University-Level eLearning in ASEAN

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Abstract

The Association of Southeast Asian Nations or ASEAN was established in 1967 in Bangkok. The ASEAN region has a population of about 500 million with a total area of about 4.5 million square kilometers, a combined gross domestic product of over US$ 730 billion and a total trade of over US$ 720 billion. On the ICT-related side, ASEAN formed a high-level e-ASEAN Task Force with two members from each of the ten countries, one member from the public sector and the other from the private sector. The author of this paper was appointed the private sector member from Thailand. Later, the e-ASEAN Task Force concluded its tasks and the e-ASEAN Business Council was established. The author of this paper was appointed the Chairman of the e-ASEAN Business Council at the first meeting in Bangkok in the year 2004. He proposed that to promote development and free flow of skilled personnel in ASEAN, eLearning degree programs should be promoted. He was assigned to survey eLearning degree programs in ASEAN and this paper presents the finding for Brunei Darussalam, Cambodia, Indonesia, Laos, Malaysia, Myanmar, Philippines, Singapore, Thailand, and Vietnam with a recommendation for cross accreditation.

1. Introduction

It should be emphasized that "eLearning" is "learning" through electronic means and the technology of choice is the Internet. A classification of eLearning may be based on the level, namely, university level, K-12 level, and short-course level. For the university-level eLearning, it may be said the United States of America is the most advanced with Jones International University as the first accredited virtual university, the University of Phoenix offering eLearning degree programs to the largest number of students (about 200,000) and Capella University as the first virtual university to enter NASDAQ stock market (raising US$ 70 million in pre-IPO funding and US$ 86 million in IPO). Other countries are also advanced in university-level eLearning. For example, Cannada has established the Canadian Virtual University. The United Kingdom government originally allocated Pound Stering 62 million for the UK e-University (UKeU) but the project faced serious difficulty in raising private finance and has to be disbanded. However, the universities such as Middlesex continue eLearning development on their own. In ASEAN, the Universiti Tun Abdul Razak (UNITAR) became the first virtual university in the region.

The Free Trade Agreement (FTA) and the General Agreement on Trades in Services (GATS) include "Education". Peter Drucker predicted that the commercial value of eLearning will be greater than that of eCommerce. Therefore, all countries including those in ASEAN must promote eLearning.

This paper presents the existing situation of eLearning in Higher Education which will be referred to as "Hi-Ed eLearning" in each and all of the ten countries in ASEAN and a recommendation for cross accreditation in

order to promote development and free flow of skilled personnel.

2. Hi-Ed eLearning in Brunei Darussalam

Universiti Brunei Darussalam, with the web (www.ubd.edu.bn) shown in Figure 1, was established in 1985, offering Bachelor's, Master's and Ph.D. degree programs. The university has developed several eLearning projects to support the existing classroom-based programs and is in the process of establishing eLearning degree programs.

Figure 1. Universiti Brunei Darussalam

3. Hi-Ed eLearning in Cambodia

Cambodia started university-level eLearning in 2004. **The National Institute of Business** with the web (www.nib.edu.kh) as shown in Figure 2 was supported by Japan Overseas Development Corporation (JODC) to provide eLearning Bachelor's and Master's degrees in many fields such as Accounting and Finance, Sales and Marketing and Business Management.

Figure 2. The National Institute of Business

The Ministry of Education, Youth and Sports promotes education for all through distance education and self-learning. **University of Cambodia** (www.uc.edu.kh) offers eLearning and provides free email accounts with wireless Internet access.

4. Hi-Ed eLearning in Indonesia

Many universities in Indonesia provide eLearning. The first example is **Indonesian Open Learning University** with the web (www.ut.ac.id) as shown in Figure 3. There are eLearning platforms available such as calendar, forum, online tutorial, chat, and etc.

Figure 3. Indonesian Open Learning University

Another example is **Trisakti University** (www.trisakti.ac.id) which has already offered Master of Management in eLearning mode and in the process of preparation of other eLearning degree programs such as Bachelor of Management, Bachelor of IT, Master of Accountancy, Master of Industry Technology and Ph.D. in Economics.

