

Policy Suggestions in Preparation for Labor Flow in the Tourism Industry and the Development of Teaching and Learning Potential of Students at Vocational Colleges Offering Hotel and Tourism Major through Curriculum Improvement and Preparation for the ASEAN Economic Community in 2015

— *Review of* —
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ABSTRACT

This research study is divided into two research projects. The objectives of the first research project were (1) to study and analyze touristic flows affecting Thailand after the participation in the AEC in 2015, (2) to study and analyze both positive and negative macro effects of touristic flows on Thailand's culture and society, and (3) to study and analyze factors and causes of cultural and social impacts on Thailand due to touristic flows. The objectives of the second research project were (1) to study, collect, and analyze the quality, efficiency, and effectiveness of the hotel and tourism curriculum at vocational colleges in terms of its context, input, process, and outputs with regard to the preparation for the touristic flow, and (2) to study, collect, and analyze data to promote and develop the hotel and tourism curriculum at vocational colleges in accordance with the ASEAN mutual recognition arrangement on tourism professionals.

Keywords: Vocational Colleges of Thailand, Tourism Industry, ASEAN Economic Community in 2015, Mutual Recognition Arrangement on Tourism Professionals.

1. INTRODUCTION AND OBJECTIVES

In relation to the mission to concretely establish the ASEAN Free Trade Area (AFTA) by the year 2020, it was decided at the ASEAN Summit that the Association of South East Asian Nations (ASEAN) has to determine essential directions towards the ASEAN Economic Community (AEC) in the year 2015. Originally, ASEAN was established to promote economic growth and cooperation within the region. There are 10 member countries including Thailand. As a result, Thailand has to prepare for its participation in the AEC in 2015 according to the eleventh national economic and social development plan (2012-2016). As a center of labor skill development in the service and tourism industry, we have to equip our education personnel with necessary tools to produce skilled labor in this industry. This matter should be emphasized among personnel who take direct responsibility for following the mutual recognition arrangement on tourism professionals according to the government policy. This leads to the development and training of service and tourism skills indicated in the strategic plan. To that end, teachers in academic institutes, particularly those in vocational colleges, are directly involved in generating graduates in the service and tourism majors. It is necessary for them to

receive relevant information and clearly understand the concepts before designing their curriculum and lessons.

One of the important components in realizing the AEC in 2015 includes being a single market and production base, with free flow of goods, services, investment, and skilled labor. Thailand is designated to coordinate accelerated integration in the service and tourism sector for the ASEAN country members. With this issue in mind, the researchers realized the importance of preparing policy suggestions in preparation for labor flow in the tourism industry and the development of teaching and learning potential of students in vocational colleges offering hotel and tourism majors through curriculum improvement and preparation for the ASEAN Economic Community in 2015.

This research study is divided into two research projects as follows:

Research Project 1: Policy suggestions in preparation for labor flow in the tourism industry in preparation for the AEC in 2015. The objectives of this research are:

1. To study and analyze touristic flows affecting Thailand after the participation in the AEC in 2015.
2. To study and analyze both positive and negative macro effects of touristic flows on Thailand's culture and society.
3. To study and analyze factors and causes of cultural and social impacts on Thailand due to Touristic flows.

Research Project 2: Policy suggestions for the development of teaching and learning potential of students at vocational colleges offering hotel and tourism majors through curriculum improvement and preparation for the ASEAN Economic Community in 2015. The objectives of this research are:

1. To study, collect, and analyze the quality, efficiency, and effectiveness of the hotel and tourism curriculum at vocational colleges in terms of its context, input, process, and outputs with regard to the preparation for the touristic flow according to the ASEAN common competency standards for tourism professionals.
2. To study, collect, and analyze data to promote and develop the hotel and tourism curriculum at vocational colleges in accordance with the ASEAN mutual recognition arrangement on tourism professionals.

