THE IMPACT OF ASEAN ECONOMIC INTEGRATION ON THE THAI HIGHER EDUCATION POLICY AND PLAN

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This study investigated how the Thai higher education sector perceives the impacts and responses to the ASEAN economic integration. The cross sectional data comparison was used to identify the pattern of the administrators' perceptions and policies. The comparison was based on the four types of higher education institutions and Office of the Higher Education Commission. Based on the EU and the Bologna Process experience, higher education is an integral part of regional political, economic, and social development. In a case of ASEAN, higher education was included in the integration process as a part of trade in services liberalization and a supporting sector to the regional development.

Participants responded to an anonymous survey which asked how their institutions perceive and prepare for the potential impacts of the integration. The follow-up oral interviews and document reviews were conducted to seek additional data. The results exhibited that all types of institutions shared similar interests and concerns. However, each type of institution had different priorities and preparation. The result also demonstrated that every type of institution was facing similar challenges in the policy process, including policy clarity, government regulations, and budget inadequacy.

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LIST OF ACRONYMS

AEC	ASEAN Economic Community
AFAS	ASEAN Framework Agreement of Services
AFTA	ASEAN Free Trade Area
AIA	ASEAN Investment Area
APEC	Asia-Pacific Economic Cooperation
APSC	ASEAN Political-Security Community
ASCC	ASEAN Socio-Cultural Community
ASEAN	Association of Southeast Asian Nations
AU	African Union
AUN	ASEAN University Network
CEP	Cooperative Education Project
CHE	Commission on Higher Education, Thailand
CLMV	Cambodia, Laos PDR, Myanmar and Vietnam
EC	European Commission
ECTS	European Credit Transfer System
EHEA	European Higher Education Area
EQF	European Qualifications Framework

EU	European Union
FQ-EHEA	Framework for Qualifications of the European Higher Education Area
GATS	General Agreement on Trade in Services
GATT	General Agreement on Tariffs and Trade
IAI	Initiatives for ASEAN Integration
Mercosur	Mercado Común del Sur
MFA	Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Thailand
MOC	Ministry of Commerce, Thailand
MOE	Ministry of Education, Thailand
NAFTA	North America Free Trade Agreement
NCPO	National Council for Peace and Order, Thailand
NRUP	National Research Universities Project
OBEC	Office of the Basic Education Commission, Thailand
OHEC	Office of the Higher Education Commission, Thailand
OVEC	Office of the Vocational Education Commission, Thailand
ONESQA	Office for National Education Standards, and Quality Assessment (Public Organization)
RMUTT	Rajamangala University of Technology
SEAMEO	South East Asia Ministers of Education Organization
SEAMEO RIHED	SEAMEO Regional Centre for Higher Education and Development
TQF	Thai Qualifications Framework for Higher Education
UCTS	UMAP Credit Transfer Scheme
UMAP	University Mobility in Asia and the Pacific

WEF	World Economic Forum

1.0 INTRODUCTION

This study aims to examine the impact of the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN)[1] economic integration on Thai higher education policy and planning. To achieve the goal, this study investigated how Thai higher education administrators perceive the potential impact and include ASEAN economic integration into higher education policies and plans. The results of the study show the linkages and gaps that exist between ASEAN economic integration and Thai higher education policies and plans at both national and institutional levels, as well as how Thailand positions itself in ASEAN. The results of this study will help Thailand and Thai higher education institutions formulate and execute higher education policies and plans to support ASEAN economic integration and cope with challenges emerging from that integration (Austria 2012; Low 2004; Severino 2007).

After the end of the Cold War in 1991, the global context changed dramatically. After the Cold War the role of political ideology competition decreased, increasing the importance of global and regional economic cooperation and competition. At the global level, the long multilateral trade negotiation under the Uruguay Round (1986-1994) was completed and institutionalized. As a result, the World Trade Organization (WTO) was established in 1995 to regulate and enhance global trade as well as economic cooperation and development. However, the ineffectiveness of the WTO forced member countries to shift the focus on economic

[1]ASEAN member countries are Brunei Darussalam, Cambodia, Indonesia, Laos PDR, Malaysia, Myanmar, the Philippines, Thailand, Singapore, and Vietnam. More details in Appendix 1.

integration to a regional level, which allowed them to keep pace with the changing global economic contexts. The emerging regional organizations, including the Asia-Pacific Economic Cooperation (APEC), the North American Free Trade Agreement (NAFTA), and the Mercado Común del Sur (Mercosur), have an ultimate goal of fostering regional economic cooperation and competitiveness. Existing regional organizations, such as ASEAN and the Southern African Development Community (SADC) shifted their priorities from maintaining regional political security to promoting economic cooperation. Likewise, the European Union (EU) enhanced the role of economic cooperation and its membership to former socialist countries in Eastern Europe (Berger and Moutos 2004; Jacobsen 1997).

Most regional organizations consider higher education as an important mechanism to facilitate the economic integration process. As a result, higher education becomes both a goal and supporting element for economic integration. The EU has a number of initiatives to utilize higher education to foster economic cooperation and development, which include initiating life-long learning and student and faculty mobility programs, for instance, ERASMUS, Leonardo da Vinci, and Erasmus Mundus programs. In addition, the EU has implemented two regional qualifications frameworks to enhance the comparability of qualifications, mobility of student and workforce, and the employability of graduates. APEC has Education Network (EdNet) under the Human Resources Development Working Group (HRDWG) to provide policy recommendations and academic support for economic cooperation and development between member economies (Hoffman 2009; McKay 2002; Ravenhill 2001; Teichler 2003).

ASEAN includes higher education as one of 12 tradable services that are scheduled to be fully liberalized by 2015. Therefore, ASEAN expects higher education to play roles in enhancing economic development and reducing the development gap in the region (ASEAN Secretariat

2008b, 2009a). To achieve these roles, the ASEAN Economic Community (AEC) Blueprint and ASEAN Socio-Cultural (ASCC) Blueprint clearly express that higher education has to assist member countries to prepare for the potential impacts of ASEAN economic integration. One of the roles is to support a free flow of workforce among ASEAN member countries by equalizing education and qualification systems, promoting life-long learning, and creating a competitive workforce (ASEAN Secretariat 2009a). Based on the AEC and ASCC Blueprints, ASEAN expects member countries to include ASEAN economic integration agendas in their higher education policies to facilitate the integration and prepare for the potential impacts of the integration.

Focusing on Thailand, one of the 10 ASEAN member countries, this study consists of five chapters: introduction, review of the literature, research design, findings, and discussion. The introduction provides the rationale of the study, the problem statement and research questions, and the significance of this study. The literature review focuses on the nature of regional economic integration and its impact on higher education policy and planning. In addition, this section includes the roles of higher education in supporting regional economic integration. The research design comprises the conceptual framework that guides this study, the data collection plan, and data analysis approaches. The findings section presents data from the survey and interviews of higher education administrators. It explores their perceptions of ASEAN economic integration, the current and future policies and execution, and the current and expected roles of OHEC. The discussion section concentrates on the policy consistency between OHC and higher education institutions under its supervision. In addition, policy recommendations are provided, aiming at creating synergy in both policy content and implementation.

1.1 PROBLEM STATEMENT

ASEAN economic integration is a collective effort of ASEAN member countries to establish the AEC, one of the three pillars of the ASEAN Community along with the ASEAN Political-Security Community (APSC) and ASCC. The establishment of the ASEAN Community is expected to be completed by the end of 2015. Leaders envision the ASEAN Community as a zone of peace, freedom, and partnership in economic development bound by common regional identity (ASEAN Secretariat 2003). These initiatives bring with them concerns on how member countries develop a common identity and support integration, given that Southeast Asia is a diverse region. In terms of political systems, ASEAN consists of democracies, socialist republics, monarchies, and military dictatorships. Regarding economic development, Singapore is among the most competitive countries according to the World Economic Forum (WEF), whereas Cambodia, Laos PDR, and Myanmar are among the least developed countries according to the United Nations. The ASEAN member countries are also diverse in terms of language, religion, and education systems.

Although ASEAN issued blueprints for integration as policy outlines, strong support from the education sector is required. To create a common regional identity, the education sector needs to cultivate individuals with regional and multicultural awareness. Therefore, ASEAN citizens will accept and respect differences between cultures within the region. In terms of economic integration and the creation of the AEC, education has to play roles in developing a capable workforce, enhancing research and innovation, and harmonizing the education quality. These roles will eventually help increase the trade volume of goods and services and enhance a free flow of capital and workforce in the region, which are the goals and success indicators of the AEC.

As a member of ASEAN, Thailand is obligated to support the goals of ASEAN integration and the AEC, which includes national higher education policies and plans. According to the Thai higher education administrative structure, the Office of Higher Education Commission (OHEC) has the authority to recommend and execute higher education policy and plan agendas. However, the implementation largely depends on higher education institutions. Hence, the OHEC and higher education institution administrators' perceptions significantly impact the roles of Thai higher education in supporting ASEAN economic integration.

This study will investigate Thai higher education administrators' perceptions and how their perceptions affect Thai higher education policies and plans at the national and institutional levels. In addition, the study will review ASEAN expectations about the higher education sector in order to identify the linkages among the regional, national, and institutional higher education policies and plans. The congruence and deviation between them will show the impact of ASEAN economic integration on Thai higher education administrators' perceptions and Thai higher education policies and plans. Additionally, the findings will reveal current roles of Thai higher education in supporting ASEAN economic integration. The findings are expected to be a foundation for the Thai higher education policy and plan recommendations, particularly on how Thailand will support, utilize, and cope with potential challenges from ASEAN economic integration.

1.2 RESEARCH QUESTIONS

The goal of this study is to examine how Thailand develops and implements higher education policies and plans in preparation for ASEAN economic integration. To achieve that goal, this

study will investigate how Thai higher education administrators perceive the potential impact of ASEAN economic integration on the Thai higher education system, Office of Higher Education Commission (OHEC), and higher education institutions. Due to Thailand's higher education administrative structure, perceptions of HEI administrators toward ASEAN economic integration affect how Thailand formulates and executes higher education policies at the national and institutional levels. Their perceptions thus affect the position of Thai higher education in ASEAN and influence how thoroughly the country supports the goal of integration. The study will also identify the linkages between policy and plan contents and implementation at OHEC, and public and private higher education institutions.

The overarching question of this study is how ASEAN economic integration affects Thai higher education policies and plans to address this issue. In addition to this overarching question, there are three research questions that will guide this study and research design.

1. How do Thai administrators at government agencies and higher education institutions perceive the potential impacts of ASEAN economic integration?
2. How have OHEC and higher education institutions prepared for the potential impact of ASEAN economic integration in their policies and plans?
3. How do the content and implementation of policies and plans at OHEC link with those of higher education institutions and ASEAN?

Findings will show the patterns and linkages between Thai higher education administrators' perceptions, policies, and plans toward ASEAN economic integration at national and institutional levels. In addition, the results will reveal connections between Thai higher education policies and ASEAN's expectations concerning the role of higher education. The findings will be discussed and used as a foundation of policy recommendations.

1.3 RELEVANCE OF THE PROBLEM

There are studies that investigate the effects of regional economic integration on higher education policy. Most of them are conducted in the European context, focusing on the linkages between the Bologna Process and European integration and higher education at the regional and national levels. Many studies illustrate how the emergence and goals of the EU force higher education reform in its member and non-member countries in Europe. The effects include degree and quality assurance systems reform, student and faculty mobility promotion, and business-sector cooperation enhancement. The studies also demonstrate the importance and necessity of policy cooperation among regional organizations, national governments, and higher education institutions. There are also studies in the ASEAN context but they focus more on the impact of trade on higher education services rather than the role of higher education in supporting ASEAN economic integration. These studies discuss the potential impacts of trade in higher education services liberalization on higher education agencies and institutions. Although it is an important issues, the scope of economic integration covers other issues, including human capital development, research enhancement, and harmonization of higher education systems. This study fills the gap existing in literature by addressing the role of higher education in liberalizing trade in higher education services, enhancing regional economic development through human capital development and research enhancement, and harmonizing higher education systems in member countries.

According to the AEC Blueprint, the purposes of ASEAN economic integration are to establish a single market and production base, enhance regional economic competitiveness, reduce the development gap between member countries, and be a part of global economy as a region (ASEAN Secretariat 2008b). The focus of ASEAN economic integration strongly impacts

the role of the higher education sector in two aspects. First, they shift the nature of higher education from that of public service to that of tradable and profitable commodity. Second, they demand that higher education place a greater emphasis on regional economic development, particularly in terms of economic competitiveness, human capital development, and government-industry-university cooperation.

ASEAN member countries consider higher education as a public service in which the government is the biggest higher education provider through public institutions. However, a lack of resources has forced governments of member countries to privatize higher education systems, aiming at providing access in response to an increased demand for higher education (UNESCO 2006; Welch 2011). In addition, the public service status was altered when the WTO and ASEAN included higher education in their trade negotiation as one of 12 tradable and profitable services (World Trade Organization 1991). It has gradually forced governments to liberalize their higher education provision as required by the General Agreement of Trade in Services (GATS).

The liberalization of trade in higher education will allow foreign institutions to provide higher education services in any member country. It potentially poses challenges for developing countries in at least four aspects: (1) unequal access to higher education markets between providers in developing and developed countries, (2) negative effects of competition among domestic higher education institutions, (3) inflow of low-quality foreign providers, and (4) inequitable access to higher education (Knight 2002; Tham 2010). To prepare to face these challenges, ASEAN member countries have adjusted education policies and plans to increase competitiveness and performance of domestic higher education services and institutions. In addition, each member country has strengthened their qualifications and quality assurance

systems to protect the students from low quality higher education programs and institutions (Hendriks 2005; OECD Secretariat 2003; Tham 2010).

To accomplish the goal, the success of ASEAN economic integration largely depends on higher education. According to World Economic Forum (WEF) and the ASCC Blueprint, higher education plays a role in enhancing economic development through research and innovation production, human capital development, and government-industry-university cooperation (ASEAN Secretariat 2009a; World Economic Forum 2011). Additionally, ASEAN expects higher education to be a mechanism to reduce the development gap among member countries (ASEAN Secretariat 2008b).

To enhance the role of higher education, member countries need to synchronize higher education policies and systems to ensure the progress and success of ASEAN economic integration. Overregulated and asynchronous policies will create difficulties in negotiation among member countries and hamper the progress and success of the integration (Molle 2006; Schmitter 1970a; Simms and Simms 2007). Governments also need to prepare people and higher education institutions for the potential impacts of ASEAN economic integration. Hence, it is important to have policies that support and prepare people and higher education institutions for the impact of ASEAN economic integration.

2.0 REVIEW OF THE LITERATURE

This section discusses literature on regional economic integration and the role of higher education in supporting its goals. The purpose of this literature review is to examine the nature and the roles of higher education in supporting regional economic integration. Although this study is about ASEAN, the cases of AU and the EU are also reviewed. The EU case shows successful practices of the utilization of higher education to support regional economic integration. The AU case illustrates the role of higher education in supporting regional economic integration at the early stage. This section consists of five parts: the nature of regional economic integration, ASEAN economic integration, the relationship between regional economic integration and higher education, higher education's role in supporting regional economic integration, and the impact of regional economic integration on national higher education policy.

2.1 NATURE OF REGIONAL ECONOMIC INTEGRATION

Regional integration covers political, economic, and social aspects. Based on the scope of integration, regional organization might focus on one or a combination of two or more aspects. Although most regional organizations focus on the integration in multiple aspects, there are also regional organizations focusing on the integration in a specific area. For instance, the North

Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO) and Asia-Pacific Economic Cooperation (APEC) focus solely on politics and security, and economic cooperation respectively.

The idea of regional integration emerged in Europe after World War I, focusing on political and security cooperation. However, it became more concrete after the end of World War II with the establishment of the European Coal and Steel Community (ECSC) in 1952 (Mattli 1999). The original objective of regional integration was to avoid conflict and war among European countries (Deutsch 1957; Schmitter 2005). The political and security aspect played a dominant role in regional integration, particularly in Europe and Southeast Asia during the Cold War due to concerns about political conflict and expansion of opposing ideologies. Nevertheless, the role of economic and social integration had gradually emerged as parallel areas of integration. Not only did it foster economic integration but it also prevented conflict by enhancing economic ties and political contacts among member countries (Carbaugh 2012).

The role of economic integration started to dominate regional integration after the end of the Cold War in 1991, marking the end of political ideology competition between democratic and communist blocs (Gaddis 2005). Economic integration and competition between countries and regions became global issues. At the global level, the WTO has played a prominent role in fostering economic integration between member countries since its establishment in 1995. Nevertheless, trade negotiation under the WTO progresses slowly because of the diverse needs and interests of its members. As a result, countries in different regions try to overcome the ineffectiveness of the WTO by strengthening regional economic integration, which helps them keep pace with global and regional economic development needs (Baldwin and Jaimovich 2012; Bhagwati 1993, 2008).

Many regional organizations focusing on economic integration have emerged since the 1980s, for instance, Mercosur in 1985, APEC in 1989, NAFTA in 1994, and AU in 2001. The existing regional organizations shifted their focus to economic cooperation and expanding memberships to countries in the region regardless of their political orientation (Bhagwati 1993; Furusawa and Konishi 2007; Plummer 2009). These regional organizations are modeled after the EU and share common objectives, including eliminating trade barriers among member countries, fostering and sustaining regional economic development, and enhancing regional economic competitiveness (Geda and Kibret 2008; Lindberg 1963; Lloyd 2010; Park, Kim, and Harrington 2011; Solís, Stallings, and Katada 2009; Van Langenhove and De Lombaerde 2007).

2.2 DEFINITION OF REGIONAL ECONOMIC INTEGRATION

The literature defines regional economic integration as a process in which two or more countries eliminate various restrictions and barriers to international trade, investment, and population mobility (Capannelli, Lee, and Petri 2010; Carbaugh 2012; Geda and Kibret 2008). Generally, regional economic integration aims at transforming the region into a single market and production base, increasing regional economic competitiveness, fostering economic development, and effectively integrating the region into the global economy (ASEAN Secretariat 2008b). The end product of regional economic integration varies by the level of integration from free trade agreements to economic and political union (Balassa 1961; Goldfarb 2003; Mirus and Rylska 2001; Molle 2006; Park and Park 2009; Rosamond 2005).

Regional economic integration is an objective in itself as well as a rationale to achieve a higher objective of political security and economic prosperity. The earliest study of regional

integration was in the area of international relations. Thus, it was more likely to focus on political and security aspects (Molle 2006). The literature describes regional integration as a process or arrangement in which two or more national countries and non-country political actors are persuaded to shift their loyalties and activities from national countries to a new political institution to ensure that conflict will be solved without violence (Deutsch 1957; Nye 1968). The end product of regional integration is a new political community or supra-national institution (Caporaso 1998; Deutsch 1957; Haas 2004; Lindberg 1963; Nye 1968; Slocum and Langenhove 2004).

2.3 SCOPE AND LEVEL OF REGIONAL ECONOMIC INTEGRATION

Regional economic integration covers both market and policy integration (Balassa 1961; Mirus and Rylska 2001; Molle 2006). Market integration promotes eliminating tariff and non-tariff barriers for trade in goods and services as well as financial transactions. Policy integration refers to harmonization of economic, political, and social policies including education (Molle 2006). There are five levels of regional economic integration described in the literature: free trade agreements, custom unions, common markets, economic unions, and economic and political unions (Balassa 1961; Carbaugh 2012; Goldfarb 2003; Mirus and Rylska 2001; Park and Park 2009).

2.3.1 Free Trade Agreement

Although the literature discusses a preferential trade agreement (PTA) as the first step toward regional economic integration, the first level of regional economic integration is the free trade agreement (FTA). A PTA aims at reducing tariff and non-tariff trade barriers instead of completely eliminating them. On the contrary, the objective of an FTA is to completely eliminate tariffs and non-tariff barriers, for instance, quotas, trade subsidies, and local content requirements among member countries (Molle 2006).The difference in objectives distinguishes the PTA from FTA.

An FTA contains provisions and schedules that member countries adhere to, eliminating trade barriers on a reciprocal basis. Apart from the elimination of trade barriers, an FTA might include policy mechanisms to solve disputes between member countries. An FTA does not require member countries to further harmonize regulations, economic policies or include investment and a mobility of workforce in the agreement. Each member country still has the authority to formulate and implement their own economic policy and set trade barriers against non-member countries (Molle 2006; Ornelas 2005).

One key element of the FTA is rules of origin. They are the set of rules that help identify product manufacturing and exporting countries (Heetkamp and Tusveld 2011). The objective is determining if a certain product is eligible for the tariff and non-tariff barriers exemption under the FTA (Grinols and Silva 2011; Heetkamp and Tusveld 2011; Inama 2009; Krishna 2005). It prevents member countries from importing products and collecting taxes from non-member countries and reselling such products to other member countries without paying tax. Each business sector negotiates and devises the rules of origin that suit their industry (Krishna 2005).

Although investment and workforce mobility were included in the integration, ASEAN is still at the level of Free Trade Agreement. Each member country still has the authority to formulate and implement trade policies toward non-member countries. The clear examples are the trade agreements between Japan and three ASEAN member countries: Malaysia, Singapore, and Thailand. These three member countries signed trade agreements with Japan as a single country which clearly demonstrated the authority to implement trade policy toward non-member countries independently.

2.3.2 Custom Union

The second level of regional economic integration is a custom union (CU). The goal of the CU is to eliminate trade barriers and harmonize member countries' trade policies toward non-member countries (Balassa 1961; Mirus and Rylska 2001; Molle 2006). The efforts include the establishment of tariffs and non-tariff barriers on products and common trade remedy policies, for instance, anti-dumping and subsidies policies toward non-member countries. To harmonize trade policies, member countries have to give up a certain degree of sovereignty (Molle 2006). Unlike the FTA, the CU does not require the rules of origin because any products imported from non-member countries are subject to the same tariffs and non-tariff barriers regardless of the point of entry (Mirus and Rylska 2001; Molle 2006).

2.3.3 Common Market

The third level of regional economic integration is a common market (CM). In addition to trade barriers elimination and policy harmonization, the CM aims to remove barriers of workforce,

capital, and other resources.(Balassa 1961; Mirus and Rylska 2001; Molle 2006). Hence, the CM requires a significant level of policy harmonization in various areas; including education, public health, and immigration. Thus, the CM significantly limits member countries' ability to pursue independent economic policies.

2.3.4 Economic Union

The economic union is the highest form of regional economic integration. It requires member countries to coordinate and harmonize a number of key principles; for example, monetary and labor policies. The common policies ensure the certainty of currency exchange, wage, and interest rates and also improve the efficiency and effectiveness of the economic union (Grauwe 2003). The implementation of the economic union requires an establishment of the supranational institution. The institution's responsibilities include regulating and facilitating trade negotiations and ensuring the conformity of policies. Under the economic union, member countries need to transfer a part of their sovereignty to the institution and adjust their policies according to the regional agreements (Nacarino, Corte, and Freudenstein 2012).

2.3.5 Economic and Political Union

Based on the neo-functionalist theory, the success of the economic union expands the area of integration into political and social aspects (Haas 1961, 1970, 1975, 2004; Korres 2007; Rosamond 2005; Schmitter 1970b, 2005). The economic and political union requires member countries to synchronize and coordinate both economic and political policies. The sovereignty of member countries is significantly reduced because they have to transfer the authority on political

and economic policies to a supranational institution. Although there are attempts to harmonize economic and political policies; most notably in the EU, a true and complete economic and political union has yet to exist in any region (Molle 2006).

2.4 ASEAN AND ASEAN ECONOMIC INTEGRATION

ASEAN economic integration is one of the three parallel processes of ASEAN integration which are politics and socio-cultural integration. The ultimate goal of the ASEAN integration is to create the ASEAN Community, which will ensure durable peace, political stability, and economic prosperity in the region (ASEAN Secretariat 2003). Although the three processes relate and support one another, the focus of this study is on ASEAN economic integration. Hence, this section discusses ASEAN economic integration in terms of its rationale and development, goals, and the roles of higher education in supporting the integration.

2.4.1 What is ASEAN?

ASEAN is a regional organization comprising 10 member countries in Southeast Asia; namely, Brunei Darussalam, Cambodia, Indonesia, Laos PDR, Malaysia, Myanmar, the Philippines, Singapore, Thailand, and Vietnam. ASEAN was established on 8 August 1967 in Bangkok, Thailand, with the signing of the ASEAN Declaration.[2] The purposes of ASEAN cover political, economic, and socio-cultural cooperation. The political aspect focuses on a promotion of

[2]Founding members are Indonesia, Malaysia, the Philippines, Singapore, and Thailand.

regional peace and stability, rule of law, and human rights protection. The economic cooperation covers trade in goods and services liberalization, investment facilitation, and development gap reduction. The socio-cultural aspect concentrates on developing regional identity, raising quality of life, and promoting Southeast Asian studies; thus, member countries are encouraged to provide technical assistance in a form of education and training, research facilities, and administration support (Ahmad 2012; ASEAN Secretariat 2003, 2008a, b, 2009a, b; Severino 2007). To achieve the goals, which are scheduled to be completed in 2015, the ASEAN Leaders declared the establishment of the ASEAN Community based on security, economic, and socio-cultural pillars.

2.4.2 Rationale for ASEAN Economic Integration

ASEAN economic integration is a regional attempt to enhance economic competitiveness and reduce the development gap between member countries. It is accelerated by the changing global context after the end of the Cold War in 1991, particularly by the emergence of China and India, bilateralism and regionalism in global economy, and the establishment of the WTO in 1995 (Austria 2012; Yue 1998). The end of the Cold War reduced political competition and confrontation among ASEAN member countries (Severino 2007). It allowed ASEAN to expand its membership to socialist countries and shifted its priority to economic cooperation. After the end of the Cold War, China and India gradually became the most attractive investment and outsourcing destinations, particularly for labor intensive industries. The increasing minimum wage and the reforms of government regulations in ASEAN member countries reduced the region's comparative advantage in comparison with China and India (Austria 2012), thus leading

to the ASEAN financial crisis in 1997 and the fear that ASEAN's competitiveness was deteriorating.

The establishment of the WTO in 1995 created regulations and a negotiation forum for trade in goods and services at the global level. However, trade negotiation under WTO is a slow process and cannot keep pace with the needs of the global and regional economy. In addition, the trade negotiation process is inherently political, in which the more developed countries tend to dominate and use negotiations for their advantage. As a result, countries in the same region as ASEAN started to form regional organizations focusing on economic cooperation to maintain their own economic competitiveness and increase their bargaining power in the changing economic context (Austria 2012; Petri, Plummer, and Zhai 2012).

2.4.3 Building Blocks for ASEAN Economic Integration

This section will discuss four initiatives that are the building blocks for ASEAN economic integration, including the ASEAN Free Trade Area (AFTA), ASEAN Investment Area (AIA), ASEAN Framework for Services (AFAS), and Initiatives for ASEAN Integration (IAI). These initiatives are cooperation frameworks in enhancing regional competitiveness and reducing the development gap between member countries.

AFTA is a preferential trade agreement established in 1992. The ultimate goal of AFTA is to reduce tariff and non-tariff trade barriers of all manufactured products, including capital goods and processed agricultural products within the region (ASEAN Secretariat 2008b; Austria 2012). The initiative was implemented under the Common Effective Preferential Tariff Scheme (CEPT-AFTA) and ASEAN Trade in Goods Agreement (ATIGA). Under AFTA, member countries are bound to gradually reduce tariffs to 0-5 percent. AIA is an initiative to enhance a

free flow of capital and investment within the region and promote ASEAN as a global investment destination (Austria 2012; Masron and Yusop 2012; Petri, Plummer, and Zhai 2012). The initiative is regulated by ASEAN Comprehensive Investment Agreement (ACIA) and signed by member countries in 2007. The ACIA fosters transparency in investment and enhances investor protection. The programs include the elimination of investment barriers and liberalization of investment rules and regulations through NT and MFN treatments for ASEAN investors and non-ASEAN investors in 2010 and 2020 respectively (ASEAN Secretariat 2008b; Austria 2012; Masron and Yusop 2012).

AFAS was signed in 1995 and has since then become the regional framework for trade in services liberalization and cooperation. It is also the protocol for mutual qualifications recognition and dispute settlements mechanisms. Under AFAS, ASEAN member countries agreed to expand the depth and scope of trade in services liberalization beyond those undertaken by member countries under GATS (ASEAN Secretariat 2008b; Austria 2012). The liberalization process under AFAS was exempted from ASEAN principles of consensus in order to allow more expedient negation processes. This occurred because of the diversity in member countries' economic development levels and readiness to trade in services through negotiation. It allows ASEAN member countries to negotiate in ASEAN-X[3] pattern, meaning that if two or more countries are ready to negotiate, they can proceed without other member countries. However, all member countries have to review their regulations, to progressively liberalize cross border services supply and free flow of labor force, and to allow ASEAN juristic persons[4] to hold up to

[3] ASEAN minus X.

[4] According to AIA, ASEAN juristic persons include ASEAN citizens, and non-ASEAN citizen who invest in ASEAN member countries.

70 percent of equity participation in their respective countries (ASEAN Secretariat, 2008). The schedule of liberalization is shown in Table 2.1.

Table 2.1. The Schedule of Liberalization of Trade in Services in ASEAN

Mode of Supply	**Detail and Schedule**		
Mode 1: Cross-border supply	No restrictions with exceptions due to bona fide regulatory reasons (2008) by 2010		
Mode 2: Consumption abroad			
Mode 3: Commercial presence	**Schedule**	**Four Priority Areas**[5]	**Other Areas including Higher Education**
	2006	At least 49 percent foreign equity participation	N/A
	2008	At least 51 percent foreign equity participation	At least 49 percent foreign equity participation
	2010	At least 70% foreign equity participation	At least 51 percent foreign equity participation
	2013	N/A	At least 70 percent foreign equity participation for logistics services
	2015		At least 70 percent foreign equity participation for all services sectors
Mode 4: Movement of natural persons	Full implementation of completed Mutual Recognition Agreements (MRA) by the end of 2015		

Source: ASEAN Secretariat (2008b).

IAI was launched in 2000, aiming at accelerating integration processes and reducing the development gap between ASEAN member countries, particularly between ASEAN-6 and Cambodia, Laos PDR, Myanmar, and Vietnam (CLMV countries). IAI work plans identify priority areas, including transportation and energy infrastructure, human resource development,

[5] Four priority services are Air Travel, e-ASEAN (Information and Communication Technology), Healthcare and Tourism.

and information and communication technology (ASEAN Secretariat 2009b; Severino 2005). Although IAI is under the AEC by structure, the scope of IAI covers various areas, for instance, social security and health, education and training, and environmental sustainability (ASEAN Secretariat 2009b).

2.5 THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN REGIONAL ECONOMIC INTEGRATION AND HIGHER EDUCATION

This section discusses the role of higher education in regional economic integration as both a goal and supporting element. As the goal, regional economic integration aims to eliminate trade barriers and increase the volume of trade in higher education services. To achieve the goal, each member country is obliged to adjust regulations to allow higher education services providers from other member countries to enter and compete fairly in domestic markets (Kuroda, Yuki, and Kyuwon 2010; World Trade Organization 2001). As the supporting element, higher education is expected to play leading roles in enhancing economic competiveness, developing human capital, and harmonizing higher education systems in member countries. These roles will eventually enhance regional economic development and reduce the development gap among member countries (ASEAN Secretariat 2008b, 2009a; Cloete, Bailey, and Maassen 2011; Daniel and Orsetta 2006; Etzkowitz and Leydesdorff 1997; Fujita, Kuroiwa, and Kumagai 2011; Pillay 2011; Plummer and Chia 2009; Schultz 2012; Temple 2012; Zaglul, Sherrard, and Juma 2006).

2.5.1 Higher Education as a Goal

In most regional organizations and the WTO, liberalization of trade in services is negotiated under the *GATS* framework. The GATS covers all levels of education including higher education (World Trade Organization 1991). Unlike trade in goods, services are often considered as intangible and non-storable, thus requiring unique modes of supply to deliver services to customer. Likewise, barriers of trade for services are different from those involving trade of goods.

According to GATS, there are four modes of services supply: cross-border supply, consumption abroad, commercial presence, and movement of natural persons (World Trade Organization 2006). Based on the mode of services supply, students and individuals are able to access foreign higher education services through on-line and distance education (cross border supply), enrollment in higher education institutions in other countries (consumption abroad), and placement of foreign university branch campuses (commercial presence) in their home countries. Likewise, individuals are allowed to teach or conduct research in foreign countries (movement of natural persons). The detail is as shown in Table 2.2.

The barriers of trade in service are generally based on four principles: most-favored nation treatment (MFN), transparency, market access, and national treatment (Wolfrum, Stoll, and Feinäugle 2008; World Trade Organization 2006). The MFN and transparency principles are overarching frameworks that apply to every service sector. Market access and national treatment are specific commitments that apply to certain service sectors. Hence, market access and national treatment in certain service sectors may be different from the others.

