

AWARENESS AND ATTITUDES OF SELECTED PRE-SERVICE TEACHERS IN SOCSKSARGEN TOWARD ASEAN INTEGRATION

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ABSTRACT

One of the growing concerns and challenges that the Philippines is currently facing is the swelling of globalization and regional integration in Asia. With this integration, the demand for human services and resources are rising rapidly to Asian people. Another hurdle is brought by the limited competencies of pre-service teachers to educate and empower them in addressing issues on ASEAN Integration. This gap calls for state colleges, and universities to increase their level of awareness on the dynamics of this integration. One of the means to address this concern is by conducting baseline survey relative to this issue. Thus, this study aimed to identify the extent of awareness of pre-service teachers on the crucial issues for ASEAN to enhance integration and cooperation; determined the attitude towards ASEAN integration, and investigated the significant difference in students' attitudes toward ASEAN across schools. This study was conducted to 1,320 pre-service students who were randomly selected from six (6) schools in SOCSKSARGEN. It employed a descriptive survey design. Findings of the study revealed that majority of the pre-service students are less aware on the crucial issues for ASEAN to enhance its integration and cooperation. This result indicates that students need to be exposed to summits or other matters concerning ASEAN integration. Secondly, most of the pre-service teachers have a positive attitude towards ASEAN integration and cooperation. Moreover, results showed that there is a significant difference in the pre-service teachers' awareness of their attitude on ASEAN integration across schools. To further, this paper provides some recommendation to produce pre-service teachers who are more responsive and globally competent.

KEY-WORDS:Awareness, Attitudes, Pre-Service Students, SOCSKSARGEN, ASEAN Integration

1. INTRODUCTION

It is imperative for every member country of the global village to align its social dimension of progress and development with the standards of global and regional convergence. In context, the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN) has entered into another milestone consequent to the adoption of blueprints for an integrated local community. This involves a deeper coordination between ASEAN's ten (10) members for a more enhanced political, economic, and security, cultural and social integration (Hayton and Thuzar, 2016). A region-wide survey of (Thompson and Thianthai, 2008) articulated the high level of awareness on ASEAN Integration among undergraduate university students in Southeast Asian nations. It was also proven that students maintain positive attitudes toward it, and go so far as to agree when asked if they consider themselves to be members of the regional economic cooperation. In contrary to this optimistic vision, there is an existing atmosphere of anxiety and pressure for the prime-movers of the ASEAN integration because of the high level of apathy among ASEAN citizens. In 2013, the ASEAN Secretariat revealed that three out of four ASEAN citizens (76 percent) lack the basic understanding of what ASEAN is and what it is striving to do. The report concluded that the overall level of agreement for both businesses and the general public is still low because of a prevailing lack of interest along with an ineffective use of communication channels (Domingo, 2013).

Schools and other educational institutions must be responsible for increasing awareness and positive attitude toward ASEAN among the next generation of its citizens. As postulated by Foreign Affairs Assistant Secretary

TeresitaBarsana, education leaders and stakeholders should work together to strengthen and improve educational opportunities for the Filipino children and make full use of the ASEAN to be able to compete with their counterparts in the region (Alcober, 2014). Given this, the study was conducted to provide contextual baseline information on the awareness and attitudes of pre-service teachers in SOCSKSARGEN toward ASEAN Integration. Specifically, this study aimed to investigate the awareness of the crucial issues for ASEAN to enhance integration and cooperation; determined their attitude towards ASEAN integration and cooperation, and find out the significant difference in pre-service teachers' awareness of their attitude on ASEAN integration across schools. Findings were generated from the survey responses of pre-service teachers who participated in the local and regional academic conferences. The study outcomes may be utilized in the development of initiatives for further empowerment of ASEAN goals.

2. REVIEW OF THE LITERATURE

The Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN) was established in 1967 by Thailand, Malaysia, Singapore, Indonesia, and the Philippines. This association was considered as the premier comprehensive regional organization in East Asia (IBON, 2015). The ASEAN Economic Community was founded on four core initiatives: promoting equitable economic development; creating a single market and production base; increasing competitiveness, and further integrating ASEAN with the global economy (Soesastro, 2007). ASEAN has been the most important multilateral group in Asia for the past forty-five years. Since its inception in 1967, ASEAN has largely achieved its initial purpose of preventing Southeast Asia from further outbreaks of conflicts among forces, thus focusing its strength to accomplishing several notable achievements in the economic and nonproliferation realms. These accomplishments cannot outdo the challenges of not maintaining a peacekeeping force, authority to enforce human rights or possess a formal mechanism for conflict resolution (Kurlantzick, 2012). These are just some of the salient fissures of the region in which ASEAN prime-movers are affirmative to overcome through the initiative of the economic integration. For the conceptual framework of the study (see Fig.1), the independent variable includes knowledge about ASEAN in general, disaster prevention, educational improvement, poverty reduction, science & technology development, regional identity & solidarity and cultural preservation. On the other hand, the dependent variable consists of attitude toward cultural exchange, educational exchange, economic cooperation, tourism, development assistance, security and military cooperation, sports and political participation.

