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THE ROLE OF UNIVERSITIES IN THE DEVELOPMENT OF GREATER
MEKONG SUBREGIONAL ECONOMIC COOPERATION

BY

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THESIS

Submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirements
for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy in Education
in the Graduate College of the
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ABSTRACT

In the new era of peace and stability, the six countries of the Greater Mekong Subregion (GMS), namely, Cambodia, Lao PDR, Myanmar, Thailand, Vietnam, and China's Yunnan Province, are now taking an active measure to accelerate development and economic growth through a regional cooperative approach. However, there are constraints that make cooperative efforts complicated. A comparatively loose form of cooperation, moving gradually from easier viable areas to more complex ones, has been considered more appropriate. Higher education cooperation seems to be an avenue available to encourage and facilitate this subregional cooperation.

The purpose of this study is to examine the perceptions of university administrators and academics as well as education specialists of relevant international organizations regarding the role universities have in the development of economic cooperation in the GMS. This qualitative study is based upon in-person interviews with those university people, who have been involved in the GMS university development cooperation. These interviews were conducted during field studies in the six GMS countries.

The findings that emerged showed that university people considered regional cooperation beneficial to GMS

university development. At the same time, they also believed that cooperation in higher educational activities could promote mutual understanding and improve attitudes, which are necessary for the success of economic cooperation and for building a peaceful GMS community.

Most individuals interviewed were satisfied with past and present GMS university cooperative activities. However, some were frustrated over problems arising from complex bureaucracy, political intervention, and language differences. They viewed the insufficiency of funds, the lack of information networks, and the lack of firm and precise policies for GMS academic cooperation as critical issues, working against the potential role of universities. International sharing of resources, cooperative research studies, and international study and teaching visits were suggested as practical measures for future cooperation. The fields of study recommended for further cooperative programs are economics, education, agriculture, engineering, health science, tourism, and environmental studies.

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LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS AND ACRONYMS

ADB	Asian Development Bank
AEM-MITE	ASEAN Economic Ministers and Japan's Ministry of Trade and Industry
AFTA	ASEAN Free Trade Area
AIDAB	Australian International Assistance Bureau (now AusAID)
AIT	Asian Institute of Technology
APEC	Asia Pacific Economic Cooperation
APC-HRD	ASEAN-Pacific Cooperation in HRD
ASEAN	Association of Southeast Asian Nations
ASEM	Asia-Europe meeting
AUN	ASEAN University Network
AusAID	Australian Agency for International Development (formerly AIDAB)
CACM	Central American Common Market
CARICOM	Caribbean Common Market
CAS	Chinese Academy of Sciences
CASS	Chinese Academy of Social Sciences
CEAO	West African Economic Community
DTEC	Department of Technical and Economic Cooperation
ECAFE	Economic Commission for Asia and the Far East (now ESCAP)
ECOWAS	Economic Community of West African States

ECSC	European Coal and Steel Community (now EU)
EEC	European Economic Community (now EU)
ERASMUS	European Community Action Schemes for the Mobility of University Students
ESCAP	Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific (formerly ECAFE)
EU	European Union
FCDI	Forum for Comprehensive Development of Indochina
FEA	Faculty of Engineering and Architecture
FEM	Faculty of Economic and Management
GMS	Greater Mekong Subregion
HIVED	Department of Higher, Technical and Vocational Education
HRD	Human resource development
IDRC	International Development Research Centre
JICA	Japan International Cooperation Agency
KMIT	King Mongkut Institute of Technology
LAIA	Latin American Integration Association
MDRN	Mekong Development Research Network
MRC	Mekong River Commission
MRCS	Mekong River Commission Secretariat
MRU	Mano River Union
NAFTA	North American Free Trade Area
NAP	National Action Plan

NEC	National Education Commission
NEM	New Economic Mechanism
NHETF	National Higher Education Task Force
NIDA	National Institute of Development Administration
NIED	National Institute for Educational Development
NIPA	National Institute of Public Administration
NLD	National League for Democracy
NUOL	National University of Laos
OECD	Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development
PROAP	UNESCO Principal Regional Office for Asia and the Pacific
PTA	Eastern and Southern African Preferential Trade Area
QEC	Quadripartite Economic Cooperation
RIHED	SEAMEO Regional Centre for Higher Education and Development
SAARC	South Asian Association for Regional Cooperation
SEAMEO	Southeast Asian Ministers of Education Organization
SEAMES	Southeast Asian Ministers of Education Secretariat
SEATO	Southeast Asian Treaty Organization
SIDA	Swedish International Development Authority

