

## Analyzing Thai Border School Policy Formation in the ASEAN Community Era

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### Abstract

*During the 1990s, Thailand's border areas became more open as a result of improved political relations in the region, especially in regards to the promotion of border trade and transnational trade among Indochinese countries under the "From a Battlefield to a Marketplace" policy. In terms of education development, the nature of border schools in general has been gradually evolving over the past 60 years, and Thai border schools have improved considerably over this period. The first initiative undertaken in regards to border schools in Thailand was the official establishment of the "Border Patrol Police (BPP) School" in 1956. In more recent years, education development policy in border areas has repeatedly been modified, particularly since Thailand's agreement to further integrate with other Southeast Asian countries as a part of the ASEAN Community 2015. In 2010, Thailand's commitment to developing its border schools increased when it began development of the "Buffer School" program as part of a strategic plan to improve educational institutions under the ASEAN "Spirit of ASEAN" policy. This policy aimed to promote education development and cooperation within the ASEAN through a range of initiatives, including ones pertaining to border areas. This paper thus aims to 1) review the substance of the Buffer School program as it pertains to emerging Thai border school policy in the ASEAN Community era, as well as the structure of its enforcement, then, 2) analyze the background and rationale of policymaking that has occurred from agenda-setting and policy formulation up until policy enactment corresponding to ASEAN frameworks derived from the ASEAN charter and Work Plan on Education.*

**Keywords:** Policy Formation, Thai border School, Buffer School Program, ASEAN Community

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## **Introduction**

Thailand's border areas were essentially closed for many decades until the late 1980s, with the only cross-border interactions involving official missions and local inhabitants. During the 1990s, the border areas became more open due to political changes in the region, especially with the implementation of the "From a Battlefield to a Market Place" policy, which promoted border commercial activity and tourism among Indochinese countries (Khamkhun, 2008; Kaewkumkong, 2015).

In terms of education development, the nature of border schools has been gradually evolving over the last 60 years. As with other countries, Thai border schools have developed substantially throughout this era. The first initiative was the official establishment of the "Border Patrol Police (BPP) School" in 1956. The concept of the scheme was to develop remote, poor and educationally disadvantaged children and youth (Border Patrol Police Bureau, 1996). There were a number of obstacles to be overcome in educating the people in border areas, which were both rural and often far from public transportation. There were also both domestic and international security issues. Thailand's border areas were often subject to plunder, looting, kidnappings, and robbery (Ruannak, 1996). Also, family ties were weakened by the necessity for parents to seek employment outside the area and children were often neglected and subject to sexual abuse. Furthermore, these border areas typically faced high levels of gambling, drug trafficking, and crime (Office of the Education Council, 2010). Recognizing this, the government has included the development of remote and poor areas in its policy planning since its fifth National Economic and Social Development Plan in 1982 (Office of the National Economic and Social Development Board, 1982).

After the member states of ASEAN committed to developing human resources through closer cooperation in education, affirmed in the ASEAN charter, and in order to prepare for ASEAN Community 2015, the Ministry of education of Thailand placed greater emphasis on innovative education development in the ASEAN community

context to be accomplished by providing a pilot policy of educational cooperation with neighboring countries. As a part of this, the education development policy for border areas has undergone a number of adjustments, such as the 2010 “Buffer School” scheme. The range of official ASEAN agreements aimed at promoting education development and cooperation that affect border area education policy include the ASEAN charter; the ASEAN Socio-Cultural Community Blueprint (ASCC); the Cha-Am Hua Hin Declaration on Strengthening Cooperation on Education; and the ASEAN 5-Year Work Plan on Education: 2011-2015 (Bureau of Academic Affairs and Educational Standards, 2012), as well as the Master Plan on ASEAN Connectivity (ASEAN Secretariat, 2011).

This paper therefore aims to 1) review the substance of the Buffer School program as it pertains to emerging Thai border school policy in the ASEAN Community era, as well as the structure of its enforcement, then, 2) analyze the background and rationale of policymaking that has occurred from agenda-setting and policy formulation to policy enactment corresponding to ASEAN frameworks derived from the ASEAN charter to ASEAN Work Plan on Education. The paper begins with a literature review of border schools and related research concerning education in border areas in the ASEAN region and around the globe. In the results and discussion section, it starts with a review of the policies of the Buffer School program and then goes into its history. The paper then analyzes the consequences of the Buffer School program followed by policy analysis approach (Dunn, 2012; Jann & Wegrich, 2007). This process focuses on how the policy should be implemented in Thailand and reasons why it should be applied. It also elaborates how the policy correlates with ASEAN frameworks.