Table 2.2. Mode of Higher Education Services Supply and Examples

Mode	Explanation	Practices in higher education
1. Cross-border supply	A customer in country X receives services from abroad through its telecommunications or postal infrastructure. It does not require physical contact.	• Distance learning • E-learning
2. Consumption abroad	Nationals of country X have moved abroad to consume the respective services.	• Students go to study abroad
3. Commercial presence	The service is provided within country X by a locally-established affiliate, subsidiary, or representative office of a foreign-owned and controlled company (bank, hotel group, construction company, etc.)	• Locally branch or campuses of foreign higher education institutions
4. Movement of natural persons	A foreign national provides a service within country A as an independent supplier (e.g., consultant, health worker) or employee of a service supplier (e.g., consultancy firm, hospital, construction company).	• Professors, teachers, and researchers work in higher education institutions in foreign country

Sources: World Trade Organization (2006) and Knight (2002).

The MFN refers to non-discrimination treatment among member countries. A member country who grants trade preference to another member country is obliged to unconditionally extend the preferential treatment to all other member countries. Nevertheless, each member country might apply for exemption from the MFN for certain service sectors on a reciprocal basis. The transparency principle requires member countries to publish information on laws and regulations relating to trade in services and make them accessible. The market access principle refers to the elimination of barriers that might limit the foreign services and services suppliers to access the domestic market. The national treatment principle requires each member country to

treat foreign services and service suppliers according to same rules and regulations as domestic services and service suppliers. Hence, the modification of rules and regulations in favor of domestic services and service suppliers is prohibited (Bassett 2006; Wolfrum, Stoll, and Feinäugle 2008; World Trade Organization 2001, 2006).

Based on the four principles, the barriers can be categorized into three groups. The first category is a quantitative restriction including numerical quotas, monopolies, exclusive service suppliers, and the requirements of an economic needs test. The quantitative restriction applies to a total value of a transaction or asset, total number of service operations or output, and total number of employees in certain service sectors. The second category is a restriction in the form of service supplier establishment. Each member country is not able to employ any measure which restricts or requires foreign service suppliers to establish specific types of legal entities or joint ventures within its territory. The third category is a restriction on a maximum percentage of foreign equity participation or a total value of individual or aggregate foreign investment (Bassett 2006; Wolfrum, Stoll, and Feinäugle 2008; World Trade Organization 2001). These barriers apply to every service and mode of services supply.

The potential barriers for trade in higher education services include limitation on foreign equity participation, joint venture requirement, student visa and work permit requirements, student quotas, and quality assurance and qualifications systems. Regional economic integration tries to eliminate these barriers and ensures that foreign services and service suppliers will be treated equally in comparison with domestic services and service suppliers. The elimination of barriers will increase the volume of trade in higher education services and the mobility of students, capital, and workforce, thus fulfilling the goals of regional economic integration.

2.5.2 Higher Education as a Supporting Sector

Based on the goals of regional economic integration, higher education is expected to play important roles in enhancing regional economic development and reducing the development gap among member countries. To achieve these goals, the roles of higher education include economic competitiveness enhancement, human capital development, and higher education systems harmonization (ASEAN Secretariat 2008b, 2009a). These roles are clearly evidenced in the EU through the Europe 2020 policy, which focused on knowledge and innovative-based economic development and employment rate enhancement, and supporting initiatives, for instance, the Bologna Process and Lisbon Strategy.

2.5.2.1 Higher Education and Economic Competitiveness

Economic competitiveness refers to a set of policies and factors that influence the level of productivity (Shafaeddin 2012; World Economic Forum 2011). It is a relative concept that refers to both a goal and a pathway to economic development (Krugman 1994; Shafaeddin 2012). As the goal, each country has to identify and acquire factors and to formulate and implement policies that enhance the level of competitiveness. The higher level of competitiveness provides a country and region advantages in international trade and economic development. As the pathway to economic development, the level of economic competitiveness determines a return rate of investment, which is a fundamental driver of economic development (World Economic Forum 2011).

According to the World Economic Forum (WEF), there are three stages of economic development: factor-driven economies stage, efficiency-driven economies stage, and innovation-driven economies stage (World Economic Forum 2011). The level of economic competiveness in

each stage relies on various factors, for instance, natural resources, market efficiency, and skilled labor. Higher education has important roles in enhancing economic competitiveness, particularly in the efficiency-driven and innovation-driven stages (Cloete, Bailey, and Maassen 2011; Daniel and Orsetta 2006; Shafaeddin 2012; World Economic Forum 2011; Zaglul, Sherrard, and Juma 2006). At both stages, higher education helps increase economic competitiveness by developing skilled labor, conducting advance research, and transferring technology to the business sector (Cloete, Bailey, and Maassen 2011; Etzkowitz and Leydesdorff 1997; World Economic Forum 2011; Zaglul, Sherrard, and Juma 2006).

Most workers with inadequate education and health conditions struggle to work efficiently and adapt to new tasks and technology, hence resulting in low productivity and inefficient production processes (World Economic Forum 2011).Higher education will enhance competitiveness in the factor-driven economies stage through teacher and health professional development. It also enhances the quality of basic education and health services, thus providing the workforce better health care and employment opportunities (Pillay 2011).

2.5.2.2 Higher Education and Human Capital Development

Human capital theory considers an individual's learning capacity as an asset that is equivalent to other types of capital and resources in a production process (Lucas 1988, 1990; Nafukho, Hairston, and Brooks 2004). The focus of human capital theory is a correlation between quantity and quality of education, general health and nutrition conditions of the workforce, and income level at both micro and macro levels (Becker 1964; Langhammer 1999; Savvides and Stengos 2009; Schultz 1994; Schultz 1960; Zulkifli 1999). Human capital theory considers education expenditure as an investment and a country can accumulate and use human capital to enhance economic development (Savvides and Stengos 2009; Stanfield 2009).

Education investment transforms an individual from unskilled labor to skilled labor, thus increasing productivity and competitiveness of the individual, nation, and region (Nafukho, Hairston, and Brooks 2004). A number of studies conclude that each year of schooling significantly increases an individual's income by comparing a country's minimum wage and average wage, or individual income and the average years of schooling (Becker and Chiswick 1966; Ciccone and Peri 2006; Gundlach 1999; Psacharopoulos 1994; Psacharopoulos and Patrinos 2004; Savvides and Stengos 2009; Slottje 2010; Stanfield 2009). Although human capital theory is widely accepted and used to explain the relationship between education investment and economic development, it has a number of limitations, including the diminishing marginal return effect and the omission of a number of variables that might affect income level.

2.5.2.3 Harmonization of Higher Education Systems

Regional economic integration considers higher education as a part of regional economic infrastructure. Thus, higher education institutions are expected to serve the region and every country in the region regardless of their locations (Echols 1996; OECD 2009). There are a number of regional initiatives that rely on the roles of higher education, for instance, workforce mobility, regional identity creation, and trade in higher education services liberalization. However, the implementation of these initiatives has been facing difficulties because of the diversity in degrees, qualifications, and quality assurance systems among member countries (OECD 2009).

To overcome the challenges, regional economic integration includes the policy of higher education harmonization in the integration process. The harmonization of higher education is a process aiming to recognize higher education diversity, build connections among different higher

education systems, and promote common guidelines and practices for cooperation (Butter 2006; Knight 2012; Terada 2003). Generally, the harmonization of higher education is modeled after the EU and the Bologna Process frameworks. It focuses on three categories: cross-border student and faculty mobility, mutual credit and degree recognition, and life-long learning (African Union 2008; Butter 2006; Hawkins 2012; Neubauer 2012).

2.5.2.3.1 Cross-Border Student and Faculty Mobility

Student mobility refers to students who leave their countries of origin for another for the purpose of studying (Junor and Usher 2008; OECD 2006; UNESCO 2009). Student mobility covers vertical (degree) and horizontal (non-degree) mobility. Vertical mobility means that students study the entire degree program abroad. On the contrary, horizontal mobility refers to short-term study abroad mainly as an exchange student, whereby students only complete some modules or courses but not the whole degree (Solimano 2008; Teichler 2003, 2011). Faculty mobility refers to faculty members who leave their countries for another for the purpose of teaching, training, and conducting research (OECD 2009; van de Bunt-Kokhuis 2000). Cross-border student and faculty mobility is considered as a tool to transfer knowledge and expertise among countries that will enhance academic and research cooperation and reduce economic development gaps in the region (Knight 2012; Neubauer 2012; OECD 2009).

Apart from the impact on academic cooperation and economic development, cross-border faculty and student mobility programs also enhance graduate employability by cultivating cultural awareness, self-reliance, and problem solving skills (Brooks and Waters 2009; Gürüz 2011; Hawkins 2012; Hoffman 2009; Pineda, Moreno, and Belvis 2008; Teichler 2011). Graduate employability is considered a key to deepening regional economic development and integration and enhancing education quality, efficiency, and accountability. Based on the

perceived impacts, most regional organizations have implemented student and faculty mobility programs, for instance, ASEAN International Mobility for Students (AIMS) in ASEAN, Erasmus Programs in the EU, and University Mobility in Asia and the Pacific (UMAP) under APEC framework (Hawkins 2012; Neubauer 2012; OECD 2009; Solimano 2008; Teichler 2011).

2.5.2.3.2 Mutual Credit and Degree Recognition

Mutual credit and degree recognition are the most important pieces in the harmonization process. The scope of mutual credit and degree recognition covers education qualifications at every level, including credit earned from foreign education institutions and professional and academic titles conferred in foreign country (Butter 2006; Hawkins 2012; Teichler 2003, 2011). The objective is to enhance comparability and readability of credit, degree, and qualifications among education institutions. The comparability and readability ensure that credit, degrees, and qualifications earned are recognized, hence, students have adequate achievements prior to continuing their studies and graduates are treated fairly regardless of their study location. As a result, the volume of students and workforce mobility will increase.

The focuses of mutual credit and degree recognition are to review, compare, and create common frameworks for qualifications and quality assurance systems in different countries (Teichler 2011). Based on ASEAN, AU, and the EU experiences, the frameworks are based on the period of study and expected student outcomes. The period of study refers to the length of study and number of credit hours in the three-cycle degree system including bachelor's, master's, and doctorate. The requirement for adopting standardized lengths of study forces countries in Europe to reform their higher education systems. Prior to the implementation of the Bologna Process, many countries in Europe, for instance, Germany, France, and the Netherlands, did not utilize the three-cycle degree or credit-hour system. The difference in the period of study is also

a challenge in ASEAN and AU. In both cases, there are member countries that have not adopted a credit-hour system. In addition, their degree systems are based on different models, resulting in different periods of study particularly at bachelor's degree level.

Although the Bologna Process member countries have gradually reformed their degree systems, the period of study still varies in different countries, particularly at the bachelor's degree level. To overcome this challenge, the EU, ASEAN, and AU shifted the focus of the mutual credit and degree recognition to student outcomes. Student outcomes are explicit descriptions of what students are expected to know, understand, and be able to perform after a period or process of study (Allan 1996; AQF Advisory Board 2007; Bogue and Hall 2003; European Commission 2004; Kennedy, Hyland, and Ryan 2006; Moon 2004). The description usually consists of a required list and level of competencies along with a period of assessment. The competencies include knowledge, skills and abilities, and attitudes and values (European Commission 2004). The period of assessment may be a module, course, or entire program (Harvey and Green 1993; Kennedy, Hyland, and Ryan 2006; Thomas and Douglass 2009)

Due to the linkage between knowledge and process of study, student outcomes are also considered as a benchmark for quality assessment and indicator for effectiveness of education (Harvey and Green 1993; Thomas and Douglass 2009). Although student outcomes facilitate the comparability of credit and degree particularly at the international level, implementation has been challenging, particularly concerning the complexity in identifying, interpreting, and assessing student outcomes (Benjamin 1989; Dang 2010; Kennedy, Hyland, and Ryan 2007). Thus, it is important for regional organizations and member countries to negotiate, mutually understand, and include student outcomes in the qualifications and quality assurance systems.

2.5.2.3.3 Lifelong Learning

The focuses of lifelong learning are on workforce development and cooperation between higher education and business sectors. The ultimate objective is to enhance graduate employability. The term "employability" refers to a wide range of meanings. It covers an ability to obtain and maintain employment, secure new employment if required, and also includes the quality of work and employment (Bridgstock 2009; Hillage and Pollard 1998; Knight and Yorke 2003; McQuaid and Lindsay 2005). Employability depends on competencies individuals possess, deploy, and present as well as the needs of the labor market and government policy (Hillage and Pollard 1998; Lees 2002; Moir 2012; Young 2005). Although the literature discusses employability as an ability to obtain any job, this study discusses employability as an ability to obtain jobs that match graduates' qualifications and level of education. When applying the concept of employability to regional economic integration context, it refers to seeking employment within and beyond national boundaries (OECD 2009).

To enhance graduate employability, higher education and business sectors are encouraged to work closely with one another to ensure that degree and training programs help graduates and the workforce develop necessary competencies (Bardhan, Hicks, and Jaffee 2011; Tomlinson 2012). Like the other two areas of harmonization, the implementation of lifelong learning in the context of regional economic integration has at least two challenges. The first challenge is the identification of necessary competencies (Gonczi 2006; Martinez 2008). The list of competencies must be identified based on national and international reference points, for instance, qualifications frameworks, professional standards, and mutual recognition agreements[6].

[6]Mutual Recognition Agreement (MRA) is a framework for developing professional practices and qualifications among member countries. The objective of MRA is to support a mobility of skilled-labor and services within a region. The MRA may be done by two or more countries and within regional organization. EU and ASEAN member countries have been negotiated a number of MRAs.

The second challenge is to link necessary competencies to student outcomes and embed them in the curriculum design (Cranmer 2006; Down 2006; Knight and Yorke 2003). Generally, competencies must cover academic and professional aspects. The focus of academic competencies is on research and knowledge comprehension, generation, and transmission. Professional competencies focus on the application of knowledge and generic skills for occupations. If education institutions are not able to identify necessary competencies, the scope of student outcomes will be narrow, resulting in a lack of student intellectual and professional development. (Kennedy, Hyland, and Ryan 2006). Hence, it is important for education institutions to identify and link these competencies to student outcomes based on areas of study.

In conclusion, higher education is included in regional economic integration as both a goal and supporting element. As the goal, regional economic integration expects member countries to eliminate barriers of trade in higher education services. Regarding the supporting element, higher education is expected to enhance national and regional economic competitiveness and development. It may be done through enhancing ability to anticipate and adapt to rapid changes in technology, developing a skilled workforce, and facilitating the mobility of the workforce. To achieve these objectives, each country in the region should embed regional education integration in higher education policies and plans and adjust the role of higher education accordingly.

2.6 POLICY IN SUPPORTING REGIONAL ECONOMIC INTEGRATION

Higher education has two major roles in supporting the goals of regional economic integration: eliminating barriers of trade in higher education services and enhancing regional economic

development. Additionally, higher education has roles in preparing the populace, education institutions, and its host country for the potential impacts of regional economic integration. To achieve these roles, regional organizations and member countries have to review, formulate, and execute higher education policies and plans in at least five areas: reforming higher education degree systems, reforming qualifications and quality assurance systems, fostering cooperation between government, industry and higher education institutions, promoting student and faculty mobility programs, and liberalizing trade in higher education services.

2.6.1 Higher Education Degree Reform

The objective of the reform is to create a readable and comparable degree system that facilitates student and workforce mobility (EURYDICE 2010). Prior to the Bologna Process, the EU and the Bologna Process member countries had employed different degree systems. The UK and countries that adopt British and American higher education system employ a three-cycle degree system, which consists of bachelor's, master's, and doctoral degree cycles. Nevertheless, there were a number of countries that combined bachelor's and master's degrees into one cycle, or employ complete different degree systems. The similar situation also occurs in ASEAN and AU. Although most countries in these regions employ three-cycle degree systems, a number of countries are employing different degree systems, particularly in French-speaking countries. The diversity of degree systems has been a major obstruction to mutual degree recognition and student mobility.

In a case of the EU, the European Commission addresses the challenge by adopting the three-cycle degree system through the Bologna Process and regional qualifications frameworks. The three-cycle degree system consists of bachelor's, master's, and doctoral degree cycles. The

objectives and student outcomes of each cycle are clearly defined and distinguished from one another in the regional qualification frameworks. Based on the Sorbonne Declaration (1998), Berlin Communiqué (2003), and Framework of Qualifications in European Higher Education Area (FQ-EHEA), the first degree cycle should last at least three years comprising between 180-240 ECTS credits and the second cycle should range between 60-120 ECTS credits (EURYDICE 2010). Although the implementation has faced challenges particularly in the area of medical sciences and other professional degrees, the Bologna Process member countries use the three-cycle degree system as a reference degree system.

Unlike the EU, the degree system reforms in ASEAN and AU are still in an early stage and neither ASEAN nor AU have identified a reference degree system. Although the reforms in ASEAN and AU are modeled after the Bologna Process, the issues and contexts are quite different. Both regions have diversity in their higher education systems and level of higher education development. The harmonization of higher education systems in ASEAN focuses on qualifications and quality assurance systems and on the mobility of students. Degree system reform is not among the priorities of the harmonization process (ASEAN Secretariat 2008b, 2009a; Hawkins 2012). In comparison to the EU and ASEAN, the AU case is much more complex because of the differences in higher education systems, the lack of policy mechanisms, and scarcity of financial resources. Additionally, it is facing complicating issues. For instance, the AU must confront problems with accessibility to education along with cultural identity issues related to colonialism, political conflicts, and the threat posed by HIV/AIDS (African Union 2008; Johnson, Hirt, and Hoba 2011). The AU countries have harmonized their higher education systems through a number of regional and sub-regional initiatives. Nevertheless, none of these

initiatives considers degree system reform as a priority (African Union 2008; UNESCO 2002; Watson 2009).

2.6.2 Qualifications and Quality Assurance Reform

Qualifications and quality assurance reform are the priorities of harmonization in all three regions. The highlight of the reform is the establishment of qualifications frameworks at regional and national levels. The qualifications framework is a document describing domains and levels of student outcomes. The objectives are to establish regional and national standard competencies, promote accessibility and quality of education, and ensure comparability of degrees and qualifications across higher education institutions and countries (Allais 2010; Burke et al. 2009; European Commission 2008; Young 2007).

Higher education institutions are encouraged to use qualification frameworks as a basis and reference point for curriculum design and quality assessment. Basically, a qualifications framework provides a generic description of expected student outcomes. The descriptions are neither subject-specific nor limited to certain academic professional or vocational areas (Karseth 2010). Thus, each country and area of study can use it as a basis for developing its own framework that will facilitate mutual credit and degree recognition, promote student and workforce mobility, and enhance graduate employability (Burke et al. 2009; Rauhvargers 2004).

The student outcomes in qualifications frameworks consist of types and levels of competencies. The competencies are a combination of knowledge, skills and abilities, along with attitudes and values (European Commission 2004). In addition, qualifications frameworks describe an articulation process of each qualification in the respective system, period of assessment, and how students may move between different qualifications (Rauhvargers 2004;

Young 2007). Generally, student outcomes are jointly identified by stakeholders, including representatives from the business sector. The participation of the business sector helps employers better understand the meanings of each qualification and degree level in terms of competencies students possess after graduation (Young 2005). It enhances graduate employability and ameliorates discrepancies between the labor market needs and graduates' competencies (Cranmer 2006).

The qualifications framework has gradually become a part of quality assurance. It shifts the focus of the quality assurance to student outcomes. It also encourages the development of credit hour systems to complement the qualifications framework (Burke et al. 2009). In the case of the EU and the Bologna Process, there are two regional qualification frameworks: the Framework for Qualifications of the European Higher Education Area (FQ-EHEA) and European Qualifications Framework for Lifelong Learning (EQF). The focuses of the FQ-EHEA and EQF are on higher education and all levels of education, respectively. The FQ-EHEA identifies requirements and expected student outcomes for each higher education degree cycle. On the other hand, the EQF categorizes education into eight levels and describes expected student outcomes for each level. Both frameworks are compatible and the implementation is coordinated, particularly on the sixth-eighth levels in the EQF that are comparable to the three higher education degree cycles. The FQ-EHEA and EQF serve as overarching frameworks for education systems in the EU and the Bologna Process member countries. Each member country is encouraged to develop qualifications frameworks at the national level based on these frameworks. Although the FQ-EHEA and EQF have been adopted and implemented, a number of countries do not have a qualification framework in place (EURYDICE 2010).

The development of regional qualifications frameworks in ASEAN and the AU is still at an early stage. The majority of ASEAN and AU member countries do not have qualification frameworks or are in the early stages of implementation (Burke et al. 2009). For instance, three ASEAN member countries including Malaysia, Thailand, and the Philippines launched their national qualifications frameworks in 2007, 2009, and 2011 respectively. Brunei Darussalam is in an initial stage of developing a national qualifications framework. Five ASEAN member countries have not started developing their frameworks. Nevertheless, the trend of developing qualification frameworks and shifting the focus of quality assurance to a credit hour system has emerged in both regions (African Union 2008; Watson 2009).

The implementation of qualifications frameworks and quality assurance reform have challenges including resistance from higher education institutions, technical difficulties, and the lack of political support (African Union 2008; Burke et al. 2009; Watson 2009; Young 2005, 2007). Based on the EU case, the development and implementation of the FQ-EHEA, EQF, and national qualifications frameworks are centralized and top-down processes. Thus, there are higher education institutions that view the implementation of a qualification framework as an attempt to standardize curricula, which threatens academic freedom and autonomy (Young 2007). In addition, it is difficult for different higher education institutions and disciplines to associate their uniqueness into the curriculum design, which is based on the designated competencies in qualifications frameworks (Karseth 2010).

The implementation of qualifications frameworks and student outcomes creates technical difficulties including development of the scope and terms of student outcomes and associating them with curriculum development (Bouder 2008; Rauhvargers 2004; Young 2005, 2007). The academic study, particularly at higher education level, should be multi-disciplinary and open-

ended. Thus, the scope of student outcomes must associate with this nature and stimulate student intellectual development (Kennedy, Hyland, and Ryan 2006). There are also concerns that language and terms describing student outcomes might not correspond with every discipline. It is because the student outcomes are described through generic terms that might not have clear definitions, resulting in misinterpretation and confusion (Young 2005). Therefore, it is difficult to embed student outcomes in the curriculum and develop evaluation criteria (Karseth 2010; Young 2007).

To successfully implement qualifications frameworks and reform quality assurance, it is imperative to have stakeholders' support and commitment. It is a long and expensive process that needs to be funded, maintained, and monitored (Burke et al. 2009; Young 2005). Although there are policy frameworks in all three regions, ASEAN and AU are facing challenges in gaining political support and budgeting. In addition, there are a number of countries whose higher education systems are under multiple agencies, while other countries do not even have an agency dealing with quality assurance. These situations create potential tension and ambiguity of roles and responsibilities of each agency which impede reform efforts.

2.6.3 Government, Industry, and Higher Education Institutions Cooperation Enhancement

The objectives of government, industry, and higher education institutions cooperation are to enhance graduate employability and lifelong learning, promote research and innovation, and facilitate technology transfer (Etzkowitz and Leydesdorff 1997; Lane 2012; Leydesdorff and Meyer 2003; Schultz 2012). The tri-party cooperation directly impacts the ability of the business sector, country, and region to compete in the global economy. Each sector has roles and

responsibilities in the cooperation. The government provides policy frameworks and allocates necessary budget items aiming to reduce the incongruity between the products of higher education and the needs of business (African Union 2008; Etzkowitz 2003; Etzkowitz and Leydesdorff 1997; Mora, Vieira, and Detmer 2012). The higher education institutions have roles in producing capable graduates along with quality research and innovation (Ternouth 2012). The business sector has roles in utilizing and applying research and innovation in order to enhance quality and efficiency of products and the production process (Gulbrandsen 1997; Lane 2012; Temple 2012). This tri-party cooperation is a foundation which enhances economic competitiveness based on research, innovation and skilled labor (Etzkowitz 2003; Etzkowitz and Leydesdorff 1997; Leydesdorff and Meyer 2003).

The tri-party cooperation has significantly received policy attention at both regional and national levels. The EU emphasizes the importance of the tri-party cooperation and the role of higher education in economic development through the Lisbon Strategy (2000-2010) and Europe 2020 initiatives. Both initiatives emphasize the roles of higher education in enhancing regional competitiveness through augmenting graduate competencies and strengthening research and innovation production (Mora, Vieira, and Detmer 2012). The ASEAN addresses this issue in the AEC Blueprint, Vientiane Action Plan (2004 - 2010) and IAI Work Plan 2 (2009 - 2015). Based on these three documents, higher education is expected to be a mechanism for producing knowledge and a capable workforce. In addition, it has to play roles in reducing the development gap between the ASEAN-6 and CLMV countries. The AU includes the cooperation in a number of initiatives, for instance, the Higher Education Quality Management Initiative of Southern Africa (HEQMISA) and AU Harmonization Strategy. These two initiatives focus on curriculum

development, the congruence between higher education and business sector, and research promotion (African Union 2008; Watson 2009).

Apart from the regional initiatives, a number of countries support cooperation by establishing centers of excellence, supporting university business incubators, and including representatives from business sector in qualifications and quality assurance processes (African Union 2008; Mora, Vieira, and Detmer 2012). The center of excellence is a consortium of higher education institutions focusing on certain area of research and innovation. It facilitates mobilization of financial resources from government and business sectors and of experts from different higher education institutions. The university business incubator has roles in intellectual property management, research commercialization, and technology transfer. In addition, it facilitates university and business-sector cooperation in research, internship programs, and curriculum development (Mora, Vieira, and Detmer 2012).

Like other policy initiatives, tri-party cooperation has challenges in terms of political commitment, financial resources and management systems. Research and innovation development is an expensive initiative that requires continuous political support and appropriate level of budgetary support (African Union 2008). Many countries provide financial support to centers of excellence and university business incubators in the form of annual appropriation, research grants, and tax exemption. Nevertheless, it is difficult for the government to justify financial support because not every research breakthrough explicitly contributes to economic development. Although the majority of research and innovations become intellectual assets, higher education and the private sector are only able to transform approximately 20 percent of research and innovation to tangible products (Mora, Vieira, and Detmer 2012). In terms of management challenges, the differences in organizational culture, priorities, issues, and

governance between higher education and business sectors can obstruct the cooperation between the two sectors (Ternouth 2012; Williams 2012).

2.6.4 Regional Student and Faculty Mobility Enhancement

The student and faculty mobility program is an important mechanism and indicator of higher education system harmonization and regional economic integration. The volume of student and faculty mobility shows the mutual credit and degree recognition as well as the volume of workforce mobility. In addition, student and faculty mobility enhances graduate employability, facilitates technology and intellectual transfer, and develops cultural awareness that fosters regional integration in both economic and political aspects (Rexeisen et al. 2008).

Student mobility helps enhance graduate employability by developing necessary competencies including intellectual and communication skills, decision making and problem solving skills, and cultural awareness (Ingraham and Peterson 2004; Ingram 2005; Liu 2010; Magnan and Back 2007; Segalowitz and Freed 2004; Van Hoof and Verbeeten 2005). In addition, it helps students better understand and be aware of career options in foreign countries, which help them increase their chances of acquiring employment, particularly positions requiring international experience. (Relich and Kindler 1996). To foster student and faculty mobility, the EC and EU member countries implement a number of scholarship and fellowship programs, for instance, the ERASMUS Program (the EC), DAAD Scholarship program (Germany), Chevening Scholarship program (United Kingdom), and Nuffic Scholarship Programs (the Netherlands). In ASEAN and the AU, regional organizations have not initiated and allocated budget space for scholarship programs. Nevertheless, ASEAN and AU member countries provide aid to foreign and local students in the form of government scholarships and short-term scholarship programs,

for instance, Singapore's ASEAN Scholarship Program and scholarships under the University Mobility in Asia and the Pacific (UMAP) program (Hawkins 2012).

The policy of enhancing student and faculty mobility has faced a number of challenges including financial constraint, immigration procedures, and a diverse array of higher education systems. Financial constraints are considered the greatest barriers to student mobility (Souto-Otero et al. 2013; West and Barham 2009). Thus, it is important for regional organizations and governments to provide appropriate and adequate financial support to enhance mobility (Verbik and Lasanowski 2007). Apart from financial constraints, the difficulties in getting visa and work permits also obstruct student and faculty mobility (African Union 2008; Gürüz 2011; Rivza and Teichler 2007). Although countries in Europe such as the UK, France and Germany alleviate their visa procedures and allow students to work during their studies and after graduation, most countries still have strict visa and work permit procedures because of security and public health reasons (Gürüz 2011).

The diversity of higher education systems also affect the mobility of students and faculty. It encompasses differences in academic calendars, language of instruction, and credit, along with degree and quality assurance systems (African Union 2008; Brooks and Walters 2009; Gürüz 2011; Hughes 2008; Souto-Otero et al. 2013). The variety of academic calendars hinders short-term student mobility because it might extend students' period of study. Regarding the language of instruction, literature suggests that English is the most preferable for mobile students because it is compatible with the needs of the labor market. As a result, non-English speaking countries like Germany, France, and the Netherlands in Europe as well as Singapore and Thailand in Asia adopted the policy to offer courses and degree programs in English (Gürüz 2011).

The lack of credit transfer and mutual degree recognition systems creates concerns about the value of credit and degrees earned abroad. At present, the EU uses European Credit Transfer System (ECTS) and qualifications frameworks as tools and benchmarks to ensure the value of credit and degrees earned at higher education institutions regardless of their location. The credit transfer in ASEAN is done under the UMAP Credit Transfer Scheme (UCTS). In addition, ASEAN, ASEAN University Network (AUN) and the South East Asia Ministers of Education Organization (SEAMEO) are collaboratively developing its ASEAN credit transfer system. The AU is still in the early stages of developing a credit transfer system. Unlike the EU, ASEAN and the AU have not had regional qualifications frameworks to facilitate credit and qualifications comparison.

Although the mobility of students and faculty supports regional economic integration, there are a number of concerns. The patterns of student mobility in Europe and Asia show that students are more likely to select more developed countries for study and employment after graduation (Gürüz 2011; Pineda, Moreno, and Belvis 2008; Rivza and Teichler 2007). This has the potential to create a brain drain problem and worsen development gaps between member countries. There are also discussions concerning the genuine impact of student mobility on graduate employability. Although study abroad provides students employment opportunities in the country of study and international-related jobs, the impact of study abroad on graduate employability is not clear and depends on context. Nevertheless, East Asian students with study abroad experiences are clearly preferred by employers within services sector industries (Brooks and Walters 2009; Waters 2006). There are also concerns about the connections between student/faculty mobility, security, and epidemic control, including human trafficking, narcotics, and terrorism. Nevertheless, these issues are not a focus of the literature.

2.6.5 Trade in Higher Education Services Liberalization

The policies in supporting trade in higher education services liberalization focus on two aspects: eliminating trade barriers and increasing competitiveness in higher education services. Based on the WTO and GATS, all barriers of trade in higher education services including quantitative restriction, exclusive service suppliers, and the requirements of an economic needs test should be eliminated. The elimination of trade barriers will allow foreign higher education service providers access to domestic markets. In addition, these foreign services and services providers must receive the same treatment as local services and services providers.

Among these three regions, the EU is advancing toward the complete elimination of trade in higher education services barriers. However, ASEAN and the AU are still at an early stage of liberalizing higher education services due to the diversity of legal systems and development levels of their member countries. Many countries in both regions are reluctant to liberalize their higher education services because they consider higher education as a public service. In these countries, higher education is mainly provided and subsidized by the government. In addition, there are also concerns about the quality of education and competition from foreign higher education institutions. To keep the liberalization process going, ASEAN adopted the ASEAN-X framework. The framework allows two or more member countries that are ready to negotiate to proceed without other members. A similar process has yet to be implemented in the AU.

Although most policy agendas on trade in services are formulated and agreed upon at the regional level, regional organizations do not have authority and jurisdiction over higher education systems, education institutions, and quality assurance systems in member countries. The government and responsible agencies in each member country still have the authority to adopt, defer, and implement these policies. To enhance compatibility in policy formulation and

implementation, ASEAN, AU, and the EU created and utilized international agencies to facilitate and synchronize policy implementation at both regional and national levels. The EC and the Bologna Process member countries work closely with a number of regional organizations, for instance, European Association for Quality Assurance in Higher Education (ENQA), European University Association (EUA), and the European Student Union (ESU). ASEAN and its member countries work collaboratively with SEAMEO, AUN, and UNESCO on a number of projects. Likewise, the AU and its member countries work with a number of agencies, for instance, African Development Bank, UNESCO and Southern African Development Community (SADC).

2.7 HIGHER EDUCATION IN THAILAND

This section discusses the structure of Thai higher education, the roles of the Office of Higher Education Commission (OHEC), and policies and plans relating to ASEAN economic integration. The structure of Thai higher education identifies players and their roles in higher education administration. The roles of OHEC show the authority of government agencies and higher education policy mechanisms. Higher education policies and plans concerning ASEAN economic integration illustrate existing policies and plans and ongoing programs which address the potential impact of ASEAN economic integration.

