

CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

The proliferation of regionalism after the second half of the twentieth century has become a contemporary global trend in the international relations system. The attempt at regional integration in the European Union is perhaps the best known example of this trend (Schulz, Soderbaum and Joekim, 2001: 1). Since current global regionalization processes are seen as having the potential to create a more peaceful world (Lombaerde and Langenhove, 2006: 248), a 'world' paradigm of procedural consensus and political frameworks has become widely adopted. Undoubtedly, the intensification of relations among sovereign states within geographical proximity affects the architecture of global governance. In the post-Cold War era, most sovereign states have changed from a strategy of power politics to interdependence which is manifested in the expansion of transnational cooperation. The process of regional integration affects the global system even further as this phenomenon has been divided and caused the formation of regional entities to arise in many other parts of the world. The number of regional projects and organizations has been rising in several world regions. These regional actors play significant roles in the global arena.

When regionalization started to spread over Southeast Asia, transnational cooperation became more focused on not simply serving the interests of a single country, but on regional interests as a whole. Although there were attempts to form regional organizations prior to the establishment of the Association of Southeast Asian Nations" (hereinafter refer to as ASEAN), it was the inception of ASEAN in 1967 that caused the shared aspirations for regional cooperation amongst Southeast Asian countries to become more concrete. Through the course of ASEAN's development over four decades, since its inauguration till the present, it has managed to achieve its current status as an internationally recognized regional organization (Pitsanu, 1997: liii). Along the lines of slowly creating peace and regional integration, several fields of cooperation in ASEAN

have been growing, including the field of education.

Education is viewed as a primary means to develop human resources for the benefit of the region's improvement. Moreover, it is also seen as a tool to cultivate a sense of political entity and identity within a geographical area, which could help promote the social integration of the region. Thus, the goal of providing a better understanding and awareness of the region has been pushed forward by the aim to lay a strong foundation for regional consolidation. The rise of regionalization in Southeast Asia has motivated the formation of a linkage between education and regional integration. This can be noted if one observes the rapid increase of multilateral agreements and regional cooperation in the field of education, particularly after the 1950s.

Since the establishment of ASEAN, education has been one of its significant spheres, as evidenced by the aims of ASEAN mentioned in the Bangkok Declaration¹, many of which are related to education development. Activities for the regional integration of ASEAN cooperation on education includes, for example, student and faculty exchange, information networking among ASEAN universities, conference and training sessions, seminars, collaborative research, etc. The issue of creating a mechanism like the 'ASEAN University' or some such form which could allow special collaboration amongst the higher learning institutions of ASEAN countries was raised in 1977. However, it was not brought into being until 1992 when this issue came to the attention of ASEAN leaders. The ASEAN commitment to strengthen regional cooperation in the field of higher education was affirmed when ASEAN leaders agreed on the establishment of an ASEAN university. After more consideration, the initiative evolved into the establishment of the ASEAN University Network (hereinafter referred to as AUN) in November 1995.

¹ See Chapter 2 for details

1.1 Rationale

Following the aim of becoming regionally integrated, academic cooperation activities for regional integration have been intensified on the grounds that they can enhance regional consciousness, which is one of the significant foundations for regional integration. Currently, academic cooperation for regional integration has been expanding in many regional entities all over the world. However, this concept should not be taken for granted without being empirically verified. Hence, this research will focus on academic cooperation as a method of improving regional integration, by concentrating on the academic cooperation processes in Southeast Asia which take place under the umbrella of ASEAN.

Since the ASEAN Vision on establishing ASEAN Community was agreed to be accelerated, in order to be achieved by 2015, the mechanisms and implementation of cooperation in ASEAN for regional integration must be more carefully monitored in order to ensure the effectiveness of its operation, following its objectives to provide regional benefits. The AUN, in recognition of the need to strengthen cooperation on higher education to enhance ASEAN solidarity and consolidation, needs to tighten the academic cooperation network amongst the leading universities of ASEAN countries. It must also improve ASEAN awareness and nurture a sense of “ASEANness” through its implemented initiatives and activities. The AUN is used as a case study for this research, in terms of studying its role and impact on ASEAN integration. Investigation of the current AUN’s planning and implementation will be conducted to monitor the operation after fifteen years of its establishment (by November 2010) and evaluate whether it is in line with ASEAN’s aspirations.