### **Border School and Education at Border: Situation and Transformation**

There are only slight variations in the definition of “border school” given by various scholars. Generally, the term “border school” refers to schools located at the periphery of a country adjacent to a neighboring

country. Although there is no absolute definition of what qualifies as a border school or border education, the literature demonstrates that border schools or education near borders possess specific features. Examination of the US-Mexican border confirms that border education plays an important role in the global market (Cashman & McDermott, 2013). Furthermore, Suenobu (1995) claims that border education has helped relieve mental stress and helps improve vocational skills at Thai-Cambodian refugee camps. This section presents the findings of previous works regarding education at borders and border school situations, as well as management of border schools in Thailand and other countries.

Conditions on the Thai-Cambodian border have been examined in numerous studies. The impact of conflict on education along the border was measured in a study by Suenobu (1995), in which it was concluded that despite political unrest, violence, and internal overpopulation, the education system in two refugee camps which received assistance from the UN improved. However, she noted that problems of education management in the camps remained. Ruannak (1996) reflected on the difficulties of education management in border schools, noting that most of them were small and their education system had to be managed amid conflict and confrontation. The research concludes that border schools encounter problems stemming from difficult education management, conflict and confrontation, and deficiencies in the number and ability of teachers, curriculum, learning activities, instructional media, and budget. Meanwhile, the Thai Office of the Education Council (2010) noted that most border schools are small in size and dispersed widely along the borders, usually in small villages facing economic hardship. In addition, they tend to receive minimal support from the local community. It was also noted that children from Cambodia would cross the border to study in these already overburdened schools. Major problems the schools face include 1) shortage of teachers and lack of teaching continuity as teachers frequently leave the area; 2) insufficient

technological media for learning; 3) limited finances of local families and weakened family structures; 4) negative local influences such as gambling, drug trafficking, and crime; and 5) disparity between local personnel and teachers in the border area in terms of management, budget, and evaluation procedures due to ineffective policy.

Aside from conflict and confrontation, Kaewkumkong (2015) presented the trends in education along the Thai-Cambodian border. It was found that the Educational Service Area, the representative office of the Ministry of Education, launched effective projects in the border regions including an education program under the “Thai-Cambodian Friendship” program, a provincial administrative organization that pursues policies relating to border school development, while also providing support and allocating funding for learning activities. In addition to aid programs, schools along the border also assist and cooperate with each other, such as with exchange visits of teachers and students, seminars and conferences, culture and performance exchange programs, educational facilities and equipment assistance. As a part of its ASEAN Community commitments, the government has supported several cultural and language exchange programs and expanded its teacher exchange program.

In regards to the education situation along Thailand-Myanmar border, Funkhiaw, Chaowakeeratiphong and Polprasert (2014) noted that the region faced various problems such as a limited subjects taught, limited qualified personnel, economically disadvantaged students, insufficient research, and lack of art and cultural preservation in the community—problems also noted by local stakeholders. Turning to the southern border between Thailand and Malaysia, a study by the Thailand Development Research Institute (n.d.) found that the education system in the south was divided into two tracks: Islamic education, which is important to the Muslim inhabitants in the south, and general education, which is important for producing skilled professionals, which affects both the regional and national economy. The research also highlights

problems in the local education system including inadequate Thai language skill, poor-quality general education, segregation between Buddhist and Muslim students, and students leaving to pursue higher study outside the area.

Research on border education in other ASEAN countries includes the work of Nishimura (1999), which examined the dynamics of education in the border schools of Malaysia and Indonesia. The study found that vectors of nationalization could be understood as a force flowing from the national capital and reaching directly to the border villages, with the characteristics of localization arising in the provincial capital and extending to the border villages, which are apparent in the local history, culture, and customs. Vectors of internationalization are clearly manifested in the movement of people, exchange of goods, and exchange of information, as well as in the education system and school curricula. A study of the Chinese education policy in Yunnan along the Myanmar border was conducted by Rattanaamornbhirom and Mahatdhanobol (2011). Their work revealed that education development on the border is directly related to Chinese traditional security concerns. China plans and carries out its education development programs without any foreign involvement. Meanwhile, several international organizations have initiated educational development projects on the Myanmar side. This research also points to challenges of education development in the region, including insufficient government funding, the educational values of parents, and a reduction in the number of students attending school. In research about border pedagogy in Israel, Miles (2011) asserts that in Middle Eastern countries, the location and local perspective regarding the border are particularly important, noting that a recent change in the Israeli secondary school curriculum blurs boundaries between geography and politics in the discussion of borders.