2.7.1 The Structure of Thai Higher Education Administration

According to the *Ministry of Education Regulatory Act* (2003), the *Private Higher Education Act* (2003), and the Ministry of Education's regulations on higher education quality assurance, Thai

higher education administration and quality assurance systems are under the authority of OHEC, Ministry of Education (MOE).[7] The systems are highly centralized and controlled by the national government. Although there have been attempts to promote decentralization of higher education administration, the government is still the main policy maker, higher education provider, quality controller, and allocator of resources.

The main function of OHEC is to provide recommendations on policy, quality standards, and resource allocation criteria and frameworks. In addition, it has the authority in evaluating the quality of institutions and degree programs. OHEC administration is under the supervision of CHE, which is the national board of higher education. The members consist of 29 experts and representatives from public and private sectors, local administration, and professional associations. Apart from overseeing the OHEC administration, CHE is empowered to provide recommendations to the Minister of Education and the cabinet. The Secretary-General serves as the secretary of CHE and chief executive officer of OHEC. The OHEC consists of nine bureaus.[8] Each bureau is responsible for policy formulation and implementation in different areas, for instance, quality assurance, faculty development, and higher education resources allocation.

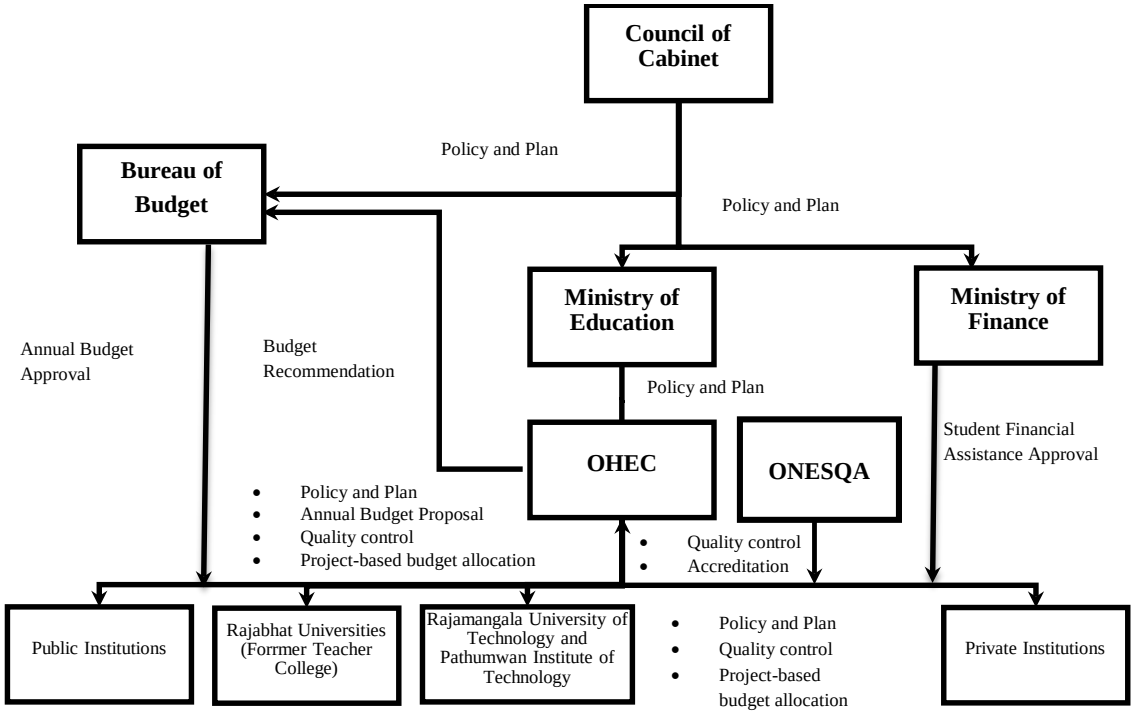
Currently, there are 173 higher education institutions under the supervision of OHEC. Every public higher education institution receives annual appropriation from the government. Faculty and staff members in each institution are either public officials or employees.
The private higher education institutions are universities and colleges operated by private or religious entities. Private institutions are not eligible for allocations in the government's annual

[7]OHEC is one of the five main organizations of the Ministry of Education. The others are the Office of Permanent Secretary, Office of the Education Council, Office of the Basic Education Commission, and Office of the Vocational Education Commission.

[8]They are the Bureau of General Administration, Bureau of Policy and Planning, Bureau of Community College Administration, Bureau of Cooperation and Promotion, Bureau of Standards and Evaluation, Bureau of Monitor and Evaluation, Bureau of International Cooperation Strategy, Bureau of Student Development, and Bureau of Personnel Administration and Development.

budget. Nevertheless, they receive government subsidies in the form of student financial assistance programs. The structure of Thai higher education is shown in Figure 2.1.

Figure 2.1. The Structure of Thai Higher Education Administration



Sources: National Education Act (1999), *Ministry of Education Regulatory Act* (2003), and *Private Higher Education Act* (2003).

According to Figure 2.1, the relationship between OHEC and higher education institutions is based on a number of laws and regulations, most notably the *Private Higher Education Act* (2003), *National Qualifications Framework* (2008), and *Civil Service in Higher Education Institutions Act* (2004) and its second revision of 2007. The laws and regulations designate OHEC to be a higher education policy maker, quality controller, and resources manager. However, OHEC does not have the full authority in allocating financial resources to

higher education institutions. Although OHEC is able to allocate budgetary items for special projects, for instance, faculty development scholarships, university business incubator projects, and student mobility programs, OHEC does not have the authority regarding annual appropriation and student financial assistance allocation. This structure creates challenges for higher education policy implementation.

2.7.2 The Functions and Roles of OHEC

OHEC's responsibility includes formulating recommendations on higher education policy, quality assurance frameworks, and resources allocation criteria. In addition, it has authority regarding evaluation of institutions and programming, along with developing a master plan for university administrators, faculty management and professional development. OHEC also has the authority to consider annual budget proposals from public universities. However, it does not have the authority to make a final decision on annual appropriation and student financial assistance programs. These decisions are under the authority of the Bureau of Budget and Ministry of Finance, respectively.

The policy recommendations and framework development processes involve a number of committees and sub-committees. The nature of the processes allows representatives from public and private higher education institutions to serve as committee members, which allow them to insert their concerns and agendas into higher education policy. However, the role of public and private higher education institutions in the processes is still limited. The committee system also provides opportunity to business sector to involve in the policy process. At present, there are business sector representatives serving as the members of CHE and a number of committees under OHEC, particularly in the area of cooperative education.

Apart from the policy and budget aspects, OHEC has the authority to accredit private institutions and their programs. According to the Ministry of Education's regulations and the *Private Higher Education Act* (2003), private institutions and their degree programs are required to get approval and accreditation from OHEC before starting operations. This requirement does not apply to public institutions, Rajabhat Universities, and Rajamangala Universities of Technology. However, every institution is obliged to submit annual reports to OHEC as a part of internal quality assurance. In addition, OHEC and the Office for National Education Standards, and Quality Assessment (Public Organization) (ONESQA) require every institution to be reviewed every five to 10 years as a part of external quality assurance. The quality assurance processes are based on the *National Qualifications Framework (2008)* and a number of MOE regulations.

2.7.3 The Enrollment in Thai Higher Education Institutions

According to OHEC, there were 2,061,905 students in Thai higher education institutions in academic year 2014 (Office of the Higher Education Commission 2015). Public institutions, Rajabhat Universities, and Rajamangala Universities of Technology were the biggest higher education providers. These three types of institutions hosted approximate 64 percent of the students in the Thai higher education system. Private institutions hosted 305,689 students (14.82 percent). The two open-admission institutions and community colleges admitted 408,915 and 13,356 students, respectively (see Table 2.3).

Table 2.3. The Enrollment in Thai Higher Education Institutions

	Certifications	Bachelor's	Master's	Doctoral	Total
1. Public Institutions	7,649	528,674	82,504	19,436	638,263
2. Rajabhat Universities and RMUTT	11,277	669,226	13,468	1,711	695,682
3. Private Institutions	3,580	264,422	35,150	2,537	305,689
4. Public Open-Admission Institutions	227	353,871	53,151	1,666	408,915
5. Community College	13,356	N/A	N/A	N/A	13,356
Total	36,089	1,816,193	184,273	25,350	2,061,905

Source: Office of Higher Education Commission (2015).

The data in Table 2.3 exhibited the public demand for higher education. The number suggested that the demand for undergraduate education was high in comparison with graduate education. It also demonstrated how each type of institutions in Thailand play role in providing higher education to Thai people. Rajabhat Universities and Rajamangala Universities of Technology heavily focused on undergraduate students. The graduate enrollment for these institutions was approximately 2.2 percent of the total enrollment. It was significantly lower than those of public and private institutions whose number of graduate students were 16 percent and 12.32 percent of their total enrollments, respectively.

2.8 THAI EDUCATION POLICY AND ASEAN ECONOMIC INTEGRATION

This section examines Thai higher education policy relating to ASEAN economic integration. It explores contemporary higher education policy and its connection to ASEAN economic integration. It covers four policy issues: trade in higher education liberalization, research and innovation enhancement, graduate and workforce development, and higher education systems harmonization. The discussion is based on the *Second 15-year Long Range Plan for Higher Education* and the *11th Higher Education Development Plan*, education laws and regulations, and on-going projects.

OHEC considers ASEAN integration as a pressing matter that poses significant impact on the Thai higher education system. However, long range and higher education development plans do not directly address this issue (Office of the Higher Education Commission 2008). Both plans provide general policy frameworks for Thai higher education development and the role of higher education in economic and social development. OHEC addressed the potential impacts of ASEAN integration by launching the *Strategies for the ASEAN Community in 2015*. The goal of the strategy is to enhance the competiveness of Thai higher education institutions and graduates in ASEAN. The strategies suggest that Thailand and ASEAN should learn from the EU experiences and adapt good practices to the region, especially regarding mutual qualifications and degree recognition processes and student mobility programs. The main components of the strategies focus on enhancing the graduates' quality, higher education institutions' competitiveness, and Thailand's role as an education and research hub in ASEAN. Although OHEC launched the strategies for ASEAN integration, the implementation is still in an early stage. It is facing a number of challenges, including the lack of supporting resources, resistance

from higher education institutions, and limited awareness and interest from university administrators, faculty, and students.

2.8.1 Trade in Higher Education Services

As a member of ASEAN, Thailand is unconditionally bound by the AEC Blueprint to liberalize higher education services by 2015. In terms of laws and regulations, the *National Education Act* (1999) and the *Private Higher Education Act* (2003) do not obstruct trade in higher education liberalization. In addition, the *Foreign Business Act* (1999) allows foreign HEIs to be founded and operate in Thailand. The main obstruction for foreign higher education service providers is the *Land Act* (1954), which does not allow foreign naturalized persons to own land in Thailand. Oher obstructions include qualifications of foreign faculty, language of instruction, and requirements on the nationalities of a university president and chairman of the university board of trustees.

Although laws and regulations facilitate trade in higher education services liberalization, higher education institutions usually resist and disagree with Thailand's positions and bilateral and multi-lateral negotiation frameworks, including ASEAN. Thai higher education institutions have had limited role in the negotiations, which are led by either Ministry of Commerce or Ministry of Foreign Affairs. In addition, university administrators are usually not interested or even aware of the existing regulations and on-going trade negotiations. The liberalization of higher education services created both threats and opportunities to the Thai higher education system and institutions. The main concerns include potential competition from foreign higher education institutions, emergence of on-line degree programs, and encroachment of low-quality higher education intuitions and programs. Meanwhile, the liberalization of trade in higher

education services provides opportunities for Thai higher education institutions to recruit more foreign students.

To address these threats and opportunities, OHEC and higher education institutions have actively executed a number of initiatives, including offering more programs using English as a language of instruction, organizing Thai higher education seminars and exhibitions in ASEAN member countries and China, and revising quality assurance regulations for online and traditional degree programs. In addition, OHEC is working with the Royal Thai Police, Ministry of Foreign Affairs, and Ministry of Labor on facilitating issuance and renewal of student and faculty visas and work permits. However, the implementation is still at an early stage and facing challenges, including scarcity of resources, language capacity of faculty and staff, and coordination between government agencies and higher education institutions.

2.8.2 Research and Innovation Enhancement

Being aware of the importance of research and innovation on economic development, the Thai government has promoted Thailand as the education, research and development, and conference hub of ASEAN. One of the policies is to develop national research universities which are recognized internationally. To support this policy, OHEC implemented two projects: the National Research University Project (NRUP) and the Higher Education Research Promotion Project (HERP). The first phase of the NRUP was implemented during 2010-2012. The objectives were to enhance university research capability, promote Thailand as a regional education and research hub, and produce human resources to support research and innovation needs (Office of the Higher Education Commission 2011).

The first phase of the projects was funded by an economic stimulus, which was not a part of government annual budget. OHEC employed an incentive-based budget allocation model to encourage higher education institutions to participate in the projects. This budget management approach gave OHEC flexibility in project implementation and budget allocation. During 2010-2012, a number of higher education institutions applied for the National Research University Project, but only nine institutions were selected. All of them received budget allocations for developing research infrastructure and conducting research. Other institutions were categorized into three groups: specialized university, undergraduate university, and community college. The selection and categorization were based on the OHEC criteria and each institution's mission and specialization.

The projects are concrete steps to enhance university's capability in research and innovation. However, research and innovation require continuous financial support from the government and business sectors. It is important for Thailand and OHEC to seek additional financial resources, given that the economic stimulus money is no longer available after 2012. In addition, it is important to have a clear development plan for higher education intuitions in the other three categories. Without a coherent development plan and continuous financial support, it will be very difficult for Thailand to achieve its envisioned goals to become the education and research hub of ASEAN.

2.8.3 Human Capital Development

The OHEC policies on human capital development aim at enhancing graduate employability in both national and regional labor markets. The policies are OHEC's responses to the increasing roles of employers in shaping higher education as both a supporter and user of higher education

products (Eckel and King 2004). Currently, higher education intuitions are facing two related challenges: an incongruity between graduates' competencies and the needs of employers in addition to looming competition between Thai graduates and those from other ASEAN member countries. ASEAN economic integration will create a greater flow of trade and mobility of workers across borders. After 2015, labor markets will significantly expand, shifting from national to regional spheres. To seek employment, graduates and workers must excel in their professional skills and acquire additional ones, including foreign language acquisition and the capacity for cross-cultural communication.

To address these challenges, OHEC launched two initiatives: university and business-sector cooperation and the National Qualifications Framework (NQF). The university and business-sector cooperation focuses on increasing the role of employers in curriculum development, providing internship opportunities for students, and enhancing research commercialization and technology transfer. The NQF provides competencies frameworks for curriculum development. The five domains of learning outcomes in the NQF cover both professional and social competencies. The NQF will ensure that graduates possess necessary competencies for seeking employment. In addition, it will allow employers to better understand graduates' qualifications and recruit those who obtain competencies necessary to work in their establishments.

Apart from graduate employability, OHEC has implemented the teacher development project. The project was developed on a principle that the quality of teacher significantly affects the quality of basic and vocational education. Augmenting the quality of high school teachers will likely enhance the quality of secondary instruction, which will ensure graduates have the preparation they need to succeed at the tertiary level. The teacher development project focuses

on enhancing the quality of teachers in the areas of Thai and English languages, basic sciences, and mathematics. It is an on-going project facing a number of challenges, particularly regarding the coordination among related government agencies and graduate job placement.

2.8.4 Higher Education System Harmonization

OHEC is very active in harmonizing the Thai higher education system with those in ASEAN member countries. The policies mainly focus on quality assurance and qualifications recognition, aiming to support the mobility of students, workers, and higher education services. OHEC has worked with the ASEAN University Network and SEAMEO Regional Centre for Higher Education and Development to develop regional a quality assurance framework and credit transfer system.

To support this development, OHEC has implemented a number of projects to create awareness of ASEAN integration and to enhance student and faculty mobility. Currently, there are two programs that focus on student and faculty mobility between Thailand and ASEAN member countries. The programs provide opportunities to students to study or conduct research in other ASEAN member countries for up to one academic year. Although incentives and financial support are provided to participants, OHEC still struggles with enticing interest from students and higher education intuitions, in comparison with other student and faculty mobility programs.

Thailand is also working with the European Commission to compare and exchange good practices in higher education system harmonization. The EU-Thailand cooperation focuses on the development and implementation of the NQF and qualifications frameworks for each area of study. Implementing the NQF will likely strengthen the comparability of degrees offered by

HEIs within ASEAN. Previous distinctions such as period of study and degree titles will be replaced by harmonization between institutions operating under the NQF framework. Additionally, the NQF will support the negotiation and implementation of mutual recognition agreements, enhancing the mobility of workers and people within ASEAN member nations.

The harmonization of higher education systems in ASEAN is a long, arduous journey. It requires policy and financial supports from every ASEAN member country and regional organization. OHEC is working with other government agencies in Thailand and other member ASEAN countries to foster this harmonization. However, the process is facing challenges, most notably the differences in higher education and quality assurance systems, diverse levels of economic and education development among member countries, and lack of support from higher education intuitions.

2.9 SUMMARY OF THE REVIEW OF THE LITERATURE

The review of the literature provides ideas on the regional economic integration and the roles of higher education in supporting its goals. The literature suggests that higher education is included in regional economic integration as both a goal and supporting element. As a goal, it is one of the 12 tradable services which will be liberalized. Regarding the supporting element, higher education plays roles in enhancing economic development and reducing development gaps between member countries. These roles are implemented through a number of initiatives such as higher education system harmonization, student mobility programs, and collaboration between government, higher education, and the business sector. To enhance the roles of higher education, the policies must support the goals and prepare for the impact of regional economic integration.

The findings from the literature review will be used to guide the research design, conceptual framework, data collection, and data analysis.

3.0 RESEARCH DESIGN

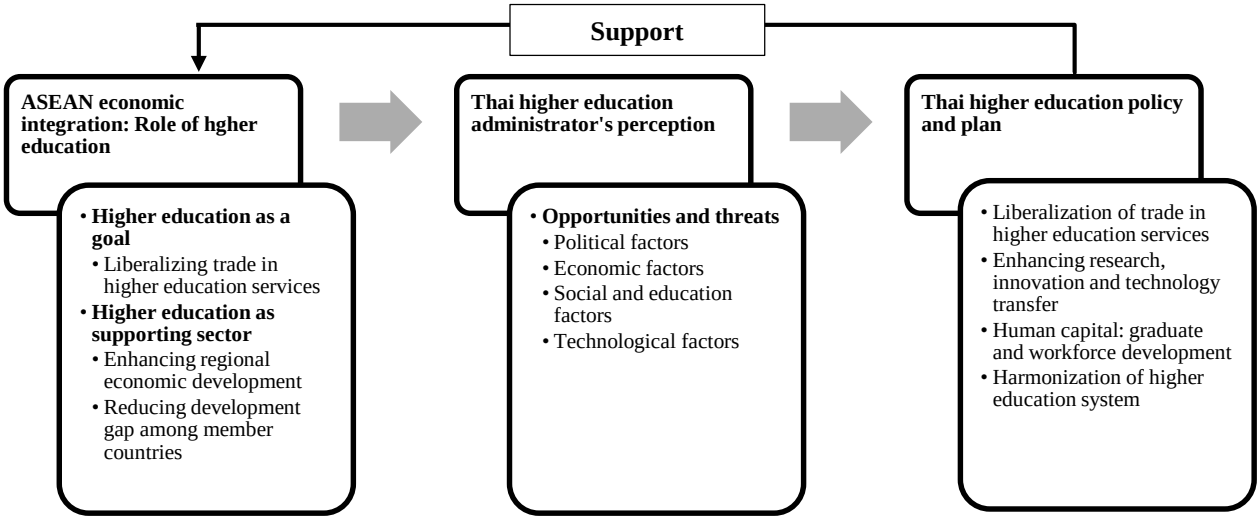
This section discusses the conceptual framework and methodology of this study. The conceptual framework is based on three frameworks and theories: the World Economic Forum (WEF) framework for economic competitiveness, human capital theory, and strategic planning theory. The conceptual framework is a guideline for questionnaire development, data collection, and data analysis. The methodology section consists of data collection, data analysis method, and study population. The methods of data collection include document review and a survey based on a pre-developed questionnaire. The data analysis technique utilizes descriptive statistics and exploratory data analysis. It aims at identifying patterns and linkages between higher education administrators' perception, ASEAN expectations on higher education and Thai higher education policies and planning. Study populations are Thai higher education administrators at the Office of Higher Education Commission, MOE, and Thai higher education institutions.

3.1 CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK

The conceptual framework is developed on a basis of multiple frameworks and theories including the WEF framework for economic competitiveness, human capital theory, the GATS framework and strategic planning theories. The WEF framework explains the roles of higher education in enhancing national and regional economic competitiveness at each stage of

economic development. Human capital theory lends itself to the understanding of the roles of formal education in economic development, along with workforce development and education investment (Barro and Lee 2001; Becker 1964; Langhammer 1999; Nafukho, Hairston, and Brooks 2004; Paulsen 2001; Savvides and Stengos 2009). The GATS framework describes the nature and process of liberalizing trade in services at both global and regional levels (World Trade Organization 1991, 2001, 2006). In addition, it explains the mode of service supply and potential barriers to trade in services. Theories on strategic planning provide ideas on how political and economic contexts like regional economic integration affect higher education policy and the formulation and execution of university plans(Allison and Kaye 2011; Bryson 2004; Schraeder 2002). It also explains how and why Thailand positions its higher education system within ASEAN. The conceptual framework is as shown in Figure 3.1.

Figure 3.1. Conceptual Framework



3.1.1 WEF Framework for Economic Competitiveness

WEF framework describes three stages of economic development: factor-driven economies, efficiency-driven economies, and innovative-driven economies. At each stage, the economic competitiveness level depends on different factors. In factor-driven economies, countries compete based on price and basic products. Thus, economic competitiveness depends on well-functioning public agencies and private institutions, unskilled-labor and natural resources. Once countries become more competitive, wages will rise but to maintain economic competitiveness, they cannot increase price levels. Then, countries will move to an efficiency-driven economic stage of development, in which they need to increase efficiency and productivity to maintain price levels and economic competitiveness. At this stage, economic competitiveness increasingly relies on higher education and training, utilization of existing technology, and goods, and labor markets efficiency.

Eventually, price level, existing products, and production process cannot generate revenue that sustains wage level. Countries are forced to move to an innovative-driven economic stage. At this stage, countries are able to maintain their competitiveness by innovating and developing new and unique products through the most efficient and sophisticated production processes. Thus, the ability to discover and adopt new and existing technology will determine the level of economic competitiveness at this stage of development (World Economic Forum 2011). The connection between the three stages of development and competitiveness factors is shown in Table 3.1.

Table 3.1. Stage of Economic Development and Competitiveness Factors

Stage of Economic Development	Competitiveness Factors
1. Factor-driven economies	• Public and private organizations performance • Infrastructure readiness • Stable macroeconomic environment • Quality of public health and basic education services
2. Efficiency-driven economies	• Quality of higher education and training • Goods, services and the labor market efficiency and flexibility • Financial market development • Technological readiness • Domestic and foreign market size
3. Innovation-driven economies	• Business network, strategy and operation • Innovation capability

Source: World Economic Forum (2011).

According to the WEF framework, higher education plays important roles in enhancing economic competitiveness, particularly in efficiency-driven and innovative-driven stages of development. Higher education assists countries to move beyond simple production processes and products by creating a skilled and well-educated workforce and developing research and innovation that will benefit the business sector. The well-educated workers will be able to adapt quickly to the changing contexts and needs of production systems and markets. The countries' ability to generate research and innovation will provide competitive advantage, particularly when the possibility of integrating and adapting existing technologies tends to diminish. The development of a well-educated workforce, along with sophisticated research and innovation capacity requires extensive collaboration between higher education institutions and the business sector. Support from the government is also needed, such as financial assistance and intellectual property protection.

Higher education also indirectly improves economic competitiveness at the factor-driven economies stage through teacher and health professional development. At this stage of economic development, economic competitiveness depends on healthy workforces who are able to perform sophisticated tasks. The workers with poor health conditions rarely perform to their full potential, thus significantly increasing companies' expenses. Likewise, the workers with inadequate education will be able to perform only simple manual tasks. They will struggle to adapt to changing contexts and have issues with performing more sophisticated tasks. The quality of teachers and health professionals will ensure that workers receive basic education of adequate quality and public health services, thus increasing their efficiency and productivity.

3.1.2 Higher Education, Human Capital, and Economic Development

According to the theory, human capital is an important variable of economic development at both microeconomic and macroeconomic levels (Barro 2001; Barro and Lee 2001). At the microeconomic level, greater educational attainment increases personal income level (Becker and Chiswick 1966; Ciccone and Peri 2006; Gundlach 1999; Psacharopoulos 1994; Psacharopoulos and Patrinos 2004; Savvides and Stengos 2009; Slottje 2010; Stanfield 2009). At the macroeconomic level, the well-educated workforce will increase the efficiency of production process and facilitate the invention and absorption of new technology from more developed countries (Nafukho, Hairston, and Brooks 2004). This study uses human capital theory to explain the relationship between higher education policy and planning and economic development at the macroeconomic level. The focus is on the roles of higher education in enhancing graduate employability, research and innovation ability, and life-long learning.

3.1.3 Strategic Planning Process

Strategic planning is a formal and systematic process of rational decisions-making which moves organizations in a certain direction (Bryson 2004; Dooris, Kelley, and Trainer 2004; Presley and Leslie 1999; Schraeder 2002). Government agencies and higher education institution embraced the idea of strategic planning as a tool to identify directions, strategies, and best practices for current and changing contexts. Basically, the strategic planning process consists of an environmental scan, organizational assessment, and strategy and priority identification (Alfred 2006; Bryson 2004; Schmidtlein and Milton 1989). The environmental scan and organizational assessment is usually referred to as a strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, and threats (SWOT) analysis. The objective of this analysis is to identify organizational strengths and weaknesses in consideration of external opportunities and threats. The framework for the SWOT analysis is based on political, economic, social, and technological contexts.

This study considers ASEAN economic integration as the environment of the Thai higher education system. The basic assumption is that potential benefits and challenges caused by the integration will first impact Thai higher education administrators' perceptions and eventually impact higher education policies and plans. The perceived impacts of policies and corresponding adjustment of strategic plans will show how Thailand positions its higher education system within ASEAN and prepares to utilize and cope with the challenges of regional integration.

3.2 METHODOLOGY

Based on the conceptual framework, the methodology was developed to identify necessary data to address the research questions, data collection method, study population, and approach to data analysis. The overarching question of this study is how ASEAN economic integration will impact Thai higher education policy and planning. To address this question, this study collected data on Thai higher education administrators' perceptions of the potential impacts of ASEAN economic integration on Thai higher education policies and plans. Furthermore, this study addressed how ASEAN policies and plans will impact higher education in the region.

The administrators' perceptions showed their perceived opportunities and threats from ASEAN economic integration. The data also illustrated similarities and differences concerning how Thai higher education administrators at government agencies and different types of higher education institutions perceive the potential impacts of integration. Thai higher education policies and plans revealed how Thai higher education administrators include their perceptions into policy agendas. In addition, it exhibited how Thailand positions itself within ASEAN. The ASEAN expectation on higher education provided ideas concerning linkages between regional organizations and its member countries' policies.

The data collection included an online survey based on a pre-developed questionnaire, a semi-structured interview, and document review. The questionnaires for the online survey consist of demographic questions and a series of closed-ended and open-ended questions. The study population was Thai higher education administrators at the Office of Higher Education Commission (OHEC) in Thailand's MOE and every individual higher education institution under the supervision of OHEC. The interview is based on pre-developed questions that have been

screened by a pilot survey group. The participants in follow-up interviews were selected from participants in the survey.

The document review focused on ASEAN and Thai official documents, including policy documents, meeting minutes, joint statements, declarations, and speeches. The data analysis identified emerging trends in Thai higher education policy and planning, perceived benefits and challenges, and how Thailand is preparing to cope with the impacts of ASEAN economic integration. It helped to identify the linkages between Thai higher education policy and its roles in supporting ASEAN economic integration.

3.3 DATA COLLECTION

Data collection consists of survey and interviews with Thai higher education administrators, and a collection of Thailand and ASEAN policy and plan documents, ASEAN Leaders and Ministers of Education's joint statements and declarations, and other related documents. The population in the survey consisted of 11 administrators from OHEC and the ONESQA, along with 150 administrators from every Thai higher education institution under the supervision of OHEC, with the exception of two priest training universities[9] and 21 community colleges.[10] The nature, objectives, and missions of the religious universities and community colleges are not relevant to the purposes of this study. The online survey was based on the pre-developed questionnaire. It consists of a series of closed-ended and open-ended questions, which are guided by the

[9]Although both priest universities are under the supervision of OHEC, the universities administrations are under the authority of the Supreme *Patriarch* of Thailand. The main objectives of the universities are to educate Buddhist priests in the area of Buddhist philosophy and linguistics.

[10]Community colleges in Thailand do not offer degree programs. Their objective is to provide vocational and professional training according to the needs of local communities.

conceptual framework. Following the survey, the semi-structured interviews were conducted with 14 higher education administrators. The interview is based on pre-developed questions.

The survey provided data on how Thai higher education administrators perceive the potential impact, how Thai higher education positions itself in ASEAN, and the expected roles of Thai higher education in supporting ASEAN economic integration. The findings from the survey were verified and triangulated by data from the interviews, which aimed at getting in-depth data on how Thai higher education perceive ASEAN economic integration and OHEC policies, and integrate them into their plans. The findings of the survey and interviews were then verified and triangulated by the data from the documents review.

Evidence of these data directly addressed the first and second study questions. The collection of policy documents exhibited how Thailand includes ASEAN economic integration in Thai higher education planning. Evidence included the content in higher education contextual analysis completed by OHEC during the formulation of *the Second 15-Year Long Range Plan for Higher Education* in 2007, priority issues, and on-going programs that support the goals of ASEAN economic integration. These data addressed the third study question. The linkages between study questions, data and evidence, and collection methods are as shown in Table 3.2.

Table 3.2. Data Collection Methods and Evidence

Data to be Collected	Evidence	Method
Study question 1: Perception toward ASEAN economic integration		
• Importance of ASEAN economic integration	• How administrators prioritize ASEAN economic integration in comparison with other issues in higher education	• Survey • Interviews
• Perceived opportunities for higher education	• Administrator's perception of opportunities and potential benefits	
• Perceived threats to higher education	• Administrator's perception of potential challenges	
Study question 2: OHEC and higher education institutions preparation for the potential impact of ASEAN economic integration in their policies and plans		
• Thailand's positions and perceived roles in trade in higher education services liberalization	• Administrator's perception of o trade in higher education services liberalization o roles of higher education in enhancing research and innovation o roles of higher education in enhancing higher education and business-sector cooperation o regional higher education harmonization o Barriers in policy implementation	• Survey • Interviews • Document review
• Perceived role of higher education in ASEAN economic integration.		
• Perceived challenges in implementation		
Study question 3: Policy connection between OHEC, institutions, and ASEAN		
• Policy issues concerning trade in higher education services liberalization	• Roles of Thailand in harmonizing higher education system in the region • The current and expected roles of OHEC in the policy implementation process • Policy content on o research and innovation o developing human capital o government, university, and-business-sector cooperation	• Survey • Document review
• Policy issues on preparation for the impact of ASEAN economic integration		
• Expected roles of OHEC		

3.3.1 Survey

To enhance the response rate, the surveys were made available through e-mail, mailed letters, and Qualtrics Survey Services. These approaches alleviated logistical and geographical challenges of data collection. The development of the questionnaire was based on the following topics: potential benefits and challenges of ASEAN economic integration, liberalization of trade in education services, the role of higher education in supporting economic development, and harmonization of higher education systems in ASEAN.

After the IRB approved the study and questionnaire, the questionnaire and link to the online survey were sent to each participant by e-mail. In addition, the letter and paper questionnaire were also sent to participants. Each participant had the option to complete the attached paper questionnaire or the online survey. The second e-mails were sent to remind participants two weeks after the first e-mail and letter were sent. After the period of survey, data were reviewed and coded using Stata data analysis software.

3.3.2 Oral Interviews

All survey respondents who expressed their willingness to participate in the interviews were approached through e-mail. Of them, 14 administrators agreed to participate. The interviews were conducted by the author via phone or Skype. The follow-up interviews aimed to obtain additional data concerning policy formulation and implementation, along with linkages between institution policies and those of OHEC's.

3.3.3 Population

The population of the study consists of two groups: higher education administrators at OHEC and Thai higher education institutions. The number of participants (n) in this study is 161, consisting of 11 administrators from OHEC and ONESQA, and 150 administrators from higher education institutions under the supervision of OHEC. The sampling technique for university administrators was criterion sampling, in which participants were chosen based on specific criteria (Mertens 2010). The administrators were chosen based on their responsibilities in the area of policy and international cooperation.

