysia’s MOE gave premium to evidence-based planning that provides bases for the educational reforms that they want to make, as well change implementation strategies they intend to employ. Second, a wholistic approach to change management was demonstrated by examining, planning and implementing changes from basic to higher education to ensure coherent and consistent design of policies and programs. Third, it is worth noting that through a coalition of experts consisting of stakeholders within their educational system and international experts in education, pertinent insights were generated on what changes can help address the challenges brought about by globalization, including ASEAN integration. Fourth, constant monitoring and evaluation of programs and activities through KPIs help in tracking change implementation. Lastly, ensuring strong and committed leadership
in consolidating gains and promoting continuous change is of value for consistent and continuous implementation of reforms.

**Philippines**

The change management process implemented by the three education agencies that comprise the Ministry of Education in the Philippines, namely, Department of Education (DepEd), Technical Education and Skills Development Authority (TESDA), and the Commission on Higher Education (CHED) clearly demonstrate a case of creating the climate for change by advocating for the legislation of key education reforms. Before the passage of Republic Act 10533 or the Basic Education Act of 2013, the Philippines was one of the few countries in the world with 10 years of basic education. Among other salient features, the K to 12 reform increased the number of years of basic education to 13, in an attempt to make Philippine graduates comparable in terms of qualifications and competencies with graduates of other countries particularly within ASEAN.

In terms of engaging and enabling the organization, the K to 12 reform was designed to give Filipino students or graduates a comparative advantage within a regional and global context. The change management strategy involved in K to 12 entails a radical break from 10 years to 13 years of schooling with the addition of Kindergarten and Grades 11 and 12. Other changes embedded within K to 12 include Mother Tongue-Based Multilingual Education (MTBMLE), both as a guide to the medium of instruction and an additional learning area from Grades 1 to 3.

Meanwhile, TESDA began to implement reforms pertinent to ASEAN integration as early as 1998. This was when the Agency started implementing reforms leading to a quality assured competency-based TVET system and developed the Philippine Qualification Framework (PQF) which aligned with the ASEAN Qualification Reference Framework. In 2004, the system was formally established and defined as the National Qualification Framework for TVET, known as the Philippine TVET Qualification Framework. This was expanded in the same year with the issuance of Executive Order No. 358-2004 which institutionalized the interface between TVET and higher education (HE) through a unified National Qualifications Framework that established equivalency pathways and access ramps for a ladderized system, thus enabling easier transitions and progressions between TVET and HE.

In higher education, initiatives pertinent to ASEAN integration include interventions related to Outcome-Based Education (OBE), Quality Assurance (QA), internationalization of education and Typology Based QA.

In implementing and sustaining change, the three Ministries have been juggling to keep abreast of developments in the international context while continuously improving and aligning programs and initiatives that were implemented in line with educational system reforms. In the process of implementing reforms, several activities and programs have been happening one after another in tight phases, such as changes in the curriculum, development of textbooks and other teaching materials, assessment strategies, career pathways, and the like.

The change strategies employed by the three agencies seek to foster competitiveness of Filipino students so that they are better prepared for increasing ASEAN regional integration. The challenge for the three agencies is to align their programs and initiatives to achieve a common goal, which is the competitive advantage of Filipino students within a context of increasing ASEAN regional integration. Constant communication within and among the leaders and members of DepEd, TESDA, and CHED is crucial to achieve the common goal of providing access to quality education.
Thailand has consciously and purposively initiated varied educational reforms to prepare for increasing ASEAN regional integration. The change management process as evident in the *climate for change* is triggered by the realization that the Thai people must be developed to effectively participate in the ASEAN Economic Community. The development of the ASEAN Education Strategic Plan of the Ministry of Education (2015-2019) depicts the response of Thailand to the challenges of the increasing ASEAN regional integration.