In their paper regarding the border between Mexico and the United States, Cashman and McDermott (2013) assert that education in this area should be more standardized to allow graduates to better

compete in global markets. They recommend that the curriculum include a broader discussion of international perspectives. At the same time, they advised that students in the border schools should be more engaged in discussions of border violence and crime, including drug trafficking and armed violence, because these issues are close to home and directly impact the area. Another study focusing on the US-Mexican border was presented by Fernández, Howard and Amastae (2007). Their study noted that, like many borderlands, the US-Mexican border is characterized by chronically low levels of education and high rates of poverty. In South America, Waltermire's (2012) work regarding the Uruguay-Brazil border noted how the use of Portuguese among the marginalized border population influences the teaching in schools along the border. He noted that Portuguese is more frequently used in the home with relatives and close friends, and in more formal domains, including schools, while the use of Spanish is much more common throughout the rest of the country. This situation resembles other contact situations along national borders where two major languages are spoken.

In Europe, the issue of cross border cooperation is given particular recognition. Dołzbłasz (2013) conducted research on border regions in Poland, which borders the Czech Republic, Slovakia and Germany. The study found that there were initiatives promoting cooperation in border regions and consequent assistance provided for overcoming regional problems covering areas such as human resource development and education. It also revealed that such projects had a significant impact on the development of trans-border cooperation along border. Similarly, Więckowski (2002) noted that educational cooperation had occurred within the framework of the Polish-Slovak Intergovernmental Commission since 1996, including culture, education and exchange programs, as well as cross-border cooperation by local authorities. Čok and Pertot (2010) focused on education language policy along the Slovene-Italian border and concluded that the bilingual system provided an advantage on the border in light of evolving socio-economic

conditions related to the European integration process. In addition, they argued that minorities were assuming an increasingly important role in the integration of the border area.

Diverse research has been conducted on educational affairs at border areas across ASEAN as well as throughout the rest of the world. A review of the literature reveals that although border areas share various common characteristics, each border area has its own distinct conditions and issues. As in most aspects of modern society, border areas around the world are facing globalization. The trend suggests the increasing significance of cross-border cooperation among bordering countries, encompassing both economic opportunities and international threats. Education management at border areas has seen improvement while concurrently facing complicated conditions. Specific educational approaches are necessary in order to respond to the unique problems and situations present in border regions. Past research has highlighted the challenges faced along the borders between Thailand and its neighboring countries, which need to be met with international cooperation and new development paradigms. Educational cooperation will clearly play an essential role in developing these areas.

## **Results and Discussion**

This section is a presentation of the data analysis as well as a discussion of the findings. It is based on the descriptive analysis method following the policy analysis approach and focusing on policy formation. The ASEAN framework for data analysis consists of five official documents: ASEAN charter, ASEAN socio-cultural blueprint, Cha-Am Hua Hin Declaration on Strengthening Cooperation on Education, the ASEAN 5-Year Work Plan on Education, and Master Plan on ASEAN Connectivity. The policy formation analysis of the Buffer School program described in this paper was launched in an era of regional integration. Considering national and international circumstances, there are two specific research questions: (1) How was the Buffer School program

formulated in 2010? And (2) Why is Thailand promoting the Buffer School policy?

### **Buffer School Program: Thai Border School Development Policy Under the ASEAN Community**

The Thai Ministry of Education has set policy to improve education under the ASEAN Community framework, as have the other member states. By nature, the educational development policies of Thailand, Laos, Cambodia and Vietnam are rooted in their respective National Economic and Social Development Plans. Reform focuses on the distribution of educational opportunities and quality of education. As a part of its efforts, the Office of the Basic Education Commission has been working to develop Thailand as a regional education hub and implement the “Spirit of ASEAN” strategic plan. This approach aims to prepare Thai youth as members of ASEAN so that they will be able to communicate and coexist with citizens of the other member states on a basis of equality and for their mutual benefit. In all, 38 elementary and secondary schools across several regions of Thailand have been developed under this initiative. They can be categorized into three groups: (1) 30 Sister Schools, (2) 24 Buffer Schools, and (3) 14 ASEAN Focus Schools. Additional strategies include the School Partnership Program between Secondary Schools in Thailand and Indonesia, and a program known as the ASEAN Learning School (Bureau of Academic Affairs and Educational Standards, 2012).