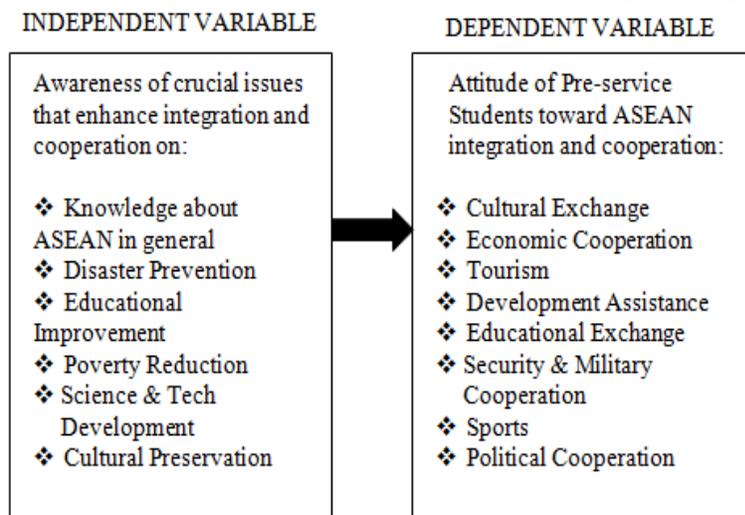


Fig. 1 Conceptual Framework

Moreover, the flexibility that characterizes this integration, referred to as "ASEAN way," may offer the member states a convenient ground for defiance. Enforcing the concurrences remains to be a challenge to hurdle. Aside from

this, internal and external critics agree that cooperation lacks sufficient mechanisms to ensure compliance to the economic integration (Menon and Anna, 2015). Movements to widen ASEAN awareness were inaugurated by and among various institutions which include government agencies, business, media, and institutions. For instance, the renowned social news network Rappler and the Asian Institute of Management (AIM) agreed to work on the sequel of stories explaining to the public the significance and impact of ASEAN integration (Ranada, 2015). Moreover, the ASEAN Business Advisory Council also strengthens the thrust toward ASEAN by organizing a recognition program for Philippine companies which have contributed to the growth and advancement of the ASEAN economy (Mirafior, 2014). These awareness campaigns are affirmed to be essential as it is noted from Min (2015) that one of the biggest challenges in ASEAN Integration involves raising awareness among its citizens about the benefits of the regional economic community.

The ten-nation survey of (Thompson and Thianthai, 2008) revealed that the attitudes toward ASEAN as expressed by the undergraduate university students range from enthusiastic through positive and ambivalent to skeptical. It is observable that there is ambivalence toward ASEAN among students in more affluent nations, enthusiasm from least wealthy nations and positive but moderate attitudes from "middle-income" nations. Furthermore, Inquirer.net broadcasted through (Domingo, 2013) that little awareness on ASEAN integration was noted from a survey commissioned by the ASEAN Secretariat. The report stressed that three out of four citizens (76 percent) "lack the essential understanding" on the basic objective of what ASEAN is striving to do even if 81 % are familiar with or have already heard of ASEAN. However, the report added that it is good to note that the overall perception and attitude towards the ASEAN community is still positive.

3. METHODOLOGY

This study aimed to find out students' awareness on crucial issues for ASEAN to enhance integration and cooperation. Likewise, it determined students' attitude towards ASEAN integration and cooperation; investigated the significant difference in students' attitudes toward ASEAN across schools.

3.1 Research Design

The study utilized a descriptive-comparative design. The respondents of the survey were the one thousand three hundred twenty (1,320) randomly selected pre-service teachers in SOCSKSARGEN. The respondents were enrolled at the University of Southern Mindanao, Quezon Colleges of Southern Philippines, Sultan Kudarat State University, Mindanao State University- GenSan, Notre Dame of Tacurong College and Edenton Mission College Inc, during the School Year 2014-2015.