2. RESEARCH METHODOLOGY AND RESULTS

2.1 Research Project 1

2.1.1 Research Methodology

This research is a survey research using close-ended questionnaire as the data collection tool. The questionnaire was tested for its content validity by experts in the field. It was also checked for reliability by using Cronbach' Alpha Reliability Test with a reliability value of 0.867. The population was Thai people who know and understand the labor flow in the tourism industry in preparation for the AEC in 2015. The researcher used the Taro Yamane's table with a 95% confidence level and $\pm 10\%$ precision (Yamane, 1967) to determine the sample size. The table indicated that 100 samples size was reasonable for the study. However, the researcher distributed the questionnaire to 150 samples to ensure the reliability of this research and received 142 completed questionnaires. The data were collected during August - September 2014. The statistical data analysis was conducted using the descriptive statistics and the inferential statistics including t-test, One Way ANOVA and Multiple Regression

Analysis to test the hypotheses. Moreover, the researcher used the interview to be a tool to gather the information about positive and negative macro effects of touristic flows on Thailand's culture and society and factors and causes of cultural and social impacts on Thailand due to touristic flows with representatives from the embassies, Thai labor, and international labor in the ASEAN countries in 32 different job positions in Bangkok.

2.1.2 Research Results

In order to study and analyze touristic flows affecting Thailand after the participation in the AEC in 2015, this study examined the factors of demographic data including gender, age, educational level, and income/month influencing labor flow in the tourism industry in preparation for the AEC in 2015. In terms of descriptive statistics, demographic data from the questionnaire showed that most respondents were male (61.1 percent), had age between 36-40 years old (29.4 percent), had a bachelor's degree or above (39.9 percent), and had income/month between 20,000-30,000 Baht (46.5 percent). The results of inferential statistics are shown below.

H1: There is different attitude in labor flow in the tourism industry in preparation for the AEC in 2015 between males and females.

Table 1: Result of the attitude in labor flow in the tourism industry in preparation for the AEC in 2015 between males and females.

Variable (Gender)	Sample (persons)	Mean	Standard Deviation	t-Value	Sig.(P -Value)
Males	87	4.47	.62	.288	0.000***
Females	55	4.49	.64		

P-Value < 0.05*, 0.01**, 0.001***

Therefore, it found that there is different attitude in labor flow in the tourism industry in preparation for the AEC in 2015 between males and females ($t=.288$, $p < 0.001$) with a statistical significance of 0.001.

H2: There is different attitude in labor flow in the tourism industry in preparation for the AEC in 2015 among age, educational level and income/month.

Table 2: Result of the attitude in labor flow in the tourism industry in preparation for the AEC in 2015 among age, educational level and income/month.

Variables	Sample (persons)	F- Value	Sig. (P -Value)
1. Age	142	3.474	0.032*
2. Educational level	142	4.306	0.014*
3. Income/month.	142	4.244	0.015*

P-Value < 0.05*, 0.01**, 0.001***

Therefore, it found that there is difference attitude in labor flow in the tourism industry in preparation for the AEC in 2015 among age ($F=3.474$, $p < 0.05$) educational level ($F=4.306$, $p < 0.05$) and income/month ($F=4.244$, $p < 0.05$) with a statistical significance of 0.05.

The results above were related to the studies of Phongkaphat, et al. (2001) and Ministry of Foreign Affairs, (2010) mentioned that since Thailand is designated to be the center of developing skilled labors in the service and tourism industry, it is important to analyze any potential problems resulting from the rapidly changing economy, society, politics, law, and culture. Yet Tunyawasinphong (2012) also mentioned the difference between the profession in the hotel and tourism industry and other academic professions is that the latter has a distinct professional certificate. In other words, most labor in the hotel and tourism industry are general skilled labors who do not have a specific professional certificate. Therefore, it is difficult to set any standard criteria to prevent the labor flow. The labor with standard skills or higher qualifications does not have the same opinions and attitudes as those without standard skills or lower qualifications. In addition, the concepts about tourist behaviors and characteristics also showed that personnel who work in the tourism industry need to deeply understand the service work according to the classification of tourists (Sharpley, 1999; Nash, 2007), and tourist behaviors (Hall & Muller, 2002; Muller, Hall, & Keen, 2004).

In the aspects of the influences of the push and pull factors in hotel and tourism work, and the pull factor in working in the ASEAN countries were found to have positive impact on the labor flow of tourism professionals when the AEC starts in 2015. The result of inferential statistics are shown below.