The Buffer Schools operate under the concept of promoting educational cooperation between border schools of Thailand and those of neighboring countries. Each school has a different role and duty according to its uniqueness and location. Schools under the Buffer School scheme are located in border areas between Thailand and Cambodia, Laos, Myanmar and Malaysia. Participating schools in the pilot project focus on the following points: (1) Intensive English and a second foreign language (language of the neighboring country),

(2) Setting up an ASEAN Study Center in the school, (3) Strengthening the curriculum development concerning knowledge of the ASEAN Community, (4) Boosting learning together in a multicultural society, and (5) Using ICT support in teaching and learning management (Bureau of Academic Affairs and Educational Standards, 2012).

The key function in the pilot schools is teaching one ASEAN language, namely, the language of the neighboring country. Other crucial activities in the schools are promoting knowledge and enhancing cultural awareness. The scheme may also include meetings, training courses and seminars, as well as field trips to learn about educational management from proper sources that can be used as models for school development (Bureau of Academic Affairs and Educational Standards, 2012).

The goal of the program is to strengthen the pilot schools so that they can serve as role models for ASEAN learning and network-building. The scheme also benefits the communities through cooperation between public and private agencies or related organizations, both domestically and internationally. The aim is to improve the quality of education through collaborative learning, exchange of knowledge, and sharing of culture and values. This aims to promote educational development in the ASEAN community by building knowledge, understanding and awareness regarding ASEAN among students, parents and the general public. Implementation of the scheme can be divided into three phases: Phase I, preparation of people for the ASEAN Community (2010-2011); Phase II, strengthening the preparation of people for the ASEAN Community (2012-2013); and Phase III, development of key competencies for the ASEAN Community (2014-2015). All pilot schools, 14 of which are elementary schools and 10 of which are secondary schools, are located in border areas as shown in Table 1 (Bureau of Academic Affairs and Educational Standards, 2012).

Based on past performance, schools strengthen the curriculum development that focuses on ASEAN, intensive English and the second

foreign language (language of the neighboring country), as well as learning in a multicultural society and the use of ICT in teaching and learning management. It is essential coordination be carried out with another ASEAN country that is located in close proximity to the school, and activities such academic camps where academic administrators, teachers, students and parents of member states participate. This is in order to encourage a positive attitude toward the ASEAN Community and its member state citizens as well as to develop the skills essential for international network building. It is specified that there be at least nine schools in network, and the network also incorporate the community surrounding the school. There must be at least one ASEAN language teacher and that a curriculum that focuses on ASEAN must be developed. Cooperative networking between schools both within the country and with foreign countries is also mandated. One desired outcome of this an increased mutual understanding of educational management, politics, economics, society and culture of ASEAN countries and their dialogue partners. Also essential is cooperation with relevant public and private agencies and organizations, both domestically and internationally, in order to advance Thailand's education conformity with the ASEAN Community. As a result to this, Thai youth's key competencies will improve so that they can be successful within the ASEAN Community (Bureau of Academic Affairs and Educational Standards, 2012).

Table 1. *Pilot schools under the Buffer School policy*

Border area	Province	Number of schools	
		Elementary	Secondary
Thailand-Myanmar	Tak	2	-
	Chiang Rai	1	1
	Ranong	2	-
	Ratchaburi	1	1
Thailand-Laos	Nan	1	1
	Mukdahan	1	1
	Nong Khai	1	-
	Bueng Kan	-	1
	Ubon Ratchathani	1	1
Thailand - Cambodia	Sisaket	1	1
	Surin	1	1
	Sakaew	1	1
Thailand- Malaysia	Yala	1	1
Total		14	10

(Source: Bureau of Academic Affairs and Educational Standards, 2012)

Note: Due to poor performance, one elementary school in Ubon Ratchathani is no longer a part of the Buffer School program.

