



Vocational Education in Indonesia and ASEAN Economic Community

KASIM YAHIJI¹, CHOIRUL MAHFUD², AND MUHAMMAD ARFAN MU'AMMAR³

Abstract

Nowadays, vocational education and the ASEAN Economic Community (AEC) are an interesting topic to discuss for contributing to the ASEAN future. This article explores the vocational education in Indonesia facing ASEAN Economic Community. Vocational education is clearly significant not only to help the government but also to determine the future direction of the people and the nation. This article describes the condition of vocational education in facing ASEAN Economic Community. Also, this article explores the strategic roles in the development of vocational education in the ASEAN Economic Community (AEC) era for the benefit of the nation which is expected by all, especially for society, nation, and the world through reviewing references and literature books, news, journals and opinions in mass media and various related publications and sources. The article discusses the contributions from all stakeholders of education from civil society organizations in Indonesia that are very significant for facing AEC. Implications for educational policies on vocational education are also presented.

Keywords

ASEAN economic, civil society community, vocational education

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1. Lecturer at IAIN Sultan Amai Gorontalo, Indonesia; kasimyahiji@iaingorontalo.ac.id
 2. Lecturer at Institut Teknologi Sepuluh Nopember (ITS), Surabaya, Indonesia; choirul.mahfud@its.ac.id
 3. Lecturer at Muhammadiyah University of Surabaya, Indonesia; arfan.slan@gmail.com



Introduction

“The West” will be left behind as the Southeast Asia countries (Naisbitt & Aburdene, 1990). In connection with the issue of studying vocational education in facing the ASEAN Economic Community (AEC) era, it is part of an interesting topic to be discussed more seriously for understanding future’s ASEAN in the world as the AEC has begun since 2015. The 10 ASEAN countries, namely Indonesia, Thailand, Myanmar, Laos, Vietnam, Cambodia, Brunei Darussalam, Malaysia, Philippines, and Singapore have significant roles each other. ASEAN Economic Community can be called as one sign as well as a symbol of the phenomenon of the world that looks flat, like a country without distance from each other. It is not surprising that Friedman (2005) concludes that the world is now flat without “something”.

For more watching the global dynamics in the ASEAN region, of course, it requires a systematic and synergistic study. Winantyo, Arifin, Djaafara, and Budiman (2008) explain the importance of synergy to face a competition not only at ASEAN level but also at the world level. Moreover, as one region is so close, the nation's problems should be solved together with a mutual understanding and keeping for independence and progress of all the nations (Winantyo, Arifin, Djaafara, & Budiman, 2008). The ASEAN economic community certainly has new opportunities and challenges.

In the book "Toward ASEAN Economic Community 2015" issued by the Ministry of Trade of the Republic of Indonesia (2009), there are 7 opportunities for future Indonesia including 1) economic benefits of integration, 2) world potential market, 3) exporting country, 4) destination state of investor, 5) competitiveness, 6) open service sector, and 7) capital flow. Additionally, Winantyo, Arifin, Djaafara, and Budiman (2008) discuss that at least 9 challenges faced by Indonesia, including the rate of export and import improvement internally and externally, inflation rate, negative impacts of more free capital flows, product similarity, and competitiveness of priority integration sector, competitiveness of human resources (HR), a level of economic development, national interest, and state sovereignty. Another challenge for Indonesia is how to optimize the opportunities. If Indonesia does not make significant and well-preparations, of course, Indonesia will become “object” or a marketing destination for other ASEAN countries (Winantyo, Arifin, Djaafara, & Budiman, 2008).

In this context, the success or failure of the future ASEAN economic community program depends on the seriousness of the implementation of policies in each country, including the policies in the regions of each ASEAN member country. Inayati (2000) noted that several aspects of ASEAN's success and failure have been largely determined by the participation, competition, and synergy of all stakeholders. The general objectives of the study are to find out the relationship between vocational education and the ASEAN economic community and the response of stakeholders of vocational education in Indonesia to the ASEAN Economic Community. Particularly, this article focuses on how the relationships between vocational education and the ASEAN economic community exist through reviewing references and literature books, news, journals and opinions in mass media and various related publications and sources.