According to the Thai higher education administration structure, OHEC is a government agency responsible for providing policy recommendations, managing higher education, and promoting higher education development on the basis of academic freedom and excellence. At OHEC, the Secretary-General serves as the chief executive officer and is supported by three Deputy Secretary-Generals and one Assistant Secretary-General. The Senior Advisors serve as consultants in specific areas, for instance, international cooperation and plan formulation and execution. However, all senior advisor positions are vacant or under a selection process. The nine bureaus are administered by directors.

Administrator participants were at the vice president level or someone of an equivalent position. Administrators were selected based on their responsibilities on issues related to the impact of ASEAN economic integration and liberalization of trade in higher education services. The list and contact information of these administrators was obtained from the OHEC.

3.3.4 Document Review

This study included a review of several kinds of documents such as meeting minutes, speeches delivered by the administrators, policy documents, and other documents offered by the participants as evidence. These documents provided evidence that was not directly collected by the survey. The document review helped strengthen the overall understanding of Thai administrators' perceptions of higher education policies and plans concerning ASEAN economic integration. As part of the document review, emerging themes and trends, consistencies and inconsistencies between the review and survey were recorded, analyzed, and included as a part of the study results. Apart from Thai higher education policy and plan documents, ASEAN documents which concerned economic integration were reviewed to determine the ASEAN's expectations of the roles of higher education in supporting the integration goals.

3.4 DATA ANALYSIS

The data from the survey and document review were coded and analyzed to identify patterns and emerging trends of Thai administrators' perceptions toward ASEAN economic integration. The survey data were categorized into four groups based on the types of organization: OHEC, public higher education institutions, Rajabhat Universities (former teacher colleges) and Rajamangala Universities of Technology (former technical colleges), and two types of private higher education institutions, including master's universities, and baccalaureate colleges and special-focus institutions. Cross sectional data analysis was performed to identify similarities and differences in the perceptions between OHEC administrators and each type of higher education

institution, along with comparisons between administrators of different types of higher education institutions. In addition, the existing policies concerning ASEAN economic integration were also reviewed and compared.

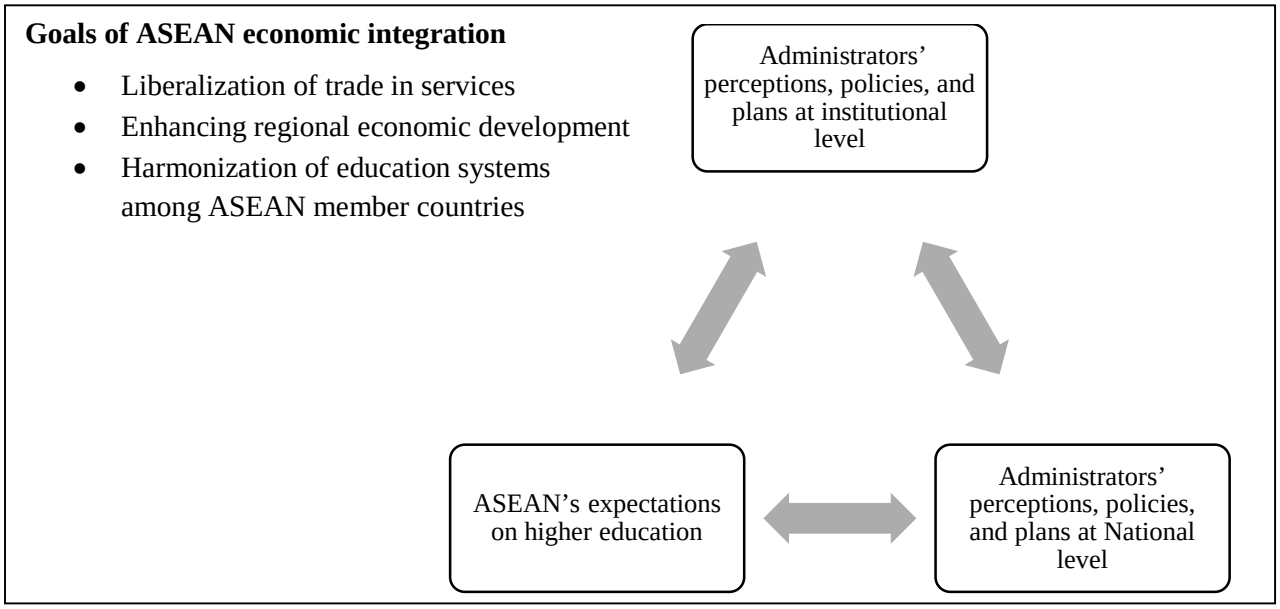
The similarities of perceptions, policies, and plans illustrated emerging trends in Thai higher education toward ASEAN economic integration. On the contrary, the differences between OHEC and higher education institutions demonstrated gaps and discrepancies between higher education policies and plans at national and institutional levels. The comparison was based on the roles of higher education in supporting the goals of ASEAN economic integration (see Table 3.3).

Table 3.3. Cross Sectional Data Analysis

<table>
<tr><th rowspan="3">Types of Organizations</th><th colspan="4">Goals of ASEAN Economic Integration</th></tr>
<tr><td>Liberalization of Trade in HE Services</td><td colspan="3">• Enhancing regional economic development
• Reducing development gap among member countries</td></tr>
<tr><td>Research and Technology Transfer</td><td>Human capital development</td><td>Harmonization of HE systems</td></tr>
<tr><td>1. OHEC
2. Public HE institutions
3. Rajabhat Universities and Rajamangala Universities of Technology
4. Private HE institutions
4.1. Master’s Colleges and Universities
4.2. Baccalaureate Colleges and special-focus institutions</td><td colspan="2">• Potential benefits and challenges based on the four modes of services supply
• The current policy and plan execution
• The future policy and plan</td><td colspan="2">• Potential benefits and challenges
• The position of each type of organization in ASEAN
• The current and future policy and plan execution in the areas of
o Government, university and business-sector cooperation
o Qualifications and quality assurance
o Student and faculty mobility</td></tr>
<tr><td>Data analysis</td><td colspan="4">Similarities and differences in
• Perceived impacts of ASEAN economic integration
• The current policy and plan execution
• The future policies and plans</td></tr>
</table>

The emerging trends in administrators' perceptions and higher education policies and plans at national and institutional levels were compared to the ASEAN expectations of the role of higher education in supporting the integration. The comparison was based on the goals of ASEAN economic integration, policies, and initiatives that support such goals. The comparison will exhibit linkages between higher education policies at regional, national, and institutional levels. The data analysis model is displayed in Figure 3.2.

Figure 3.2. Data Analysis Model



Based on the findings, policy recommendations were provided, particularly in enhancing the roles of higher education in supporting and preparing for the integration, and enhancing congruence between higher education policies at institutional, national and regional levels. The role of higher education in supporting the integration was recommended based on its impact on enhancing economic development and reducing development gaps within the region. Finally, the

recommendations on enhancing policies and congruence of planning focused on communication between regional organizations, governments, and higher education institutions.

3.5 SUMMARY OF THE RESEARCH DESIGN

The conceptual framework is based on the WEF framework for economic competitiveness, human capital theory and strategic planning theory. The framework guided the selections of study population, data collection, and data analysis approaches. The population in the study consisted of 161 Thai higher education administrators at both government and institutional levels. Every Thai higher education institution under the supervision on OHEC was included in this study, except priest universities and community colleges due to the irrelevancy of their missions to the study's objectives.

The data collection methods included a survey based on a pre-developed questionnaire, oral interviews, and document review. The survey was conducted through e-mail and Qualtrics Survey Services. The data analysis technique was mainly composed of descriptive statistics and exploratory data analysis. It aimed at identifying patterns and linkages between higher education administrators' perception, ASEAN expectations on higher education and Thai higher education policies and plans. Based on the findings, policy recommendations were provided.

4.0 ASEAN EXPECTATIONS AND THE ADMINISTRATORS' PECEPTIONS TOWARD ASEAN ECONOMIC INTEGRATION

This chapter consists of three sections, which cover the political instability in Thailand and its effects on higher education, ASEAN expectations from the higher education sector, and the administrators' perceptions toward ASEAN integration. The political instability section explores the current political situation in Thailand and its impacts on the higher education sector. The discussion was based on the document review. The ASEAN expectations segment was based on ASEAN official documents, for instance, the ASEAN Charter, Leaders and Ministers of Education statement, and Blueprints for ASEAN Community. This segment investigated education policy at the regional level, which provides a reference point for Thai higher education policy. The findings on administrators' perceptions were based on Thai government official documents, survey, and interviews. This section exhibited how Thai higher education administrators perceive the potential benefits and challenges from economic integration.

4.1 POLITICAL INSTABILITY AND ITS EFFECTS ON THAI HIGHER EDUCATION ADMINISTRATION AND POLICY

Following a period of widespread political instability, confrontation, and violence, the Royal Thai Army, led by General Prayuth Chanocha, launched a coup d'état against the caretaker

government on 22 May 2014. It was the consequence of failed attempts to peacefully end political confrontation between the caretaker government and anti-government groups. The coup ended the political deadlock which came about when Prime Minister Shinawatra and nine members of the cabinet were impeached by the Constitutional Court on charges of abuse of power for transferring senior government officials.

After the coup d'état, the caretaker government, House of Representatives, and Senate were immediately dissolved. In addition, the 2007 Constitution was repealed, replaced by the present interim constitution. The military established a junta called the “National Council for Peace and Order” (NCPO) to govern the nation. The interim constitution gives the authority to NCPO to appoint members of the National Legislature Assembly, the Prime Minister, and the members of cabinet. As a result, General Prayuth was appointed to be the Prime Minister, and both the parliament and cabinet are dominated by the military staff and individuals who opposed the previous government.

The government dissolved a number of the former government’s policies and projects, for instance, the rice mortgage scheme and free computer tablets for primary students. In terms of education administration, the structure of the MOE and OHEC, and the relationship between OHEC and higher education institutions did not change. However, the NCPO removed and shuffled a number of MOE senior officials from their positions, including the Secretary-General for Basic Education and Secretary-General for Higher Education (Royal Thai Government Gazette 2014). The military government also appointed Admiral Narong Pipatanasai and Lieutenant General Surachet Chaiwong to be the Minister and Deputy Minister of Education, respectively. These appointments proved the tremendous military influence and power, and demonstrated the attempt to secure total control of the country’s administration. Without

background knowledge and experience in education policy, the government provided support to the military-appointed ministers by appointing Krissanapong Kirtikara as the second Deputy Minister of Education. Krissanapong is a former Secretary-General for Higher Education, and President of King Mongkut's University of Technology Thonburi, one of the elite public higher education institutions. During his tenure at the OHEC, he had a significant role in developing the *Second 15-Year Long Range Plan for Higher Education*, which is the current master plan for Thai higher education development.

Not only did the political turmoil in 2014 demonstrate the influence of military, but also the pattern of political instability, which has plagued Thailand for over two decades. Since 1991, Thailand has gone through three military coups, four constitutions, and 11 Prime Ministers. These numbers illustrate the worsening political situation among democratic countries in ASEAN[11] and, perhaps, the Asia-Pacific region. The political instability hinders political, economic, and social development. Likewise, it often stalls the continuity of higher education development and policy implementation, as pointed out by the OHEC administrators in this study. The slow development and delayed introduction of the *Second 15-Year Long Range Plan for Higher Education*, National Qualifications Framework, and the New Higher Education Act are prime examples of the impacts of political instability on Thai higher education sector. Although this relationship is not the focus of this study, it is considered as one of the factors that contribute to the formulation and implementation of the policy toward ASEAN economic integration.

[11] At the same period, Indonesia and the Philippines have had six presidents, Cambodia, Malaysia, and Singapore have had four, three, and two Prime Ministers, respectively.

4.2 ASEAN EXPECTATIONS FROM HIGHER EDUCATION

Based on *ASEAN Charter* and *Roadmap for an ASEAN Community 2009-2015*, the goals were categorized into three aspects, including political and security, economic, and socio-cultural. Regarding the political and security aspect, the main goal is to promote a stable, secured, and peaceful region. In addition, the shared norms and values have been emphasized at both regional and national levels, aiming at creating regional rules that apply to every member country. In terms of economic goals, expectations include enhancing regional economic development, creation of a single market and production base, and promoting professional qualifications recognition. The socio-cultural goals focus on human resource development, social justice, human rights promotion, and the creation of an ASEAN identity (ASEAN Secretariat 2009b). To support these goals, ASEAN expects the education sector of each member country to include them in their policies. According to *Cha-am Hua Hin Declaration of 2009*, ASEAN leaders identified the roles of education in supporting ASEAN goals (see Table 4.1).

The ASEAN has encouraged member countries to review and revise education regulations to facilitate and support ASEAN policy implementation. In the higher education sector, the priorities are on human capital development, research and innovation enhancement, and education systems harmonization (ASEAN Secretariat 2008b, 2009a). The human capital development concentrates on professional and social competencies, for instance, foreign languages and cultures. It also gives priority to education accessibility, teacher development, and education and business-sector cooperation. The research and innovation enhancement emphasizes the importance of cooperation among government, universities, and the business sector among member countries. It aims at promoting joint-research programs, fostering technology transfer and commercialization, and collaborating with the business sector to produce

quality graduates (ASEAN Secretariat 2009b). The focus of education systems harmonization is mutual credit and degree recognition, based on comparable competencies frameworks and student and faculty mobility programs.

Table 4.1. Roles of Education in Supporting ASEAN Goals

ASEAN Goals	Roles of Education
1. Political and Security	• Promote the ASEAN Charter, democratic principles, and human rights through the school curriculum. • Enhance cultural awareness among teachers through exchange programs and online database. • Strengthen school leader's network at regional level.
2. Economic	• Develop qualifications and skills frameworks at national level. • Promote the mobility of students, faculty, and workers. • Strengthen cooperation between education and business sectors, particularly in developing competencies-based professional standards.
3. Socio-cultural	• Develop common content on ASEAN, and include it in the school and university's curriculum. • Promote ASEAN languages and cultures in the school curriculum. • Enhance cross-border youth and student exchange. • Promote and support accessibility to education, life-long education, and the goals of "Education for All" initiative. • Establish the ASEAN educational research convention to promote research and development.

Source: ASEAN Secretariat (2009).

To enhance policy implementation, ASEAN Ministers of Education decided to convene ASEAN Education Ministers Meetings (ASED) on a regular basis. The decision was endorsed by the AEAN Leaders in the 11th ASEAN Summit in Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia in 2005 (ASEAN Secretariat 2005). After 2005, the ASEAN Education Ministers meet annually in conjunction

with the SEAMEO Council Conference (SEAMEC).[12] Its joint statements are considered the ASEAN policies on education cooperation. The implementation of these policies has been carried out and coordinated by the Senior Officials on Education (SOM-ED)[13] and AUN.

Since the first ASED in 2006, ASEAN Education Ministers have emphasized the roles of education in creating the ASEAN identity, developing human capital, and strengthening education cooperation with ASEAN dialogue partners and UNESCO (ASEAN Secretariat 2006, 2010, 2012b). Based on these policy agendas, and the blueprints for APSC, AEC and ASCC, ASEAN launched the *ASEAN 5-Year Work Plan on Education 2011-2015.* It serves as the cooperation framework and policy implementation guideline for SOM-ED, AUN, and member countries. The work plan identified four strategic priorities, including promoting an ASEAN identity, improving quality and accessibility to education, enhancing cross-border mobility and education system harmonization, and supporting the operation of ASEAN agencies relating to education (ASEAN Secretariat 2012a). The ASEAN identified work plans and activities in each priority, focusing on developing regional guidelines, identifying and sharing best practices, and promoting education personnel development (see Table 4.2).

Although the work plan included the roles of education in ASEAN in various aspects, it did not include research enhancement. In addition, the work plan did not sufficiently address resources mobilization or progress evaluation. As a result, its success heavily depends on how each member country determines the importance of ASEAN, and allocates necessary resources to support the implementation.

[12] SEAMEC is meeting of education ministers of 11 SEAMEO member countries, including Brunei Darussalam, Cambodia, Indonesia, Lao PDR, Malaysia, Myanmar, the Philippines, Singapore, Thailand, Timor-Leste and Vietnam. The meeting is held annually.

[13] ASEAN SOM-ED is the meeting of senior officials from the education ministries from ten ASEAN member countries. It has roles in preparing ASED meeting agenda and coordinating ASEAN education policies and plans implementation in their respective countries.

Table 4.2. ASEAN Work Plan of Education

Priorities	Work Plans
1. Promote the ASEAN Identity	• Develop ASEAN guidelines for promoting ASEAN awareness and curriculum in pre-school, primary, and secondary schools. • Promote ASEAN Studies programs at higher education levels. • Support capacity building for educators and Ministries of Education staff. • Promote cultural exchange among students and faculty.
2. Improve Quality and Education Accessibility	• Increase access to quality primary and secondary education. o Identify and share best practices in promoting universal and equal access to education. o Identify and incorporate the teacher development approaches. o Promote the roles of higher education institutions in support equal access to education. • Enhance education quality, lifelong learning, and professional development. o Develop regional model schools and instructional programs. o Promote quality assurance and academic standards at every level of education. o Promote and share best practices in teacher training and development. o Utilize information technology in teaching and learning processes. • Develop qualifications and skills framework at national level. • Promote students, faculty, and workers mobility. • Strengthen cooperation between education and business sector, particularly in developing competencies-based professional standard and human capital.
3. Enhancing Cross-border Mobility and Education System Harmonization	• Share knowledge and academic resources at regional level. • Strengthen student and faculty exchanges programs. • Develop regional plan for internationalizing and harmonizing higher education systems.
4. Supporting ASEAN Agencies Relating to Education	• Support partnership between education and other sectors, for instance, public health, environment, and human right.

Source: ASEAN Secretariat (2012a).

4.3 PARTICIPANTS IN THE STUDY

In all, 59 out of 161 higher education administrators (36.64 percent) participated in the survey. Among the respondents, 11 (18.64 percent) were from OHEC, 12 (20.34 percent) were from public higher education institutions, and 16 (27.12 percent) were Rajabhat Universities and Rajamangala Universities of Technology administrators. There were 20 administrators from private higher education institutions, consisting of 6 (10.17 percent) from private master's universities, and 14 (23.73 percent) from private baccalaureate colleges and special-focus institutions. Most of the respondents were in charge of more than one aspect, and had multiple years of experience in university administration. However, policy and planning, international cooperation, and quality assurance were all responsibilities for the majority of the respondents. From the respondents in the survey study, 14 were selected to participate in the interviews. The selection was based on the respondents' willingness to participate in the interview.

4.4 PERCEPTIONS TOWARD ASEAN ECONOMIC INTEGRATION

The administrators' perceptions on the potential impacts of ASEAN economic integration varied. Nevertheless, almost all of them (96.50 percent) considered the integration an important trend of Thai higher education. There were worries about certain issues that the administrators shared. For instance, the importance of English competency and ASEAN language abilities, along with education quality, and potentially expanding Thai higher education services to greater numbers of foreign students were common concerns. This section discusses how administrators perceived the ASEAN economic integration in four aspects, including the liberalization of trade in higher

education services, research and technology transfer, human capital development, and harmonization of higher education systems.

4.4.1 Liberalization of Trade in Higher Education Services

The liberalization of trade in higher education services created concerns among administrators at both OHEC and higher education institutions. The main concern was potentially increasing competition between their institutions and foreign institutions. For most administrators, and those at Thai higher education institutions in particular, student recruitment was a central issue. The data demonstrated that 77.59 percent of the administrators believe that the integration will create an unequal competition among higher education institution in the region. In addition, the administrators mentioned the inadequacy of communication between OHEC and higher education institutions concerning the development of ASEAN economic integration and its potential impacts on Thai higher education. Without timely and accurate information, higher education institutions struggled to prepare and create awareness of the integration among faculty and staff. Adjusting policy and planning to the changing contexts was problematic. It also prevented them from effectively participating in the development and identification of Thailand's proposal in ASEAN and other free trade agreements.

Although most administrators agreed that the integration will increase the volume of online and distance education services, they generally were not concerned about the potential inflow of low-quality institutions and programs. On contrary, they were optimistic and envisioned online education as opportunities to expand Thai higher education services to foreign students in ASEAN and other regions. This section discussed administrators' perceptions of four modes of services supply.

4.4.1.1 Cross-Border Supply

Approximately 9 out of 10 administrators in this study believed that integration will facilitate the provision of online degree programs. However, the data showed that most of them (71.42 percent) were not worried about the inflow of low quality online programs. Instead, they expressed discontent about the different treatment of online programs offered by Thai and foreign higher education institutions. Although OHEC has the regulatory authority to create quality frameworks for online and distance education programs, its jurisdiction only covers higher education institutions which have physical campuses in Thailand. Thus, the regulations do not apply to foreign institutions which do not have campuses in Thailand. In addition, OHEC does not have ability and authority to block online education programs offered by foreign institutions via the Internet. Apart from the different treatments of Thai and foreign higher education institutions, OHEC also treats public and private higher education institutions differently. Although they need to report new programs, public institutions are able offer the programs without any formal approval from OHEC. On contrary, private institutions need to report and get approval from OHEC before admitting any students. The administrators, particularly from private institutions, saw this as a disadvantage in the competition for student recruitment.

The lack of authority over foreign online programs also worried OHEC administrators, particularly concerning student protection and free trade agreements negotiation. There were cases in which Thai students obtained online degrees, which were not accredited by OHEC or a quality assurance agency in their home countries. Not only did this minimize a student's employment opportunities, but it also resulted in wasted money and effort on these online programs. Apart from the student protection issue, OHEC administrators grumbled that this

situation practically allows any foreign higher education institution to offer online degree programs to Thai students, regardless of their location or Thailand's position in free trade agreements.

4.4.1.2 Consumption Abroad

The OHEC and university administrators perceived studying aboard as one of the means to develop graduate competencies, particularly in the areas of science and technology, culture, and languages. The OHEC administrators indicated that Thailand does not have any regulations which prevent Thai students from studying in other countries. The only concern among administrators was that the students may seek employment in foreign countries after graduation instead of coming back and working in Thailand.

Regarding incoming students, almost all administrators (98.24 percent) in this study considered the integration to be an opportunity to recruit more foreign students, and promote Thailand as a regional education hub. The majority of them (73.69 percent) believed it is a chance for their institutions and Thailand to earn income from the increasing number of foreign students. The administrators expressed their confidence that Thailand would be an attractive destination for students from ASEAN countries, particularly from Cambodia, Laos, Myanmar, and Vietnam. However, Thailand has to compete with Malaysia, Singapore, and local branch campuses of higher education institutions from Australia and the UK in Vietnam and Malaysia. The administrators stated that Thailand has strengths in terms of location, climate, and international transportation. In addition, tuition fees and living expenses in Thailand are lower than Malaysia or Singapore. Nevertheless, there were administrators (25.31 percent), particularly from Rajabhat Universities and private baccalaureate institutions, who did not consider it an opportunity to recruit foreign students. In addition, 86 percent of the administrators anticipated

increasing competition among Thai higher education institutions in recruiting foreign students (see Table 4.3).

Table 4.3. The Perceptions toward the Student Recruitment Competition

	AEC will increase student recruitment competition among Thai higher education institutions.			
	Strongly agreed	**Somewhat agreed**	**Somewhat disagreed**	**Strongly disagreed**
OHEC	4	5	2	0
Public HEIs	3	7	2	0
Rajabhat Universities and Rajamangala Universities of Technology	4	9	2	0
Private Master's Universities	3	3	0	0
Private Baccalaureate Institutions	4	8	2	0
Total	**18 (31.03%)**	**32 (55.17%)**	**8 (13.79%)**	**0 (0%)**

Although Thailand has advantages in recruiting foreign students, the administrators expressed their concerns about the complexity of visa regulations, which could prevent foreign students from applying to Thai higher education institutions. According to the MFA, foreign students need to obtain the non-immigrant visa "ED" in order to study in Thailand. This type of visa allows individuals to stay in Thailand for up to 90 days. Students and faculty whose programs are longer than 90 days must apply for a one-year extension at the Office of the Immigration Bureau which is under the Royal Thai Police. After the one-year period, they need to renew their visas on an annual basis. This process is complicated and time-consuming, in

comparison with the processes in Australia, the UK, and the US, the largest host countries for international students.

Apart from the immigration process, the university administrators discussed facilities and staff readiness. They emphasized that higher education institutions need to improve facilities, including dormitories, classrooms, and laboratories, in order to meet the needs of foreign students and international standards. Additionally, it is important for faculty and staff to be able to conduct classes and communicate in English. At present, almost all Thai higher education institutions are facing these two challenges and implementing a number of initiatives to deal with them.

4.4.1.3 Commercial Presence

Although trade in higher education services includes the establishment of foreign institutions' local branch campuses, the administrators were less likely to be concerned about this issue. Unlike the online programs, the administrators believed the process of establishing local branch campuses in Thailand was complex. Laws and regulations, demographic trends, and the upfront capital investments made branch campuses impractical and unprofitable. Approximately 70 percent of the administrators stated that the unlikelihood of foreign higher education institutions establishing branch campuses in Thailand. Nevertheless, foreign institutions will increasingly offer online degree programs and joint-degree programs in collaboration with Thai higher education institutions, as well as recruit Thai students to study at the main campuses in their respective countries.

The administrators contemplated the integration as a chance to expand their higher education services into other ASEAN member countries. However, their perceptions toward the

Thai laws and regulations on the establishment of branch campuses aboard varied in every type of institution. The detail is shown in Table 4.4.

Table 4.4. The Perceptions toward the Laws and Regulations on the Establishment of Branch Campuses Abroad

	Thai laws and regulations facilitate the establishment of branch campuses abroad			
	Strongly agreed	**Somewhat agreed**	**Somewhat disagreed**	**Strongly disagreed**
OHEC	1	4	6	0
Public HEIs	2	4	4	1
Rajabhat Universities and Rajamangala Universities of Technology	0	10	4	1
Private Master's Universities	1	4	1	0
Private Baccalaureate Institutions	1	4	6	1
Total	**5 (9.09%)**	**26 (47.27%)**	**21 (38.18%)**	**3 (5.45%)**

Table 4.4 indicates that the administrators were dubious about the laws and regulations affecting plans to establish branch campuses. However, there were also other factors, including institutional capability, the availability of resources, and the lack of information on laws and regulations in target countries. The impact of these factors was clear among administrators from Rajabhat Universities and private master's universities, as shown in Table 4.5.

The data in Table 4.5 showed that the majority of higher education institutions, particularly Rajabhat Universities and private master's universities, did not have a plan to establish the branch campuses or offer education services in other countries. Among the institutions which planned to open a branch campus, none of them had significantly solidified

their plans. In comparison with other modes of services delivery, the data indicated that commercial presence was the lowest priority.

Table 4.5. The Perceptions toward the Establishment of Branch Campuses Abroad

	Your institution plans to establish a branch campus in other ASEAN member countries.			
	Strongly agreed	**Somewhat agreed**	**Somewhat disagreed**	**Strongly disagreed**
Public HEIs	3	4	2	2
Rajabhat Universities and Rajamangala Universities of Technology	0	4	8	4
Private Master's Universities	0	1	4	1
Private Baccalaureate Institutions	1	5	1	5
Total	**4 (8.89%)**	**14 (31.11%)**	**15 (33.33%)**	**12 (26.67%)**

4.4.1.4 Movement of Natural Persons

The liberalization of trade in higher education services allows faculty, staff, and graduates to move and seek employment in other countries. The data showed that administrators in every type of organization/institution considered it an outstanding opportunity for graduates and faculty to seek employment in other member countries. Likewise, it is also desirable for higher education institutions to recruit more foreign faculty. These details are shown in Table 4.6.

Although this development potentially benefits individuals, higher education institutions, and Thailand, it raised concerns about brain-drain problems. The administrators mentioned that it is likely that Thailand has to compete with more developed countries, such as Singapore and Malaysia, as well as emerging economies, like Vietnam and Indonesia, in recruiting high-quality faculty and graduates. With better compensation structure and academic advancement, Singapore will attract faculty and graduates from every ASEAN country.

Table 4.6. The Perceptions toward of Enhanced Employment Opportunities for Thai Graduates and Faculty

	Agreed	**Did not agree**
AEC will create more employment opportunities for Thai graduates.	48 (84.21%)	9 (15.79%)
AEC will open more opportunities for Thai faculty members to work at higher education institutions in other member countries.	51 (89.47%)	6 (10.53%)
AEC will allow higher education institutions to recruit more foreign faculty members.	53 (93.98%)	4 (7.02%)

According to ASEAN Foundation, in 2008, approximately 54.30 percent of university students in ASEAN would prefer to work in Singapore if they could work in other ASEAN countries (Thompson and Thianthai 2008). Likewise, Vietnam and Indonesia have been aggressively developing their business and higher education sectors, and are in need of educated workers. Both countries attract an increasing number of multinational corporations, which provides rising salaries for their employees. Consequently, Thailand might lose high quality workers and faculty to these countries. The statement was supported by the data, which

suggested that foremost concern among the administrators was a potential brain drain, as shown in Table 4.7.

Table 4.7. The Perception toward the Potential Brain-drain Problem

	The ASEAN economic integration will worsen the brain-drain problem.			
	Strongly agreed	**Somewhat agreed**	**Somewhat disagreed**	**Strongly disagreed**
OHEC	1	5	4	1
Public HEIs	3	5	3	0
Rajabhat Universities and Rajamangala Universities of Technology	2	12	2	0
Private Master's Universities	2	2	2	0
Private Baccalaureate Institutions	1	7	4	0
Total	**9 (16.07%)**	**31 (55.36%)**	**15 (26.79%)**	**1 (1.79%)**

The data in Table 4.7 indicated that most university administrators, particularly from Rajabhat Universities, Rajamangala Universities of Technology, and private institutions, worried about the brain-drain problem. On the contrary, OHEC administrators had split opinions about it. The administrators' perceptions reflected the diverse nature of organizations and types of institutions. The competition for high-quality personnel occurred among institutions as well as between higher education and business sectors. Among different types of institutions, Rajabhat Universities, Rajamangala Universities of Technology, and private higher education institutions struggled to attract high quality personnel. These types of institutions are considerably less

prestigious than public ones, and their remuneration structures are not as attractive in comparison with the private sector.

Although the liberalization of trade in higher education services allows higher education institutions to recruit more foreign faculty, the present immigration and labor laws and regulations do not facilitate the recruitment process for higher education institutions. According to the current laws and regulations, faculty members have to obtain a non-immigrant visa "B" and work permits to teach in education institutions in Thailand. However, these types of visas only allow individuals to stay in Thailand for up to 90 days. If the contract length exceeds 90 days, faculty need to apply for a one-year extension at the Office of the Immigration Bureau. After the one-year period, they need to renew their visas on an annual basis (Royal Thai Government Gazette 2009). In addition to the visa, faculty need to obtain a work permit from the Ministry of Labor within 90 days of their arrival in Thailand. According to the *Working of Alien Act of 2008*, the work permit must be renewed on an annual basis, or when the faculty change their employment status.

The labor laws also restrict higher education institutions from recruiting foreigners to teaching positions, but not administrative, research, and or supporting staff positions. There were administrators, particularly private master's and baccalaureate institutions, expressing their discontent about this restriction. They mentioned that foreign staff would help create an international community on campus, and provide better communication and services to foreign students because of their language ability. This comment reflected the lack of English and foreign languages ability among Thai staff in higher education institutions.

4.4.2 Research and Technology Transfer

This section discusses the administrators' perceptions on the potential impacts of ASEAN economic integration on the research cooperation and technology transfer among higher education institutions, and between higher education and business sectors in ASEAN. According to the literature and EU experiences, regional economic integration facilitates and increases the cooperation between higher education and business sectors on research, innovation, and workforce development. This cooperation affects the country's development and regional economic competitiveness. In this study, almost all administrators were very positive about the impact of integration on research cooperation and technology transfer (see Table 4.8).

Table 4.8. The Perceptions toward the Research Cooperation and Technology Transfer under the ASEAN Economic Community

	Agreed	**Did not agree**
AEC will facilitate research cooperation among member countries.	54 (94.74%)	3 (5.26%)
AEC will facilitate research and technology transfer among member countries.	52 (92.86%)	4 (10.53%)
AEC will enhance cooperation between government, higher education institutions, and business sector.	51 (91.07%)	5 (8.93%)

The data in Table 4.8 showed that administrators considered the economic integration a pivotal opportunity to develop and enhance cooperation between higher education institutions, government, and the business sector. OHEC officials and administrators from both public higher education institutions and Rajabhat Universities also added that the integration enhances the roles of higher education in economic development through this cooperation. Nevertheless, it is

important for higher education institutions and OHEC to identify clear and practical roles in using their research and innovation capacity to support national and regional economic development.