After the literature review on the objectives and related documents regarding the AUN initiatives, it appears that the main aim underlying these academic cooperation activities is to promote regional integration. In accordance with ASEAN aspirations on

functional cooperation on education (ASEAN Secretariat, 2010 : online), the activities of the ASEAN Committee on Education (ASCOE) and the ASEAN University Network (AUN) complement ongoing regional initiatives to promote ASEAN awareness, solidarity and identity in education institutions. In this sense, ASCOE remains focused on its mission to promote ASEAN awareness in schools through its implementation. Thus, the AUN promotes ASEAN awareness at the higher education level through its implementation. As mentioned, the programs implemented by the AUN may possibly enhance the awareness and attitudes of participants towards ASEAN, which is one of the significant foundations for regional integration. However, there has been no empirical research conducted to prove this assumption. Therefore, in my work I intend to prove this assumption on an empirical basis by means of the quantitative method. The results from a pre-activity questionnaire and post-activity questionnaire completed by participants before and after their engagement in an AUN program will be analyzed to infer a pattern of improvement and the impact of such programs.

Moreover, searching for published works regarding the AUN has led to the finding that information related to the AUN's planning phase, namely background, policies, and strategies, can be found e.g. "ASEAN University Network" (ASEAN Secretariat: 1995) and "ASEAN University Network: Co-operation in Higher Education in ASEAN" (Yawaprapas: 2000). However, a publication or thorough study on the aforementioned cooperation from the initial stage to present-day implementation has yet to be found. Now that it has been over a decade since the establishment of the AUN, there must have been many programs implemented following its objectives and planning strategies. Therefore, I would like to fill this gap by conducting this research to examine the role and progress of this academic cooperation organization for regional integration and how it has impacted youth development towards ASEAN integration. This investigation emphasize that the implementation of AUN's activities has an impact on human resource development. Youth is selected as a focus group in this research since the role of youths in raising ASEAN awareness and helping ASEAN community-building has been

stressed, the scope of the empirical data collection examines the incremental increase of ASEAN consciousness among youths after their participation in these academic cooperation activities.

Apart from the rationale mentioned above, the course of action of selecting AUN as a case study in this research was taken for several reasons. Firstly, the researcher is interested in the field of international cooperation, particularly in the academic field, with the ultimate aim of promoting better understanding between different countries. Moreover, the researcher has background involvement with the AUN, as both a scholarship recipient in 2005 and an employee in 2008. Additionally, the AUN Secretariat is located in Bangkok, where the researcher also resides. This factor leads to a particular vantage ground for the acquisition of knowledge, namely information and statistical data which have not been published, but which it is possible to inquire about. Furthermore, the AUN regularly has activities which gather students from all ASEAN countries. Therefore, this provides a practical channel to get responses in both questionnaires and interviews from a variety of ASEAN students. Overall, these points make the data collection and field research process for this research appropriate to the designed timeframe and budget limit. In conjunction with the researcher's aforementioned topical interest, this has been the inspiration for conducting this research.

1.2 Hypothesis

Based on the grounds that AUN activities must have impacts on their participants towards ASEAN integration, particularly in terms of perception and attitude, this research emphasizes the improvement of ASEAN consciousness in the participants after participating in AUN activities. *Therefore, it is hypothesized here that apart from attaining the specific objectives of each academic cooperation activity, the activities must nurture a sense of regional awareness to participants which is a necessary step towards ASEAN integration.* In this respect, the AUN's activities must show its impacts on

improving participants' ASEAN consciousness in some aspects selected to be proved in this research: a deeper understanding of ASEAN, general knowledge of ASEAN, and attitudes and awareness towards ASEAN. These impacts will be empirically measured from the output of these activities by qualitative and quantitative methods. This evidence based research should be able to pinpoint the impacts of academic cooperation activities in enhancing ASEAN consciousness in youth participants. After investigation of the research sampling set in this research, the empirical results obtained should be able to verify this hypothesis.