H3: The influence of the push and pull factors in hotel and tourism work, and the pull factor in working in the ASEAN countries have positive impact on the labor flow of tourism professionals when the AEC starts in 2015.

Table 3: Result of the influences of the push and pull factors in hotel and tourism work, and the pull factor in working in the ASEAN countries.

Variables	Regression Coefficient Beta	t- Value	Sig. (P -Value)
1. The push and pull factors in hotel and tourism work	.745	2.945	.000***
2. The pull factor in working in the ASEAN countries	.584	2.588	.015*

$R^2 = 0.744$, $F\text{-value} = 11.64$, $n = 142$, $P\text{-Value} < 0.05^*$, 0.01^{**} , 0.001^{***}

Therefore, it found that the influence of the push and pull factors in hotel and tourism work ($\beta = .745$, $t = 2.945$, $p < 0.001$) and the pull factor in working in the ASEAN countries ($\beta = .584$, $t = 2.588$, $p < 0.05$) were found to have positive impact on the labor flow of tourism professionals when the AEC starts in 2015, with a statistical significance of 0.05 and 0.001, respectively. This result is related to Williams and Hall (2002), who mentioned that workers who came into the country for a short-term business negotiation or for a temporary stay might extend their stay for months or years as it seemed to be an advantageous opportunity for them. This idea corresponds to Archer and Cooper (1994), and Burns and Holden (1995) who stated that positive economic effects were acknowledged by most scholars. However, there were also social and cultural negative effects. These were complicated issues and needed thorough understanding to avoid any conflict. It related to the Pull and Push Theory

of Lee (1966) and the research study of Ravenstein (1985, 1989) which indicated that both pull and push factors caused labor migration. The push factors included poverty, shortage of land, and overpopulation. The pull factors included better job opportunity, wages, and modernity. Clark (1982) and Urry (2002) found that the pull factor that attracted the labors to leave their country was higher wage and salary for the same kind of occupation as they were seeking an opportunity to gain more income. Labor shortage in some fields of work might cause labor from other countries to leave their country provided that it offered them higher wages and salary, career advancement, better facilities and modern technology. In addition, the management approach that put an emphasis and priority on labor capacity would attract experts and highly skillful labors from the least developed countries. This also corresponds to the pull and push concept and theory in relation to the international labor flow.

Furthermore, interviews were conducted with representatives from the embassies, Thai labor, and international labor in the ASEAN countries in 32 different job positions in Bangkok. It was found that it was not popular among Thai labor to move to work in another country due to the factor of their behaviors and communicative limitation of foreign languages. On the other hand, more laborers were moving to Thailand due to the reasons of economic struggle, job opportunity, and supporting diplomatic protocol which allows simpler procedure for people to work abroad.

2.2 *Research Project 2*

2.2.1 *Research Methodology*

A survey research using close-ended questionnaire as the data collection tool was used in this study. The content validity was examined by experts in the field. Moreover, it was also checked for reliability by using Cronbach' Alpha Reliability Test with a reliability value of 0.956. The population was the teachers who teach in Vocational Colleges' Tourism and Hotel Curriculum Program from Ministry of Education of Thailand. The population included 2,534 teachers of Vocational Colleges' Tourism and Hotel Curriculum Program under the Office of Higher Education Commission. The researcher used the Taro Yamane's table with a 95% confidence level and $\pm 5\%$ precision (Yamane,1967) to determine the sample size. The table indicated that 345 samples size was reasonable for the study. However, the researcher distributed the questionnaire to 500 samples to ensure the reliability of this research and received 412 completed questionnaires. The data were collected during August - September 2014. The statistical data analysis was conducted using the descriptive statistics and the inferential statistics including Pearson's Correlation Coefficient Analysis to test the hypotheses. Moreover, the researcher used the interview to be a tool to gather the information about promoting and developing the hotel and tourism curriculum at vocational colleges in accordance with the ASEAN mutual recognition arrangement on tourism professionals with representatives from the management personnel at the vocational colleges that offer hotel and tourism majors, students, alumni, parents, and stakeholders.