The administrators also pointed out the increasing emphasis on partnering with higher education institutions and the business sector in ASEAN. A number of public intuitions shifted their focuses on research cooperation from higher education institutions in the US and Europe to ones in ASEAN. In addition, through collaboration with OHEC and the Delegation of the EU to Thailand, they initiated tri-party cooperation among higher education institutions in Europe, Thailand, and ASEAN countries. These public institutions and Thailand became a cooperation gateway between the EU and ASEAN and fostered truly international academic cooperation. Although the administrators were optimistic about the cooperation opportunity, they were not confident that the integration would alleviate academic development gaps among ASEAN member countries. The detail is shown in Table 4.9.

Table 4.9. The Perception toward the Academic Development Gap

	The ASEAN economic integration will alleviate the academic development gap among member countries.			
	Strongly agreed	**Somewhat agreed**	**Somewhat disagreed**	**Strongly disagreed**
OHEC	1	3	6	1
Public HEIs	0	5	5	1
Rajabhat Universities and Rajamangala Universities of Technology	0	9	6	1
Private Master's Universities	0	2	3	1
Private Baccalaureate Institutions	3	6	2	1
Total	**4 (7.14%)**	**25 (44.64%)**	**22 (39.29%)**	**5 (8.93%)**

ASEAN and AUN give priority to the academic development gap issue. Both regional agencies have been implementing a number of projects under the IAI initiative, aiming at bridging the academic development gap between ASEAN 6 and CLMV countries. However, it was not a priority issue among the Thai administrators in this study. It never emerged nor was it explicitly discussed in open-ended questions and the follow-up interviews.

4.4.3 Human Capital Development

The ASEAN economic integration will expand the labor market and provide employment opportunity for graduates in ASEAN, regardless of their nationalities and locations. However, the market requires graduates to possess additional skills apart from academic knowledge and professionalism, including language acquisition and cross-cultural awareness. To prepare Thai graduates, both OHEC and university administrators emphasized education quality enhancement, which is considered the first priority in the preparation for the potential impacts of the integration, along with an effort to further internationalize Thailand's higher education system. The education quality enhancement focuses on instilling a learning-outcomes-based curriculum, ensuring the quality of faculty, and developing graduate competencies. The ultimate goal is to produce graduates who are able to compete and work at the global level. The graduate preparation for the ASEAN labor market is the first step, an inevitable result of this goal for globally competent graduates. This perception emerged from OHEC and public institution administrators, but not among the administrators from other types of higher education institutions. This is an important distinction. Administrators of Rajabhat Universities and private master's institutions focused on quality as the most pertinent issue facing higher education.

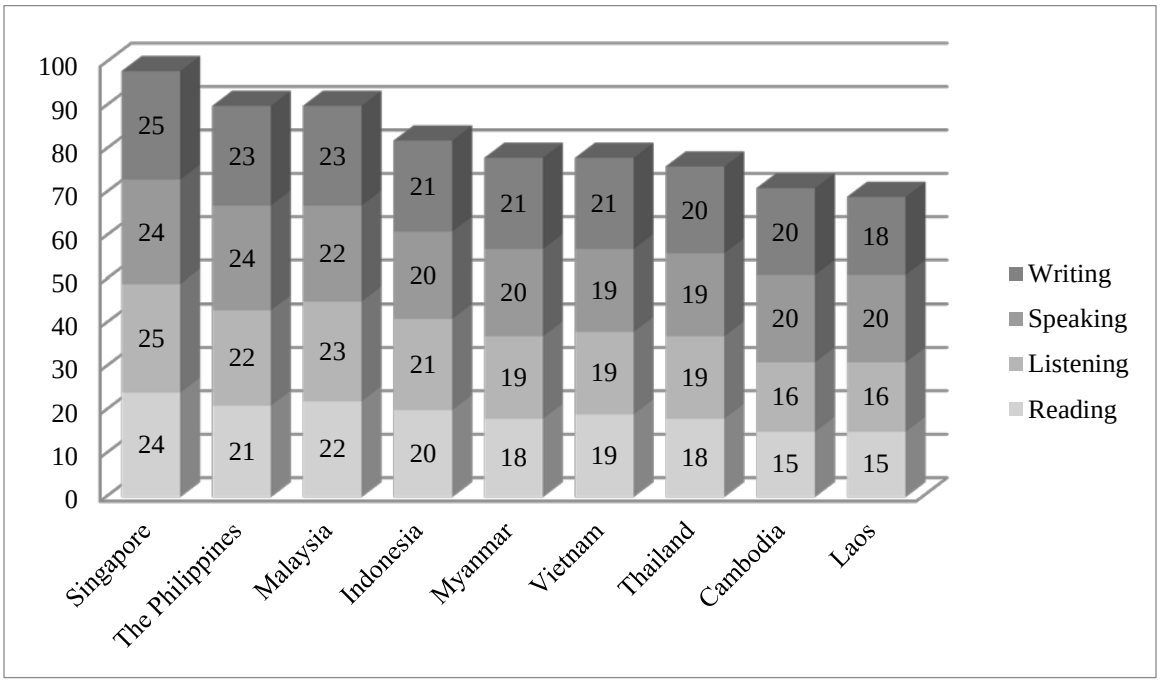
In terms of curriculum, the administrators indicated that OHEC needs to provide a clear and flexible quality framework, in order to help higher education institutions enhance quality and develop their niches and identities. They mentioned that the current quality assurance framework is too rigid, and more likely to focus on documentation and quantitative indicators. It neither enhances quality, nor is practical in the contemporary higher education institution context in Thailand. In addition, private institution administrators viewed the implementation of the present quality assurance framework and ensuing regulations as discrimination against private institutions.

Although the majority of administrators considered the current quality assurance framework problematic, there were comments from OHEC and public institution administrators on its necessity. They referred to the quality of many private institutions and Rajabhat Universities as questionable. There were cases that these institutions offered subpar quality and unaccredited courses, and graduates were not able to use their qualifications to apply for jobs. Consequently, it is important for OHEC and the ONESQA to closely monitor and protect students and their parents from these institutions.

Apart from the quality of curriculum, the university administrators pinpointed the inadequacy of English and ASEAN languages ability, and the need to emphasize cross-cultural experiences among faculty, staff, and graduates. According to the ASEAN Charter, English is a working language of ASEAN (ASEAN 2007). However, the Bahasa language is widely spoken in ASEAN member countries. It is the official language of Brunei Darussalam, Indonesia, Malaysia, and Singapore. In addition, Bahasa is used among ethnic groups in the Southern part of Thailand, Myanmar and the Philippines. Hence, English and Bahasa literacy are both likely to increase graduate employability in ASEAN.

More than one-third of the administrators in this study agreed that English language development was a critical issue. They need faculty and staff who are able to conduct classes in English and provide supporting services to foreign students. Likewise, the administrators suggested that all institutions need to develop graduates' language ability, otherwise, they will struggle to compete for employment in regional and global labor markets. As of 2014, the average TOEFL of Thailand is 76, which is lower than admission requirements of the universities in the US, UK, and Australia (ETS 2014). The performance was also worse than the majority of ASEAN member countries, as shown in Figure 4.1. On the international stage as well as in Southeast Asia, Thailand is at risk of falling behind.

Figure 4.1. Comparison of TOEFL Scores among ASEAN Member Countries



Notes: (1) Only nine ASEAN member countries were included in the report; and (2) the maximum score is 120.
Source: ETS (2014).

The IELTS score in 2012 demonstrated similar results. The average IELTS scores for Thailand were 5.8 and 5.5 out of 9 for academic and general training formats,[14] respectively. Among all test-takers, 52 percent scored 6.0 or higher, meeting the application requirement for higher education institutions in the US, UK, and Australia. However, the average score was less than the admission requirement, and lower than all six ASEAN member countries in the report, as shown in Table 4.10.

Table 4.10. The Average IELTS Test Score for ASEAN Member Countries

Countries	Academic	General Training
1. Singapore	N/A	7.4
2. The Philippines	6.8	6.1
3. Malaysia	6.8	7.1
4. Indonesia	6.2	6.4
5. Vietnam	5.9	5.9
6. Thailand	5.8	5.5

Notes: (1) Only six ASEAN member countries were included in the report; and (2) The maximum score is 9.0.
Source: IELTS Researchers (2014).

Apart from language proficiency, the administrators underlined the role of cross-cultural awareness in increasing graduate employability. They pointed out that Thai faculty, students, and members of the general population were not adequately aware of the other ASEAN countries, or opportunities from current integration efforts. According to ASEAN foundation, most Thai students considered ASEAN countries as travel destinations, not places for study and work (Thompson and Thianthai 2008). This statement was supported by the OHEC administrators,

[14] IELTS Academic Testing is generally for those who want to apply for higher education institutions in English-speaking countries. The General Training Testing focuses on individual who would like to work, participate in a training program, and apply for secondary school.

who stated that it is difficult to attract faculty and students to participate in the mobility programs between Thailand and ASEAN countries. Each year, OHEC offers a number of short-term scholarships to Thai students and faculty to study or conduct research in ASEAN countries. However, the number of applications is often less than the number of available scholarships.

Although the ASEAN awareness among Thai students was low, most of them were willing to learn more about other ASEAN countries (Thompson and Thianthai 2008). In addition, approximately 86 percent of the administrators in this study also believed that ASEAN economic integration will help to cultivate an ASEAN identity among Thai citizens. In the meantime, higher education institutions must develop cross-cultural awareness among faculty, graduates, and students. It will increase graduate employability and foster mutual understanding and peaceful coexistence in the region.

The administrators also emphasized the importance of basic and vocational education. They commented that every level of education needs to contribute and enhance human capital development. Higher education institutions will struggle to develop students if basic and vocational institutions do not prepare them for advanced learning, particularly on basic knowledge, necessary skills, and social maturity. The higher education sector needs to help basic and vocational education by focusing on teacher development. The administrators perceived the deficiency of coordination among basic, vocational, and higher education. They saw quality of school teachers affecting overall human capital development in Thailand.

4.4.4 Harmonization of Higher Education Systems

The harmonization of higher education systems focuses on enhancing comparability of credit, qualifications, and quality assurance systems. The comparable credit and qualifications system

will facilitate student and workforce mobility within ASEAN. The efforts to harmonize higher education systems in ASEAN have been facing a number of challenges, including the differences in credit and degree systems, and lack of regional quality assurance and accreditation agencies. The ASEAN and member countries are trying to overcome these challenges by learning from the EU and the Bologna Process experiences, particularly on the introduction of national and regional qualification frameworks, and faculty and student mobility programs. This segment discusses findings concerning the issues of the harmonization of higher education systems, focusing on the differences in the level of education development and systems.

Almost all of administrators (96.43 percent) perceived the unequal education development among ASEAN member countries as one of the challenges to the harmonization of higher education systems. The administrators discussed that the member countries are in different stages of development, particularly regarding credit, qualifications, and quality assurance systems. Although most member countries are implementing a credit hours system, Cambodia, Laos PDR, and Myanmar have not adopted such a system. They also pointed out that the calculations of credit hours are different among member countries, even ones which currently have such a system in place. It means one credit hour in a certain country might not be equal to one credit hour in the others. This difference affects the institution's decision to accept credit earned at the institutions in other ASEAN countries. This concern emerged among administrators from Rajabhat Universities and private higher education institutions, but not among public university administrators (see Table 4.11).

Table 4.11. The Perception toward Credit Earned in Other ASEAN Countries

	Your institutions accept credit transfer from HEIs in other ASEAN member countries.			
	Strongly agreed	**Somewhat agreed**	**Somewhat disagreed**	**Strongly disagreed**
Public HEIs	9	2	0	0
Rajabhat Universities and Rajamangala Universities of Technology	2	6	4	1
Private Master's Universities	0	4	2	0
Private Baccalaureate Institutions	2	5	4	2
Total	**13 (7.14%)**	**17 (44.64%)**	**10 (39.29%)**	**3 (8.93%)**

The lack of synchronized credit hours systems and value of credit hours led to the challenge of qualifications recognition. It was stressed by the Asia-Europe Meeting (ASEM) data, which indicated that the required credits for bachelor's- level degrees in ASEAN countries varies between 120-144 credit hours,[15] and one credit hour in different countries requires varying degrees of student workload (ASEM Education Secretariat 2010). In addition, there were cases in which OHEC equated doctoral degrees from another ASEAN member country to a master's degree from a Thai higher education institution.

Apart from the issue of credit and qualifications recognition, the administrators were dubious about the comparability of education quality in ASEAN member countries. It was caused by the differences in administration systems and quality assurance mechanisms in each country. There are member countries, which utilize a single government agency to oversee education administration, including Brunei Darussalam, Laos PDR, Myanmar, Singapore,

[15] The number of credits for professional degrees, which take five-six years to complete, is between 180-220 credit hours.

Thailand, and Vietnam. There are also countries which have more than one responsible agency for the same task. This group consists of Cambodia,[16] Indonesia, Malaysia, and the Philippines. Regarding quality assurance mechanisms, Myanmar does not have use them, whereas other member countries implement either compulsory or voluntary institutional and program accreditation systems. The detail is shown in Table 4.12.

Table 4.12. The Government Agencies Responsible for Education Administration

Countries	Responsible agencies	Quality assurance mechanism	Quality assurance agencies
1. Brunei Darussalam	Ministry of Education	Conditional qualifications accreditation	National Accreditation Council
2. Cambodia	• Ministry of Education, Youth, and Sport (basic and higher education) • Ministry of Labor, Technical Vocational Education and Training (vocational education)	Compulsory Institution accreditation	Accreditation Committee of Cambodia
3. Indonesia	• Ministry of Education and Culture (every level of education) • Ministry of Religious Affairs (religious education)	Compulsory Institution and program accreditation	National Accreditation Agency for Higher Education
4. Laos PDR	Ministry of Education and Sports	Voluntary institution and program accreditation	Ministry of Education and Sports
5. Malaysia	• Ministry of Education (basic education) • Ministry of Higher Education (Higher and vocational education)	Voluntary Institution and program accreditation, unless it is required by the government.	Malaysian Qualifications Agency
6. Myanmar	Ministry of Education	N/A	N/A
7. The Philippines	• Ministry of Education (basic and vocational education) • Commission on Higher Education	Compulsory Institution and program accreditation by Commission on Higher Education	Commission on Higher Education and the Federation of Accreditation Agencies
8. Singapore	Ministry of Education	Institution self-assessment	Ministry of Education
9. Thailand	Ministry of Education	Compulsory Institution and program accreditation	Ministry of Education and ONESQA
10. Vietnam	Ministry of Education and Training	Voluntary institution and program accreditation	Ministry of Education and Training

Sources: SEAMEO RIHED (2006) and Malaysian Qualifications Agency (2008).

[16] Although Cambodia has two main government agencies responsible for education administration, there are ten government agencies, which provide higher education services through different types of institutions.

There have been attempts to harmonize qualifications and quality assurance systems, most notably the introduction of learning outcomes assessments and implementation of the national qualifications frameworks. Based on the EU and the Bologna Process experiences, the qualifications framework created a clear and consistent standard which addressed the challenges of quality, transparency, and efficiency of higher education. At present, only Malaysia, the Philippines, Singapore, and Thailand are implementing qualifications frameworks and integrating learning outcomes assessment in their curriculum and quality assurance systems. Other member countries are either in the initial stage of formulating a qualifications framework (Brunei Darussalam), or have not started the process. The administrators suggested that it might be difficult to develop and implement a national qualifications framework in CLMV countries because of their stage of academic development and complex administration systems. Nevertheless, the administrators were confident that the integration will enhance the harmonization of higher education systems (as portrayed in Table 4.13).

Table 4.13. The Perceptions toward Harmonization of Higher Education Systems

	Agreed	**Did not agree**
AEC will facilitate cross-border credit transfer.	53 (91.38%)	5 (8.62%)
AEC will facilitate mutual degree and qualifications recognition.	51 (89.47%)	6 (10.53%)
AEC will foster the development of regional quality assurance system.	52 (89.06%)	6 (10.94%)
ASEAN has a regional agency working on fostering quality assurance.	48 (85.71%)	8 (14.29%)

The data in Table 4.13 showed that the administrators believed that economic integration will facilitate cross-border credit transfer, mutual degree and qualifications recognition, and regional quality assurance system development. In addition, they perceived AUN and SEAMEO Regional Centre for Higher Education and Development (RIHED) as important regional agencies which foster the harmonization of higher education systems. Nevertheless, both agencies need support from ASEAN, the governments of member countries, and higher education institutions in the region.

4.5 SUMMARY OF THE ADMINISTRATORS' PERCEPTIONS

The administrators in this study were from different types of institutions. Nonetheless, their perceptions toward ASEAN economic integration were similar. They shared common concerns, particularly on the quality of education, the potential for increasing competition among higher education institutions, and the comparability of higher education systems in ASEAN. There were also concerns which emerged among the administrators from certain types of institutions. For instance, Rajabhat Universitiy administrators were more likely to raise concerns about the potential brain-drain problem. The private master's and baccalaureate institution administrators worried about the different treatment of public and private institutions, and their disadvantages in attracting high quality faculty.

Regarding the quality of education, the administrators emphasized the connection between the expanded labor market and the role of higher education in enhancing graduate employability. They suggested that, apart from professional skills, higher education institutions need to develop English language ability, and cultivate cross-culture awareness in students and

graduates. These suggestions were based on the fact that Thai people have comparatively low English proficiency, and were inadequately aware of the diversity of ASEAN member countries.

Regarding increasing competition, the administrators pointed out the potential for international competition between Thai higher education institutions and those in ASEAN member countries, and domestic competition among institutions in Thailand itself. The perceived focus of the competition included faculty and student recruitment, along with online programs. The administrators stressed the challenges caused by the current immigration and online quality assurance laws and regulations, including visa and work permit issuance, and the jurisdiction of Thai laws and regulations over foreign higher education institutions.

The concerns on the comparability of higher education systems were largely based on the different stages of academic development in ASEAN member countries. The administrators perceived the differences between ASEAN-6 and CLMV countries, and pointed out its effects on the efforts to harmonizing higher education systems, and the goals of ASEAN. This issue is complicated, and it is going to take years for ASEAN and member countries to work it out.

Although the administrators were worried about the potential challenges, they recognized a number of potential benefits from the integration, including the promotion of Thailand as the education hub, and the opportunity to foster academic cooperation among higher education institutions in ASEAN and between higher education and business sectors. The administrators agreed that the integration will provide an improved opportunity for higher education institutions to recruit more foreign students, particularly from ASEAN member countries. Although Thailand is behind Singapore and Malaysia in the area of language ability and political instability, Thailand has advantages over other ASEAN countries, in terms of location and international transportation, climate, and the cost of living and tuition fees. However, it is

important for higher education institutions to improve their teaching and learning environments and facilities to welcome foreign students. The ASEAN economic integration will also facilitate and encourage higher education institutions to develop greater cooperation with the institutions in other member countries, along with the business sector. In addition, the administrators also viewed Thailand as an academic cooperation gateway between ASEAN and the EU through the tri-party cooperation. The focuses of the cooperation will be on research and technology transfer, joint-degree program development, and graduate employability enhancement through exchange and internship programs.

Based on the administrators' perceptions, the next chapter presented findings on the OHEC and higher education institutions' policies and plans, in terms of content and implementation. The discussion also included the challenges in the policy processes, and the connection between OHEC and higher education institution plans. In addition, the current and expected roles of OHEC were also discussed.

5.0 POLICIES AND PLANS TOWARD ASEAN ECONOMIC INTEGRATION

Although the perceptions toward the ASEAN economic integration were similar across all types of higher education institutions, the data suggested OHEC and each type of higher education institution have prepared for the potential impacts of the integration differently. At OHEC and public higher institutions, the preparation occurred in two areas: policy and administrative structure. In addition, these two types of organization considered ASEAN as a part of a larger policy initiative centered on internationalization. They actively initiated and participated in the programs relating to ASEAN integration. On the contrary, Rajabhat Universities, Rajamangala Universities of Technology, and private master's and baccalaureate institutions have been facing challenges in formulating and implementing policies relating to the integration. There were also institutions without any concrete measures presently in place although the administrators were aware of the potential impacts of the integration.

The administrators also noted a number of new stakeholders and participants in the policy processes. Although OHEC and higher education institutions are the main stakeholders and participants, a number of government agencies, business sector representatives, and professional associations have been involved in the process. In addition, there are higher education institutions, which hire private agencies to perform the task of recruiting foreign students. The scope and goals of ASEAN and the overlapping responsibilities among government agencies create an environment that requires cooperation across public and private sectors. However, this

environment may also create tension between government agencies because they have different perceptions and policy priorities on the integration.

This chapter presents findings on the policies and planning toward ASEAN economic integration at OHEC and institutional levels, and discusses both content and implementation. Additionally, the participation of higher education institutions in the OHEC policy process, challenges in the implementation, and expected roles of OHEC were discussed. These findings and discussion are presented in five segments, including the overview of policy and plans toward ASEAN economic integration, stakeholders and participants in the policy process, organizational restructuring, challenges in policy implementation, and the current and expected roles of OHEC.

The policy overview demonstrates the framework and direction of Thai higher education in general and priority areas, and the real actions that OHEC and institutions have taken in the preparation for the potential impacts of the integration. The stakeholders and organizational restructuring section presents the roles of stakeholders and participants in the policy formulation and implementation process. In addition, this section discusses OHEC attempts to create "buy-in" of higher education institutions in the policy process. The challenges and roles of OHEC provides ideas on the obstructions in the implementation process, and how higher education institutions expect OHEC to help them in the preparation for the potential impacts. The findings were based on the interviews and document review and supported by the data from the survey.

5.1 OVERVIEW OF POLICES TOWARD ASEAN ECONOMIC INTEGRATION

Most of higher education institutions in this study considered ASEAN economic integration an important trend and included it in their policies and plans. Although every type of institution

shared a number of common goals, each of them employed different approaches in formulating and implementing the policies. The OHEC and public institutions perceived ASEAN economic integration as a part of a changing environment. The administrators indicated that their organizations and institutions included ASEAN in the internationalization policy, aiming to raise the quality of education and graduates and to compete at the global level. The goals at ASEAN are byproducts of these efforts. On the contrary, Rajabhat Universities and private master's institutions had goals of protecting themselves from the increasing competition, and seizing opportunities from their strengths and niche programs. They did not express ambition to compete at a global level or become a leading institution in the ASEAN region. The private baccalaureate institutions did not have clear focus on the ASEAN matter. These institutions were more likely to focus on competing with one another in recruiting domestic students, rather than competing with more prestigious domestic institutions and foreign higher education institutions.

At a national level, OHEC emphasized the importance of ASEAN and its potential impacts in the *Second 15-Year Long Range Plan for Higher Education* and the *11th Higher Education Development Plan*. Under the scopes of these two documents, a number of initiatives have been implemented, aiming at promoting Thailand as a regional education hub, developing necessary competencies for graduates and the workforce, and harmonizing higher education systems in ASEAN. The OHEC identified the implementation plan specifically for ASEAN by formulating the *Thai Higher Education Strategy for ASEAN Integration* document, which identified Thai higher education goals in the ASEAN context. These documents serve as a guideline for policy formulation at the institutional level. A number of public and private master's institutions indicated that their policies and goals were formulated in accordance with these plans. This section presents findings on the OHEC and higher education institutions' policy

contents and implementation. The findings were mainly based on document reviews and interviews, and were supported by the data from the survey. It consists of four policy aspects, including liberalization of trade in services, research and technology transfer, human capital development, and harmonization of higher education systems.

5.1.1 Liberalization of Trade in Higher Education Services

As a member of WTO and ASEAN, Thailand realized that the liberalization of trade in higher education services is inevitable. With the advancement of information and transportation technology, liberalization of services expanded at a faster rate than the capacity for governments and institutions to control them. Thus, they shifted their focus from resisting free trade agreements to seizing opportunities, preparing for the increasing competition, and protecting students and higher education consumers. In ASEAN context, the administrators saw a number of opportunities, including to promote Thailand as a regional education hub. To support the education hub goals, a number of programs have been implemented, aiming at increasing the number of foreign students and international/English programs in higher education institutions and enhancing the Thai higher education system and institutions' competitiveness.

5.1.1.1 Promoting International Programs

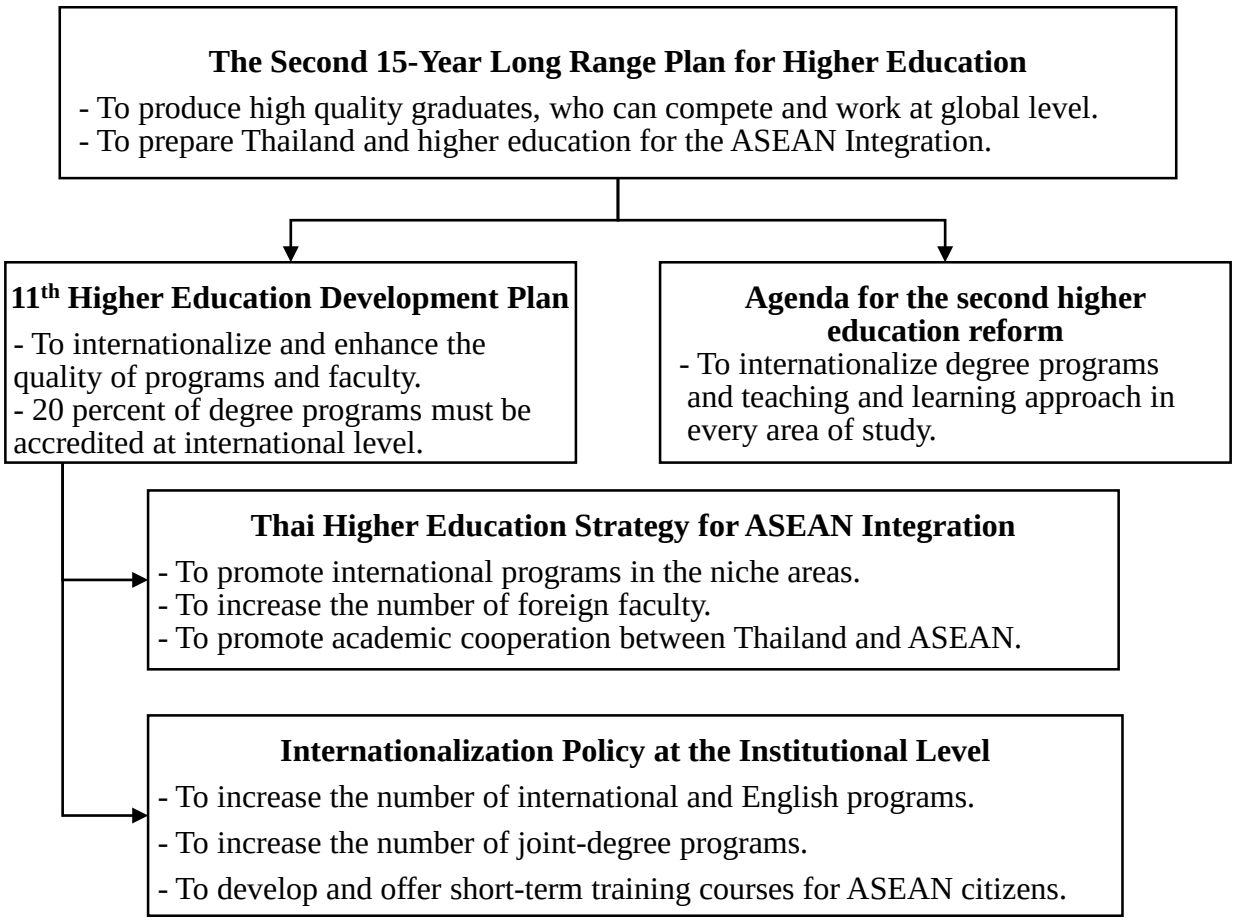
The OHEC gave priority to internationalization of faculty and programs in both content and teaching and learning approaches. Hence, the promotion of international programs is not only using English as medium of instruction, but also raising the quality of faculty and content to meet the international standards. Based on the general guidelines in the *Second 15-Year Long Range Plan for Higher Education*, OHEC included this issue in both the *11th Higher Education*

Development Plan and *Thai Higher Education Strategy for ASEAN Integration*. In addition, this issue is a part of the second higher education reform, which is an on-going process.

In the *11th Higher Education Development Plan*, the promotion of international programs is part of the strategy to develop high-quality graduates and enhance the role of Thai higher education in ASEAN. The notable Key Performance Indicator is that 20 percent of degree programs must be accredited by international professional associations or equivalent institutions. The initiative was included in the *Thai Higher Education Strategy for ASEAN Integration*, aiming to enhance Thai higher education institution quality and its role in supporting ASEAN integration. The actions include promoting international programs in the niche areas, increasing the number of foreign faculty, and promoting academic cooperation with higher education institutions in ASEAN member countries. However, the strategy did not provide a clear key performance indicator or timeframe for assessment, or identified the niche areas.

The three policy documents became the general guidelines for policy formulation at the institutional level. Most higher education institutions embraced the OHEC policy content, and included it in their policies and plans. However, the degree of inclusion varied, based on the types of institutions. Most public institutions and private master's institutions tended to give high priority to internationalization and the promotion of international programs, in comparison with Rajabhat Universities and private baccalaureate institutions. The initiatives that emerged at the institutional level were aimed at augmenting the number of international, joint-degree, and short-term training programs. The target included ASEAN students and members of the workforce who wanted to update and upgrade their competencies. The connection between *11th Higher Education Development Plan* and *the Thai Higher Education Strategy for ASEAN Integration* on the international programs promotion is shown in Figure 5.1.

Figure 5.1. The Connection of Policy on International Program Promotion



As of 2013, there were 65 institutions offering 1,044 international programs. The number of international programs slightly increased from 2012 and 2010, when there were 1,017 and 981 programs, respectively. Of the 65 institutions, there were 24 public institutions, 13 Rajabhat Universities and Rajamangala Universities of Technology, 14 private master's institutions, and 15 private baccalaureate institutions. To better understand how each type of institution gave priority to international programs, it is imperative to compare the number of institutions and number of international programs offered by each type of institution. The detail is shown in Table 5.1.

Table 5.1. International Programs in Thai Higher Education Institutions

Types of Institutions	Offer international programs	Total number of HEIs	Percentage	The number of programs	Percentage
Public HEIs	24	31	77.42%	698	66.86%
Rajabhat Universities and Rajamangala Universities of Technology	13	49	26.53%	39	3.74%
Private master's institutions	14	14	100%	207	19.83%
Private baccalaureate institutions	14	56	25.00%	100	9.57%
Total	**65**	**170**	**38.24%**	**1,044**	**100%**

Source: Office of the Higher Education Commission (2014b).

The data in Table 5.1 showed that international programs were offered in most public institutions, and all private master's institutions. On the contrary, the majority of Rajabhat Universities and private baccalaureate institution groups did not offer international programs. Regarding the number of programs, approximately 67 percent and 20 percent of international programs were offered by public and private master's institutions, respectively. The remaining 13 percent were offered by Rajabhat Universities and private baccalaureate institutions. Another interesting aspect was the distribution of international programs among higher education institutions. Although most programs were offered at public and private master's institutions, approximately 56 percent of the international programs were offered by only six institutions, including five public institutions and one private master's institution. The details are shown in Table 5.2.

Table 5.2. The Distribution of International Programs at Six HEIs

Institutions	Levels of programs				Total
	Certification	Bachelor's	Master's	Doctoral	
1. Mahidol University	5	21	79	56	161
2. Prince of Songkla University	1	11	75	36	123
3. Assumption University	1	43	51	14	109
4. Chulalongkorn University	-	13	38	22	73
5. Thammasat University	1	24	17	6	48
6. Suranaree University of Technology	-	-	23	23	46
Total	**8**	**112**	**283**	**157**	**560 (55.78%)**

Source: Office of the Higher Education Commission (2014b).

Assumption University, which is a private master's institution, offered more international programs than the other 13 private institutions combined. Apart from the five public institutions in Table 5.2, the distribution of the number of international programs among public institutions was practically the same. This was not an unexpected phenomenon, given the different focuses, target students, and amount of resources and expertise among the institutions. However, it demonstrated a huge gap in the policy implementation among higher education institutions.

5.1.1.2 Recruiting Foreign Students

The ASEAN economic integration is expected to facilitate the cross-border movement of students and higher education services. In terms of policy content, the goals of increasing the number of foreign students, and expanding higher education services were mentioned in the *Thai Higher Education Strategy for ASEAN Integration*. Approximately 93 percent of the administrators indicated that their organization and institutions have a goal of increasing the number of foreign students. In addition, there were a number of institutions which planned to

expand their services to other ASEAN countries, mostly in the form of joint-degree programs. Although the liberalization of trade in higher education services allows the establishment of branch campuses in other countries, around 40 percent of the administrators suggested that their institution considered it. Among them, only two institutions had concrete plans. Based on the data, this segment focuses on foreign student recruitment policy and its implementation.