Upon grasping the increased urgency for change, the change process started. As led by the Thailand MOE, a Chair to the Committee of Acceleration of the Preparation for the Integration into the ASEAN Community in 2015 and beyond was assigned. The Committee developed a vision of empowering the participation of Thai people to the ASEAN community, which was duly documented in the ASEAN Strategic Plan. The vision is clearly articulated in the six strategies which capture the holistic development of learners, along with the priority areas of the ASEAN Work Plan in Education (WPE), and the key elements of education in the SEAMEO Education Ministers meeting held in Vientiane, Lao PDR on September 11-12, 2014. The six strategies include (1) enable Thai people to understand themselves and its neighboring countries; (2) to understand and express favorable attitudes towards neighboring countries; (3) to acquire communicative skills in English, ASEAN, and other languages; (4) to recognize cultural diversity and be able to live in harmony, develop analytical thinking and professional skills; (5) to leverage opportunities available in ASEAN; and (6) to develop 21st century skills that will lead to lifelong learning, help the Thailand to achieve the MDG of EFA and sustainable development, as well as ensure that ASEAN continues the development of quality citizens who co-exist peacefully (Thailand, Ministry of Education, 2015). It is to be underscored that the Thai leadership consciously and internationally committed to spearhead the journey towards ASEAN integration.

In terms of *engaging and enabling the organization*, Thailand’s MOE communicated the necessary changes for increasing ASEAN regional integration, its benefits to individual learners and to the entire organization through different information dissemination mechanisms such as seminars, brochures, and infographics. In addition, as part of *engaging and enabling the organization*, the Strategic Plan enumerates the changes and expected benefits for every stakeholder.

Pertinent programs and activities are likewise clearly articulated, a key step for engaging organizations. For instance, the MOE saw the great potential of the youth in promoting ASEAN awareness. Thailand’s MoE focused on developing within Thai students the “spirit of ASEAN”, and has instituted the “Young ASEAN Ambassadors” program to promote friendly relations among ASEAN youth. “Connecting Classrooms” is likewise a similar initiative, with Thai students getting connected with students from other ASEAN countries through video conferencing.

The reconfiguration of the ASEAN Youth Junior program to include students from other ASEAN countries, engaging teachers as coaches, and the camp “alumni” as trainers/facilitators further exemplifies how buy-in for change is promoted among Thai’s young population. Continuous improvement and innovation increased the level of success of the ASEAN Youth Junior program and the International ASEAN Youth Camp.

Thailand has engaged its higher education institutions in efforts to increase cross border mobility and internationalization of education. Thailand also strategically took actions to address quality of education challenges. Focus on English language proficiency; science, technology, engineering, and mathematics (STEM); and,
recruitment of quality teachers through rigorous licensing system and continuous teacher training are all efforts initiated to improve the quality of education of Thailand.

In terms of sustaining and nurturing change, the Thai MOE has instituted measures of success for monitoring and evaluation and introduced a decentralized mechanism for the implementation and monitoring of programs and strategies. The different offices in the MOE have been working together from conceptualization to implementation of changes, and through monitoring and evaluation that could provide inputs to further changes.

A salient feature in the case of Thailand is the leadership of the MOE as change agents in developing a strategic plan that appropriately integrates policies, programs, and activities pertinent to increasing ASEAN regional integration. The Strategic Plan specifies vision, mission, objectives, and strategies to prepare the Thai learners for increasing ASEAN integration. It sets directions and guidelines in implementing ASEAN related activities and programs which are aligned with the ASEAN pillars, namely the ASEAN Political-Security Community (APSC), the ASEAN Economic Community (AEC), and the ASEAN Socio-Cultural Community (ASCC). The case of Thailand proves that crucial to any reform initiative is the change agent. Thus, champions for ASEAN integration must be present for pertinent change be conceptualized, implemented, sustained and nurtured.

**Conclusion**

The demands and challenges of increasing ASEAN regional integration prompted varied responses from the Ministries of Education (MOE) of the ASEAN Member States. Countries like Brunei Darussalam, Cambodia, Lao PDR, and Indonesia have aligned their strategic educational plans with their national vision or development plan. Malaysia, the Philippines, and Thailand crafted their higher education strategic plan to develop competitive human resources.