Vocational education and the ASEAN economic community (AEC)

Understanding vocational education and the ASEAN economic community (AEC) cannot be separated from the discussion of state policies. As Dye (1972) discloses in the book "Understanding Public Policy" that public policy is whatever the government choose to do or not to do which means that whatever the government does or does not as a public policy. Lasswell (1936) in his famous book on "*Politics: Who Gets What, When, How*", explains that policy is the political product of a country. The existence of a vocational education policy in the context of the era of ASEAN economic community such as state policymaking, in general, is also not something without a plan. Wahab (1997) sees the interconnection between one policy and another policy are inevitable in making a policy. The principles of all these policies should not be forgotten and deviate far from the interests and needs of the people of a country (Anderson, 1998).

Here, it can be said that ASEAN policy is a planned agenda agreed by all ASEAN members. Certainly it is not made for the unilateral interest, but for the common interest and vision. The discussion of the AEC since December 2015 is like two sides of the coin. On the one hand, there are opportunities, and the other hand there are challenges that need to be considered along with all elements of region and nation. Both are equally important for the advancement and change towards a better life for the nation to the world free market era in 2020. There responds positively and negatively to the AEC. The pros and cons of the AEC are an early stage that needs to be understood, but still, needs to be considered together. The reason is like a school exam, agree or disagree, we will do the test. When we understand from Gramsci's hegemony theory (1971 as cited in Heywood 1994), all countries in the era of ASEAN economic community, like or dislike, of course, we will make efforts to hegemony in the sense of power to influence.

According to Gramsci (1971 as cited in Heywood 1994) that hegemony is a dominant worldview and way of thinking, in which a concept of reality is disseminated in society both institutional and individual levels that dictate all tastes, moral habits, religious principles and politics, and all social relations (Patria & Arief, 1999). Of course, state policy depends on its leaders to do the hegemony. In understanding the practice of hegemony in the era of ASEAN economic community practiced in the formulation, implementation and evaluation of policies can be seen from two important stages. The reason, hegemony in Gramsci's (1971 as cited in Heywood 1994) optics is indeed working with two main stages; firstly, the stage of domination, and secondly, the stage of direction/ leadership. Usually, the most frequent stage of domination by states through power institutions such as schools, universities, capital, media, and other state institutions (Patria & Arief, 1999).

It can be understood that the AEC is an opportunity as well as a challenge for all elements and stakeholders of the Indonesian to share solutions as well as competition towards the good and progress of the nation at the ASEAN level. Nugroho (2003) in his book, "*the Excellence in Education Policy*", sees that the advancement of a society is strongly influenced by policies made or even not made. In this case, the government playing a larger role is also influenced by the policies made to respond and capture the opportunities of the ASEAN economic community (Nugroho, 2003).



Vocational education is a policy that is anticipative and contributive to Indonesia in facing globalization, especially in the era of ASEAN economic community. The AEC is one stage of globalization at the regional level (starting from 2015) which ends at the point of globalization at the global level in the world (2020). In this context, beside the government, of course, the elements of civil society (CSOs) in Indonesia are also playing a significant role that could be the key to a successful change in life. Vocational education is about working together for the best future. There is an interesting lesson related to the efforts to respond to global economic business problems, namely the flow of domestic and foreign trade is thought ideally, but it is understood as a whole. This can be seen also in the case of Indonesia which is facing the Free Market in the ASEAN region and the world (Anderson, 1998). Vocational education is also part of an effort to create a prosperous society. The prosperous society is a concept whereby a country participates in economic, social and other activities that support the creation of prosperity for its citizens. The concept of welfare is a tangible example of idealism that embodies a prosperous society that should be emulated by other regions. The prosperous society is a mirror of the welfare state. The more the region and the people are prosperous; it can be assured that the country is more prosperous. The task of the state whose government guarantees the implementation of the people's welfare is expected to always run continuously throughout the life of the country.