To achieve the goal of increasing foreign student enrollment, OHEC, MOC, and higher education institutions organize Thai higher education seminars and exhibitions twice yearly in target countries like China, Myanmar, and Vietnam. The event consists of two main activities, including the higher education exhibition, and meetings between Thai and foreign higher education administrators. The main objectives of these activities are to enhance the visibility and awareness of the Thai higher education system and institutions, increase the number of foreign students, and foster academic cooperation between Thailand and those countries. OHEC assessed the success of the event based on the number of visitors and participants. However, OHEC did not follow-up with participating institutions on the actual number of students they recruited in and after the events..

Apart from the exhibition and seminar, OHEC complied and published databases of foreign students and international programs. The databases were used to identify target countries/cities, marketing strategies, and Thai higher education capability in providing education and training services to foreign students. The OHEC administrators believed the databases help OHEC to understand the demographic and preferences of foreign students. In the past, OHEC targeted and organized the exhibition and seminar only in large cities, for instance, Beijing and Shanghai in China, and Hanoi and Ho Chi Minh City in Vietnam. However, the databases indicated that foreign students in Thailand were more likely to come from smaller

cities, such as Nanning and Chongqing in China, and Hue and Danang in Vietnam. The databases also identified the emerging target countries like Indonesia and Myanmar.

At the institutional level, universities employed different approaches to recruit foreign students. One approach, which emerged among private institutions, was hiring local agencies to recruit students to their institutions. These local agencies served as brokers to a number of higher education institutions in Thailand and other countries, and helped students to choose the institution that suited their needs and ability. Among public institutions, there was an increased effort to recruit foreign students through joint-degree programs. One public institution administrator indicated that not only do joint-degree programs help to recruit foreign students, they also increase the visibility of the institution and expand academic and personal networks. These networks will eventually facilitate the recruitment of foreign students. Faculty are likely to recommend their students to study in the institutions they graduated from, visited, or had personal contacts.

As of 2012, there were 16,999 foreign students in 107 higher education institutions. The number represents a decline of approximately 8.4 percent from figures in 2011 when Thailand hosted 20,309 foreign students. The distribution of foreign students was in line with the distribution of international programs. The public and private master's institutions, which offer 86.69 percent of the total number of international programs, hosted 6,428 (37.81 percent) and 6,129 (36.04 percent) foreign students, respectively. Rajabhat Universities and Rajamangala Universities of Technology were the home to 2,436 (14.33 percent) of foreign students, while 2,006 (11.82 percent) chose to study at private baccalaureate institutions. The detail is as shown in Table 5.3.

Table 5.3. The Distribution of Foreign Students at HEIs

Institutions	Levels of programs					Total
	Certification and Graduate Diploma	Bachelor	Masters	Doctoral	No information	
Public HEIs	259	2,904	2,314	624	327	**6,428 (37.81%)**
Rajabhat Universities and Rajamangala Universities of Technology	714	1,551	138	2	31	**2,436 (14.33%)**
Private master's institutions	504	4,500	1,060	65	-	**6,129 (36.04%)**
Private baccalaureate institutions	207	1,429	318	30	22	**2,006 (11.82%)**
Total	**1,684**	**10,384**	**3,830**	**721**	**380**	**16,999**

Source: Office of the Higher Education Commission (2014a).

Based on the data in Table 5.3, public institutions had slightly more foreign students than private master's institutions. However, the latter hosted more students at bachelor's degree and certification levels. The data also indicated that the focuses of Rajabhat Universities and private baccalaureate institution groups were on bachelor's degree and certification levels. The number reflected the focuses and capability of different types of institutions.

5.1.2 Research Enhancement and Technology Transfer

The policy on research enhancement and technology transfer appears in the *Second 15-Year Long Range Plan for Higher Education* and *11th Higher Education Development Plan*. In both plans, OHEC emphasized the role of higher education in economic development through

research and business-sector cooperation. The plans suggested that OHEC has to categorize higher education institutions into four groups, and encourage each group to contribute to economic development based on their focuses and expertise. One of the four groups is the Research University[17]. OHEC has tried to enhance their research capability through the National Research University Project (NRUP). The main goal is to elevate the institutions to the "world-class university" status. Based on the goals, three main objectives were identified, including to enhance faculty research capability, increase the number of publications, and enhance the quality of graduates.

At present, there are nine participating institutions. All of them are among the largest and most prestigious public institutions in Thailand. The OHEC selected the participating institutions based on institutional rank in the QS World University Ranking and the number of publications in the Institute for Scientific Information (ISI) or Scorpus databases. In addition, at least 40 percent of faculty must hold a doctoral degree. The assessment of the participating institutions is based on the quality of research, cooperation with business sector, research network, and international aspects. The detail is as shown in Table 5.4.

The NRUP targeted large public institutions, which have potential to become world-class universities, and serve as the leading institutions and focal points for research networks in Thailand. To create the research network, OHEC created the Higher Education Research Promotion Project (HERP), aiming at developing research networks between NRUP-participating institutions and other public institutions, Rajabhat Universities, Rajamangala Universities of Technology, and public and private research centers. Between2011-2013, the research networks were established in nine research clusters (Office of the National Research

[17] The other three groups are comprehensive university, four-year liberal arts college, and community college.

University and Higher Education Research Promotion 2013). Each of them is chaired by one of the NRUP participating institutions.

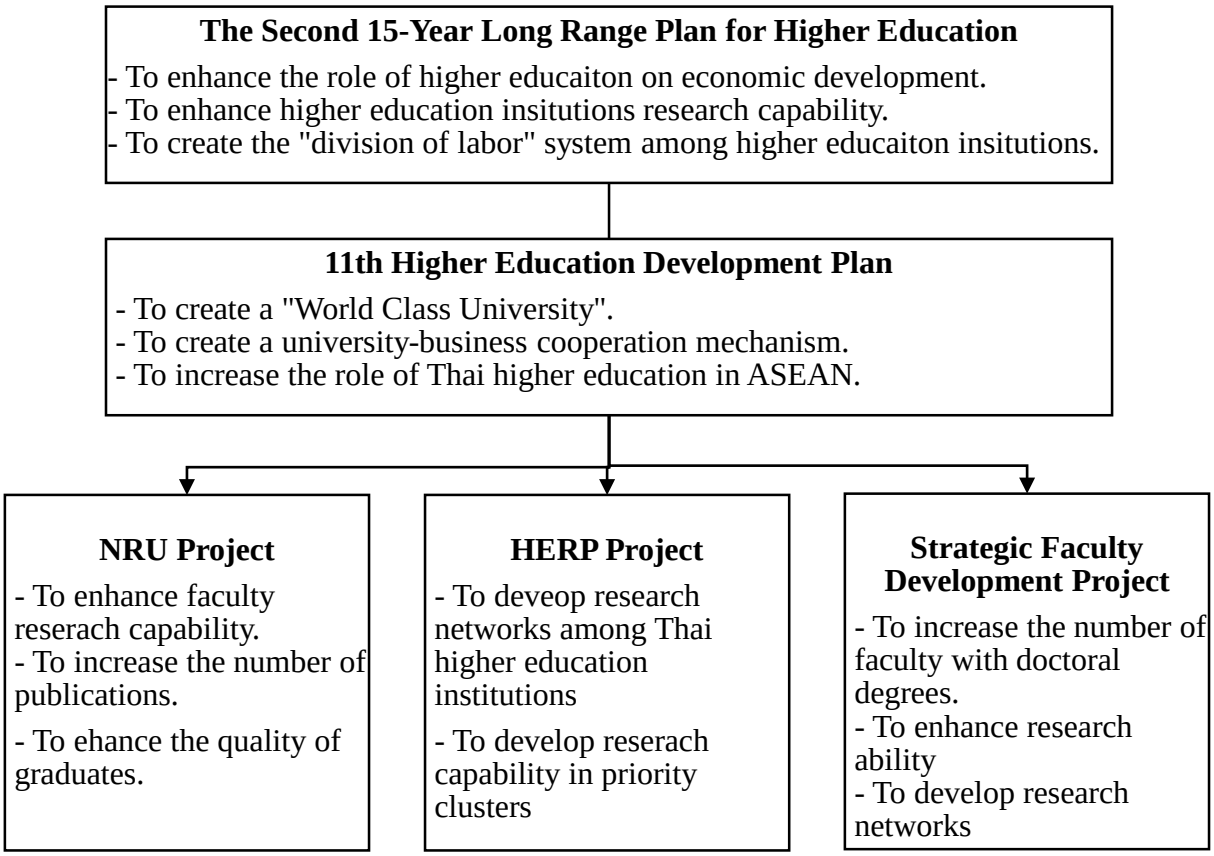
Table 5.4. The Assessment Criteria of NRUP Participating Institutions

Requisites	Indicators
1. Quality of research	• The number of publications in international academic database. • The number of patents, joint-research projects with foreign university and business sector, and exchanged students and faculty. • The number of graduate and post-doctoral students.
2. Cooperation with business sector	• The number of research projects which are hired by business sector. • The revenue from research and academic services.
3. Research network	• The number of higher education institutions in the research network.
4. International aspect	• The role of the institutions in providing academic services and training programs for ASEAN citizens.

Source: Office of the National Research University and Higher Education Research Promotion (2013).

To support the NRUP and HERP, OHEC initiated the Strategic Faculty Development Project. It is a scholarship program aiming at increasing the number of faculty with doctoral degrees, enhancing faculty research capability, and developing research networks at the international level. The scope of the project covers doctoral and post-doctoral degree scholarships in Thai and foreign higher education institutions, and budget needs for student, faculty, and researcher short-term exchanges. The research enhancement policy connection is shown in Figure 5.2.

Figure 5.2. The Connection of the Policy on Research Enhancement



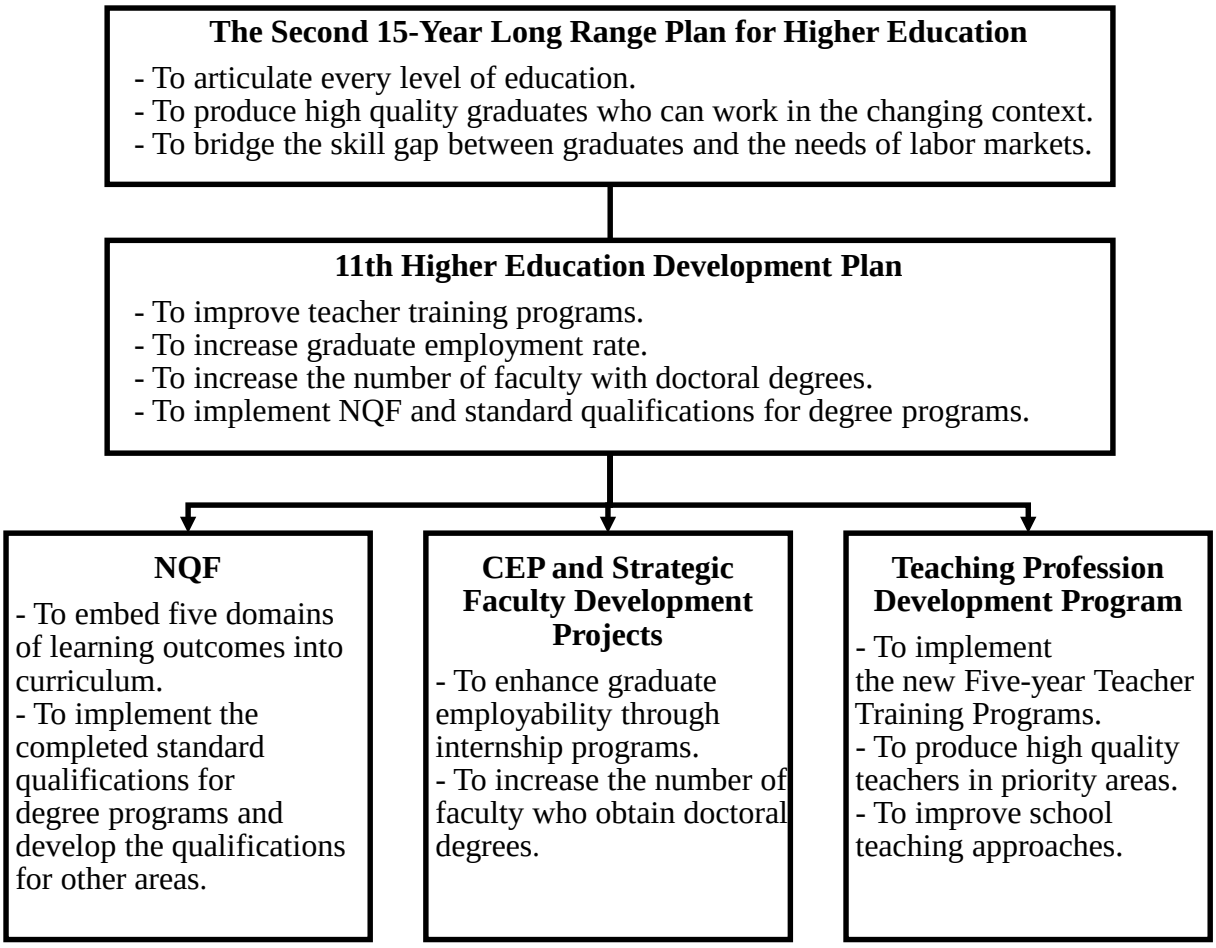
From 2011 to 2013, nine research clusters were established. OHEC and the NRUP participating institutions planned to introduce seven new research clusters by the end of 2019. OHEC targeted every Rajabhat University and Rajamangala University of Technology, along with 20 public institutions participating in the HERP. However, it did not elaborate how each institution would contribute to the project. In terms of the Strategic Faculty Development Project, OHEC has yet to identify the number of scholarships awarded and the projected impacts of the program, including the number publications and research projects.

One observation was that private institutions did not have any role or contribution to these projects. There was no private institution participating in the NRUP and HERP. In addition, private institution faculty are not eligible for funding through the Strategic Faculty Development Project. Data demonstrated the gaps and discrimination in policy implementation between public and private institutions at the national level. This situation could eventually alienate private institutions and widen the gap in academic development between public and private higher education institutions.

5.1.3 Human Capital Development

The goal of human capital development policy is to enhance graduate employability in the expanding labor market. To achieve the goal, both OHEC and higher education institution administrators emphasized the importance of quality at every level of education. At the higher education level, OHEC is implementing the NQF and standard qualifications for degree programs to assure the quality and consistency of qualifications. In addition, OHEC and higher education institutions have implemented the Strategic Faculty Development Project and Cooperative Education Project (CEP) to enhance faculty quality and graduate employability. The higher education policy on human capital development is as shown in Figure 5.3.

Figure 5.3. The Connection of the Policy on Human Capital Development



The OHEC included issues on the articulation of higher education, basic and vocational education in the *Second 15-Year Long Range Plan for Higher Education*. The plan focuses on increasing the number and enhancing the quality of teachers at basic and vocational levels. According to the Office of Basic Education Commission (OBEC) and Office of Vocational Education Commission (OVEC), Thailand is facing a teacher shortage, particularly in the areas of mathematics, sciences, and foreign languages. The lack of teacher quantity and quality

directly affects the quality and college readiness of high school graduates. Eventually, it will have an impact on higher education. As the teacher-producing agencies, OHEC and higher education institutions need to address this problem. Because the Strategic Faculty Development Project was discussed in the previous section, this segment concentrates on the implementation of NQF, CEP, and the Teaching Profession Development Program.

5.1.3.1 National Qualifications Framework

The OHEC implemented the NQF and standard qualifications for degree programs in 2009. They are the national standard qualification competencies, consisting of five domains of learning outcomes: ethical and moral development, knowledge, cognitive skill, interpersonal skill, and analytical and communication skills. The main objectives are to promote quality of education, ensure comparability and consistency of degrees and qualifications, and enhance graduate employability. Both documents serve as benchmarks for internal and external quality assessment, which help the employers to understand competencies graduates possess from certain qualifications and levels of study. The implementation of the NQF increases transparency and accountability among higher education institutions at national and regional levels. The implementation of NQF is also expected to foster the harmonization of higher education systems in ASEAN.

According to OHEC, the NQF has been enforced in every higher education institution in Thailand. However, OHEC did not identify the number of revised curricula which met the NQF requirements. The NQF implementation was assessed based on the percentage of graduates who either passed the exit exam from their institutions or were granted professional licenses from professional associations. OHEC launched standard qualifications in 10 areas of study, including

computer science, nursing, and engineering. Additionally, OHEC is developing standard qualifications in 23 other subject areas.

The majority of the administrators (64.28 percent) in this study believed these measures would enhance graduate employability in both Thailand and ASEAN member countries. In addition, they believed the NQF is a solid foundation to foster the quality of their curricula. However, the implementation of NQF is at an early stage. It created discontent among higher education institutions, particularly on the increasing amounts of compliance and requirements to submit numerous reports. The administrators and faculty have also struggled to embed the learning outcomes into the curriculum due to the lack of comprehension of the advanced subject competencies. Thus, it is important for OHEC and higher education institutions to provide support and training to faculty to enhance the implementation and ensure their commitment to the NQF.

5.1.3.2 Teaching Profession Development Program

Thailand is facing challenges in the quantity and quality of teachers. It is because the teaching profession, particularly at basic and vocational education level, is considerably less prestigious, and provides less compensation and career progression in comparison with other professionals. As a result, teacher training programs have struggled to attract top quality students, who usually consider a teacher training program among their last options. Without the new high quality teacher in the system, the quality of high school graduates and their college readiness are decreasing, which will eventually impact the quality of higher education graduates, and their employability.

To address this challenge, OHEC has implemented the Teaching Profession Development Program. The ultimate goal of the program is to produce high-quality teachers for basic and

vocational education institutions. To achieve the goal, OHEC revised and expanded the duration of the teacher training curriculum from four to five years. Scholarships have been provided to outstanding students in five-year teacher training programs. If students are not in the five-year teacher training program, they are required to study in the one-year teacher certification program after graduating from their programs. In addition, OHEC, in collaboration with OBEC and OVEC, facilitates job placement for participating students at public schools under the supervision of the OBEC and OVEC.

As of 2010, there were 45 participating institutions. Of them, 33 were Rajabhat Universities. The other 13 institutions were public institutions (11) and Rajamangala Universities of Technology (2). There were no private institutions participating in the program. The participation of Rajabhat Universities was anticipated because they were founded as teacher training colleges. Likewise, the absence of private institutions is also anticipated because teacher training is not considered one of their specialties.

5.1.3.3 Cooperative Education Project

The CEP aims to foster university and business-sector cooperation in three aspects: research and technology transfer, research commercialization, and graduate employability enhancement. Nevertheless, improving graduate employability emerged as the central priority. To achieve this goal, higher education institutions involve private industry representatives in curriculum development and foster student competencies enhancement through internship programs.
A number of incentives have been provided to participating institutions and faculty, for instance, extra budget allocations for institutions and faculty, based on the achievements of the CEP.

As of 2011, there were 27,061 participating students from 97 institutions which is 25.14 percent increase from 2010, when 21,624 students from 92 institutions participated in the

program (Office of the Higher Education Commission 2007). Regarding the business sector, 13,127 business organizations participated in the project. Although the number of participating students exceeded initial estimates, OHEC expressed concerns on the implementation. The first concern was on the number of business organizations, which was increasing at a slower rate than the number of participating students. If this trend continued, there could be a paucity of internship positions within the coming decade. The second issue was a lack of policy continuity, and untimely coordination and communication among OHEC, the related government agencies, and higher education institutions. The university administrators suggested that the policy makers, including MOE and OHEC administrators, changed quite often, which had negative impacts on the policy direction and priorities. In addition, there are many government agencies involved in the country's human capital development and human resource planning. Thus, it is important for these agencies to coordinate and identify clear goals. These issues negatively affected the preparation of higher education institutions. The OHEC administrators also indicated that the number of cooperative education curricula were decreasing after OHEC stopped providing financial support in 2003.

At the institutional level, the university administrators expressed concerns on the continuity of policy and how institutions prepared students for internship programs. There were comments that participating students possessed a lack of professionalism, maturity, and communication skills. In addition, there were students who were not interested in participating because they might have to spend a longer time in their programs. Thus, it is crucial for the institutions to better prepare students and create awareness on benefits of the program. Likewise, the employers need to provide adequate supports to participating students, such as mentors, equipment, and competitive compensation.

The OHEC and university administrators spoke positively about the impact of the program on graduate employability. One private master's institution administrator said every participating student got a job after graduation. It was consistent with comments from the majority of administrators in this study. They mentioned that the participating students tended to obtain employment quicker, and the students reflected that they required less time adapting to on-the-job responsibilities.

5.1.4 Harmonization of Higher Education System

As discussed earlier, the goals of the harmonization of higher education are to enhance the comparability of credit, qualifications, and quality assurance systems. Both OHEC and higher education institutions realized the scale and complexity of the task. A number of stakeholders considered it an important issue, and either included it in their plans or participated in the OHEC programs. At present, OHEC and higher education institutions focus on student mobility programs, credit transfer, and information exchange with other ASEAN member countries. OHEC has implemented two faculty and student mobility programs within ASEAN. They are the Staff and Student Exchange Program between Thailand and Greater Mekong Sub-region (GMS) Countries, and *ASEAN International Mobility for Students* (AIMS). Although the objectives, scopes, and durations of programs are similar, each program targets different geographical areasand has slightly different requirements for credit transfer.

The GMS program has been implemented since 2000, aiming at fostering student and faculty exchange between Thailand and four ASEAN member countries and two provinces in China: Yunnan and Guangxi. The four ASEAN countries are Cambodia, Laos, Myanmar, and Vietnam. Unlike other mobility programs, OHEC provides financial support to both incoming

and outgoing participants in this program. The scope of the program covers researching and studying for students and research and teaching for faculty. The duration of the program is one semester. Although credit transfer is encouraged, it is not required for students due to the different or lack of corresponding credit systems in partner countries. During 2000-2010, there were 1,176 participants, including 626 Thai faculty and students and 550 faculty and students from GMS countries.

The AIMS is the collaborative program among Indonesian, Malaysian, and Thai governments, and SEAMEO RIHED. Although it is a student exchange program, its ultimate goals are to foster credit transfer, mutual qualifications recognition, and quality standards among participating countries. The implementation of the program is still at an early stage. Thus, only three ASEAN member countries participate in and provide financial support to the program. In addition, the number of participating institutions and areas of study are still limited. As of 2014, there were seven Thai public institutions, along with another 17 institutions in Indonesia and Malaysia, participating in the program. The three governments and SEAMEO RIHED planned to expand programs to other member countries, and use the programs as a foundation to develop a regional credit transfer system.

There were public institutions that used these two programs as frameworks to develop their own student and faculty exchange programs. One public institution administrator mentioned that his institution included the number of participating students in the exchange program as one of the KPIs for each school. However, the exchange programs at the institutional level were slightly different from OHEC's, particularly the duration of the program and supporting budget. The exchange program at the institutional level did not require students to participate in the program for the whole semester. Thus, students have the option to spend a part of the semester in

foreign institutions. In addition, most institutions provided only partial financial support to participating students. The administrators said the shorter participating period attracted more students to participate in the program, because most students did not have experience aboard, and were anxious about spending the whole semester in other countries. The cost-sharing approach allowed the institutions to increase the number of participating students, and seize the potential benefits from the participation.

The OHEC and education agencies in other member countries formally and informally meet several times a year to exchange information on education systems and progress in preparation for the ASEAN integration. In addition, OHEC and higher education institutions restructured their academic calendars to match those in ASEAN countries and the majority of countries worldwide. At present, the first semester starts in September and finishes in December, and the second is from January to April. The OHEC expects the realigned academic calendar will foster student mobility within the region and between Thailand and other parts of the world.

5.2 THE STAKEHOLDERS AS PARTICIPANTS IN POLICY PROCESSES

There are a number of stakeholders and participants in the higher education policy process. The roles of these stakeholders were evidenced at both OHEC and institutional levels in various forms. Their involvement was a part of the OHEC and higher education institutions' efforts to keep pace with the changing context and forge a connection between higher education and economic development. This section discusses the roles of three stakeholders: higher education institutions, government agencies, and business sector and professional associations.

5.2.1 Higher Education Institutions

The structure of the Thai higher education system is rigidly centralized. The OHEC is the policy maker, regulator, and supervisor, while higher education institutions are mainly responsible for policy implementation. However, OHEC does not have the authority over higher education budget allocation, which hinders the OHEC's ability to enforce mandates and implement policies. To overcome this issue, OHEC has attempted to create buy-in among higher education institutions by including representatives from both public and private institutions in the OHEC's committees and sub-committees. These committees and sub-committees have played important roles in providing input and sharing their concerns during the formulation of the *Second 15-year Long Range Plan for Higher Education*, the *10th and 11th Higher Education Development Plans,* and policies toward ASEAN integration and internationalization of higher education.

The data from the interviews suggested that OHEC intensively engaged and gave priorities to comments and recommendations from higher education institutions. The data also indicated that OHEC has attempted to disseminate information on the ASEAN development and OHEC initiatives through conferences and publications. Although most institutions designated certain administrators and staff to participate in the process, a number of institutions kept changing responsible persons. In addition, there were communication gaps between the representatives and administrators of many institutions. These issues obstructed the flow of information from OHEC to institutions, preventing them from effectively and actively participating in the process.

Regarding policy implementation, most public institution administrators suggested that OHEC policies and goals were generic, which allowed institutions to develop specific goals, objectives, and KPIs, based on their focuses and niches. On the contrary, there were

administrators, particularly from private institutions and Rajabhat Universities, who discussed the ambiguity of the policy. This ambiguous policy did not help institutions to prepare for the changing contexts and ASEAN integration. The perceptions affected their participation in the OHEC initiatives. One example cited by administrators was participation in the OHEC's student and faculty mobility programs. Although the majority of the institutions in this study participated in OHEC initiatives, most of non-participant institutions were private institutions and Rajabhat Universities. The details are shown in Tables 5.5 and 5.6.

Table 5.5. HEIs Participation in OHEC Student Mobility Programs

	Your institution participates in OHEC's student mobility program(s) between higher education institutions in Thailand and ASEAN member countries.			
	Strongly agreed	**Somewhat agreed**	**Somewhat disagreed**	**Strongly disagreed**
Public HEIs	9	2	0	0
Rajabhat Universities and Rajamangala Universities of Technology	3	10	1	0
Private master's Universities	0	2	3	0
Private Baccalaureate Institutions	2	3	6	2
Total	**14 (32.56%)**	**17 (39.53%)**	**10 (23.26%)**	**2 (4.56%)**

The data in Table 5.5 showed that 11 out of 12 non-participant institutions were private institutions. All public institutions and almost all Rajabhat Universities participated in the programs. This similar pattern was also evidenced by participation in the OHEC faculty mobility programs.

Table 5.6. HEIs Participation in OHEC Faculty Mobility Programs

	Your institution participates in OHEC's student mobility program(s) between higher education institutions in Thailand and ASEAN member countries.			
	Strongly agreed	**Somewhat agreed**	**Somewhat disagreed**	**Strongly disagreed**
Public HEIs	9	2	0	0
Rajabhat Universities and Rajamangala Universities of Technology	3	7	3	1
Private Master's Universities	0	3	2	0
Private Baccalaureate Institutions	2	5	4	2
Total	**14 (32.56%)**	**17 (39.53%)**	**10 (23.26%)**	**2 (4.56%)**

The data in Table 5.6 indicated that the majority of non-participating institutions were private institutions, followed by Rajabhat Universities. The OHEC administrators explaining this situation pointed out that the mobility programs between Thailand and ASEAN member countries were not very attractive to faculty and students. In addition, the application requirements, which include English language proficiency, might have discouraged students from participating in the programs. The higher participation rate among public institutions might be the result of the ASEAN International Mobility for Students Program, launched in 2010. The public institution administrators added that students refrained from applying to the program because they did not have adequate knowledge about ASEAN countries. In addition, it is very difficult for them to find hosting institutions unless their institution or academic advisor facilitates the placement. The OHEC priority areas of exchange also obstructed certain institutions from participating in the programs because they do not offer programs that have

faculty and students in available subject areas. These are issues OHEC needs to address to increase higher education institutions' participation in the process.

5.2.2 Government Agencies

There are at least four government agencies participating in the higher education policy process, including the MFA, MOC, Ministry of Labor, and the Royal Thai Police. The Department of Trade Negotiations, MOC and MFA are the lead government agencies in free trade agreement negotiations and in international cooperation. The OHEC works closely with these agencies to identify Thailand's positions and proposals in trade negotiations, publicizing information on the liberalization of trade in services, and promoting ASEAN economic integration. The goal is to create awareness of the necessity of economic integration, and the potential benefits and challenges of the free trade agreements.

In the implementation process, the Department of Export Promotion, MOC, Ministry of Labor, and the Royal Thai Police play important roles, particularly in the recruitment of foreign faculty and students. The Department of Export Promotion designated educational services to be tradable and exportable, and claimed that the promotion of Thai education should fall under its jurisdiction. The MOE and OHEC have been opposing this idea, emphasizing that they are responsible for the promotion of Thai education services and institutions because its scope covers both faculty and student recruitment, along with academic cooperation enhancement. Although MOE and OHEC have worked with the Department of Export Promotion, some discord still exists, and each of these agencies promote Thai education services based on their individual strategies and available budget. This situation reduces synergy in the implementation

process and budget allocation, which eventually hinders the effectiveness of the attempt to promote Thailand as a regional education hub in Southeast Asia.

Apart from the disagreement on Thai education services promotion, there are also disparate positions among the MOE, MFA, Ministry of Labor, and the Royal Thai Police concerning the immigration and work permit procedure for foreign students and faculty. The MOE and OHEC are pushing for the creation and implementation of student and faculty visas that would cover the entire period of study and employment contract. The MOE and OHEC believe it will help education institutions to recruit and retain foreign students and faculty. However, no action has been taken by the MFA. In addition, the Royal Thai Police and Ministry of Labor insisted on the necessity of strict immigration procedures for national security reasons.

At present, each institution helps foreign faculty and students obtain and renew their visa and work permits. The Ministry of Labor and Royal Thai Police facilitate the process by setting up mobile units for certain institutions on an annual basis. However, a number of institutions are not familiar with the process and struggle to handle the immigration procedure. The administrators reflected on this situation and expressed opinions on visa and work permit issuance and renewal. The detail is shown on Tables 5.7 and 5.8.

Table 5.7. The Perceptions on Student Visa Issuance and Renewal

	Thailand has a regulatory framework that facilitates student visa issuance and renewal.			
	Strongly agreed	**Somewhat agreed**	**Somewhat disagreed**	**Strongly disagreed**
OHEC	2	6	3	0
Public HEIs	2	3	5	1
Rajabhat Universities and Rajamangala Universities of Technology	3	6	7	0
Private Master's Universities	1	3	2	0
Private Baccalaureate Institutions	1	8	3	1
Total	**9 (15.79%)**	**26 (45.61%)**	**20 (35.09%)**	**2 (3.51%)**

The data in Tables 5.7 and 5.8 suggested that the majority of administrators at OHEC, Rajabhat Universities, and private institutions believed that the current regulations facilitate visa and work permit issuance and renewal. On the other hand, public university administrators expressed divided viewpoints. These administrators complained that the immigration processes were complicated and time-consuming. However, they also noted that the Ministry of Labor and Royal Thai Police provided step-by-step directions, which helped higher education institutions to prepare required documents and make suggestions for foreign faculty and students.