SSA	sub-Saharan Africa
UNDP	United Nations Development Programme
UNESCO	United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization
UNICEF	United Nations Children's Fund (formerly United Nations International Children's Emergency Fund)
USAID	United States Agency for International Development

CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

The significant role of universities in the task of national development is widely accepted especially among developing countries (Coleman & Court, 1993). From an economic point of view, the sustainable economic growth and the competitiveness of the country generally depend upon the availability and the productivity of a well-educated workforce. In this regard, universities prepare high-level scientific, technical, professional and managerial personnel for the public and private sectors. Universities as generators and communicators of knowledge also transform or provide research and development results for the country's industrial productivity. In addition, from a social point of view, universities produce well-informed citizens who help promote values like democracy and concern for the environment and contribute to societal transformation and improvement in the quality of life of the people (Coleman & Court, 1993; The World Bank, 1991, 1996; UNESCO, 1991).

Aside from the universally recognized role and responsibilities largely addressed on a country basis, another important role of universities has recently emerged. This additional role of a cross-border nature is

parallel to a present trend towards regionalization and globalization of economies. In this connection, the idea is that higher education plays an important part in an effort towards regional cooperation and contributes to the success of the ultimate aim of unification (Commission of the European Communities, 1991). Higher education cooperation, as a means and an end that is in itself of great benefit, helps promote mutual trust and understanding among participating nations. Logically, it is the mutual trust that builds cooperation and vice versa (Pante, 1997). As a region becomes more integrated economically and politically, the scope for strengthening existing university linkages also increases.

Education as a tool for cooperation appears more valid and relevant with regard to a regional grouping of developing countries that were long in bitter conflict. First, as developing countries are likely to face a shortage of financial resources and limitations in technical capacity in higher education, university development cooperation, e.g. sharing of available resources, is a cost-effective strategy (Raghavan, 1995). Secondly, to reduce the age-old rivalries and mutual suspicion that beset past attempts at cooperation, higher education cooperation, an area that should be relatively

free of reservations, is a viable initial step (Suwanwela, 1993). Jean Monnet, a statesman known as one of the founding fathers of European Unification (Duchene, 1991), once stated "If I had to do it again, I would start with education" (Commission of the European Communities, 1991, p.5). His statement expresses well the important role of education in regional cooperative efforts.

Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this dissertation is then to look into this role of education in the context of the Greater Mekong Subregion (GMS). Specifically, the study examines the perceptions of university administrators and academics, government officials, and education specialists of relevant international organizations, regarding cooperative GMS university development. The aim is to understand the role of universities in the development of economic cooperation in the Greater Mekong Subregion, past and present cooperation for GMS university development, and possibilities for future cooperation among GMS universities, including any impediments and limitations, the opinions of those GMS university people suggest.

Definition of Terms

The Greater Mekong Subregion

The Greater Mekong Subregion (GMS) comprises Cambodia, Lao People's Democratic Republic, Myanmar, Thailand, Vietnam, and Yunnan Province of the People's Republic of China.

Higher Education and University

Higher education refers to the system of post-secondary schooling, which includes all institutions of higher learning, like the universities, teacher training colleges, colleges of technology and agriculture. A university refers to the institution of higher learning where instruction leads to academic degrees in various fields. In this study, the two terms are used interchangeably to mean the same thing even though the former is a broader concept, and either one is used where appropriate. In other words, higher education institutions refer to universities, and vice versa. This is to avoid any confusion whenever a post-secondary school is called a university. For example, Yunnan Normal University is in essence a teacher training college whereas Yunnan University is a comprehensive university where various degree programs are offered. In Cambodia, the Faculty of Business and the Faculty of Pedagogy are regarded as

universities, and each has its own administrative body and office similar to the one at the Royal University of Phnom Penh, a more comprehensive university of the country.

University People

The university people in this context refer mainly to university administrators and academics in the six GMS countries. They also include influential and well-informed individuals, who have been involved in university cooperative activities, in other government offices and international organizations concerned. They are, for example, a vice-rector for international affairs, a program officer for education at an international organization, a faculty member who organized a regional conference, or a director of international cooperation division at the Ministry of University Affairs. The latter group is important, especially those in international organizations, because they can provide donor perspectives that are relatively disconnected from political considerations in the Subregion due to their external status. Those who are in other government offices, as they are not affiliated with any one university, are also not obliged to give opinions according to the wishes of university administrators.