A fundamental aspect of Buffer Schools is the desire to improve educational institutions and promote education in the international setting of the ASEAN community. The purpose of this policy is to promote educational cooperation, which includes strengthening relations with neighboring ASEAN countries. The strategy of Buffer Schools could eventually be seen as a key mechanism for promoting development. It could also play an important role in the economic and political prosperity, security, society and culture of the country. The essential characteristics of the Buffer School can be summarized as shown in Table 2:

Table 2. *Overview of the Characteristics of The Buffer School Program*

Principle	Function	
Idea	Improving pilot border schools and promoting educational management in the international setting of the ASEAN community	
Feature	<i>Beginning stage</i>	<i>Next stage</i>
	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Teaching intensive English and language of neighboring country</li> <li>2. Establishing ASEAN Study Center</li> <li>3. Developing curriculum on ASEAN Community</li> <li>4. Using ICT in teaching and learning</li> <li>5. Encouraging living in a multi-cultural society</li> </ol>	Promoting educational cooperation and strengthening relations with neighboring countries and ASEAN countries
Long-term goal	Social and economic development, including cultural and human security	

(Source: Bureau of Academic Affairs and Educational Standards, 2012)

Note: Summarized by the authors

### **Why is Thailand Promoting the Buffer School Policy?**

Thailand and the nine other countries of ASEAN agreed to unite under ASEAN Community 2015. This community has its roots in the ASEAN Charter of 2008 and the ASEAN Blueprint of 2009. The charter and blueprint provide a framework and mechanism for cooperation. They also explicitly state that closer cooperation concerning education must be fortified. The ASEAN Socio-Cultural Community Blueprint (ASCC) puts education as its first priority. ASEAN member states are clearly aware that education is an essential foundation for building the ASEAN Community. The importance of education is reflected in the ASEAN Charter and in particular in the framework of the ASCC for all members to put into practice (ASEAN Secretariat, 2008; ASEAN Secretariat, 2009).

The ASCC is characterized by the spirit of cooperation and respect for the different cultures, languages, and religions of the people. In this

regard, human development is considered the top priority among the six dimensions of cooperation. Providing education with equitable access to human development opportunities is the primary goal, and advancing education is the highest priority within the dimension of human development. The objective relating to border education is ensuring education for all and equal opportunity in education regardless of social class, geography, ethnicity, background or physical disabilities, including protecting marginalized groups (ASEAN Secretariat, 2009). This strategic objective is also in line with global commitments under the world declaration on Education for All 1990 (Mundy & Murphy, 2001).

The strategic goal is to organize educational management and other activities on the basis of cooperation. Given such conditions, ASEAN members subsequently agreed to the Cha-Am Hua Hin Declaration on Strengthening Cooperation on Education. This declaration puts more emphasis on the role of education for developing the ASEAN community. It reaffirms that one of ASEAN's goals, as stipulated in article 1(10) of the ASEAN charter, is developing human resources through closer cooperation in education. The declaration also highlights human development as one of the key elements within the ASCC development. Border schools are particularly relevant to the goals of supporting wider access of rural communities to quality education and supporting learning centers in rural areas and for indigenous people as well as supporting the Education for All policy. This declaration is also expected to promote better understanding and appreciation of different cultures, promote greater mobility of students, and improve educational standards (ASEAN Secretariat, 2009).

In support of this goal, a workshop was held entitled ASEAN 5-Year Work Plan on Education: 2011-2015. The plan developed is comprised of strategies to improve education in various areas, including promotion of border schools. Several related themes in this plan focus on under-served populations, marginalized people in remote areas, and minority groups, by using an interactive approach. As can be seen in

the objective and priorities of this ASEAN work plan, access to quality education is necessary to ensure a relevant and effective education for all citizens, particularly the marginalized. It is included to response to the “Education for All” movement and the initiative on “Reaching the Unreached”. This includes indigenous peoples and children living in difficult circumstances such as in under-served areas, remote areas and rural areas. Other activities include strengthening cross-border mobility and internationalization of education and support for other ASEAN sectors with an interest in education (ASEAN Secretariat, 2012).

These ASEAN commitments to education are also related to the Master Plan on ASEAN Connectivity. This connectivity initiative places education and culture under people-to-people linkages, encouraging regional cooperation on basic education and achieving universal access to primary education across the region. Cross-border challenges are also addressed as well as non-traditional border security concerns such as trans-national crime and illegal immigration (ASEAN Secretariat, 2011).