2.2.2 *Research Results*

The results from the study revealed that there was a relationship among the factors of context, input, process, and outputs. In terms of descriptive statistics, demographic data from the questionnaire showed that most respondents had a Master's degree

(56.5percent), teaching experiences 5-10 years (61.34 percent) and had curriculum training (43.24 percent). The result of inferential statistics is shown below.

H1: There is a relationship among the factors of context, inputs, process, and outputs of the Hotel and tourism curriculum at vocational colleges with regard to the preparation for the touristic flow according to the ASEAN common competency standards for tourism professionals.

Table 4: Result of the relationship among the factors of context, inputs, process, and outputs of the Hotel and tourism curriculum at vocational colleges with regard to the preparation for the touristic flow according to the ASEAN common competency standards for tourism professionals.

Variables	Sample (persons)	Pearson's Correlation Coefficient	Sig. (P -Value)	Level of Relationship
1. Context -Inputs	412	.856	.000***	High
2. Context -Process	412	.898	.000***	High
3. Context -Outputs	412	.916	.000***	High
4. Inputs-Process	412	.842	.000***	High
5. inputs-Outputs	412	.824	.000***	High
6. Process-Outputs	412	.859	.000***	High

P-Value < 0.05*, 0.01**, 0.001***

Therefore, it found that there is a relationship among the factors of context, inputs, process, and outputs ($r = .916, .898, .859, .856, .842, .824, p < 0.001$) of the Hotel and tourism curriculum at vocational colleges with regard to the preparation for the touristic flow according to the ASEAN common competency standards for tourism professionals, with a statistical significance of 0.001.

The result above was emphasized that teachers of the hotel and tourism majors in vocational colleges under the Office of Higher Education Commission had the same direction in focusing on these four factors. In addition, it showed that the relationship in all aspects was at a high level. However, in order to prioritize these factors for practical use in further improvement, development, or suggestion, relevant people should consider the factors that were related from the highest to the lowest order based on the scoring. In particular, context-product received the highest score of .916. It is the main job of the teachers to constantly develop, promote, and evolve the education as stated by Thongthai (2007) that the key point of educating people was to develop humans in terms of body, mind, emotion, society, wisdom, moral, and ethics so that they can be a good citizen and live happily in the society. Sarijan (2007) also added that educational assessments must consist of the following important components: objectives, subject contents, application of curriculum in the classroom, and evaluation.

Furthermore, Taylor (1970) mentioned that the important elements of curriculum according to the notion of educators were 1) curriculum objective, 2) experience, 3) organization of experience, and 4) curriculum evaluation. As for the policy of the Vocational Education Commission retrieved from the Ministry of Education (2013), it showed that at present the Office of Vocational Education Commission is operating under the Ministry of Education and has a direct responsibility in generating semi-

skilled and skilled labor, and professional specialists (technician level) to meet the demand of the labor market and be in accordance with the economy, society, culture, and technology. The curriculum of the tourism industry would focus on service skills, the policy in the development plan of the colleges, and the need of the community and society. It should also be international and relate to the other ASEAN countries in preparation for the AEC in 2015. In terms of product, it involved the quality of the graduates and the satisfaction of the employers with the graduates' work performance. This aspect highly related to the context aspect. Boonyasophon (1993) and Sornnil, et al. (2005) stated that a quality product must consist of different components including continuous development of the quality institutes to meet the international standard and effective teaching and learning to achieve the predetermined quality of education.

In addition, the factors of process also play an important role as Pusara (2008) mentioned that it required characteristics and preparation of the teachers, learners' personality, teaching materials, learning place, and budget. The important things are the capability of the organization or the unit that arranged the learning environment, strategies used for attaining the goal of the learning, and assistance needed to facilitate the learning and teaching. Chaipanich (2004) said that the teaching approach that helped develop the thinking process would focus more on the process than the subject matters in the following three areas: 1) knowledge, 2) process, and 3) attitude and assessment.