3.2 Research Instruments

This study used a modified questionnaire adapted from (Thompson and Thianthai, 2008) of the ASEAN Foundation. Cronbach alpha was calculated to ensure that the instrument used was reliable. The first part of the questionnaire pertains to the students' awareness on crucial issues for ASEAN to enhance integration and cooperation, followed by the survey questions on the attitudes of the students toward ASEAN integration and cooperation. Respondents were asked to provide responses using the scale below:

| Scale | Descriptions for Awareness & Attitude |
|-------|---|
| 5 | Very Highly Aware / Very Positive |
| 4 | Highly Aware / Positive |
| 3 | Moderately Aware / Neutral or Uncertain |
| 2 | Less Aware / Negative |
| 1 | Least Aware / Very Negative |

The following procedures were observed in the gathering, interpretation, and analysis of the research data. The researchers conducted the pilot testing as soon as the approval was granted. A pilot test was done randomly to 120 respondents, and the survey instrument was modified based on the results. Cronbach's alpha was performed to determine the reliability of the questionnaire. The survey questionnaire was then randomly administered to pre-service teachers who attended and participated the academic conferences conducted by Young Educators' Convergence of SOCSKSARGEN (YECS) to selected schools in SOCSKSARGEN. After the gathering of data, all results were analyzed and interpreted. Frequency, mean and mean percentage were used to investigate students' awareness on crucial issues for ASEAN and in determining students' attitude towards ASEAN integration and cooperation. Analysis of Variance or ANOVA was employed to find out the significant difference in students' attitudes toward ASEAN across schools. All tests were done at the 0.05 level of significance.

4. RESULTS OF THE STUDY

Table 1 presents the awareness of Pre-service teachers on the crucial issues for ASEAN to enhance integration and cooperation.

TABLE1 : AWARENESS OF PRE-SERVICE TEACHERS ON THE KEY ISSUES FOR ASEAN TO IMPROVE INTEGRATION AND COOPERATION

| ASEAN Integration Components (Cronbach's alpha=.891) | WM | Description |
|---|------|-------------|
| 1. Health & disease control | 3.01 | Moderate |
| 2. Natural Resource & Environment | 2.50 | Moderate |
| 3. Disaster Prevention, Relief, etc. | 2.49 | Less |
| 4. Educational Improvement exchange | 3.02 | Moderate |
| 5. Reduction of Poverty | 2.10 | Less |
| 6. Science & Tech Development | 3.03 | Moderate |
| 7. Cultural Preservation & Promotion | 1.70 | Least |
| 8. Regional Identity & Solidarity | 2.09 | Less |
| Overall Mean | 2.49 | Less |

Legend:

Very High: 4.50 - 5.0; High: 3.50 - 4.49; Moderate: 2.50 - 3.49;

Less: 1.50 - 2.49; Least: 1.0 - 1.49

Data revealed that the extent of awareness of the pre-service teachers has the aggregate mean of 2.49, described as less aware. Specifically, the respondents were moderate aware on the components 1, 2, 4, and 6. Similarly, they were less aware of components 3, 5 and 8. Nonetheless, pre-service teachers had the least extent of awareness on cultural preservation & promotion (wm=1.70). The result indicates that majority of the pre-service teachers were less aware of the crucial issues on ASEAN that enhances integration and cooperation. This result suggests that students need to be exposed to summits to educate them on matters concerning ASEAN integration. This finding also implies that pre-service teachers were focused only on issues pertaining to their schooling, and they lack concern or interest on matters relating to ASEAN Integration. This result supports the claim of Domingo [3] that the overall level of understanding of the general public is still low due to lack of interest alongside an ineffective use of communication channels. Nonetheless, the result is in contradict to the study of (Thompson and Thianthai, 2008) that there is a high level of awareness on ASEAN Integration among undergraduate university students in Southeast Asian nations.

Table 2 shows the attitudes of Pre-service teachers towards teachers on the crucial issues of ASEAN integration and cooperation. Based on the table, data disclosed that they are very positive on issues on Educational Improvement exchange (wm = 4.60), Health & disease control (wm = 4.51). Likewise, most of them have a positive attitude on issues referring to Disaster Prevention, Relief, etc. (wm = 3.53), Reduction of Poverty (wm = 4.10), and Regional Identity & Solidarity (wm = 4.12). However, they were neutral or uncertain on issues relative to: Natural Resource & Environment (wm = 3.29), Science & Technology development (wm = 3.38), and Cultural preservation & promotion (wm = 3.17).