Development

The notion of development generally carries implications of highly valued or positive change in a specific direction. There are many theories relating to education, economic, and national development that have been developed to explain and solve problems of underdevelopment in developing countries. Among them are theories of modernization, dependency, interdependency, and human capital. An overview and critiques of some of the theories by authorities in the field (Fagerlind & Saha, 1989) reveal that while economic progress is an essential component of development, it is not the only one. Development involves the re-organization and re-orientation of the entire economic and social system. Myrdal (1968) also defines development as the movement upwards of the entire system. It is this definition of development that is referred to in this study.

Regional Cooperation

Regional cooperation refers to voluntary efforts at collaboration among neighboring countries in areas of common interest to two or more participating countries. Genuine cooperation in this context means a form of partnership in which nationally-based efforts and the benefits of a joint undertaking in the short and long term

are shared evenly between participating countries (Oteiza & Rahman, 1978). Indeed, according to the agreement reached by the participating countries at the Third Conference on Greater Mekong Subregional Economic Cooperation in 1994, five principles guiding project generation were agreed upon. They are viability, balance, mutual benefits, complementarity, and acceptability to and among all the participating countries (Asian Development Bank, 1996a). How the principles can really be applied to initiated programs and projects remains to be seen. Each participating country has its own perception about the initiative and the Mekong River. Their short-term and long-term commitment as well as available resources will definitely be significant factors.

CHAPTER II

BACKGROUND AND OVERVIEW OF THE STUDY

Greater Mekong Subregion

The Greater Mekong Subregion (GMS) encompasses six East Asian developing countries, namely Cambodia, Lao People's Democratic Republic (hereinafter referred to as Lao PDR), Myanmar, Thailand, Vietnam, and Yunnan Province of the People's Republic of China (hereinafter referred to as China). It is termed "Subregion" because the area is only a part of the region of interest of the Asian Development Bank (ADB), the prime mover of the initiative in Greater Mekong Subregional Economic Cooperation (Asian Development Bank, 1993). The six countries are next or adjacent to each other and are linked by the Mekong River that either borders or flows through them, which defines the Subregion. This relatively vast land area of 2.3 million square kilometers is home to a combined population of approximately 237 million people (Asian Development Bank, 1997).

The international Mekong River, with a total course of its mainstream measuring 4,880 kilometers, ranks as the world's twelfth longest river and as the Southeast Asia's largest river. Its total basin area is 795,000 square kilometers, and the average annual rate of flow is 475

billion cubic meters at the entrance to the sea (Guangping, 1998; Hoskin & Hopkins, 1991). The Mekong River, the headwaters of which are snow-fed, originates from the Tanghula Mountain Range in Qinghai-Xizang Plateau in China and at that point is named Lancang. From there it crosses the Tibetan Autonomous Prefecture and Yunnan Province of China and is named Mekong after flowing out of Yunnan Province at its Xishuangbanna Autonomous Prefecture. After it departs China, the Lancang-Mekong River flows through Lao PDR, Myanmar, Thailand, Cambodia, and Vietnam before it empties into the South China Sea (see also the map of the Subregion in Appendix A) (Guangping, 1998).

Among the six countries through which the Mekong River flows, Lao PDR has the longest stretch of the river, 1905 kilometers, whereas Myanmar has a share of only 200 kilometers and a catchment area of only about two percent of the total (Tangwisutijit, 1996). With respect to the location of the six countries, China and Myanmar are regarded as upstream countries, constituting the Upper Mekong Basin, whereas Cambodia, Lao PDR, Thailand, and Vietnam constitutes the Lower Mekong Basin.

The Greater Mekong Subregion is endowed with relatively unexploited and abundant natural resources. The energy resource in the form of hydropower alone is immense.

The hydroelectric generating capacity of the basin, excluding that in China, is estimated to be equivalent to one million barrels of oil per day (Hoskin & Hopskins, 1991). On top of that, large coal and petroleum reserves abound (Asian Development Bank, 1997). Furthermore, there exist rich forest resources, including the impressive biodiversity of flora and fauna, mineral resources, fishery resources, tourism resources, and fertile land (Tan, Pante & Abonyi, 1995). Because of the huge potential of untapped resources and the mighty river of a near pristine character, the Subregion is also known as "East Asia's last frontier" (Glasser, 1997).