1.3 Research Objectives and

The objectives of this research are:

- To study the role of the ASEAN University Network towards regional integration in Southeast Asia and its progress after nearly fifteen years of operation (by November 2010).
- To examine the impacts of the implementation of the ASEAN University Network on youth development towards ASEAN integration.

1.4 Research Questions

In response to these objectives, some questions raised by this research are:

- How has the AUN developed since its inauguration to the present-day, and is current planning in line with ASEAN objectives in establishing the AUN?
- Do AUN's activities have an impact on participants which improves ASEAN consciousness e.g. understanding, knowledge, attitudes and awareness towards ASEAN?

1.5 Scope of Research

The scope of research can be divided to scope of content and scope of sampling size.

1.5.1 Scope of Content

The content of this research involving academic cooperation for regional integration is scoped down to a study case which is the AUN. In order to test the hypothesis and to respond to the research questions, the study looks at two phase of the AUN: its planning phase, and its implementing phase. The planning phase concentrates on the roles and strategic planning and policy of the AUN, relying on the literature review. The implementing phase concentrates on the impacts of AUN activities on participants by focusing on youth activities.

1.5.2 Scope of Sampling Size

For the purpose of framing the scope, the focus of this research is on youths since this group has always been emphasized as a significant portion of the population which can be cultivated in preparation to become good citizens. Thus, this research will focus specifically on academic cooperation activities for ASEAN youth development towards regional integration by taking AUN youth activities as a research sampling. To control the sampling size, the activities were chosen relying on some variables such as types of activities (academic and non-academic activity) and the duration of activities (short program and long program). An analysis of the impacts of these activities on participants will based on the research findings from the research sampling. More details of sampling size and criteria are described in Chapter 3 under the “Sampling” section.

1.6 Research Framework

In conformity with the scope of research, the research framework is drawn by the researcher as below.