Theoretically, in realizing the welfare of its people, it should be based on the five pillars of the state, namely: democracy, law enforcement, protection of human rights, social justice and anti-discrimination. In addition, the state also needs to continue to actively pursue prosperity, a fair action that can be felt throughout the community equally and balanced, not the welfare of certain groups but all the people. Furthermore, the welfare state is closely related to social policy which in many areas includes the strategy and efforts of the government in improving the welfare of its citizens, especially through social protection covering social security (in the form of social assistance and insurance social), as well as social safety nets.

Mainstreaming vocational education in facing AEC

The mainstreaming of vocational education is actually a necessity (Tushar, 2013). The need of education to prepare ready-made workers for the job is something that cannot be denied. In other words, changing the flow of education to the vocation is only to follow the needs of the industry. There are advantages of this change, including in the industry that will get a good impact, because it simplifies the process of receiving employees. The world of industry can also cooperate with higher education vocations in their respective areas to ensure the availability of experts that they need which link-and-match program can be realized. This situation will make future work acceptance focus more on certification than undergraduate degrees. Additionally, the national agency for professional certification can certainly play a big role here. Each graduate of polytechnics and academy automatically has a professional certification according to his or her level of expertise. This certificate, of course, can be accounted for and used to apply for jobs in accordance with the field of expertise. The local governments can contribute even more by supporting vocational education that



can advance the local area directly. For example, a rich region in marine products can support vocational education funding of fishing lanes.

Strengthening vocational education is actually not something strange. Vocational education in Singapore, which initially holds the same prejudice about vocational education, has gone beyond the flow of academic education. In 2016, there are 18,126 high school graduates were accepted at universities in Singapore, while 24,251 were accepted at Polytechnics and 14,173 were accepted in ITE (vocational training). The number of students in 2016 also showed the same trend: 64,303 college students, 76,865 in polytechnic and 29,295 in ITE.

Similarly, the statistic numbers of universities in Indonesia show the number of universities and colleges exceed the number of polytechnics and academies: 2,435 high schools and 557 universities versus only 254 polytechnics and 1,102 academies. This figure can be reversed by converting some colleges and colleges into polytechnics and academies. This is actually not too difficult given that almost all majors in college can actually be converted into vocational education channels, without changing the system as vocational education may be part of the good solutions for future education problems in the world of industry.

In this context, the role of youth always attracts the attention of all the nations of the world, including in facing AEC. Today and the future, the youth always will be the best asset and foundation of all nations. The challenges and opportunities for national resurgence can be reactivated as the changes are made. In 2015, the momentum of the AEC began with the entry into force of the AEC, the flow of trade in goods, services, investment, skilled labor, and increasingly free capital. ASEAN will be an area with a single production base and market with a competitive regional economy. Therefore, at this time it can be a turning point for the economic revival of society in the era of ASEAN free market as well as later also it welcomes the era of free market in 2020.

AEC and the response of the educational stakeholders in Indonesia

The response of educational stakeholders in Indonesia about vocational education and the ASEAN economics community is generally positive. Nugroho (2003) and Mahfud (2016a, 2016b) argue that the important issue of the Indonesian nation is not only on economic and political issues but also on education issues, including vocational education, which can provide solutions and anticipate today's problems including from Muslims in this country. Education is the most valuable value for the way of life in the future. The role of Indonesian Islamic civil society on vocational education and today's ASEAN economic community is very significant because the number of Muslims in this country is many who play a major role from pre-independence era until today. Also, the main role of Islamic organizations in Indonesia, of course, leads to two aspects: first, the aspect of competing in goodness (*fastabiqu al-khairat*). This aspect is clearly necessary for Muslims and Islamic organizations in Indonesia to be always ready to face the era of ASEAN economic community; and secondly, the aspect of working together in kindness (*wa ta'awannu ala al birri*), although they are ready to compete, Muslim society in Indonesia must also be ready to cooperate in goodness (Mu'ammar, 2013). By working together, the goal of goodness is



more quickly achieved and successful. Here, those are the two things that need to be the focus of Muslims and Islamic organizations in facing the challenges as well as the opportunities of AEC.