Nevertheless, whereas the resource potential of the Subregion is immense, the people in the river basin, having relatively retarded economic development, are among the poorest in the world. Per capita income in Myanmar, for example, in 1996 was only US\$ 250. Lao PDR has also been classified by the United Nations as a least developed country (Asian Development Bank, 1997). It is as if the utilization of river basin resources to improve the life of the people had been neglected or unrecognized. Parts of the reason that the resources have not been utilized very much to date is that the Subregion, where ancient kingdoms and civilizations once flourished, has been plagued by

warfare, internal political instability, ideological conflicts, and colonization. This has damaged the social and economic infrastructures and depleted government resources that might have been otherwise spent on development of the countries. The French occupation, the Khmer Rouge Regime, and the Vietnamese interventions, for instance, left Cambodia, once the cultural heartland of Southeast Asia, in a devastated condition. The 30-year Vietnam or Indochina war, which concluded in 1975, also caused many serious difficulties for Vietnam. However, today, there is quite a turn around from the tense atmosphere in the past decades. The new era of stability and opportunity has already begun.

Harnessing the water and related resources of the Mekong, an international river, is not a simple matter, though. The "reasonable" and "equitable" use of its mainstream and tributaries requires both the cooperative spirit of the countries along the river and proper joint management at the regional level (Chomchai, 1994). Comparatively, the Nile, the longest river in the world, poses identical challenges to the nine Nile River basin countries sharing the resources in Northeast Africa (Saykham, 1994).

In the absence of cooperative efforts in terms of a water rule or agreement, for example, an upstream country can automatically and conveniently divert water from either the mainstream or tributaries for irrigation. They may do as such without having to first notify other neighboring states, even during the dry season. An upstream country can construct more and more hydroelectric dams to serve its own growing power demands and the regional electricity market. Rock blasting and dredging can be done for the purpose of convenient navigation. Trees in the forest that helps keep rainwater can be cut down for sale or for dam construction. All of these possibilities of unregulated use of the shared resources can bring about detrimental impacts on the downstream countries and also the ecological system of the river as a whole. Effects on irrigation, fishery resources, local navigation, and local agriculture systems are among reasonable concerns.

Yunnan Province of China, an upstream country, has already made a blueprint to build eight hydroelectric stations on the mainstream of the Lancang-Mekong River, fifteen if proposed stations on the tributaries are included. One of them, the Manwan hydroelectric station has been built, and the construction of Dachaoshan station has also been started (Shisong, 1997).

In the past, when the six countries were in a low development stage, there did not seem to be much pressure for tapping the water resources of the Mekong. Thus, there was no evidence of open conflicts in the use of water. Along with the development process, however, growing demand for irrigation, electricity, and transport can be felt as a result of the population pressure, extension of agriculture, manufacturing, and industry, as well as expansion of urban areas. In this regard, each Mekong River country appears to have both common and its own specific pressing need. For instance, Thailand needs to divert water from the Mekong mainstream for the irrigation of its parched northeast. Vietnam's rice production in its Mekong Delta for home and for export markets depends very much on the water resources of the Mekong River. The flow from the upstream in dry season is also needed to protect the Mekong Delta from seawater intrusion in the south of Vietnam. The vast hydropower potential of the Mekong River means a lot to Lao PDR as electricity constitutes a large amount of its export value. China also expects to use the Mekong both for hydropower generation and for navigation. The increasing needs of each country as moving towards its developmental aims are all likely to be a potential source

of future conflict (The Mekong Development Research Network (MDRN), 1994).

Any adverse effect could possibly trigger another regional conflict over water resources. Besides, as certain parts of the river help mark the border between countries, tampering with the river may alter its course, leading to territorial disputes. Conflicts over resource use can be seen in any region of the world. The war between Iran and Iraq, for example, could be traced to conflicts over water use (MDRN, 1994). Water in the Mekong may not be so scarce for the time being to trigger conflict over scarce resources but very likely as the Subregion develops. Long-term cooperative planning and management would thus be needed and should definitely be better than crisis management.

In fact, the realization of river basin resources as a means to accomplish economic growth and improving social conditions and of regional cooperative approach to achieve sustainable development of the watershed has been recognized before. The recognition of the benefits of developing the river has not been limited only to the participating countries. It has also brought together twenty-one other nations, twelve international agencies,

and several private organizations (Hoskin & Hopskins, 1991).