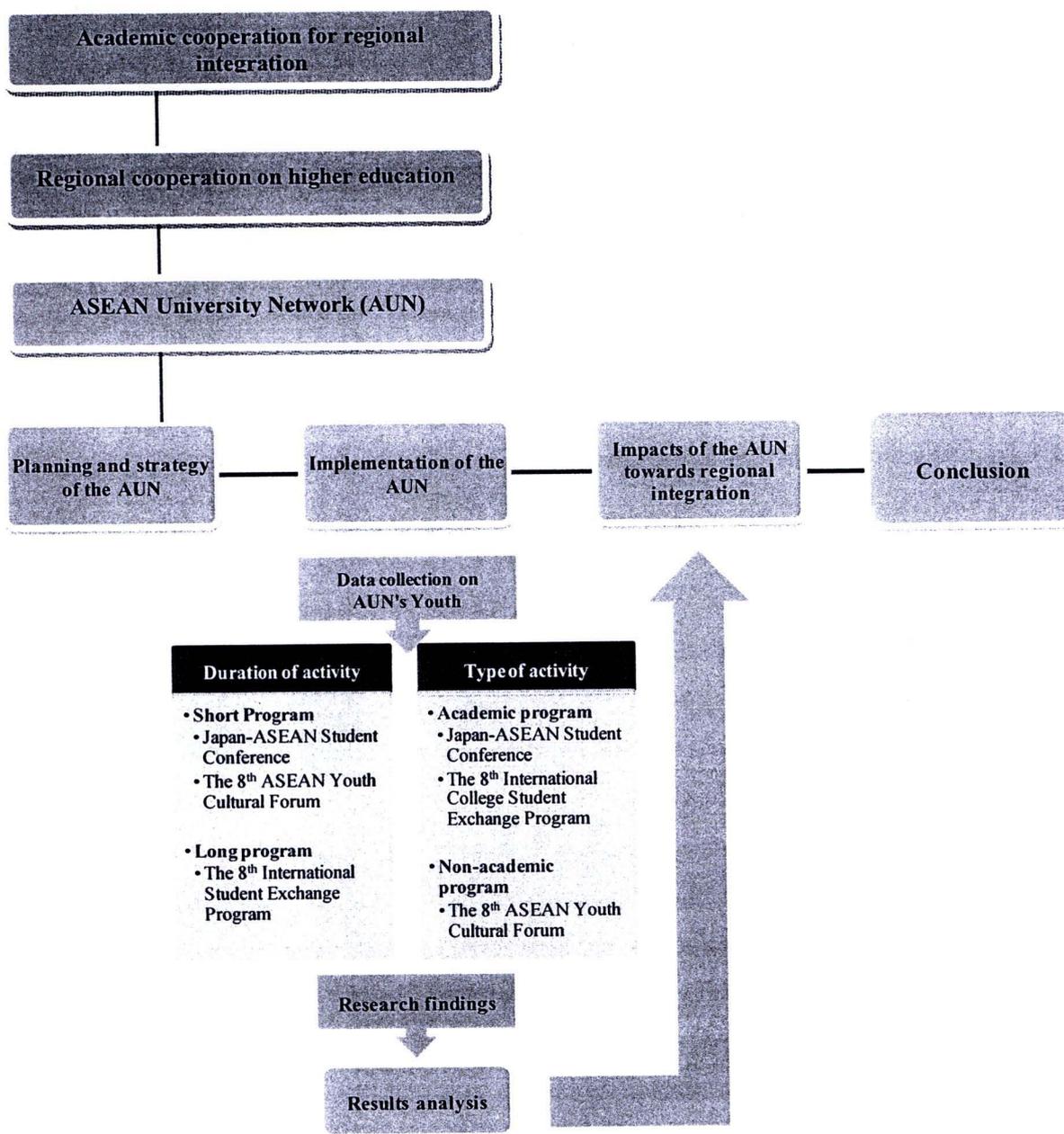


Figure 1: Research Framework

1.7 Research Methodology

Relying on the conceptual framework, the empirical research design is what best describes the data collection methodology of this research effort since apart from the literature review on theory, concepts, and issues regarding the topic, evidence was also needed to testify to the hypothesis and respond to the research questions. The combination of the two methods makes up the data collection methodology of this research: theory and experiments leads to an empirical research finding.

The data collection methodology of this research is shown in figure 2.