Thailand in particular developed the ASEAN Educational Strategic Plan which envisions that Thai people are ready for the ASEAN Community. Curricular reforms were undertaken by the Philippines, Brunei Darussalam, Cambodia, and Malaysia, while curricular review for increasing ASEAN regional integration was done by Thailand. National teacher standards and assessments were enhanced in Cambodia, Indonesia, Lao PDR, Malaysia, and Thailand. Cambodia, Lao PDR, and Indonesia strengthened their programs to increase access to education. All the ASEAN Member States have prepared for human capacity building in order to achieve their vision and be ready for increasing ASEAN regional integration.

Despite the challenges that the ASEAN MOEs have experienced, the ASEAN countries were still able to push through with their respective plans and programs to achieve regional education standards. The implementation of change management strategies for coping with increasing ASEAN regional integration among MOEs in ASEAN countries demonstrates that each member country state takes into consideration their unique and individual context. The MOEs change management strategies indicate the nature, extent of readiness and sustainability of educational reforms for increasing ASEAN regional integration.

This study documented the processes carried out by each country and has traced a common path using change management models and principles. Looking at three major steps from John Kotter’s Change Management Framework (1996) it is noted that the participating ASEAN countries have developed unique strategies that will hopefully help them sustain their current progress and achieve their set goals that are relevant to regional integration.
Based on the change management strategies demonstrated through the country cases, an Educational Change Management Strategies Framework in the ASEAN Region was developed as an attempt to understand how change management happens in the context of increasing ASEAN integration. (See Figure 2)

The Educational Change Management Strategies Framework demonstrates how change happens in five stages. The first stage is the trigger for change stage. In this stage, stakeholders can identify triggers, or drivers that kick start the impetus for change. These triggers may be specific responses to the needs, opportunities and issues relevant for the increasing ASEAN regional integration, as well as other international mandates and initiatives.

Figure 2: Educational Change Management Strategies Framework in the ASEAN Region
The second stage is the *reconnaissance* stage. The country experiences demonstrate how choosing appropriate change agents and engaging the internal and external stakeholders in the change process have proven to be effective strategies for education stakeholders to review current contexts and identify an ideal future state for relevant education ministries, as well as for selected ASEAN countries.

The third stage is the *plan to change*, which is a crucial step for operationalizing the planned reform initiative. There is a need to overcome international relations problems to achieve a true integration. Therefore, unified strategies are essential both in internal and regional integration. In this stage, setting realistic expectations and goals when proposing changes is necessary. Clear communication of the what and how of change as well as observance of the “ASEAN Way” (consultation, consensus, and non-interference in internal affairs) are good strategies in order to successfully transition to the fourth stage which is *actual change implementation*. This includes diplomatic ways of collaboration to clarify the goals of ASEAN integration.

Finally, the last stage is *monitoring and evaluation* which must be done with sensitivity, and with careful regard for the varying contexts and cultures of the ASEAN MOEs. The strategy to adjust changes based on culture can be effective in assessing the current status of increasing ASEAN regional integration.

The change management process is not linear but circular, which suggests that the results of monitoring and evaluation will provide inputs that may serve as triggers to continue necessary changes that support increasing ASEAN regional integration. The process of change would necessitate a firm support from relevant education ministries, who can serve as change agents or the champions for change. Moreover, a synergistic leadership and management for the different levels from basic to higher education is deemed necessary in developing competencies and skills needed by the learners, who are at the center of this framework, to become competitive in the ASEAN region.

### Recommendations

Amidst best practices and challenges of MOEs in responding to increasing ASEAN regional integration, this research suggests a set of recommendations that ASEAN countries and education stakeholders may consider as they continue to implement educational reforms in their own country contexts. The recommendations are not meant to be prescriptive; rather, education stakeholders can assess their own needs and contexts, and identify recommendations that are best aligned with their own education and development priorities.

#### Regional Collaboration

1. Strengthening the role of the 26 SEAMEO Regional Centers in invigorating regional understanding and knowledge sharing and promoting regional cooperation and collaboration.