In this regard, as early as 1957, the government of Cambodia, Laos (now Lao PDR), Thailand, and South Vietnam established the Mekong Committee (Committee for Coordination of Investigations of the Lower Mekong Basin) after a decade of preliminary studies. The Committee excluded China and Myanmar. Notably, at that time China did not belong to the United Nations, and Myanmar showed no interest in the cooperation (Hoskin & Hopskins, 1991). This intergovernmental agency was organized under the aegis of the Economic Commission for Asia and the Far East (ECAFE) (now the Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific (ESCAP)). Its aim was to promote, coordinate, supervise, and control the planning and investigation of water resource development projects (Chooduangngern, 1993).

It should be noted that the Mekong Committee's initial need was for information that was indispensable for planning and operation of water resources projects. In the early stage, data on the river's physical, economic, and social aspects were then gathered and analyzed. This provided for the complex questions of establishing priorities for proposed projects to be addressed correctly,

thereby a comprehensive framework for development could be drawn up (Hoskin & Hopskins, 1991). The work of the Committee at that time continued to progress despite escalating war in Indochina. However, in 1975 when the Indochina war ended with communist victory, Cambodia, Lao PDR, and Vietnam dropped out of the Mekong Committee. Three years later, in 1978, the Interim Mekong Committee was formed by Lao PDR, Thailand, and Vietnam, without Cambodia, which the Khmer Rouge had sealed off from the outside world. The objective of the Interim Mekong Committee was to promote the development of water resources of the lower Mekong basin. The Interim Committee was intended to function only until Cambodia resumed its participation (Ryder, 1992).

Looking back over more than four decades of the Mekong Committee, one can hardly see any tangible gains beyond a national level. Only national and tributary, not mainstream, development projects have so far been possible (Hoskin & Hopskins, 1991). However, this is quite understandable, taking into consideration years of political conflicts within the region. Besides, when people are becoming more aware of environmental issues, many grandiose mainstream plans based upon the piles of

information gathered over the years have simply been aborted, largely reduced, or at best put off.

Nonetheless, after the end of the Cold War, the Subregion has entered a new era of peace and stability, marked in particular by the success of the Cambodian peace process. One of the results of this new era that favors cooperation was a new framework for the Mekong development basin.

In April 1995, the 38-year-old Mekong Committee was replaced by the Mekong River Commission (MRC) under the Agreement on the Cooperation for the Sustainable Development of the Mekong River Basin. The agreement was signed by all four lower Mekong basin countries, including Cambodia (Chaipipat, 1995). The new framework under the aegis of the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) has claimed to take a more comprehensive view of all resources of the Mekong River and addresses the shortcomings of the previous one. The areas covered by the agreement include irrigation, hydroelectric power generation, navigation, flood control, fisheries, timber floating, recreation, and tourism (Yoon, 1995). It has been agreed also that the Mekong River Commission Secretariat's head office, currently based in Bangkok, Thailand, where it has been for four decades, will also be

first moved to Phnom Penh, Cambodia. The four participating countries will take turns hosting the Secretariat on a five-year rotating basis.

It is notable also that, at first, Cambodia, Lao PDR, Thailand, and Vietnam competed to take the first turn, but Thailand and Vietnam withdrew early. Cambodia and Lao PDR both claimed for their rights and argued for the appropriateness of having the Office located in their countries. It has been said that Cambodia even claimed, that since its country's name begins with the letter "C" which comes before "L," that it deserves the first turn. However, the competition ended peacefully, resulting in Cambodia taking the first turn (Pathan, 1996a; Tansubhapol, 1996).

There seem to be high hopes that the new setup will give a new life to this regional body. Still, other problems remain. The Mekong River flows through or past six countries, but as of 1998, only the four downstream states have joined in the Commission. The upstream countries of China and Myanmar have not joined yet (Pathan, 1996b). As mentioned earlier, the impact of water utilization in the upper basin could possibly affect down river. It is necessary to foster basin-wide cooperation to treat the basin as an integrated planning and development

unit (MDRN, 1994). There should be formal coordination between the upper stream and the downstream countries for a successful and sustainable utilization of water resources.