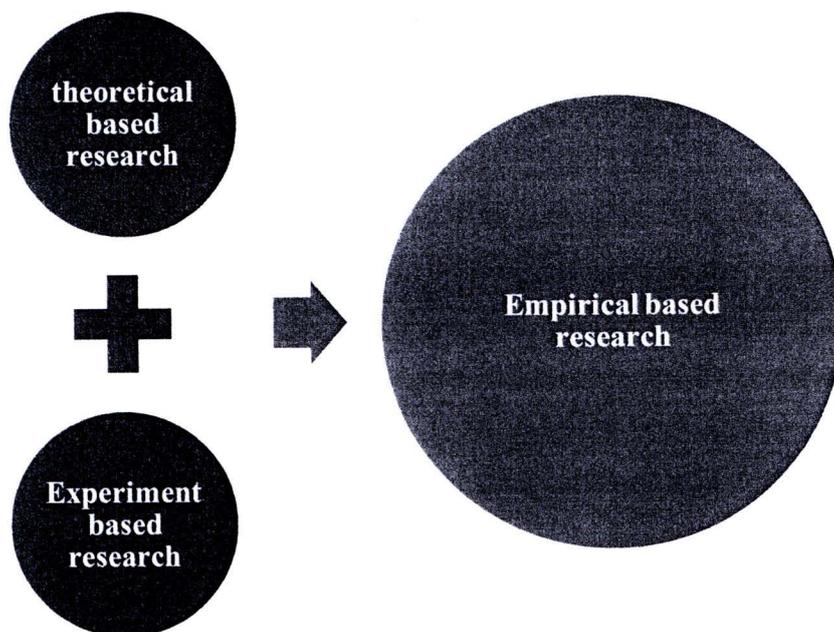


Figure 2: Data collection methodology

Apart from the literature review on related theory and background literature regarding the topic, the study is conducted on the AUN. It involves two phase of the AUN: the planning phase and the implementing phase. For the planning phase, the focus is on the policy and strategic planning of the AUN, as explored in the literature review. For the implementing phase, the focus is on the impacts of the AUN programs, as they are revealed by field research. More details of the research methodology will be described in detail in Chapter 3.

1.8 Key Terminologies in Use

For the purpose of clarifying specific definitions for some key terminologies used in this research, the definition of terms is based on definitions defined in reliable sources. The terms which are often found in this research are “higher education”, “regional cooperation on higher education”, and “youth”. The definitions that are applicable to the content of this research are referred to below.

1.8.1 *Higher Education*

The intertwined relationship between education and development has been widely accepted. Education is commonly assumed to include schooling for all children, as well as adult literacy, and is an integral part of ‘development’ (D’Aeth, 1975: 2-10). For an individual’s improvement, education avails the path of opportunity for upward mobility in socially stratified systems and so opens the way for individuals to become more outward looking. For the knowledge-based economy, educational development gives hope that better education will overcome poverty. For democratization, education is a mechanism of the democratization process which ultimately helps develop a more equitable society. For identity building, education can help foster a growing respect for each nation’s own culture, tradition, and national identity. Education is viewed to lead to economic growth, thus raising the standard of living. As pointed out by Amnuay Tapingkae, the educational system serves to inculcate values and to change attitudes in a direction favorable to social and economic development (Amnuay, 1976: 5). Naisbitt and Aburdene suggested Asia’s Pacific Rim is a case in point, having demonstrated for all to see that a poor country can develop, even without abundant natural resources, so long as it invests enough in its human resources. Hence, if we take the premise that a society which invests in education is laying a foundation of human capital which can lead to the development of the country, then we can see education as a primary ingredient in

economic growth and so on (Naisbitt and Aburdene, 1990: 215).

All levels of education underpin development. Higher education in particular has been emphasized to be significant to overall development as Charas believes:

“Primary education aims at improving the general level of knowledge of the whole population as well as its application to improve their career and livelihood. It can be seen as a basic human right for all citizens. Equity and social justice is the main determinant. In contrast, socio-economic developments require additional knowledge and skills which vary in breadth, depth and specialization. Constraints to development have been seen from limitation of necessary manpower. One may put in bluntly that no higher education means limited development (Charas, 1997: 42).”

Higher education is regarded as a mechanism to create development on a large scale. As described by Singh, higher education is the creation of knowledge through research, the dissemination of knowledge, the training of high-level specialists, and service to the community at large (Singh, 1986: 153). Scholars, a group in the population which has gone through the higher education system, usually have impacts on the macro scale e.g. national policy, technology advancement, innovations, etc. In the knowledge-based economy, there are various ways in which higher education in each country might help to meet its social and cultural as well as economic needs more adequately (Hayden, 1961: 402).

In this research, higher education refers to the level of education after secondary level in the contemporary educational system. Higher education is offered at higher education institutes e.g. university, college, a specialized institute, etc. It involves research and skilled training in a more comprehensive way than at a basic level. The expertise gained from higher learning levels can always be of use in a students' future profession.