5. Hi-Ed eLearning in Laos

In the year 1995, ten higher-learning institutions in Laos were integrated into the National University of Laos with the web (www.nuol.edu.la) shown in Figure 4. In August 2004, with the support of Kobe University in Japan and Japan International Corporation Agency (JICA), it organized

lectures on the topic of "International Economics" which were given in Kobe and attended in interactive mode by 120 students in Vientiane.
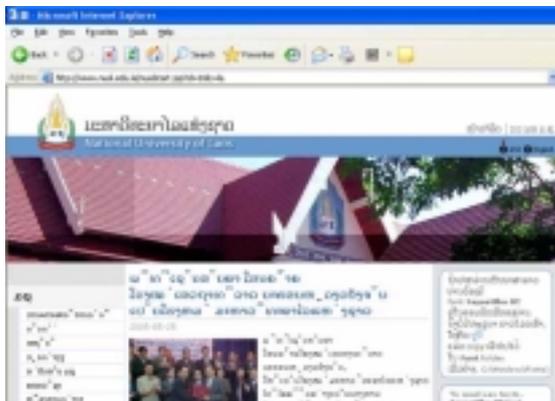

Figure 4. National University of Laos

6. Hi-Ed eLearning in Malaysia

Many universities in Malaysia have been offering university-level eLearning degree programs. The first is **Universiti Tun Abdul Razak (UNITAR)** with the web (www.unitar.edu.my) as shown in Figure 5. UNITAR was established in 1997 as the first virtual or eLearning university in ASEAN. Among the accredited degree programs are Bachelor of Business Adminitration, Bachelor of Information System, Bachelor of Management, Master of Business Administration, Master of Information and Multimedia Tech, and Master of Information Technology and Managent.

Figure 5. Universiti Tun Abdul Razak

The second virtual university in Malaysia is the **Multimedia University** (www.mmu.edu.my) which was established in 1999. It offers two accredited eLearning degrees programs, namely, Bachelor of Management, and Bachelor of Business Adminitration in Human Resorce Management. MMU is planning to offer three more degree programs which are Bachelor of e-Business, Bachelor of Information Technology, and Master of Business Administration.

The third example of Malaysian universities offering eLearning is the **University Technology MARA** (www.uitm.edu.my) which was established in 1956. In the year 2005, it provides 3 satellite campuses, 12 branch campuses, 6 city campuses and 25 franchise colleges which included eLearning students in the faculty of Business Management and faculty of Information Studies.

The forth example in Malaysia is the **Universiti Putra Malaysia** (www.upm.edu.my) which was established in 1931. It provides eLearning with support of Mahirnet (www.mahirnet.com) with online tutorial.

The fifth example in Malaysia is the **Open University Malaysia**, (www.unitem.edu.my) which was established in the year 2000**.** It provides degree programs delivered by using Learning Management System (LMS).

7. Hi-Ed eLearning in Myanmar

Japan's Minitry of Economy, Trade and Industry supported the eLearning Center with the web (www.yangon.com.mm) as shown in Figure 6. It offers preparatory materials on WBT (eLearning system from WBT System Ltd. in Ireland) for IT engineer examination. There is an "MBA Program" and 180 students have graduated and may later be expanded in eLearning mode. A complete eLearning degree program is expected in 2005.

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11.3

Figure 6. eLearning Center in Myanmar

8. Hi-Ed eLearning in the Philippines

Several universities in the Philippines have started eLearning degree programs. The first example is the **University of the Philippines Open University** with the web (www.upou.org) as shown in Figure 7. It was established in 1995. It has 30 learning centers. Contact can be made by telephone and email. Online short courses are available via the website. Complete eLearning degree programs are under development.

Figure 7. University of the Philippines Open University

The second example is **De La Salle University** (www.dlsu.edu.ph) which is a Catholic university founded in 1911. The Graduate School of Business offers two modes of online courses. The first mode is mixed-mode with face-to-face 8 times and web-based 6 times. The second mode is full online where there is face-to-face for orientation only.

9. Hi-Ed eLearning in Singapore

The first example is the National University of Singapore with the web (www.nus.edu.sg) as shown in Figure 8. It is the oldest university in Singapore. It has 13 faculties with over 30,000 students and a Center for Instructional Technology (CIT).

The second example is Singapore Management University (www.smu.edu.sg). It is the first private university which was founded in the year 2000. There are about 3,000 students. It offers Bachelor's Degree and three Master's Degree programs. Singapore Management University provides "SMUConnect" portal for access to class lists, lecture plans, discussion forums, notifications, examination records, and etc.