As a member of ASEAN, Thailand is obliged to work in accordance with the plans that have been jointly endorsed. After certifying various important documents, the Thai government has set a clear policy to bring Thailand fully into ASEAN Community 2015 by building up and strengthening each area (Department of ASEAN Affairs, 2011). This policy reflects the fact that Thailand puts ASEAN as its top priority and totally supports its creation and implementation. Therefore, it is necessary that the country prepare for and participate in driving the ASEAN Community forward.

The policy of border school development in this era of integration of countries in Southeast Asia continues to move forward. Meanwhile, the Thai government also has a policy to strengthen relations with its neighboring countries and all ASEAN countries by using education as a key mechanism for driving development. Education is an essential foundation for the economic and political prosperity, security, society and culture of the country. Hence, the strategy to improve cooperation

between border schools of Thailand and its neighbors was initiated in 2010 under the “Buffer School” scheme (Bureau of Academic Affairs and Educational Standards, 2012).

Furthermore, education in the border areas serves to address a variety of forces. For example, border schools must deal with nationalization, localization as well as internationalization (Nishimura, 1999). Therefore, they need to adapt and transform over time. Some border schools continue as an informal educational path. In the recent years of the ASEAN period, increased activities have been associated with the education sector. The local private sector and Local Administration Organizations (LAOs) have played leading roles, with certain educational activities being subsidized by the government (Kaewkumkong, 2015).

As a result, it could be concluded that Thai border schools have undergone a significant transformation since late 2008. After the ASEAN charter was crafted, Thailand launched various schemes and programs in terms of educational cooperation. The Buffer School program is just one of the outcomes of this situation which focuses on the educational cooperation of schools bordering the neighboring countries of Cambodia, Lao, Myanmar and Malaysia, and their development has larger implications for the union of the ASEAN Community and dealing with the challenges of globalization.

The flow chart shown in figure 1 analyzes and summarizes the underlying forces that inspired the central feature of border school policy in the ASEAN Community era: The Buffer School. The chart demonstrates the relationships between official ASEAN agreements, the ASEAN charter and the ASEAN Blueprint as regards the socio-cultural “pillar”. Human development is considered one of the six dimensions of cooperation, and advancing education is the highest priority within the dimension of human development. The following stages include the declaration of educational cooperation and the establishment of an educational work plan. These official education-related agreements

also relate to additional pillars and the ASEAN Connectivity plan. The involvement and mutual commitment of the educational sector will help build a solid community and also promote educational development across border areas.