1.8.2 Regional Cooperation on Higher Education in Southeast Asia

In the post World War II period, the aspiration of humankind to strengthen the prevalence of peace is more apparent when transnational cooperation is more significantly observed. The new stream of thought, that state interdependency reflects such urges, casts a new light on the concept of cross-border cooperation. A primary example is the formation of global agents like the United Nations, which officially came into existence in 1945, with the solid aim of preventing future world conflicts and encouraging global development. Manifestly, the wind of change has blown across the entire world with the concept of transnational cooperation leading many forms of cooperation: bilateral, multilateral, regional, cross-regional, inter-regional, and global.

Regional cooperation is referred to as cooperation amongst a collective of nation states, usually within adjacent areas, which agree to join in the making of a region for their stability or mutual interests in certain fields e.g. energy, education. The desirability of regional cooperation has been frequently referred to and sometimes stressed as grounds for optimism: if it is reinforced by cooperation in various spheres, a way may yet be found to resolve political barriers and conflicts among neighboring countries. Significantly, it can also strengthen economic, politic, and social stability within the region in the global arena.

When this trend was adopted in Southeast Asia, transnational cooperation started to spread throughout the region in many fields including the area of higher education. Obviously, the development of higher education in Southeast Asia has largely concerned itself with the aspirations of the region and the aim of strengthening cooperation across boundaries. Particularly during the late 1980s and 1990s, new initiatives were established and existing ones strengthened to cooperate and to coordinate developments at both the inter-governmental level and the inter-university level in the Southeast Asian region (Beerrens, 2004: 38). Muhammadi has stated that the term



“regional cooperation”, in relation to higher education levels in Southeast Asia, shall refer to cooperation between institutions of higher learning in two or more countries in Southeast Asia (Muhammadi, 1977: 83).

In this research, regional cooperation on higher education shall refer to regional organizations that cooperate on academic aspects particularly at the level of higher education in Southeast Asia, one of which is the AUN.

1.8.3 Youth

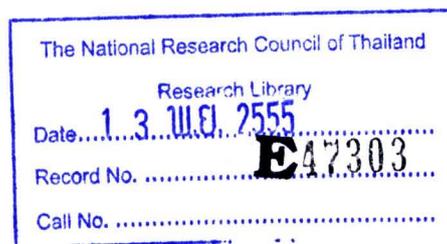
Youth is defined by the United Nation, for statistical purposes, as those persons between the ages of 15 and 24 years, without prejudice to other definitions by Member States². Although the age of youths may differ in each country due to physical and sociological differences or others, generally they are those treated as youths under the law, who will become adults when they leave this age group.

The definition of “youth” stated in the implementation guideline at one of the youth activities arranged by AUN, the Japan-ASEAN Student Conference, which was held in Japan in November 2009, was slightly different from the UN’s definition. For suitability to the objectives of the program, youth was defined as:

“...a person at the age of between 18 and 25 in university or graduate school who is appropriate for three pre-defined themes of the conference. In principle, applicants should belong to AUN member universities. If unavoidable necessary, students in non-member university could be accepted” (Japan International Cooperation Center).

Occasionally, graduate students are eligible to participate in some of the AUN programs if their ages suit the criteria. Since the focus of this research is on AUN

² This definition was made during preparations for the International Youth Year (1985). All United Nations statistics on youth are based on this definition. (<http://www.un.org/esa/socdev/unyin/qanda.htm>).



activities for students at higher education levels, the term “youths” in this research, therefore refers to undergraduate and graduate students aged between 18-26 years old who are studying at academic institution which belong to AUN member universities and, sometimes also non-member ones.