It should be noted that each country accounts for a different percentage of the Mekong's water. Myanmar, as mentioned earlier, is the source for only approximately two percent whereas China's catchment contributes about sixteen percent of the water inflow (see also Appendix B) (Nette, 1996; Ounthouang, 1996). Logically, each participating country then has its own perception about the river, largely dependent on national interest and geographic location. In Myanmar, as the river only flows through 200 kilometers of a sparsely populated area, the government seems to be relatively inactive to the cooperative effort (Adchariyavanich, 1996a). On the other hand, China already has planned a series of dam constructions in the Mekong and its tributaries to generate hydroelectricity. Therefore, China has reservations about the benefits and also the obligations of joining the Commission, for fear of losing its sovereign right in using the water resources. China has even argued that its Lancang (Mekong) River should be regarded as only a tributary, not the upper mainstream due to the amount of water flow (Pathan & Chaipipat, 1996).

It has long been a desire of the four founding members of the MRC to include China and Myanmar. However, their becoming members remains uncertain. Amid this uncertainty, China and Myanmar have recently taken a step closer towards full membership by becoming full dialogue partners of the MRC (Pathan, 1996b). Their attendance in MRC meetings hopefully will provide for opportunities when all six countries listen to the needs of their neighbors. The enthusiasm shown might also be an initial step to minimize the conflict between downstream and upstream national interests.

In this new era, opportunities for peace and stability are not limited. Other initiatives taken for the development cooperation of the Subregion are the Forum for Comprehensive Development of Indochina (FCDI), Quadripartite Economic Cooperation (QEC), Working Group on Economic Cooperation in Indochina and Myanmar (known as AEM-MITI or ASEAN economic ministers and Japan's Ministry of Trade and Industry), ASEAN-Mekong Basin Development Cooperation (ASEAN-MB), and the Greater Mekong Subregion (GMS) (Manibhandu, Tansubhapol, Sawatsawang, & Marukatat, 1996). All of these frameworks, with somewhat different political motivations and priorities, more or less, center on the socio-economic development of the Subregion.

Certain frameworks involve also other countries besides the four lower Mekong River states.

AEM-MITI, for example, which is aimed to maintain and promote dynamic growth in Asia as a whole and to strengthen economic linkages between ASEAN and Indochina (typically comprising Cambodia, Lao PDR, and Vietnam), also includes Japan. FCDI which was initiated by the Japanese government is focused only on Indochina. The objective of the Forum is to facilitate cooperation and coordination among the three countries, donor countries and international organizations for development of infrastructure and human resources in the area. For QEC, the participants are limited to China, Lao PDR, Myanmar, and Thailand; the grouping is aimed at economic cooperation. The scope is on trade development, international investment and tourism promotion among the four countries (Ladavalya, 1994; Manibhandu, Tansubhapol, Sawatsawang, & Marukatat, 1996).

Greater Mekong Subregional

Economic Cooperation

Of all the new efforts to develop the Subregion, the GMS framework seems to be the most comprehensive and well established. It involves all six Mekong River countries and encompasses almost all aspects of development, namely physical, economic, and social. It was the Asian

Development Bank (ADB) that first took the initiative in Subregional economic cooperation that was responded well to by all six participating countries.

The ADB started cooperation in GMS as early as 1992. It has organized a series of ministerial conferences and meetings for senior officials as well as experts, which have been well attended by representatives from the countries concerned. It has commissioned staff members and experts in various fields to draft the development master plan, in consultation with government officials of each of the Mekong countries, which was adopted later in 1995. The plan was drawn up in order to further promote cooperation in the areas of transportation, energy, tourism, trade and investment, environment, telecommunications, and human resources development (Adchariyavanich, 1996b).

The ADB has invested more than US\$ 300 million in the Mekong Subregion since 1992 and plans to invest a further US\$ 300 million in the next three years. According to the ADB, the GMS countries require US\$ 40 billion over the next 25 years to finance about 100 priority projects, mostly in the infrastructure sectors of transport, energy and telecommunications (Galvez, 1996).

In addition to ADB, many other donor agencies have shown their interests in this new effort, including France,

Japan, Norway, Canada, Australian International Assistance Bureau (AIDAB), Swedish International Development Authority (SIDA), Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific (ESCAP), and the International Development Research Centre (IDRC) (Asian Development Bank, 1996). In recent years, leaders of the Mekong countries have also been exchanging visits with one another, and their people have become more aware of the importance of cooperation (Shi, 1998).