Figure 8. National University of Singapore

10. Hi-Ed eLearning in Thailand

There are many universities in Thailand providing eLearning courses.

The first example is the **College of Internet Distance Educaiton of Assumption University** with the web (www.eLearning.au.edu) as shown in Figure 9. Assumption Univesity has 20,000 students from over 55 countries and faculty members from over 35 countries. Assumption University offers 37 Bachelor's, 30 Master's and 6 Ph.D. degree programs, including 28 IT-related degree programs.
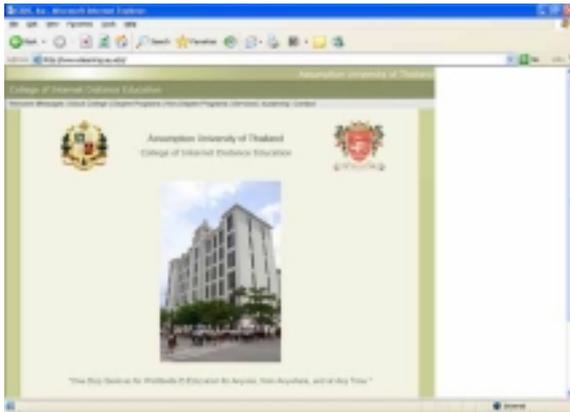
Figure 9. College of Internet Distance Education of Assumption University

The College of Internet Distance Education was established on April 25, 2002 with the aim to offer eLearning to 100,000 students per year. The eLearning programs may be from Assumption University, US and Canadian universities, UK and European universities, as well as Asian and Australian universities. Short courses will also be offered.

The College of Internet Distance Education is located at "Srisakdi Charmonman IT Center (SCIT)". A TV station at SCIT is expected to start at the end of the year 2005. Two "Blended Learning" degree programs are being offered, namely, MS in Management and MS in Information and Communication Technology.

The second example is **Thailand Cyber University** (TCU) which was established by the Office of the Commission for Higher Education with the web (www.tcu.uni.net.th) in Figure 10. TCU has completed 128 eLearning courses and will add 331 more by the end of 2005. Four universities have joined TCU, including Chulalongkorn University, Kasetsart University, and Naresuan University. Other universities may join and full degree programs may be offered later.

The third example is the oldest and the most prestigious university in Thailand, i.e. Chulalongkorn University (CU) which has several eLearning projects. The most

advanced is a complete eLearning curriculum of BS in Software Engineering which will be offered in long distance mode if and when the Thai government approves the law to recognize eLearning, expected in 2005.

Figure 10. Thailand Cyber University

The fourth example is Ramkhamhaeng University (RU) established in 1971 as the first open university in Thailand. RU has been offering eLearning courses for students abroad such as in the US and UK. RU is developing several eLearning curricula.

The fifth example is Sukhothai Thammathirat Open University (STOU) which is the second open university in Thailand. STOU has been offering eLearning Ph.D. program from Australia. STOU is also in the process of developing its own eLearning curricula.

11. Hi-Ed eLearning in Vietnam

There are many projects in eLearning supported by the Ministry of Education and Training (MoET) of Vietnam with the portal at www.eLearning.com.vn. An example of eLearning degree in Vietnam is at Can Tho University with the web (www.ctu.edu.vn) as shown in Figure 11.

The Can Tho University was founded in 1966 and offers Bachelor's, Master's and Ph.D. degree programs. There are over 15,500 students at the university with an additional 14,500 at satellite training centers.

Proceedings of the Second International Conference on eLearning for Knowledge-Based Society, August 4-7, 2005, Bangkok, Thailand

11.5

Some eLearning courses have been developed and complete eLearning degree programs are being planned.

Figure 11. Can Tho University

Concluding Remarks

All countries in ASEAN are promoting eLearning but there is a problem with accreditation. For example, a degree from UNITAR of Malaysia which is accredited by the government of Malaysia is not accredited by Thailand. To promote development and free flow of skilled manpower, there should be cross accreditation of eLearning degrees in ASEAN. Two options are proposed. The first option is for all ASEAN governments to recognize eLearning degree programs accredited by any ASEAN government. The second option is to set up an ASEAN commission for accreditation of eLearning programs.

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