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Acceleration and Improvement of Quality and Quantity of Education through ICT-based School/University Partnerships

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ABTRACT

Collaboration in Southeast Asian (SEA) countries has been developing in different fields, including in education sector. This collaboration should be seen as an integral part of education development of SEA countries, and, to some extent, could enhance mutual understanding among SEA countries, particularly in SEAMEO member countries. Some question arises are: “What forms of educational collaborations do we really need? What participations are expected from each member countries? What is the picture of future education in SEA countries? Educational cooperation should be able to answer the questions. Cooperation, according to Longman Advanced American dictionary is the act of working with someone else to achieve something that you both want. Related to educational cooperation, it refers to cooperation between education institutions in Southeast Asian countries. Participating institutions and countries will have to benefit from the cooperation. Benefit could be defined in terms of academic achievement, cultural awareness, strengthening relationship for youth, and other possible things.

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Education is a power to change the mindset of people in creating a better understanding and relation of nations or ethnics with different culture and values. We just need to properly design a plan of joint program in education sector. The joint program should give opportunity to more people across the nations to explore and to understand the culture and values of other nations. Thus, we have, at least, contributed a small piece of peace for next generation.

In a joint program for academic improvement, to have a framework of competency standard for students in SEA countries will benefit to all. It will be easier for students to pursue further study in any country they like within those mentioned countries. On top of it, it will be easier for job seekers to find job across the countries, as there will be less doubt on their competency. This is not necessarily done in all fields of study. As the beginning, we could start in one or two fields of study, such as computer skills or Mathematics. It goes along with the global era in which people can freely move to find better living. I, therefore, would like to point out some possible thoughts that should be taken into considerations. SEAMOLEC has been doing these thoughts in collaboration with some educational institutions in SEA countries, and we need to speed up this joint program among SEA countries.

School Partnership

There is a need to have a synergy in the grass root level, such as school partnership or university partnership among SEA countries as I mentioned above. SEAMOLEC has been initiating school partnership between Indonesia and Philippines, Indonesia and Thailand, Indonesia and Vietnam in a small number of schools. Support from the Ministry of Education from SEA countries will be highly appreciated and welcome. How the school partnership is done by SEAMOLEC? First, we have a workshop for principals of participating schools in which they present their own school profiles for introduction. Then those principals will have to discuss and investigate several possible forms of partnership. The most possible thing to do is collaborative e-learning in particular subject matters. Other possible things are teacher exchange and student exchange. When they come to an agreement, they will start writing a memorandum of understanding as the basis of the coming activities. For the collaborative e-learning in Mathematics, for example, participating schools need to have an agreed syllabus from which the teacher could develop learning materials. Then the teachers of selected subject matters will be provided with a training course by SEAMOLEC on how to develop the learning material in a learning management system (LMS). Once these teachers are capable to develop learning material in LMS, they are required to develop learning material from the agreed syllabus, and uploaded the material in a portal prepared by SEAMOLEC. Later on, their students will have to learn from the same resources, and will attain same competencies.

School partnership between Indonesia and Philippines, for instance, is now on progress. Teachers from both sides have been trained on developing learning material in a learning management system

(Moodle). At the moment, those teachers still continue developing their learning materials to be shared through online learning. Teacher exchange is now in a preparation stage as both institutions have come to an agreement to do the academic staff exchange.

1. University partnership

At the university level, partnership could be done in different ways. Dual degree, sandwich program, credit transfer are examples of activities in university partnership through which students could get opportunity to visit and learn the cultures and values of other Asian countries. Knowing and mutual understanding will bring about tolerance for next generation. SEAMOLEC and RIHED in Thailand have agreed to explore and to link universities / polytechnics in Indonesia and Thailand. It is expected that this collaboration could be done with other SEA countries. University of Brawijaya in Malang, Indonesia is now on progress to investigate collaboration with University of Philippines in Los Banos, in master degree of agriculture study. The use of information and communication technology (ICT) could be maximized through distance learning in the university joint program. Participating universities may share knowledge, experiences and research study through ICT.