In this regard, it is not just the onset of peace and security in the area, though a prerequisite, that is of great significance for mobilizing such effort from the international community to support the Subregion. Another significant factor has been that the former inward-looking and centrally planned economic systems in socialist countries in the Subregion are in different stages of transition to more open and market-based systems as a means for economic development (Asian Development Bank, 1993). By improvement of infrastructure, there is a chance that a vast new market will be opened up. It thus draws keen interest from the international business community (Glasser, 1997).

In this connection, Adchariyavanich (1996b) comments that the plan and its implementation of subregional

economic cooperation are dependent on both internal and external factors. The Subregion is home to almost 240 million people, and this is a potential consumer market for goods and services. If the market mechanisms are in place, an opportunity is created for potential resources to be exchanged between neighboring states, resulting in a lower cost of production. Additionally the opportunity is not limited to only these six adjacent countries.

In the ASEAN-MB development framework initiated by Malaysia and Singapore, for instance, there is a proposed plan for transport infrastructure--a Singapore-Kunming of Yunnan Province rail link. The plan is hoped to boost trade and investment between the Subregion and Malaysia as well as Singapore (Manibhandu, Tansubhapol, Sawatsawang, & Marukatat, 1996). In this regard, it seems to be that everyone wants to play a part and to gain benefits from the new regional effort (McGovern, 1996). However, for the progress and prosperity of the Subregion to be realized, it depends on two key factors, namely foreign assistance and investment. They are to help upgrade the standard of living of the people and to create more jobs and increase income for the local people and the countries (Adchariyavanich, 1996b). Thus more international community participation in the development process would

also help speed up the plans and projects which are too expensive for Mekong countries.

In addition, the dissolution of the former Soviet Union and the collapse of centrally-planned economies in Eastern Europe resulted in another significant factor. The reduction of aid flows and the collapse of the trading arrangements between the former USSR and Eastern European countries with their Indochina trading partners have increased the need for the latter to find new trading partners within and outside the region (Hanchanlash, 1994). Economic cooperation in the Greater Mekong Subregion is thus viewed as a practical response to emerging domestic priorities.

Generally, the basic rationale for economic cooperation is that it can help overcome economic constraints to the development process within a given country. It allows the relaxation of domestic supply and demand side constraints on individual economies. This can be done by expanding access to capital, physical, and human resources and by enlarging market accessibility to participants (Laszlo, Kurtzman, & Bhattacharya, 1981). Specifically, economic cooperation in the Mekong Subregion is based on encouraging existing specific and limited linkages of complementary economic activities across

borders. An underlying assumption of cooperation is that it will lead to greater economic interaction among the participating countries and improve the group's competitive position in the world economy. In addition, cooperation can enhance the attractiveness for investment of the participating countries as a group beyond their individual abilities to attract investment (Asian Development Bank, 1996).

The Asian Development Bank publication (1993) defines the Mekong Subregion as an optimal geographic area for regional economic cooperation for several reasons. Some of the common interests are summarized below:

1. The huge Mekong watershed is a central feature of the economy of the Subregion, playing a key role in the agricultural, forestry, fishing, and energy and transportation sectors. Furthermore, environmental concerns related to this watershed are complex and need to be addressed at the regional level.

2. All but one (Thailand) of the six countries are in transition from highly centralized planned economies to more market-oriented, open economies. This economic reform, including the reversal from inward-looking to outward-oriented trade policies, has opened new grounds for economic cooperation and increased the potential gains.

3. Intraregional trade has begun to grow, especially between Vietnam and Thailand, Lao PDR and Thailand, as well as Yunnan Province and Thailand.

4. The poor state of infrastructure, however, severely limits trade and commerce. Cambodia's situation is the most serious, but Lao PDR, Myanmar, and Vietnam also have large needs for improved infrastructure which are too costly for these individual states to handle. Lao PDR, for example, has no railway at present. Besides, Lao PDR and Yunnan province are landlocked; linkage with seaports is especially important to these countries. Any access to seaports for development of export trade has to be through neighboring countries. For Yunnan Province, transporting goods down to countries in the lower Mekong basin is considered a better economic alternative than to transport to a port in Eastern China, like Guangzhou. Other countries in the Subregion are therefore not only the major markets themselves, they are the passageway for Lao PDR and Yunnan Province to markets outside the Subregion.