Table 5.8. The Perceptions on Faculty Work Permit Issuance and Renewal

	Thailand has a regulatory framework that facilitates faculty work permit issuance and renewal.			
	Strongly agreed	**Somewhat agreed**	**Somewhat disagreed**	**Strongly disagreed**
OHEC	4	4	3	0
Public HEIs	1	4	5	1
Rajabhat Universities and Rajamangala Universities of Technology	3	7	6	0
Private master's Universities	1	3	2	0
Private Baccalaureate Institutions	2	9	2	0
Total	**11 (19.30%)**	**27 (47.37%)**	**18 (31.58%)**	**1 (1.75%)**

5.2.3 Business Sector and Professional Associations

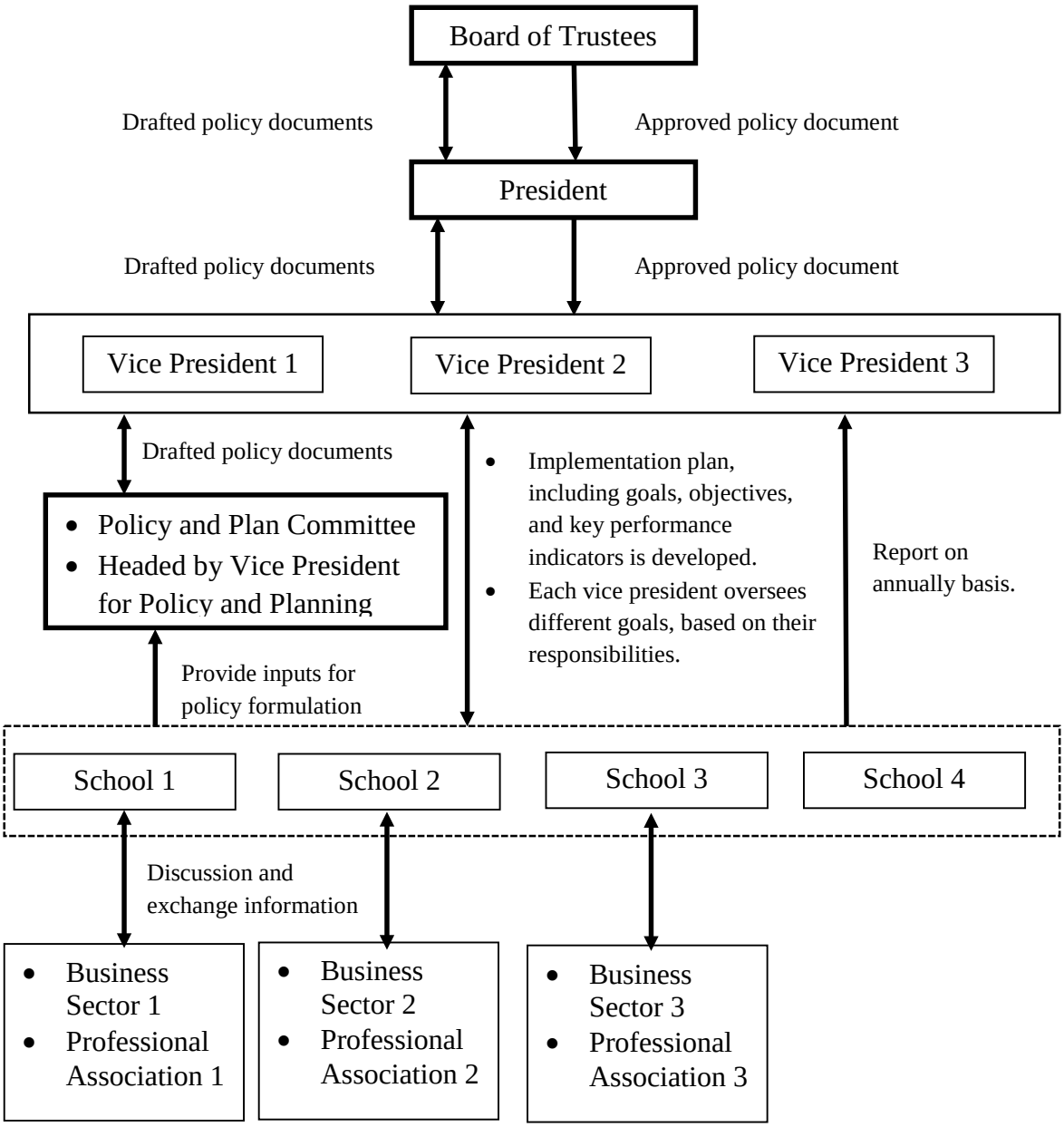
The roles of the business sector and professional associations have significantly increased in higher education policy processes. The inclusion of the business sector and professional associations aims to reduce the gap between higher education products and the needs of the labor market. In addition, it emphasizes the role of higher education in economic and social development, including research cooperation, technology transfer, and graduate employability enhancement. In terms of policy formulation, the Thai government includes representatives from the business sector and professional associations as members of the Commission on Higher Education (CHE), which serves as the national board of higher education. Likewise, most higher education institutions include business sector representatives in their board of trustees and advisory boards. Apart from serving on CHE and university boards, OHEC and higher education

institutions usually seek input from business sector representatives and professional associations during the policy formulation process.

Based on the interviews, two policy formulation models emerged. Both models are highly centralized and employ a top-down approach. The difference between the two models is how the institutions include the business sector and professional association representatives in the process. In Figure 5.4, the model indicates that the business sector and professional associations do not directly participate in the policy formulation process. They provide policy inputs through communication with the deans and administrators of each school. Then, the deans forward their input to the committee that drafts the policy document. The document is then reviewed and approved by the president and board of trustees, respectively.

This model is commonly used at public institutions, particularly ones which offer professional degree programs, such as Law, Engineering, and Medical Sciences. The administrators indicated that it is very difficult to directly include the business sector and professional associations in the institutional policy process because of the size, organizational culture, and the number of programs offered by the institutions. However, most institutions encourage schools to work with the business sector and professional associations and to have representatives from influential business establishments as members of the board of trustees.

Figure 5.4. Higher Education Institution Policy Formulation Model 1



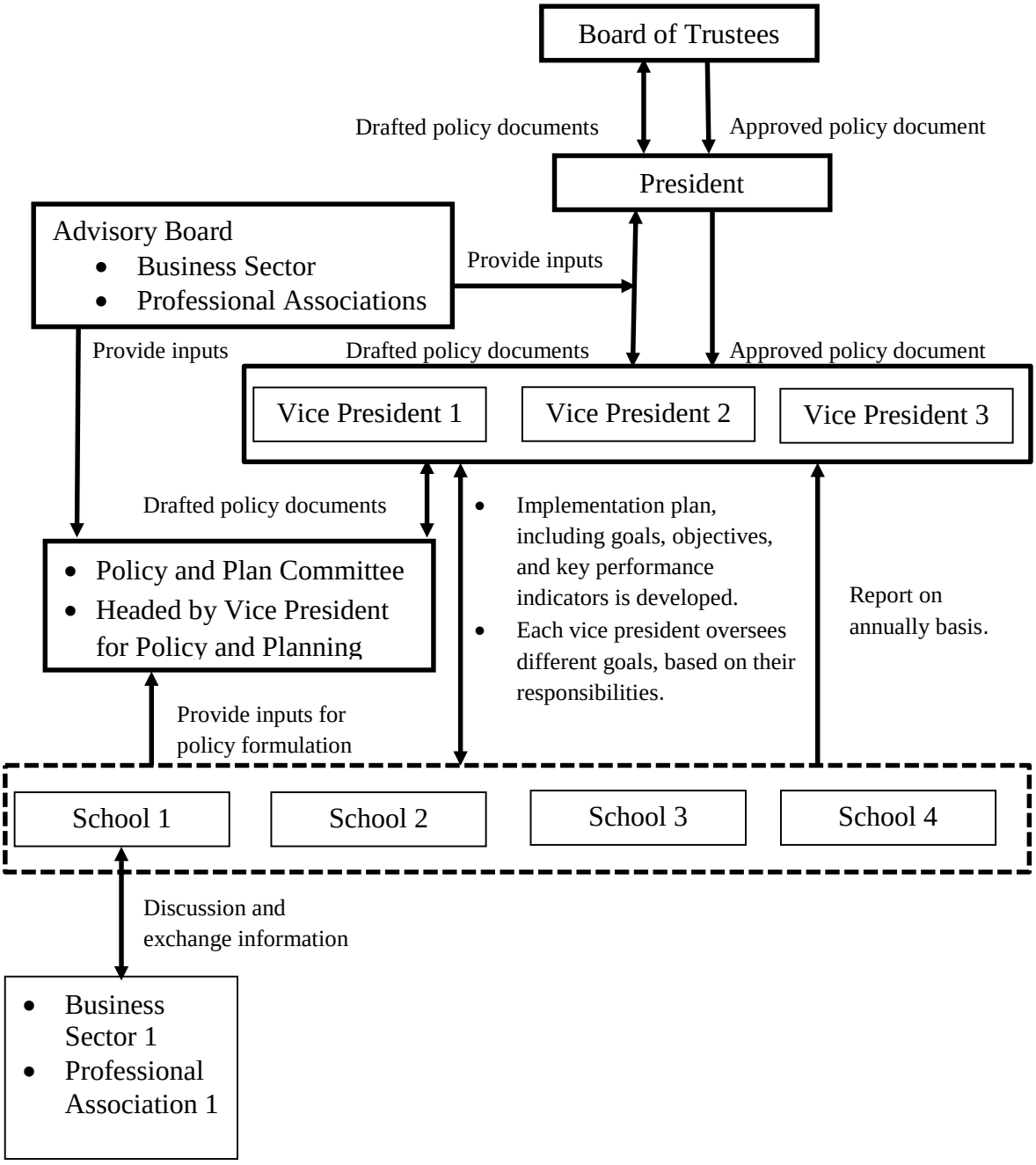
The second model (Figure 5.5) is more common among private institutions and Rajabhat Universities. In this model, the institutions appoint business sector and professional association representatives to be members of the institutional advisory board. A number of private

institutions also appointed government officials to be members of the advisory board. The advisory board provides input to the policy during the drafting and approving processes. Discussion with the business sector at the institutional level occasionally occurs in the process.

The private institution administrators mentioned that the focus of their institutions was producing graduates who were capable of obtaining employment in their chosen fields. Thus, it is important for private institutions to work with business sector representatives to identify needs and expectations from employers. However, private institutions also need to identify their academic identities and niche programs and work with selected business sector groups to enhance them. Because of scarce resources, these institutions cannot afford to achieve excellence in every discipline. Collaboration with the business sector gives these private institutions the ability to identify and accentuate successful programs and improve the visibility and prestige of their brands.

Apart from their role in the policy formulation process, the business sector and professional associations have played important roles in the policy implementation process, particularly in quality assurance and graduate employability enhancement. At the national level, the business sector and professional associations have helped develop NQF and standard qualifications for degree programs. They work closely with OHEC and academic discipline consortiums in identifying generic and discipline-specific learning outcomes, consisting of the necessary knowledge, skills, and behavior graduates need to obtain gainful employment.

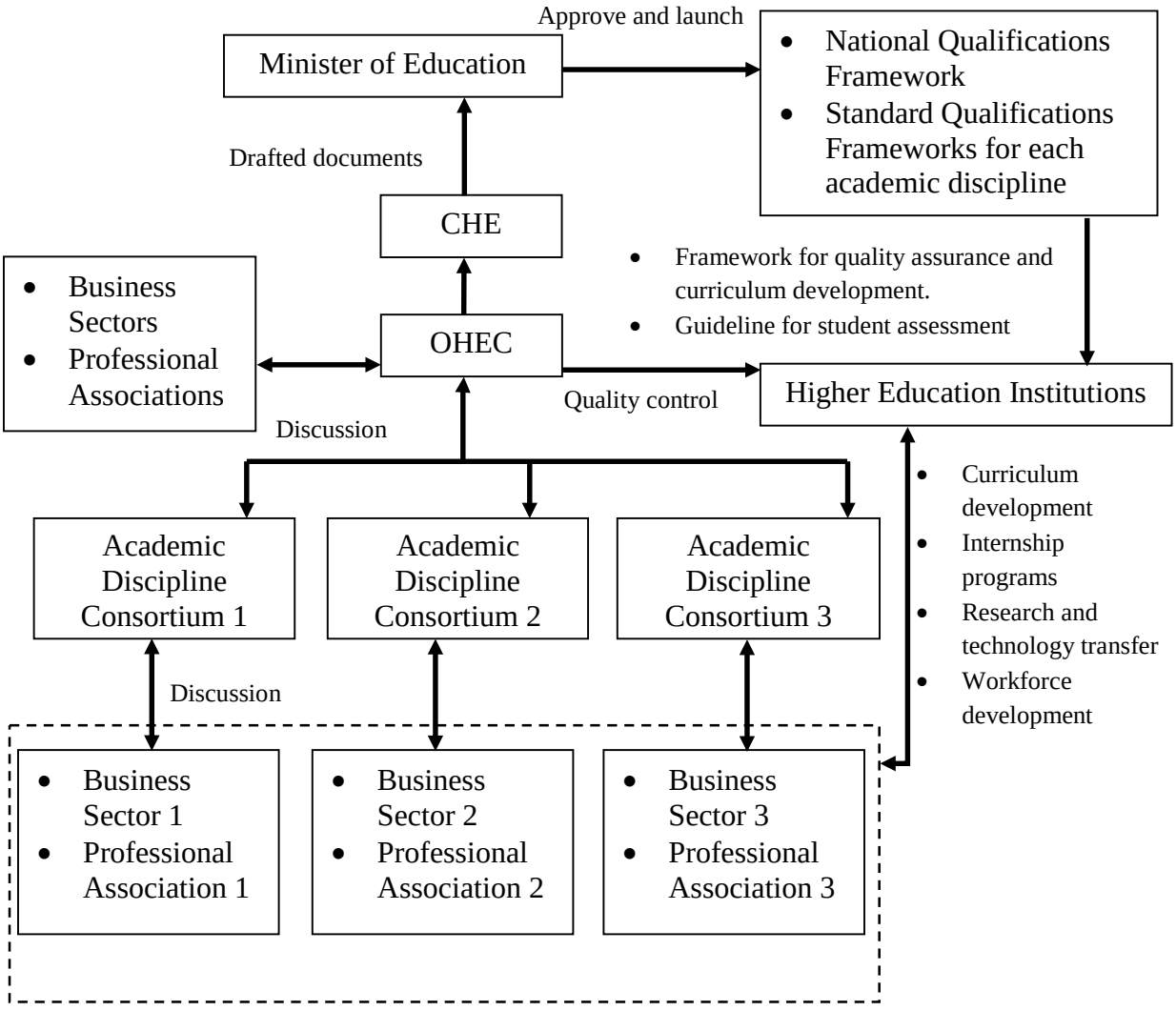
Figure 5.5. Higher Education Institution Policy Formulation Model 2



Based on the NQF and standard qualifications for degree programs, higher education institutions work closely with the business sector and professional associations in three aspects,

including curriculum development, internship program implementation, and research collaboration. During the curriculum development phase, both institution and the business sector need to include the desired learning outcomes of the curriculum and identify how to develop and assess students. If the curriculum requires internships and research, both parties need to develop and implement those programs. The role of the business sector and professional associations is displayed in Figure 5.6

Figure 5.6. The Role of the Business Sector in the Policy Implementation Process



Apart from developing students in the higher education system, higher education institutions and the business sector increasingly cooperate in workforce development. Due to the changes in technology and working contexts, it is important for the business sector to update and upgrade their employees' competencies and qualifications. This is where higher education intuitions provide their services through short-term training and continuing education programs. There have been attempts to transfer workforce experiences to credit hours. However, no concrete measure from OHEC exists at this time. Based on their role in the policy implementation process, the majority of administrators in this study indicated that their institutions included business sector and professional association representatives in curriculum development and quality assurance processes. The detail is shown in Table 5.9.

Table 5.9. The Role of the Business Sector in Policy Processes

	Agreed	**Did not agree**
Your institution includes representatives from business sector in curriculum development. (n = 47)	40 (85.11%)	7 (14.89%)
Your organization/institution includes representatives from business sector in the quality assurance and qualifications framework development processes. (n= 57)	45 (78.95%)	12 (21.05%)

Apart from participating in the policy process, there are two business corporations that have established their own higher education institutions, aiming to produce graduates to serve in their industries. The rationales behind these two institutions are the limited number of degree programs available in the areas of retail and entertainment businesses. These institutions and programs are accredited by OHEC. These two institutions offer limited numbers of degree programs, which include intensive internships at business establishments in these industries. This

is an innovative model and recent development which demonstrates the expanding role of the business sector in Thai higher education.

5.3 ORGANIZATION AND HIGHER EDUCATION SYSTEM RESTRUCTURING

Organizational restructuring is a clear trend in OHEC. In 2003, OHEC created new agencies to handle policies on higher education and business-sector cooperation, and internationalization of higher education. These agencies are the Bureau of Cooperation and Promotion, Division of the Liberalization of Trade in Higher Education Services Policy Administration, and Division of Education Hub Promotion. The organizational restructuring was not explicitly evidenced at the institutional level, but most institutions integrated tasks on internationalization within the existing internal agencies and international cooperation units. Although the scope of responsibilities are beyond the ASEAN context, it is among their highest priorities.

The Bureau of Cooperation and Promotion is responsible for higher education and business-sector cooperation in three aspects: research and technology transfer, research commercialization, and graduate employability enhancement through internships and cooperative education programs. The main responsibilities of the Division of the Liberalization of Trade in Higher Education Services Policy Administration are to identify Thailand's positions and offers in free trade agreements, and prepare the higher education system and institutions for the potential impacts. The Division of Education Hub Promotion is in charge of short-term faculty and student exchange programs and the Thai higher education system promotion, including encouraging and facilitating foreign student recruitment among higher education institutions.

Apart from organizational restructuring, Thailand has revamped higher education administration, focusing on providing more autonomy to higher education institutions. In the past, institutional administration was strictly controlled by MOE, particularly on budgets, academic program management, and human resource management. This strictly-controlled environment hinders institutional development and academic freedom. To alleviate this situation, the Thai government is slowly pushing public institutions out of the bureaucratic system. The term "public autonomous university" was introduced to describe the status of these institutions. At present, most public higher education institutions obtain this status, or are in the conversion process. In addition, the government provided more authority to private higher education institutions, particularly on human resource management.

The public autonomous university receives annual budget allocations from the government in the form of block grants, which increases institutional flexibility in spending and managing money. In terms of human resource management, the institution has the authority to formulate and implement its own policy and regulations, according to the *Civil Service in Higher Education Institution Act (2004)* and the *Second Civil Service in Higher Education Act (2007).* Public institutions are able to hire faculty, staff, and administrators and promote their faculty to Assistant and Associate Professor without approval from the MOE. In addition, the institutions have the authority to recommend faculty to the full Professor position, but their recommendations must be reviewed by OHEC, approved by the Cabinet, and finally, by the King. According to the *Private Higher Education Act (2003),* the regulations on human resource management also apply to private higher education institutions. This development is significant, because private institutions did not have the authority to appoint faculty to any academic position prior to this Act. It gives private institution faculty the opportunity to progress in their academic

careers and allows private institutions to use this incentive to attract high-quality personnel to their institutions.

5.4 CHALLENGES IN THE POLICY IMPLEMENTATION

Although the policy and plans for potential impacts of ASEAN economic integration are already in place, the implementation is still in the early stages. Each type of institution has been facing a number of barriers. Based on the data from the interviews and survey, the emerging challenges consist of political instability, improving clarity of laws and regulations, resource inadequacy, and administrator and faculty awareness and readiness. This segment discusses these four challenges.

5.4.1 Political Instability and Policy Clarity

The political instability and policy clarity were considered challenges by administrators in every type of institution. Nevertheless, the OHEC administrators were directly affected by political instability in comparison to university administrators. As previously discussed in Chapter 4, Thailand has been facing political instability for two decades. One of the consequences was frequent government and policy changes, which delayed policy formulation and implementation processes, most notably the introduction of the *Second 15-Year Long Range Plan for Higher Education*, NQF, and the New Higher Education Act. The OHEC administrators also mentioned that the appointment of the Secretary-General of OHEC and senior administrators in MOE were also influenced by political instability. There have been four Secretary-Generals of OHEC in the

past five years; two of them did not have experience or background in higher education administration. Although it did not mean they could not work at the OHEC, these issues stalled the progress and altered the direction and priorities of OHEC.

The university administrators also expressed their concerns about the clarity of education policy. The administrators, particularly from private institutions and Rajabhat Universities, admitted that they were not sure about the present education policy direction and priorities. Nevertheless, the public institution administrators countered this perspective by mentioning that the government education policy provided a clear general guideline. It was up to the institutions to further identify policies, goals, and KPIs that suit their identities and niches. These comments demonstrated different perspectives on the functions of the education policy of different institutions.

There were also comments on the communication between OHEC and higher education institutions, and within the institutions themselves. The administrators agreed that OHEC has been trying to communicate and involve higher education institutions in the policy processes. However, there were communication gaps between the two parties, and between responsible persons and administrators within the institutions. Without adequate and effective communication, it was very hard to create synergy in the policy process. Thus, it is important for OHEC to develop and strengthen communication with higher education institutions to ensure mutual comprehension in policy content and implementation.

5.4.2 Laws and Regulations and Administration Structure

The university administrators expressed discontent with the current laws and regulations, particularly on quality assurance. They said the current regulation on quality assurance increased

compliance requirements. Each institution had to shift focus and resources from enhancing their quality to completing documents and reports which are required by OHEC and ONESQA. In addition, both public and private institution administrators mentioned that OHEC and ONESQA often revise the regulations, which confused them and faculty. Thus, the regulations did not help enhance education quality or competitiveness. The private master's and baccalaureate institution administrators added that OHEC was likely to strictly control private institutions in comparison with other types of institutions. During the interviews, a couple of administrators referred to it as discrimination between public and private institutions.

The OHEC administrators countered the comments by emphasizing two functions of quality assurance: enhancing education quality and ensuring student and consumer protection. It is crucial for OHEC to strictly control the quality of private institutions because there were cases, in which private institutions offered unaccredited programs. This comment was echoed by one public administrator, who said that strict control might be necessary for private and newly established public institutions, but not for well-established public institutions.

Apart from the regulations on quality assurance, the requirements and eligibility for OHEC projects also hindered the institutions' participation in the OHEC policy implementation process, particularly among private institutions. Most OHEC projects were designed to enhance the quality and competitiveness of higher education institutions. Nevertheless, private institutions were not eligible for at least two important projects, including the HERP and Strategic Faculty Development Projects. Based on the data on international programs and foreign students in Thailand, private master's institutions played important roles in promoting Thailand as a regional education hub and in preparation for ASEAN economic integration. Like every type of institution, private institutions were facing challenges in scarcity of resources, and were in need

of government support. Without annual budget allocations from the government, these special projects were the only chances for the private institutions to directly access government funding. Thus, the exclusion of these institutions would not only hinder the policy implementation, but also discourage buy-in to the OHEC policy among private institutions.

There were comments on the administrative structure from both OHEC and university administrators. The OHEC administrators discussed how the current structure of MOE often delayed the policy formulation and implementation processes. There had been discussions and arguments from OHEC administrators and Council of Public University Presidents on separating higher education functions from MOE and establishing a new Ministry of Higher Education. Nevertheless, this concept and rationale have not yet materialized. In addition, the idea did not gain adequate support from the public or politicians due to the fact that Thailand just transformed the Ministry of University Affairs to OHEC, and merged it with MOE in 2003.

5.4.3 Lack of Budget and Administrator and Staff Readiness

Every type of institution mentioned inadequate funding. Nonetheless, the comment was more common among public institutions and Rajabhat Universities. This was unexpected because these two types of institutions receive annual government budget allocations and are eligible for every OHEC project. On contrary, the government does not directly allocate funding to private institutions. In addition, they are eligible for just a limited number of OHEC projects. The budget deficiency was a common and consistent challenge for both OHEC and higher education institutions. Although the MOE always receives the largest portion of government aid, the concentration is on basic education, which is the larger system based on the number of students and teachers.

The regulations on budgetary spending also impeded policy implementation. Although OHEC and higher education institutions discussed the inadequacy of budgets, the data showed that these organization did not even spend the entirety of their funding allotments. The biggest obstacle is the line-item budget approach, which is employed by the government. The government budget is earmarked for certain items or projects, and it is difficult to adjust and realign it. Thus, there will always be budget shortages for certain projects and a lot of money left in others. The OHEC addressed this challenge by employing a block-grant budget model, which increases the flexibility in budget management among public institutions. It is still in the early stages, and the impact has yet to be evidenced.

Apart from budget inadequacy, every type of institution discussed awareness and readiness among administrators, faculty, and staff. The administrators in this study mentioned that most faculty and staff were not aware of the potential impacts of ASEAN integration and did not prepare themselves, particularly on language ability. These concerns clearly emerged among Rajabhat Universities and private baccalaureate institutions. There were discussions on the lack of internal communication among public institutions and Rajabhat Universities, which impedes the awareness of the ASEAN integration and buy-in to the related policies among university personnel.

5.4.4 The Roles of OHEC

Apart from providing data on perceptions and policy, the administrators discussed the expected roles of OHEC in helping the institutions to prepare for the potential impacts of the integration. The data from the survey and interviews suggested that the administrators want OHEC to serve as the facilitator and coordinator, including budget and information provider, academic

cooperation facilitator, and quality promoter. The administrators from every type of institution commented that OHEC should strengthen and allocate more funding for special projects, for instance, research enhancement, faculty development, and facility improvement. The administrators clearly understood that OHEC does not have the authority in approving and allocating the government annual budget for public institutions and Rajabhat Universities. These special projects would become a channel for OHEC to use a fiscal tool to enhance policy implementation and would allow private institutions to access government resources.

As the information provider, OHEC must regularly communicate and disseminate information on the OHEC projects, ASEAN integration, and the changing contexts of higher education. The communication should also focus on creating mutual understanding on the goals and directions of higher education policy. The administrators said while communication channels between OHEC and higher education institutions were in place, they were often utilized in an untimely manner or did not reach target audiences. Consequently, the institutions and faculty were unable to support policy implementation, seize opportunities, or participate in OHEC projects.

Another function of the information provider was to increase the visibility of the Thai higher education system and institutions at ASEAN and global levels. The administrators suggested that OHEC should carry out this function in conjunction with its role of academic cooperation facilitator. With limited resources, a number of institutions were unable to promote their institutions or seek partners in other countries. This hampered their efforts in recruiting foreign students and developing academic cooperation with foreign institutions and the business sector. Thus, OHEC needs assistance to increase their visibility among foreign students and

institutions. Not only would that facilitate developing networks and improving academic reputations, improving visibility would also help OHEC achieve the goals of internationalization. Lastly, as the quality promoter, the administrators commented that OHEC and ONESQA should review and revise their roles. At present, these two organizations actively and excessively regulate and control higher education institutions. The compliance requirements and mandatory reports, which are time and resource-consuming, became the main task for the institutions, instead of trying to enhance the quality of research and curriculum. In addition, the current indicators do not reflect the quality of education. To promote and enhance this quality, OHEC and ONESQA should identify and provide clear guidelines and good practices, and allow each institution to develop its own indicators, based on its identities and expertise

5.5 SUMMARY OF THE POLICY TOWARD ASEAN ECONOMIC INTEGRATION

Based on the centralized nature of Thai higher education administration, OHEC is mainly responsible for formulating policies and plans and initiating projects to support its goals. The higher education institutions mainly play the role of policy implementation, although they are sometimes able to develop their own policies and projects. In this study, the data demonstrated that OHEC and higher education institutions considered ASEAN an important sphere of Thai higher education. They included ASEAN in their policies, plans, and projects in order to prepare themselves for the potential impacts of the integration. Although OHEC and each type of institution similarly responded to ASEAN integration, there were differences regarding supporting details that resulted from the diverse focuses and identities, levels of resources, and public or private status of the institutions.

The OHEC and public higher education institutions emphasized enhancing educational quality, graduate employability, and promoting Thailand as a regional education hub. They considered ASEAN a part of their attempts to internationalize the Thai higher education system and institutions. The success and failure of policy toward ASEAN integration was considered the byproduct of the internationalization policy and projects. On the contrary, Rajabhat Universities, Rajamangala Universities of Technology, and private institutions concentrated on preparing themselves for elevated competition for funding, students and services, and seized opportunities from the liberalization of trade in higher education services. These institutions were more likely to participate in OHEC projects than initiate and implement their own ones.

At present, it is obvious that discrimination exists, which prevents private institutions to fully support and participate in a number of OHEC projects. This decreases the synergy of the policy implementation and buy-in among private institutions, particularly in promoting educational quality and Thailand as a regional education hub. The data demonstrated that private institutions had potential, but the regulations limited their roles and opportunities to develop. Further discussion on policy consistency and recommendations can be found in Chapter 6.

6.0 DISCUSSION AND POLICY RECOMMENDATIONS

This chapter discusses the findings on the perceptions of participants and policy toward ASEAN economic integration. The discussion focuses on three research questions, including the administrators' perceptions, OHEC and institutional preparation, and the policy connections between ASEAN, OHEC, and institutions. Based on the discussion, policy recommendations and potential topics for further study were developed, aiming at helping Thailand benefit and prepare for the potential impacts of ASEAN economic integration.

6.1 PERCEPTIONS OF ASEAN ECONOMIC INTEGRATION

Generally, the administrators in this study shared common perceptions of the integration. Their concerns and interests included rising levels of competition and enhancing quality of curricula, faculty, and graduates. Nonetheless, each type of the institution had different priorities. The OHEC and public institution administrators explicitly expressed their concerns and interests on enhancing internationalization of higher education, and augmenting the status and prestige of their institutions through enhancing faculty research and rising on international rankings. The Rajabhat University administrators gave priority to faculty and staff development, particularly on language ability and cooperation with the business sector. The private institutions expressed interest in increasing competiveness through international programs and cooperation with the

business sector. They also focused on cultivating ASEAN awareness among faculty and staff. The detail is shown in Table 6.1.

Table 6.1. The Administrator Perception Comparison

	Concerns and Interests	**Priorities**
1. OHEC	• The quality of education enhancement • Faculty and staff development, particularly language ability • Graduate quality and employability • Regional academic cooperation, including research and student mobility programs	• Enhancing internationalization and comparability of higher education systems • Fostering status and prestige of the institutions
2. Public higher education institutions		
3. Rajabhat Universities and Rajamangala Universities of Technology		• Developing and improving faculty and staff language ability • Enhancing cooperation with business sector • Recruiting foreign students
4. Private master's institutions		• Fostering competitiveness of the institution. • Enhancing cooperation with business sector • Increasing the number of international programs • Enhancing ASEAN awareness among faculty, staff, and students • Seeking equal treatment between public and private institutions
5. Private baccalaureate institutions		

The data from Table 6.1 demonstrated two aspects of the perceptions. They illustrated the priorities of OHEC and different types of institutions. The OHEC and public institution administrators considered ASEAN as a part of the wider higher education environment and tried to seek opportunities that might benefit their organization and institutions. Hence, they saw ASEAN as a platform to enhance their leadership status and prestige and to foster regional academic cooperation. Public institutions were not explicitly concerned about competing to

recruit foreign students. These institutions always have more applications than they can admit from Thai students and do not solely rely on the revenue from tuition and fees, because they receive an annual budget allocation from the government. Rather, the recruitment of foreign students was a central consideration in their attempts to augment internationalization and increase their prestige.

Unlike the public institution administrators, private institution administrators perceived ASEAN as another potential threat to their existence. Thus, they saw it as a new competition platform. The concern about increasing competition was anticipated because the liberalization of trade in higher education services is the most tangible and visible element in the ASEAN economic integration. It was clearly scheduled to be completed by 2015. At present, Thailand does not have any obstruction on the trade in higher education services in cross border supply and consumption abroad modes. However, there are laws and regulations that prevent the complete liberalization of services in commercial presence and movement of natural modes of supply. Further discussion on this issue can be found in the ASEAN and OHEC policy connection segment.

The information has continuously been promoted and disseminated among higher education institutions and relating agencies. The stakes are high, considering that the college-aged population in Thailand has been decreasing and the number of seats in higher education institutions already exceeds the demand. This trend strongly affected private institutions because they are usually the second option for most Thai students and cannot rely on annual budgetary support from the government. Thus, foreign students are gradually becoming their target customers and revenue source. Mismanagement of this issue could impact enrollment, financial status, and even continued existence of the institution.

6.2 OHEC AND INSTITUTIONS PREPARATION

The business sector had an increasingly important role in the OHEC and institutional quality assurance and curriculum development processes. At the OHEC level, the business sector representatives were members of the CHE, the national higher education board, and a number of OHEC committees and sub-committees. They played important roles in the development of NQF and standard qualifications for the areas of study, and CEP Project. At the institutional level, the business sector representatives were included in curriculum development and implementation of CEP projects. They helped institutions identity learning outcomes and include them in the curriculum and facilitated the placement of students in internship positions. Apart from working with higher education institutions, there were at least two business corporations which established their own higher education institutions. The main objective of these two institutions is to produce graduates in industries that serve and support their businesses.

Faculty and staff development was one of the top priorities for OHEC and higher education institutions. The main focus was developing research capacity and improving faculty and staff qualifications. A number of scholarships have been provided by OHEC. However, they were designed specifically for faculty and staff in public institutions. The private institutions provided scholarships for their faculty and staff, but on a smaller scale due to funding limitations. Apart from research capacity and qualifications, the institutions emphasized the importance of English and ASEAN languages ability and provided training courses for their personnel.

There were implementation approaches for the institutions, including developing supporting projects and participation in OHEC projects. Most public institutions implemented their own and also participated in the OHEC projects. On the other hand, Rajabhat Universities,

Rajamangala Universities of Technology, and private institutions were likely to participate solely in the OHEC projects and were unlikely to develop and implement their own projects. This reflected the highly-centralized Thai higher education administration system, in which OHEC is the policy maker and higher education institutions are responsible for implementation.