All understand that in the Republic of Indonesia, in the aspect of quantity there is about 85 percent of the population who have embraced Islam. This country belongs to the largest Muslim population in the world. Islamic leaders also participated in fighting for independence in the country. Now, to strengthen the role of Muslims in the life of nation-state, recently the Indonesian Ulema Council has initiated the Indonesian Islamic Congress VI in Yogyakarta. The Indonesian Islamic Ulema (MUI) Congress discussed the strengthening of the political, economic and socio-cultural roles for a just and civilized Indonesia. From the congress, it is intended for Muslims in Indonesia not to be carried away by the unfavorable currents and directing the purpose of the nation and state. The chairman of MUI Amidhan said that the congress was held to answer the problems of the people in the present and future as well as the evaluation of the previous program. From this context, the congressional material focuses on three crucial issues that challenge Muslims, namely the Islamic political strategy, the strengthening of the Islamic economy, and the landscape of Islamic civilization including spatial and spiritual philosophy.

The role of civil society organizations (CSOs) in facing the Asian free trade area (AFTA), the ASEAN economic community (AEC) and other challenges in this era of globalization is very important. According to the Rector of *Muhammadiyah* University Jakarta, Syaiful Bakhri in a discussion entitled, "Regional Youth in Facing the ASEAN Economic Community" held at UIN Syarif Hidayatullah, *Muhammadiyah's* charitable efforts covering health, education and social service are the largest in the world. On the *Muhammadiyah's* journey of caring from the past and present, the activity of filling the Republic is not so simple. *NU (Nahdatul Ulama)* and *Muhammadiyah* have united to draft our constitution. Furthermore in the present, according to Syaiful, young people of Indonesia should be able to compete in the face of competition globally and locally Mahfud, 2016a).

Meanwhile, Din Syamsuddin said that *Muhammadiyah's* achievement in the midst of society by contributing to filling the social field is very good. However, *Muhammadiyah* always tries to provide a wider role in solving the problems of the nation and state. Din added that part of the role is about *da'wah* of the nationality role. *Muhammadiyah* began to enter this *da'wah* by doing a judicial review against various laws that harm people and nation. In addition, *Muhammadiyah* has also conducted a judicial review of Oil-and-Gas Law which is full of cartel and oil and gas mafia, and also has issued a fatwa or religious thought about water resources in Indonesia (Mahfud, 2016b). Din also reminds that *Muhammadiyah* will continue to share the best solutions to the nation for such problems of water (Mahfud, 2016b). These are the series of *Muhammadiyah's* *ijtihad* in upholding the national *jihad* to achieve the ideals of Indonesia's proclamation. In the era of the ASEAN economic community, the challenge of the Islamic community is not small, but we could be an optimist to solve and to contribute as a problem solver. The fact of *da'wah* is a never ending process that necessarily gives us an awareness of the importance of optimizing all missions in all situations of life. Muslims in Indonesia should have prepared all the tools that lead us to succeed. When talking about what technical roles we can do in order to succeed in our mission in AEC. At least, there are three important agendas that can be done. First,



promoting Islamic Finance, Islamic Finance is considered to be a world economic solution. So it does not matter if large countries like the US and UK, are now beginning to set up specialized institutions that study the Islamic Finance system. In here, we should understand that Islamic Finance itself is a very wide coverage. The agenda we can do at AEC is including a) pushing and optimizing the role of Islamic Banking institutions, b) encouraging the growth of the role of “*zakat, Infaq, and shodaqoh* institutions.” The two institutions (*Nabdatul Ulama* and *Muhammadiyah*) will make the property better. This is the best way when we have not been able to cope with the problems of the Indonesian economy which is caused by the individual moral damages (ASEAN, 2009).