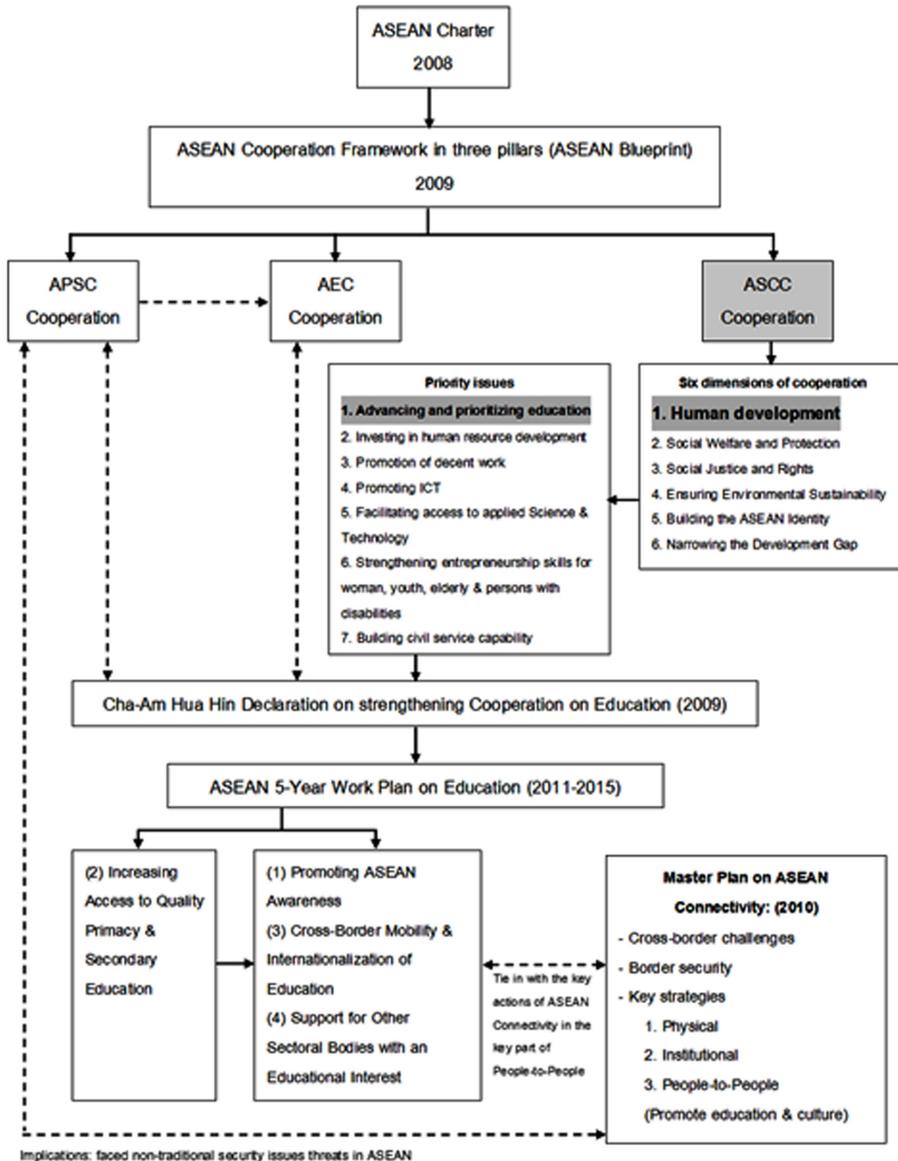


Figure 1. Framework of educational cooperation in the ASEAN Community and establishment of the Buffer School policy

## **Conclusion**

The current border school policy of Thailand, epitomized by the Buffer School program, is a key aspect of border education in the context of the ASEAN Community era. These pilot schools have been initiated and operate under the concept of promoting educational cooperation between schools on the borders of Thailand and its four neighboring ASEAN countries: Cambodia, Laos, Myanmar and Malaysia. Each school participating in this scheme has a different role and responsibility based on its unique situation and location. At present, there are 23 schools participating in the Buffer School program. Unlike the previous border school policy, Buffer Schools have a distinct agenda, operating under the principle of promoting educational cooperation with both national and international agencies, and especially with schools across borders. This is in order to stimulate educational development by building knowledge and understanding as well as awareness among students about the ASEAN Community. In contrast, the previous border school policy focused solely on improving the children's quality of life and enhancing their well-being in remote areas.

With Thailand being a member of ASEAN Community 2015, affirming strong commitments to the ASEAN frameworks is required, and as such, the Thai government has placed a priority on ASEAN integration. In terms of education, the Thai Ministry of Education is the primary agency responsible for initiating and carrying out education policy. This includes coordinating with representatives of other ASEAN member states at the senior and ministerial levels, as well as the operational level. Agencies at all levels have placed importance on preparation for entering the ASEAN Community. The Spirit of ASEAN vision was introduced in response to the various ASEAN frameworks and the Buffer School program is a specific result of this strategy. The emerging Thai border school policy also arose out of the need to secure peace and stability along Thailand's borders. Education in the border areas thus also serves to address a variety of non-traditional threats as

stated in the Master Plan on ASEAN Connectivity. The trend of regional integration across the globe such as EU challenges Thailand to respond to its ASEAN framework commitments. Moreover, due to globalization, education is becoming increasingly borderless. Interest in and the practice of cross-border cooperation in education is spreading across all regions, emerging as an issue of concern for some, but mostly as an opportunity. Furthermore, developing education at borders fulfills global commitments under the concept of “Education for All” (EFA).

An additional driving force for launching Buffer Schools is the fact that the Thai government desires to serve as a change agent for the region. Pioneering Buffer Schools in Thailand might serve as a prototype for other ASEAN member states to promote border schools in this era of the ASEAN Community. In addition, the government has aggressively pursued its role in international affairs by strengthening relationships and expanding cooperation with countries throughout Asia. These conditions will help Border Schools deliver effective educational services in a borderless environment, as well as have a substantial impact on the lives of local people and relations with neighbor countries. Thai border school policies have supported local people in different ways over the course of time. The initial period focused on improving the quality of life and enhancing the well-being of poor people in remote areas. The emerging border school policy developed within the context of the ASEAN Community recognizes the challenges and opportunities ahead as a gateway to mutual prosperity within the region.

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