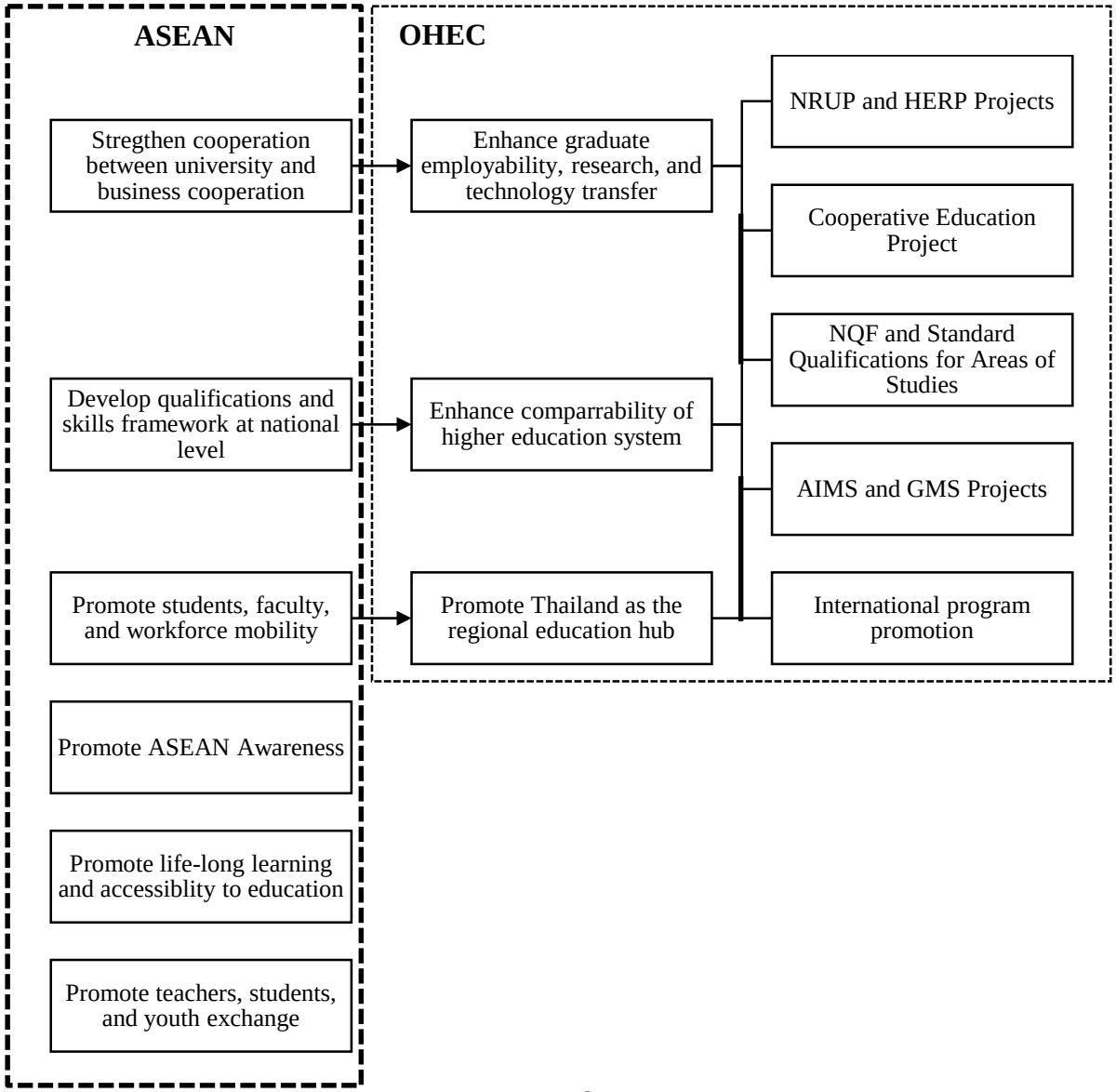
6.3 POLICY CONNECTIONS: ASEAN, OHEC, AND THE INSTITUTIONS

As discussed in Chapters 4 and 5, ASEAN identified the expected roles of higher education in supporting its goals. To determine the connection between ASEAN and OHEC policies, this study focused on how OHEC included these roles into the policy, and initiated and implemented projects. The Thai higher education administration system is highly centralized. Most policies were formulated at OHEC and jointly implemented at the institutional level. Thus, this study determines the policy connection between OHEC and higher education institutions by using data on how the institutions initiated and implemented their own projects or participate in OHEC programs. This approach is weakened by the fact that private institutions were not eligible for a number of OHEC projects. This research also demonstrates how the participation in OHEC projects and implementation of universities' projects are shaped by administrators' perceptions.

Based on the data from the document review, the ASEAN and OHEC policies were consistent. The OHEC included the expected roles of education in policy and planning documents, and implemented a number of projects to support its goals. The most tangible were the implementation of NQF, student and faculty mobility programs, and university-business cooperation. These initiatives were supported by a number of projects, including the promotion of international and joint degree programs, and teaching profession development projects.

Although OHEC has been implementing a number of projects to support ASEAN goals, there were policy gaps between the two parties, for instance, promoting ASEAN languages, developing content about ASEAN in university curricula, and promoting accessibility to education and life-long learning. The detail of the policy connection between ASEAN and OHEC is shown in Figure 6.1.

Figure 6.1. Policy Connection between ASEAN and OHEC



The policy gaps did not mean OHEC does nothing to support certain ASEAN goals, particularly in promoting ASEAN awareness, ASEAN languages, and ASEAN Studies. The OHEC and higher education institutions have implemented a number of projects. However, the scale was small, and OHEC did not include these projects as the KPIs in the *11th Higher Education Development Plan*. In addition, there were goals which did not fall into OHEC jurisdictions, such as the promotion of ASEAN through school curricula, and exchanges between teachers and school leaders, youth, and students.

Regarding the liberalization of trade in higher education services, Thailand complied well with the ASEAN requirements. At present, Thailand does not obstruct trade in higher education services in cross-border and consumption aboard modes of supply. The government allows students to access to online degree programs and pursue higher education degrees in other countries without any restriction. However, the OHEC still requires higher education institutions to own pieces of land in order to establish local branch campuses. The requirement becomes a problem because the *Land Act* (1954) does not allow foreign persons to own land in Thailand. Oher obstructions include qualifications of foreign faculty, language of instruction, and requirements on the nationalities of a university president and chairman of the university board of trustees. As a result, Thailand had not fully complied with the requirements of trade in higher education services under ASEAN, and OHEC did not provide a timeline for laws and regulations revision.

Based on the level of participation, the policy connections between OHEC and higher education institutions were decent, particularly among public institutions and Rajabhat Universities. The majority of public institutions actively participated in OHEC projects and implemented their own programs. Although Rajabhat Universities and Rajamangala Universities

of Technology were less likely to initiate and implement their own programs, they participated in selected OHEC projects, based on their capacities and roles in the Thai higher education system. For instance, public institutions were focal points and leaders in the NRUP and HERP Projects, and in attempts to promote Thailand as a regional education hub due to their research and teaching capacities, whereas Rajabhat Universities and Rajamangala Universities of Technology played leading roles in the Teaching Profession Development Program. This situation demonstrated differences in policy directions and priorities, resources, and expertise between these institutions.

Unlike public institutions and Rajabhat Universities, private master's and baccalaureate institutions participated in a limited number of OHEC projects. In addition, they rarely initiated and implemented their own projects. However, it is inconclusive and inappropriate to determine that these two types of institutions inadequately supported the goals of OHEC and ASEAN. OHEC did not make private institutions eligible for a number of important projects such as NRUP and HERP, Strategic Faculty Development, and AIMS Projects. In addition, private institutions did not receive annual government budget allocations. It was very difficult for them to invest and offer unrealistic programs, including ASEAN languages and teacher training initiatives. Although the private institutions' participation in OHEC projects was limited, private master's institutions were very active in offering international programs, recruiting foreign students, and cooperating with the business sector. As mentioned in Chapter 5, private master's institutions offered more international programs than Rajabhat Universities and Rajamangala Universities of Technology. In addition, they hosted one-third of foreign students, particularly at the bachelor's degree level. The participation of institutions in OHEC projects is shown in Table 6.2.

Table 6.2. Policy Connection between OHEC and Institutions

Projects	Public institutions	Rajabhat Universities and RMUTT	Private master's institutions	Private baccalaureate institutions
1. NQF and Standard Qualifications for Areas of Study	• Each institution participated in the development of NQF and Standard Qualifications for Areas of Study, though OHEC sub-committee and consortium. • Every institutions is obliged to follow the requirements as a part of quality assurance process.			
2. NRU Project	Nine institutions participate in the project.	Not participating in the project.	Ineligible	
3. HERP Project	20 institutions participate in the project.	Every institution participates in the project.	Ineligible	
4. Strategic Faculty Development Project	Participate in the project		• Ineligible for the OHEC project. • Implement faculty development project at institutional level.	
5. Cooperative Education Project	• 60 institutions participate in the project. • Although OHEC provides policy support, it has not allocated funding for the project since 2003.			
6. Teaching Profession Development Program	11 institutions participate in the project.	34 Institutions participate in the project.	Ineligible	
7. AIMS Project	Seven institutions participate in the project.	Ineligible		

Although the policy connection between OHEC and institutions was decent, one should take into account that certain groups of institutions were actively participating in and implementing their own programs to support the goals of ASEAN, OHEC, and their own institutions. The obvious examples were the nine public institutions, which participated in the

NRUP Project. This same group of institutions actively implemented AIMS, the Teaching Profession Development Program, and CEP. Their active participation might have raised the level of participation of public institutions nationwide. Likewise, there was one private master's institution which offered more international programs and hosted more foreign students than the rest of institutions in the group combined. Thus, it was difficult to claim that the private master's institutions, as a group, were active in the area of international education.

Policy connections and academic networks were rarely initiated at the institutional level. An institution was more likely to collaborate and form networks under OHEC projects, most notably the CEP and HERP Projects. The other types of collaboration were based on areas of study rather than the institution as a whole. These networks were evidenced during the development of the Standard Qualifications for Areas of Study and the Teaching Profession Development Program. The lack of policy connections or formal professional networks might be a consequence of the highly centralized the Thai higher education system, along with a lack of motivation among the administrators.

In conclusion, OHEC connected well with ASEAN in terms of policy and supporting projects. Nevertheless, it could have done better in promoting ASEAN awareness by encouraging higher education institutions to offer ASEAN studies and ASEAN language programs. The policy connection between OHEC and higher education institutions had room for improvement, particularly with private institutions. These institutions should have been eligible to participate in OHEC projects if they had been given the capacity to make a contribution. Likewise, the institutions should consider closer collaboration with others. Not only did it enhance buy-in among these institutions, but it also created synergy in policy implementation.

6.4 POLICY RECOMMENDATIONS

The objectives of the recommendations are to enhance the implementation of the existing policies and projects and suggest additional policy content. The recommendations are based on the potential areas of enhancement and missing elements in the current policy. In addition, it also recognizes the authority, jurisdiction, and goals of OHEC and higher education institutions to ensure the feasibility and practicality of the recommendations. Based on the findings, the recommendations are categorized into three aspects, including promoting Thailand as a regional education hub, human capital development and research enhancement, and harmonization of higher education systems.

6.4.1 Promoting Thailand as a Regional Education Hub

The promotion of Thailand as a regional education hub aims to seize opportunities and benefit from the liberalization of trade in higher education services. There are a number of success indicators. However, OHEC is mainly using two to assess the goals, including the number of international programs and foreign students in Thailand. According to OHEC, the number of international programs has been slightly increasing since 2007. On the contrary, the number of foreign students has steadily decreased since 2010. This was mainly a result of the decreasing number of students from major target countries, most notably China and ASEAN nations. The number of Chinese students dropped from 8,444 in 2011 to 6,965 in 2012. Likewise, the number of ASEAN students decreased from 5,788 in 2011 to 4,408 in 2012. During the interviews, the administrators suggested that the political situation might negatively affect the decisions of foreign students and their parents to study in Thailand. However, political instability was

uncontrollable by OHEC and higher education institutions. Hence, OHEC should focus on increasing the number of foreign students through collaboration with the Department of Export Promotion, a proactive marketing strategy, visa and immigration regulation revision, and facility improvement.

6.4.1.1 Collaboration with Department of Export Promotion

Collaboration with related government agencies will reduce redundancy and create synergy in policy implementation, based on resource and information sharing. As presented in Chapter 5, both the Department of Export Promotion and OHEC considered the promotion of higher education services their responsibility. Although OHEC has information and close connections with higher education institutions, the Department of Export Promotion obtains more resources to promote Thai higher education, including government funding and offices in foreign countries. As a result, OHEC was able to organize only two Thai higher education exhibitions abroad, whereas the Department of Export Promotion could organize and participate in many more international trade events. Nevertheless, higher education institutions were likely to participate in the OHEC events because they focused solely on higher education services. This situation demonstrated the lack of collaboration, synergy, and efficiency of policy implementation between government agencies.

Although the cooperation will enhance the effectiveness of policy implementation, it may create tension between the two agencies. The rigid Thai bureaucratic system and political rancor may create conflict on the ownership of policy and resources. In addition, both agencies will likely to take credit for successful policy implementation. To address this challenge, OHEC needs to collaborate with the Department of Export Promotion at both policy and operational levels. At the policy level, both agencies have to collaboratively identify the projected number of

foreign students, targeted countries, and overall marketing strategy. At the operational level, OHEC and the Department of Export Promotion need to discuss how to share KPIs, information, and resources. Both agencies need to pay attention on this issue and create synergy in implementation to raise the visibility of Thai higher education services in other countries.

6.4.1.2 Proactive Marketing Strategy

To enhance the visibility of Thai higher education services and utilize limited resources, OHEC needs to employ proactive marketing, which is data-driven and customer-focused. At present, OHEC collects data on foreign students, including nationalities, sources of financial support, and programs of study. However, these data have been under-utilized in the current marketing strategy. In addition, there are additional data which might help OHEC and higher education institutions improve their strategies, such as student socio-economic status, hometown, and academic background. At present, OHEC selects the target area for student recruitment based on city size, which might not be where prospective students reside. There have been discussions and predictions concerning who the foreign students in Thailand were and where they came from. However, no conclusions were made due to a lack of supporting data.

Apart from the additional data, OHEC should consider and identify how foreign students choose institutions. The data suggested that three factors affect foreign students' decisions. They were institutional prestige, programs of study, and location. It is obvious that foreign students prefer public institutions like Mahidol University (1,186) and Chulalongkorn University (725). These two universities are considered among the most prestigious institutions in Thailand and Southeast Asia. Foreign students also choose institutions which offer their preferred programs. The most popular programs among foreign students are in the area of business administration. Thus, foreign students are likely to choose the institutions which offer programs in this area,

including Assumption University (2,661), Kasem Bundit University (598), and Bangkok University (567). Likewise, the institutions that offered international programs, attract more foreign students. This group included Mahidol University, Assumption University, Thammasat University (486), and Prince of Songkla University (434). Lastly, the locations of the institutions might also affect foreign student decision. The data indicate that the institutions located closer to Thai borders attract more foreign students from neighboring countries. There are a number of Vietnamese and Laotian students at institutions in the Northeastern part of Thailand, including Khon Kaen University, Ubon Ratchathani Rajabhat University, and Sakhon Nakhon Rajabhat University. Likewise, the institutions in the Northern part and Eastern part attract students from Myanmar and Cambodia, respectively.

Among these three groups, OHEC should increase the authority of higher education institutions in the border areas, which have untapped potential to host foreign students due the location and cultural similarity. With the newly-developed road network in Southeast Asia, it is easier and cheaper for students in neighboring countries to reach these schools, and studying at the institutions in border areas could be preferable to attending institutions in larger cities in their countries. For instance, the distance from the city of Hue in Vietnam to Khon Kaen in the Northeastern part of Thailand is approximately the same as the distance from Hue to Hanoi, the capital city and the education hub of Vietnam. In addition, this part of Thailand has a similar culture to Vietnam and Laos due to the history and Vietnamese and Laotian displacement during the Indochina and Vietnam Wars from the1940s to the 1970s.

Another observation from the data was that foreign students enrolled in programs which use Thai and English as a medium of instruction. This data demonstrated that every higher education institution has the potential to enroll foreign students. Nonetheless, Thailand does not

have a standard language proficiency test like TOEFL or IELTS. Thus, it is imperative for OHEC or MOE to consider developing a Thai language proficiency test, and for higher education institutions to offer Thai language preparation courses for foreign students. These initiatives will facilitate foreign student accommodation and aid higher education institutions in the admission process.

Another aspect is to promote joint-degree programs. The programs may be operated by higher education institutions in Thailand and partnering institutions from European countries, the US, or ASEAN member countries. Students may enroll the whole period or part of the program in Thai higher education institutions. There are public and private institutions which offer this type of program. For instance, Assumption University, in collaboration with University of Woolongong in Australia, offers business administration program which allow students to enroll and transfer credit between these two institutions. This type of program may attract more ASEAN students because it will give them opportunities to study in Thailand and more academic advance countries.

The marketing strategy should also alleviate the negative image of Thailand. Although there was not a study on the effect of political instability on the number of foreign students, the number has been decreasing since 2010, when instability turned to violence in the major cities of Thailand. This negative image was exacerbated by the military coup d'état in 2014 and current military-ruled government. The OHEC does not have the capacity to deal with the political situation, but it has capability to create better perceptions among foreign students and parents, particularly on student safety and quality of education.

6.4.1.3 Visa and Immigration Regulation Revision

There are three aspects of visa and immigration regulation revisions, including the creation of students and faculty visas and work permits for students, researchers and specialists. As discussed in Chapter 4, Thailand has not authorized student and faculty visas that cover the entire period of study and employment contract. This results in more aggravation and reporting requirements for institutions, foreign students and faculty, and related government agencies.

The current labor laws do not allow students to work during their studies either on or off-campus. Student employment would help alleviate the burden of tuition and living expenses and foster an international environment on campus. It might help attract more foreign students, particularly at graduate levels. The labor laws also prohibit institutions from recruiting foreigners to administrative, research, and supporting staff positions. This prevents higher education institutions from recruiting the best foreign nationals. In addition, the foreign staff will help to provide better communication and services to foreign students because of their language ability.

To address these issues, OHEC needs to work with MFA, Ministry of Labor, and the Royal Thai Police at the national policy level. The objectives are to authorize new faculty and student visas, and allow the institutions to employ foreign nationals and also allow students to work on-campus in non-teaching positions. This revision will definitely enable the institutions to recruit higher-quality individuals, regardless of their nationalities. The revision of laws and regulations might create disagreement among related agencies because of its potential impact on national security, the domestic labor market, and social welfare. The OHEC needs to proceed carefully, and involve every related agencies and higher education institutions in the process to minimize the potential conflict.

6.4.2 Human Capital Development and Research Enhancement

The continuous projects on human capital development and research enhancement are considerably comprehensive and cover many priority issues. They cover faculty development, NQF and Standard Qualifications for Areas of Study, and NRU and HERP projects. The challenges are mainly on the implementation process, particularly on the participation of private institutions, and the implementation of the Teaching Profession Development Program. In addition, it became clear that English is necessary for graduates to obtain employment in ASEAN. However, the TOFEL and IELTS data suggested that Thailand did not do well in developing English proficiency, and OHEC needs to address this situation.

6.4.2.1 Participation of Private Higher Education Institutions

As discussed in the previous section, private institutions are not eligible for NRUP, HERP, and AIMS Projects. This situation limits the role of private institutions in national higher education policy implementation and restricts their opportunities to access government financial resources. Although private institutions are more likely to focus on teaching than research, a number of private master's institutions have potential to participate in and work with public institutions under the HERP Project. Likewise, these institutions have the capacity to participate in the AIMS Project, based on the number of international programs they offer. Thus, OHEC should allow private institutions to participate in these two projects. It will enhance buy-in among the institutions, and provide OHEC more options and opportunities to expand the scope of policy implementation.

The OHEC should also help private institutions build their capacity, particularly on faculty and staff development. At present, private institution faculty are not eligible to apply for

scholarships under the Strategic Faculty Development Project. Not only does that impede their development opportunities, it also potentially widens the academic development gap between public and private institutions. There are three approaches OHEC could do to allow these faculty to participate in the projects. The first approach is to allow the faculty to apply for a full scholarship from OHEC. The second is to partially fund or implement cost-sharing between OHEC and the home institutions. The last approach is to provide a full scholarship if students study at Thai higher education institutions. Each approach has its advantages and challenges. However, all of them would enhance faculty capacity and attract high-quality individuals to pursue teaching careers in private institutions because of the increasing career development opportunities.

6.4.2.2 Teaching Profession Development Program

The quality and quantity of the classroom teacher significantly affects the quality of high school graduates, and their college readiness (Harris and Sass 2011). The OHEC and higher education institutions, in collaboration with OBEC and OVEC, are implementing the Teaching Profession Development Program, aiming to increase the number and quality of teachers in basic and vocational education systems. Although the goals and priorities are clear, the job placement for graduates in the schools under the supervision of OBEC and OVEC is inconsistent. Additionally, it does not keep pace with the needs of the MOE. In 2012, MOE estimated that Thailand needed an additional 103,743 teachers to match the increasing number of students and replace retiring teachers. Among them, 51,462 positions were in the areas of foreign and Thai languages, mathematics, and sciences, which are the first priorities of the project. Although the demand was high, OBEC only provided 1,200 teaching positions to the programs. The number represented a decrease from 2013 (1,472), but an increase from the 2012 program (1,106). In the same period,

OVEC provided 282 teaching positions. The number of awarded scholarships was very small in comparison with the needs of MOE.

Apart from the number of scholarships, the administrators expressed concern about teaching and learning approaches. They commented that MOE can increase the number of teachers, but the impact will be limited if the teaching and learning approaches are still the same. The OHEC and OBEC have tried to improve teaching and learning approaches, particularly in the area of mathematics. However, the number of participating higher education institutions and schools is still small.

Based on the challenges in the implementation process, the recommendations are to expand the scale of the project, particularly the number of teaching positions provided by OBEC and OVEC. In addition, OHEC needs to ensure that the quality of the participants in this project is higher than the graduates from teacher training programs in general. According to MOE, Thailand is not short of graduates from teacher training programs. The estimated number of graduates during 2013-2017 is 259,522, which exceeds the MOE demand. However, the number of graduates is meaningless if their quality is subpar and OBEC and OVEC cannot appoint them to the teaching positions.

Another recommendation is to shift the focus to improving teacher approaches. One of the goals of the project is to increase the number of teachers, and decrease the class size. However, the smaller class size will have a limited effect on student achievement if there is not a rigorous curriculum and research-based instructional strategies. Thus, OHEC should allocate resources to improve the approach to teaching and learning. It can be done by shifting the focus on participating public institutions from producing teachers to conducting research and developing effective teaching and learning approaches. The teacher production task can be

transferred to Rajabhat Universities and Rajamangala Universities of Technology, which were formally teacher training and vocational colleges.

6.4.3 English Proficiency Development

The data on TOEFL and IELTS scores demonstrated that the level of English proficiency of Thai students and graduates was lower than those of most ASEAN member countries. The lack of English proficiency hindered the opportunities for students and graduates to pursue advanced degrees and employment in other countries. Likewise, it decreases the chance for Thai graduates to secure employment with multinational corporations in Thailand. This issue needs attention from OHEC and OBEC because English proficiency needs to be developed at an early age.

The OHEC is able to help develop English proficiency through English teacher training and the adoption of advanced pedagogical strategies for teaching English in secondary and tertiary classrooms. As mentioned in the previous section, Thailand is in need of quality English teachers. Thus, OHEC and higher education institutions, particularly Rajabhat Universities, should prioritize and allocate resources for developing English teachers. In the meantime, public institutions should concentrate on improving English teaching and learning approaches, along with a research-based curriculum. This policy recommendation requires resources and time before the impact can be seen. Thus, it needs to start sooner, otherwise Thailand and Thai students and graduates will gradually lose their competitiveness at regional and global levels.

6.4.4 Harmonization of Higher Education Systems

The OHEC and higher education institutions are implementing a number of projects to support the harmonization of higher education systems. The challenges are not domestic policy content and implementation, but levels of higher education and academic development among ASEAN member countries. The academic development gap between ASEAN-6 and CLMV countries is clearly evidenced. It is difficult for ASEAN to enhance the comparability and mutual credit and degree recognition, and directly follow the practices of the EU and the Bologna Process. However, OHEC could foster the harmonization of higher education systems by encouraging cooperation among ASEAN-6 countries and providing assistance to CLMV countries under the IAI framework.

Although ASEAN operates on a consensus basis, the AFAS allows member countries to proceed on the ASEAN-X approach concerning trade in higher education issues. Thus, Thailand and ASEAN member countries apply this approach in an attempt to harmonize higher education systems, because the harmonization and liberalization of trade in higher education overlap and complement each other. The implementation among ASEAN-6 countries can be considered as a pilot project, prior to expansion to every ASEAN, ASEAN +3, and ASEAN +6 country.

This needs to be implemented in conjunction with the IAI, which aims at reducing the development gap between ASEAN-6 and CLMV countries. At present, there are education and human resource development projects under IAI. Unfortunately, they are not prioritized by OHEC. Based on the current context and available resources, it is not practical to suggest OHEC provide additional resources to support IAI. However, OHEC should consider IAI as another channel to foster cooperation with CLMV countries, which are the closest neighboring countries in terms of location, culture, and ethnicity. Likewise, OHEC should recognize that closer higher

education and academic development level between ASEAN-6 and CLMV countries will increase the chance of harmonizing higher education systems in ASEAN.

6.5 LIMITATIONS OF THE STUDY

This study had limitations, particularly on potential bias toward OHEC. As a graduate student and researcher, I maintained objectivity throughout the process of study. The discussions and recommendations did not represent or specifically benefit any organizations or institutions. Nevertheless, I am also the recipient of a government scholarship and retain an official position at OHEC. I was in charge of the policies on internationalization and liberalization of trade in higher education services before enrolling in my doctoral program at the University of Pittsburgh. I will resume these responsibilities after graduation. As a result, there is a possibility that this study was biased toward OHEC policy and projects.

Another limitation of this study was the potential bias of the respondents and differences between respondents' perceptions and their institutions'. The population and sampling of this study were the administrators responsible for planning and international cooperation. However, the respondents might have had their own opinions toward the ASEAN integration, which did not echo their institutions' positions. The triangulation through survey questions and interviews partially alleviated this limitation, but it did not eliminate this challenge.

This study did not include the administrators from priest universities and community colleges. This is a result of their specific focuses and roles in the Thai higher education system. Although the community colleges were modeled after the community colleges in the US, they do not offer degree programs, and the graduates are not able to transfer to other types of institutions

and continue their studies. The two priest universities focus on offering advanced degree programs to Buddhist priests. However, the data from document review showed that the two priest universities offered international programs and enrolled a number of foreign students, including traditional students in addition to future religious leaders. Thus, leaving out the administrators from the two priest universities was a weakness of this study.

Although this study had limitations, it was carefully designed, executed and supervised. It was also among the first studies which comprehensively focused on the impact of ASEAN economic integration on higher education policy. The existing studies focused either on the liberalization of trade in higher education services or other regions. It also connected the policies at regional, national, and institutional levels, which has rarely occurred in the ASEAN context.

6.6 CONCLUSION AND FUTURE RESEARCH

Globalization and regionalization increasingly affect higher education policy and administration. The emergence of WTO and regional organizations like the EU and ASEAN forces governments and higher education institutions to adjust their policy and implementation strategies. The two main goals are to prepare their higher education system and institutions for the potential increasing competition from cross-border education services and to support the goals of the integration. A clear beacon in the night lighting the way for ASEAN is the EU and the Bologna Process, and observing how implementation of Bologna impacted member countries' higher education, credit and qualifications, and quality assurance systems.

A number of regional and inter-regional organizations, including ASEAN, are trying to follow the EU and the Bologna Process practices. However, they struggle and progress slowly

because of a lack of resources, experts, and commitment from member countries. In the case of ASEAN integration, the difference in academic and economic development among member countries and the limited authority of ASEAN are also factors in the integration process.

As a member of ASEAN, Thailand is obliged to comply with ASEAN agreements and regulations. Although the main focus is on political, economic, and sociocultural integration, higher education is considered a dynamic issue and is expected to play significant roles in supporting the goals of ASEAN. The OHEC has prepared itself and higher education institutions under its supervision since 2003. However, this study found that each type of institution perceived the impacts of ASEAN economic integration differently. As a result, their policy priorities and implementation, and participation in OHEC projects varied. The OHEC and public institutions perceived ASEAN integration as a part of their internationalization policy, which focuses on enhancing the quality of education and promoting Thailand as a regional education hub. They were confident in their ability in competing and cooperating with higher education institutions in ASEAN member countries. Unlike OHEC and public institutions, private institutions considered integration to be a warning bell portending rising amounts of competition. Their preparation focused on maintaining and increasing their competitiveness, aiming at providing education services to foreign students. Although the perceptions varied, the institutions shared similar ideas regarding preparation, including increasing the role of the business sector, shifting the focus of quality assurance to learning outcomes and graduate employability, and emphasizing faculty and staff development, particularly on language ability.

This study also demonstrated that Thai higher education institutions heavily relied on government resources and OHEC projects. The public institutions have an advantage over private institutions because they have better access through the annual budget allocation and

OHEC projects. This advantage helps public institutions to develop competencies and compete with foreign institutions. Nevertheless, it widens the academic development gaps between public and private institutions, and discourages their buy-in and participation in government policies.

There are issues for further studies, particularly on the rationales for foreign students to study in Thailand. It will help OHEC and higher education institutions to better understand and identify potential students, in terms of their locations and socioeconomic status, and their preferences and expectations from Thai higher education. Another aspect focuses on the connection between NQF and mutual credit and degree recognition. The ASEAN is trying to follow the practices of the EU and the Bologna Process in harmonizing higher education systems, but it is in an early stage of development. This study has demonstrated the progress and practices in utilizing learning outcomes and NQF as the foundation for curriculum development, credit hour calculation and transfer, and degree and qualifications recognition in ASEAN.

APPENDIX A: ASEAN MEMBER COUNTRIES AND DIALOGUE PARTNERS

At present, ASEAN consists of ten member countries in Southeast Asia. However, it started with five member countries in 1967. As a regional organization, it has expanded cooperation to a number of countries and organizations since its establishment. The main objective is to strengthen and expand cooperation among member countries, and between ASEAN and countries in other regions. The depth and scope of cooperation between ASEAN and partner countries vary from full cooperation, including political and security, economic, and socio-cultural aspects, to selected sectors cooperation.

The ASEAN +3 countries, including China, Japan, and South Korea are the closet partners. The cooperation covers political and security, economic, and socio-cultural aspects. Apart from ASEAN +3, ASEAN closely cooperates with Australia and New Zealand. The East Asian Summit is the ASEAN +3 and five dialogue partners: Australia, India, New Zealand, Russia, and the United States. The scope of its cooperation is similar to those of ASEAN +3. However, it is still in the early stage of implementation. Other dialogue and sectoral dialogue partners are important trade and political partners.

Each dialogue partner country participates in bi-lateral and multi-lateral meetings with ASEAN. One of the priorities in the meetings is to establish bi-lateral and multi-lateral free trade areas between ASEAN and dialogue partners, for instance, East Asia Free Trade Area (ASEAN

+3), ASEAN-India Free Trade Area, and ASEAN-China Free Trade Area. The list of ASEAN member and dialogue partner countries are as shown in Table A.1.

Table A.1. ASEAN Member and Dialogue Partner Countries

Member Countries	ASEAN +3 (1997)	East Asian Summit (2005)	Dialogue Partners	Sectoral Dialogue Partner
1. Brunei Darussalam 2. Cambodia 3. Indonesia 4. Laos PDR 5. Malaysia 6. Myanmar 7. The Philippines 8. Singapore 9. Thailand 10. Vietnam	11. China (1996) 12. Japan (1977) 13. South Korea (1989)	14. Australia (1974) 15. India (1995) 16. New Zealand (1975) 17. Russia (1991) 18. United States (1977)	19. Canada (1977) 20. The European Union (1977) 21. United Nations Development Program (1977)	22. Pakistan (1993)

Source: ASEAN Secretariat.

APPENDIX B: THE EUROPEAN UNION AND THE BOLOGNA PROCESS

MEMBER COUNTRIES AND ORGANIZATIONS

Table B.1. The European Union and the Bologna Process Members

	The EU Member Countries	Non-EU Member Countries and Organizations	Consultative Member Organizations
The Bologna Process Member Countries and Organizations	1. Austria 2. Belgium 3. Bulgaria 4. Croatia 5. Cyprus 6. Czech Republic 7. Denmark 8. Estonia 9. Finland 10. France 11. Germany 12. Greece 13. Hungary 14. Ireland 15. Italy 16. Latvia 17. Lithuania 18. Luxembourg 19. Malta 20. Netherlands 21. Poland 22. Portugal 23. Romania 24. Slovakia 25. Slovenia 26. Spain 27. Sweden 28. United Kingdom	1. Albania 2. Andorra 3. Armenia 4. Azerbaijan 5. Belarus 6. Bosnia and Herzegovina 7. The European Commission 8. Georgia 9. Holy See 10. Iceland 11. Kazakhstan 12. Liechtenstein 13. Moldova 14. Montenegro 15. Norway 16. Russia 17. Serbia 18. Switzerland 19. The Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia 20. Turkey 21. Ukraine	1. Council of Europe 2. UNESCO 3. European University Association 4. European Association of Institutions in Higher Education 5. European Student Union 6. European Association for Quality Assurance in Higher Education 7. Education International Pan-European Structure 8. BUSINESSEUROPE

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