1.9 Contribution of Research

This study will provide knowledge in the fields which are related to academic cooperation in Southeast Asia for regional integration. To be more specific, academic cooperation at the higher education level, by taking the AUN as a case study. The literature review explores regional integration theory and concepts, academic cooperation in Southeast Asia, and higher education in this region and its development. It also investigates the planning phase of the AUN from past to present which shows the progress of the AUN. The analysis of the results of empirical data collected from youth participants will be useful to pinpoint if the AUN has an impact on participants. By doing so, it will bring about an opportunity to monitor the current stage of operation of the AUN with regard to its attempt at attaining its objectives of regional academic cooperation for regional integration. Since the timeline for ASEAN Community is near, its cooperation in various spheres must show more concrete on its integration efforts. Hopefully, the findings of this research will be beneficial to the further development of implementation of AUN activities for ASEAN integration. Ultimately, it will help strengthen this regional academic cooperation network which will be beneficial for the future development of the region. Besides, it may also be advantageous to those involved in higher education cooperation, which aims to enhance understanding and solidarity amongst ASEAN nations, in their future activities. At any extent, it can profit those who are interested in this or a related field.

1.10 Research Schedule

The duration for the accomplishment of this research from planning, collecting data, analysis, and thesis writing is from 30th October 2009 to 30th October 2010. The initial stage of the data collection process for this research was conducted with ASEAN and Japanese youth participants in the Japan-ASEAN Student Conference which was held in November 2009 in Japan. Data analysis and conclusions for this set of data were completed in April 2010. The field research for the ASEAN Youth Cultural Forum was conducted in June 2010 and at the International College Student Exchange Program in July 2010.

1.11 Limitations

In conducting this research, there are some difficulties with and limitations to the research. Firstly, although the research is related to the impacts of AUN activities, there are a number of AUN activities which could not be covered in this research within the designed timeframe and budget limit. Therefore, the researcher decided to limit the focus of this research to youth activities by selecting only some activities as a research sampling.

Secondly, the International College Student Exchange Program is a long activity which requires a one-year commitment by participants. Due to the timeframe of this research, there are no pre-tests and post-tests conducted in this activity. Unlike other activities in which pre-tests and post-tests were distributed to participants, the empirical data collection in this activity was designed to occur only once. A questionnaire was distributed after the participants finished their first semester in Korea (July 2010), which was after four months of their participation. Since this is somewhat in the middle of the program, it is therefore referred to as a mid-activity test.

Thirdly, the total number of questionnaire respondents should be 260 respondents. In other words, total questionnaires to be evaluated should be approximately 500 sets. However, the number of the sampling size mentioned was less than expected due to some limitations which occurred during or after the data collection process e.g. missing participants, lost or missing data, incomplete questionnaires or other unexpected circumstances which led to invalidity of the data. This is also due to the condition set by the researcher that only results from participants who have done both a pre-activity questionnaire and a post-activity questionnaire are considered to be valid. Hence, this led to a lower number for the sampling size than expected, from 260 to 210 respondents.

1.12 Structure of the Thesis

The thesis is divided into 5 chapters. Details on each chapter are as follows:

Chapter I: Introduction, this chapter includes general information on this thesis: rationale, hypothesis, research objectives, research questions, scope of research, conceptual framework, research methodology, contribution of research, limitations, research schedule, and structure of the thesis.

Chapter II: Literature Review, this chapter focuses mainly on findings based on published and unpublished works regarding relevant theory, concepts, and background literature related to the topic of research. The planning and strategy of the AUN are synthesized and discussed.

Chapter III: Research Methodology, this chapter explains the details of the research methodology of this research namely, approaches, procedures, research design, and criteria used in this research. In addition, it also provides a justification for the research design e.g. sampling design and field research sites selection.

Chapter IV: Results Analysis and Discussion, this chapter shows the findings of the field research by presenting the results and analysis of empirical data collection on the impacts of the AUN's activities towards regional integration on participants. A generalization of analysis and a discussion regarding related matters are also included in this chapter.

Chapter V: Conclusion, this chapter provides a conclusion to this research as well as recommendations which were extrapolated from the research findings and analysis. Moreover, this chapter also includes research implications which can be taken into consideration for future research and projects.