2. Promote an ASEAN regional education space in order to strengthen and harmonize efforts of the 26 SEAMEO Regional Centers on the various regional integration initiatives.

3. Strengthen alignment and harmonization of regional initiatives of SEAMEO and ASEAN, spearheaded by the Secretariats of each organization, through enhanced collaborative planning, joint project implementation, staff exchange and collaborative monitoring and evaluation.
4. Revisit the role of the ASEAN in order to provide specific technical guidance to support efforts of the Ministries of Education among member states in preparing for increasing regional integration.

5. Implement continuous evaluation and improvement of the ASEAN Work Plan in Education, which may be done by developing specific success indicators along with goals, targets and mechanisms.

6. Enhance efforts to develop/refine Teacher Qualification Reference Frameworks anchored on the ASEAN Qualification Reference Framework to promote opportunities for teacher mobility in the region.

7. Support and sustain regional education initiatives, which promote cross-country collaboration, benchmarking, joint actions and regional awareness and regional identity (e.g., Southeast Asia Basic Education Standards (SEA-BES), Southeast Asia Primary Learning Metrics (SEA-PLM), Southeast Asian Competency Frameworks for Teachers and School Heads, initiatives on school in the boarders, etc.).

8. Continuously develop and promote regional professional networks for educators to collaborate in academic and research endeavors. (e.g. Association of Southeast Asian Teacher Education Network - AsTEN)

9. Proficiency in English as the designated official language of ASEAN, needs to be strengthened as an important curricular goal of Basic Education. Strong English language skills enhance student mobility, cross cultural understanding, cross fertilization of knowledge and openness to diversity and multiculturalism.

Regional Research and Knowledge Sharing

10. Enhance regional research and knowledge dissemination across ASEAN region through the development of regional toolkits (e.g., Weaving Identities, Disaster Risk Reduction Management (DRRM), Education in Emergencies (EiE), etc.), organization of regional conferences, fora/symposia; and publication of regional research journals.

11. Sustain collaborative and comparative educational research across ASEAN member states to facilitate cross-fertilization of ideas, policies, good practices, and lessons learned within the region.

12. Support efforts to translate and contextualize national and regional knowledge products to local languages (e.g., SEAMEO INNOTECH’s Mobile Technology for Teachers (MT4T) and Disaster Risk Reduction Management toolkits).

13. Strengthen advocacy, communication, and knowledge sharing regarding ASEAN Integration within MOEs and stakeholders including use of technology such as social media.

14. Conduct research on teacher preparation for ASEAN integration to ascertain the necessary knowledge, skills, programs, and initiatives needed to prepare teachers for the increasing ASEAN regional integration.

Support and Sustain Educational Policy and Planning

15. Support and sustain strategic and purposive planning by MOE to address risks, challenges and opportunities, for the education sector arising from increasing regional integration.
16. Designate/create a focal unit in charge of the ASEAN Integration activities of the Ministry of Education in order to guide educational directions pertinent to increasing ASEAN integration.

17. Examine educational laws, rules, regulations and guidelines that help facilitate sustainable reforms, activities and programs pertinent to increasing ASEAN integration.

18. Strengthen the monitoring and evaluation system of the strategic plans within the MOEs in the context of attaining agreed ASEAN targets, benchmarks and frameworks.

19. Develop, review, monitor and evaluate policies and guidelines among MOEs to facilitate teacher/faculty exchange and teacher mobility.

20. Increase resources in order to hasten the development and implementation of ASEAN-related activities.

**Capacity Building on ASEAN Integration**

21. Implement regional benchmarking programs as avenues for knowledge sharing and partnership building among MOEs.

22. Develop content knowledge among educators on ASEAN, particularly school heads as instructional leaders, to promote school level ASEAN awareness activities.

**Change Management Strategies**

23. Foster alignment of change management strategies for the different levels of education (i.e. basic education, technical vocational education and higher education) such that a common goal is achieved, within the context of increasing integration.

24. Continue to implement change strategies that are responsive to challenges and demands of increasing ASEAN integration without losing sight of each country context – A clear manifestation of the ASEAN Way.


**References**