TABLE 2 : ATTITUDE OF PRE-SERVICE TEACHERS ON THE CRUCIAL ISSUES RELATIVE TO ASEAN INTEGRATION AND COOPERATION

| Components (Cronbach alpha=.804) | Mean | Description |
|--------------------------------------|------|-----------------------|
| 1. Health & disease control | 4.51 | Very Positive |
| 2. Natural Resource & Envi | 3.29 | Neutral/ Uncertain |
| 3. Disaster Prevention, Relief, etc. | 3.53 | Positive |
| 4. Educational Improvement exchange | 4.60 | Very Positive |
| 5. Reduction of Poverty | 4.10 | Positive |
| 6. Science & Tech Development | 3.38 | Neutral/ Uncertain |
| 7. Cultural Preservation & Promotion | 3.17 | Neutral/ Uncertain |
| 8. Regional Identity & Solidarity | 4.12 | Positive |
| Overall Mean | 3.84 | Positive |

Legend:

4.50 - 5.0 Very positive, 3.50 - 4.49 Positive, 2.50 - 3.49 Neutral / Uncertain 1.50 - 2.49 Negative, 1.0 - 1.49 Very Negative

The overall mean of 3.84 implies that having a positive attitude towards issues of ASEAN integration and cooperation makes them a definite recipient to any global interventions that enhance their 21st century learning skills. These skills are vital for them to be globally competitive. The result affirms the study of (Aguila, 2015) that ASEAN integration, which is geared to shape a sustainable community, can pave the way for the 21st century skills of the pre-service teachers. This is necessary for them to cope up with the changing needs and demands for global competence. Similarly, it affirms the claim of (Robles, 2013) that educators must aspire for global trends and innovations to meet the challenges of the 21st century. On the other hand, ANOVA was employed to find out the significant difference in students' attitudes toward ASEAN integration across schools.

Table 3 shows the significant difference in the awareness of their attitude on ASEAN integration across schools. Data disclosed that schools were significantly different as evidenced by the overall F-ratio of 3.021 and a p-value of .002. These results showed that all schools except for MSU (F-ratio = 3.181 & p-value = 0.53) are found to be significant. A p-value which is less than 0.05 level of significance implies that there is a significant difference in the awareness of their attitude on ASEAN integration across schools.

TABLE 3 : SIGNIFICANT DIFFERENCE OF THE PRE-SERVICE TEACHERS' AWARENESS TOWARD THEIR ATTITUDE ON ASEAN INTEGRATION ACROSS SCHOOLS

| Schools | F-ratio | p-value | Remark |
|---------|---------|---------|-----------------|
| EMCI | 3.094 | .000 | Significant |
| USM | 2.036 | .010 | Significant |
| MSU | 3.185 | .053 | Not Significant |
| QCSP | 2.240 | .004 | Significant |
| SKSU | 3.330 | .000 | Significant |
| NDTC | 4.240 | .000 | Significant |
| Overall | 3.021 | .002 | Significant |

This finding indicates that most schools under study diverge in their awareness on ASEAN Integration as they focused more on literacy and standards that support their interdisciplinary thinking. This result confirms the claim study of Aguila, (2015) that current changes in service education among schools are concentrated on skills, literacy, and standards to upkeep interdisciplinary thinking.

5. CONCLUSIONS

In the light of the findings, the following were the conclusions:

First, the majority of pre-service teachers are less aware on the crucial issues on ASEAN issues that enhance its integration and cooperation. This result indicates that the professors will expose their students to relevant Summits or educational conferences to educate them on other matters concerning ASEAN integration. **Secondly**, most of the pre-service teachers have a positive attitude towards ASEAN integration and cooperation. Moreover, results showed that there is a significant difference in the extent of awareness of their attitude on ASEAN integration across schools.

6. RECOMMENDATIONS

In the light of the conclusion, the following were the recommendations:

Pre-service teachers are encouraged to avail alternative learning or informal learning to upgrade their knowledge and skills for them to be more responsive and globally competitive. Secondly, education students should likewise be engaged to fieldwork and hold a discussion with other peers like being exposed to summits or other educational conferences. These exposures are essential for them to learn how to adapt easily, explore alternative perspectives and improve their 21st century skills. Thirdly, schools should provide a curriculum that will develop students' lifelong skills. This ability will help them to become more responsible individuals who can make intelligent decisions amidst socio-cultural diversity. Finally, the experimental and mixed method may be done to investigate the usefulness of ASEAN Integration in improving human resource.

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