2. Language learning

Language for communications among people from different nations, including SEA countries has frequently been a barrier. So far, people of SEA countries interact in English even though none of those countries' mother tongue is English. Why not trying to learn a

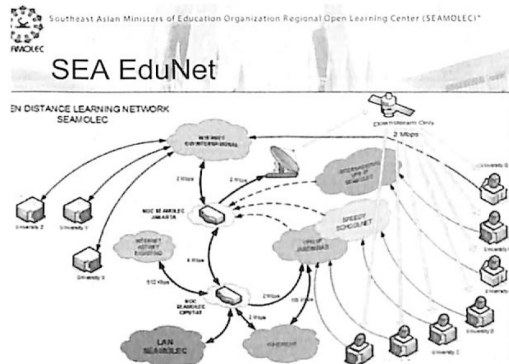
language other than English? Southeast Asian countries have more than 500.000.000 population, of which 50% live in Indonesia. When we could speak a foreign language other than English, a language from SEA countries, we will have a better understanding to that particular country. Bahasa Indonesia, a language spoken by majority of people in ASEAN countries could be an alternative to learn in universities. People of SEA countries need to have options to learn the language from each other, such as Korean, Thai, Vietnamese, Tagalog, Malay, and other Asian languages. This will enhance the possibility of joint program among schools and universities. Knowing the language will help people understand better each other, respect one another, accept the differences as an advantage, and live in harmony.

SEAMOLEC in collaboration with SEAMEO QITEP in Language, Pusat Bahasa (Language Center), Indonesian Consulate General in Davao, Philippines has been in a discussion in providing Bahasa Indonesia course at the University of Southern Mindanao and State University of Mindanao. The course could be provided through blended learning.

3. Southeast Asian Education Network (SEA EduNet)

To link the SEA countries in educational joint programs, SEAMOLEC in collaboration with TELKOM Indonesia has initiated a network called Southeast Asian Education Network (SEA EduNet).

SEA EduNet is a system of data delivery through satellite and multicast technique used for distance learning. With multicast system, it is possible to deliver data in high speed to unlimited clients. On the contrary, internet uses broadcast technique, by which the more clients get access from one resource, the lower the speed they get. It will be difficult to deliver huge amount of data to multiple clients.

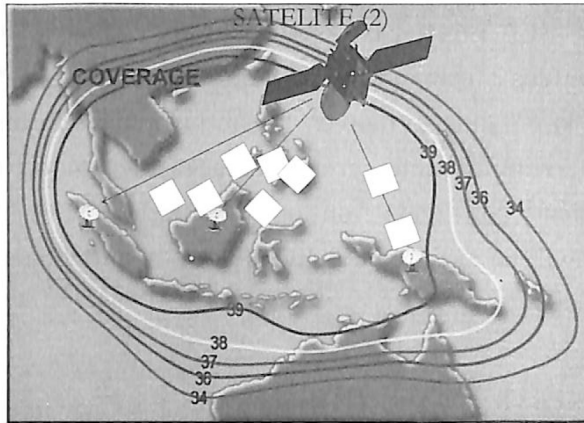


Principally, the concept of SEA EduNet is to connect educational institutions in ASEAN countries using satellite system. As the data delivery is using multicast, it is a one-way or downstream only as described in the picture above.

The picture below shows the coverage of the system.

In general, there are four uses of SEA EduNet:

- Videobroadcast



A professor from Korea, for instance, can be recorded / video-shot in his teaching on a particular subject matter, then the video could be broadcasted to other institutions. By regular schedule of video broadcasting, students in other countries can enjoy the teaching.

- Video Conference broadcasting

When there is a conference or seminar in Hanoi, Vietnam, the seminar could be broadcasted to other institutions in SEA countries as long as they have the facilities. As the SEA EduNet is using multicast, it is limited to one-way communication only,

but it is enough for the sake of sharing knowledge.

- Data broadcasting / FTP mirror

Data broadcasting includes the delivery of e-book and multimedia based learning material. Compared to conventional delivery or internet, this delivery system is faster and safer.

- TV satellite broadcasting
- SEA EduNet system allows you to see satellite TV programs. You just need to subscribe to provider of satellite TV.

4. Mobile learning

Developing mobile learning material in a game technology is one interesting thing in a school or university joint program. SEAMOLEC has been developing JENI mobile game technology and is willing to share this to SEA countries. At this stage, SEAMOLEC has provided the mentioned training course to students and teachers in Cambodia and Vietnam. The training course conducted at Hanoi Open University (HoU) was attended by students, teachers and IT staff of HoU. Participants of the training were expected to disseminate the program to schools in Vietnam. The game developed was about language learning through mobile learning in which participants of the training were trained to develop a language learning (their own language) in a mobile phone.

To conclude the discussion above, I would say that the collaboration in education through school partnership would enhance the quality of learning. A better SEA countries relation should lead to the betterment of education in that area.