Second, encouraging the entrepreneurship, welcoming the ASEAN Economic Community can only be prepared by improving the quality of Indonesian society first. It can be done through the entrepreneurship education and vocational education involving all stakeholders. Third, making Indonesia as the halal center in ASEAN countries, the ASEAN community is predominantly Muslim. Moreover, Indonesia is known as the country with the largest Muslim population in the world. By understanding the two of the global problems, maybe focus on two global issues, namely 1) food security and 2) energy security. This is not a utopian thing because of many Islamic organizations (such as NU, Muhammadiyah, Persis, and the Council of Ulema in Indonesia) who act as a pressure group on all government policies.

The three agenda have touched three main factors determining the success of the mission of our da'wah in the economic aspect. The agenda of promoting Islamic Finance at the system level is a conceptual framework sector. Encouraging entrepreneurship in the stage of improving the quality of human resources is the subject sector. While improving the quality of goods (especially food), is a sector of objects that are traded on the AEC. If we design the AEC in this way of thinking, AEC will no longer be perceived as a threat, but it can be a great opportunity for all of us. Moreover, in facing AEC, we could think that *pesantren* is also expected to contribute by equipping students through the entrepreneurship programs. *Pesantren* could prepare with various programs. The goal should be oriented to strengthening the independence of *pesantren* through the development of entrepreneurship programs including on the development of vocational education that can be the focus of *pesantren* education institutions (Rahmawati, Yahiji, Mahfud, Alfin, & Koiri, 2018).

In this context, vocational education in the era of ASEAN economic community is needed by all. Therefore, the response and the stakeholders of education in Indonesia facing the ASEAN economic community is clearly significant not only to help the government but also to determine the future direction of the people and the nation. The strategic roles in the development of vocational education are for the benefit for society, nation, and the world.

Conclusions and Implications

Vocational education in Indonesia and ASEAN economic community are important. All stakeholders should face them through working together. The key to working together is creativity, innovation, and synergy for contributing to the better nation and the world as vocation education in Indonesia is not only influenced by the government but also by all stakeholders. Vocational education is indeed currently needed to answer market and



community needs. The expertise produced through vocational channels is one of the answers in facing the current era of competition. In the ASEAN Economic Community competition, especially in certain occupational fields, the government must continue to improve it and one of them is by strengthening vocational education. In this case, vocational education is a form of preparing or capitalizing the demographic bonus that Indonesia has. Therefore, this vocational education will be right to be used to answer the opportunities and challenges of the demographic bonus.

At present, there are three things that have become the government's focus, namely deregulation, infrastructure, and human resources. The element of human resource development can be directed at education development. That is, the development of vocational education has several main principles, namely cooperation between the government and industry. Where, the government and industry are responsible for developing and designing vocational education and training frameworks. The government needs to organize a training development framework and regulations needed for the implementation of vocational training within a framework. Control of the course of training delegated from the government to an institution called related to industry and trade.

In practice, the qualifications of vocational education workers must master and understand vocational pedagogical concepts. Pedagogics is not only a concept that is owned by the world of education, but the industrial world is also always using and developing this concept. More than that, the government should also support various studies on vocational education and career consulting research involving the government, economic actors (in this case the business and industry), and other social elements. The result is to continue to encourage vocational education to find out what is developing in the industrial world, and so that the needs of the industrial world or business world for the competence of graduates of vocational education can be identified early.

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Biographical note

KASIM YAHJI is an associate professor and former of rector at State Institute for Islamic Studies (IAIN) Sultan Amai Gorontalo, Indonesia. He is currently a director of postgraduate program at IAIN Gorontalo.

CHOIRUL MAHFUD is the chairman of research group on religion studies and society at Institut Teknologi Sepuluh Nopember (ITS), Surabaya, Indonesia. He was a visiting scholar at University of California Riverside, USA (2018) and Dalian University of Technology and Beijing Institute of Technology at China (2018).

M. ARFAN MU'AMMAR is a vice director of postgraduate at Muhammadiyah University of Surabaya, Indonesia.