As a result, teachers in the hotel and tourism majors in vocational colleges under the Vocational Education Commission had the same view as the Vocational Education Commission (2013) on the importance of teachers who served as the steps to success of the students by providing both knowledge and skills in the service industry. This also corresponds to the data in Thairath Newspaper (Prime Minister's Workshop, 2013) regarding the labor flow and the increase of learning and teaching potential in vocational colleges in preparation for the AEC in 2015. It is necessary to develop human resources by providing education that meets the ASEAN standard, as well as improving skills and foreign languages. In addition, the country should reach its highest potential as a tourist destination to open more opportunities relating to the other ASEAN countries.

Furthermore, the interviews of the management personnel at the vocational colleges that offer hotel and tourism majors, students, alumni, parents, and stakeholders revealed that an emphasis should be put on the foreign languages, skills, good work attitude, patience, and work disciplines.

3. CONCLUSION AND POLICY SUGGESTIONS

The policy suggestions were concluded from the focus group discussion among experts from the government offices and educational institutes who reviewed the issue and came up with the following policy suggestions based on the information both from the questionnaires and the interviews in the above two research projects.

- 3.1 There should be some guidelines to support the Thai labor flow to the ASEAN countries.
- 3.2 There should be some guidelines to support the foreign labor flow in Thailand both at the operational and executive levels, especially those who are from the

- Philippines as they have potential in English communication and internationally accepted service skills.
- 3.3 There should be some guidelines to develop the potential of Thai labor to reach the national and international standards.
 - 3.4 There should be some guidelines to prevent a brain drain of Thai labor in the service industry as they are in shortage in Thailand. Also, we should prepare for the competitive labor market.
 - 3.5 National Tourism Services Fund should be established to get access to the capital resources of operators in the service industry.
 - 3.6 It is suggested that the private sector should take part in the brainstorming process to consider steps and standards for foreign business operators in Thailand.
 - 3.7 Federation of tourism professions should be set up to monitor, follow up, and evaluate the quality of Thai tourism service.
 - 3.8 There should be some guidelines to integrate related organizations to regularly attend meetings to exchange their ideas and come up with clear and practical policies.
 - 3.9 English and other foreign language skills should be stressed through the international program by focusing on communicative language more than grammar, which causes the students to be worried and scared to use the foreign languages.
 - 3.10 Service skills in hotel and tourism industries should be emphasized as it shows one of the unique characteristics of Thai people, being warm and friendly. A set of clear standard and criteria should be included in the curriculum in order to achieve concrete improvement, development, and support according to the international standards.
 - 3.11 The curriculum of hotel and tourism should include the subject matters that are necessary in the market where there are a lot of labor flows, such as Tour Agent, Tour Operation, Front Office, Kitchen, Housekeeping, and Food and Beverage.
 - 3.12 There should be some guidelines to ensure the students that they will get a job in other countries, even though working abroad is not Thais' preference. The students should be divided into two groups. The first group are the students who would like to work abroad. They should develop their communicative and interpersonal skills through a certified curriculum, and build their self-confidence in working in a different environment. The second group are the students who would like to work in Thailand. They should also develop the same skills and improve themselves constantly to attain higher standard and quality needed in the executive positions to supervise personnel from the Philippines or other ASEAN countries who come to work in Thailand.
 - 3.13 We should take advantage of Thai people's service-mindedness over the other countries by requesting national and international accreditation in our service in hotel and tourism. This will help Thailand become better known among Thai and foreign tourists.
 - 3.14 There should be some guidelines to develop respectful relationships between teachers and students. The students should focus on enjoying and practicing their service skills. Instead of caring for their own beauty, they should be interested in their personality and service quality.
 - 3.15 There should be some guidelines to increase the popularity in studying in a vocational college as the graduates are in high demand in the market, especially those who are qualified in working, communicating, and having good interpersonal skill in the service industry.

- 3.16 There should be guidelines for solving the problems of service work quality that do not achieve the goals according to the curriculum of the vocational colleges due to the following reasons.
 - 3.16.1 The policy is not put into practical use.
 - 3.16.2 The teacher and student ratio does not facilitate the development of service skill and expertise.
 - 3.16.3 The fringe benefits and work motivation of teachers are low and not attractive to them.
 - 3.16.4 The requirements for recruiting teachers should not only focus on education, but also experience.
 - 3.16.5 There is no manual of service work standards in the hotel and tourism work in ASEAN for teachers and students.

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