5. Areas of the Subregion have cultural heritages in common. For example, Thailand has a long historical relationship with Lao PDR, and it has linguistic ties with an ethnic group of Yunnan Province which speak Thai languages.

Various cooperative activities, together with increasing cross-border trade in goods and services, have been developing in the Subregion in recent years. Initiatives involving infrastructure are also designed to serve the interests of more than one country. The Australian government-funded Mittaphab (Friendship) Bridge, crossing the Mekong River on the route from Nong Khai in Thailand to the Lao PDR capital of Vientiane, is one good example of such initiatives. Another example is the Thai-Burmese (Myanmar) Friendship Bridge, linking Myawaddy in Myanmar and Mae Sot in Thailand, officially opened in 1997.

Other plans for the Mekong Subregional transportation network that will cover land, water, and air routes are also ready to be implemented. The plans, including nine road projects, eight railway projects, ten water transportation projects, and six air transportation projects, are aimed to improve or restore existing structures (Adchariyavanich, 1996c). A few examples include road connection between Thailand-Lao PDR and Vietnam, Yunnan province-Thailand railway, Southern Lao PDR-Cambodia navigation improvement project, and Cambodia airport improvement project.

The potential areas for further cooperation are numerous. In addition to sharing and managing natural

resources and facilitating the exchange of goods and services, there are also several other areas of joint development of public goods, including energy, telecommunications, and environment. According to Sato (1994), the distinction between social and economic cooperation is fading. It is increasingly realized that development is unsustainable if the social and economic dimensions are not in balance. As a result of the ADB's technical assistance program to identify areas and frameworks for cooperation in the Mekong Subregion, other areas besides trade and investment, have become priorities such as human resource development and environmental management.

An Avenue to Greater Mekong Subregional Economic Cooperation

There can be little question that economic cooperation is desirable, but it is often times easily said and more difficult to actually implement. It has been frequently said that the first step in economic cooperation is to strengthen the physical linkages--transportation and telecommunications--between GMS countries so as to open up a vast new market, a channel of commerce and prosperity. However, any physical infrastructure or linkage could be

meaningless if the governments or people concerned simply do not make full use of it.

Kwon, a program officer of the Asian Development Bank, was once quoted as saying that the Mekong River countries used to be enemies; how can one expect them to suddenly become friends? (Galvez, 1996). Mutual suspicions can be expected and are likely to affect or delay contact, coordination, and cooperation of any type. One such evidence is the long delay of the official opening of the Thai-Burmese (Myanmar) Friendship Bridge. The Friendship Bridge was first initiated in 1976 but not officially opened until 1997. Among the major causes of this long delay was simply suspicion (Kasem, 1997). Myanmar had reservation that Thai businessmen would take advantage of commercial possibilities once the bridge was opened. Doing away with distrusts and hard feelings is important in paving the way for further political development and economic cooperation.

It has been said that countries in the Subregion have a common original point, living beside each other with similarities and sharing a common fate of history. Now that they are now aligned into a region of peace, stability, cooperation and development, it seems they are quite short of understanding about their neighbors (Duong,

1995). Lack of knowledge and information as well as opportunity for discussion can be a source of mutual distrust, misconceptions, and political exaggerations.

Only until recently have studies or materials been seriously conducted or written about countries in the Subregion by local academics. Though still limited, they help promote mutual understanding and further communications. It is true that there are historical similarities between countries that are auspicious to cooperation. However, there are also negative aspects of one's neighbors depicted or illustrated in the history of each country. The strong negative feelings from historical events towards any one country are likely to more or less influence the present generation's attitudes. This is because people in any one country have been inculcated in the process of socialization and nationalism.

Chutintranond (1995) points out in his recent work that in Thai historical writings, the Burmese (Myanmar) are portrayed as the age old evil enemy of the Thai nation because of numerous past military invasions and threats. On top of that, as a part of the socializing and institutionalizing process, the Thai nationalist government often instilled in the minds of their youths that same image through textbooks for school and college students.

And this hostile image is still widely reflected in modern day plays, films, songs, literary works, or even cartoons (Niyomtham, 1997a). The image of Myanmar as an unethical rival thus still lingers on.

Surprisingly, Thais are not regarded in the same negative way by Myanmar, whose enemies have historically been instead the British and Japanese (Niyomtham, 1997a). This is because British ruled Myanmar from 1855 to 1937 and the Japanese occupied the country from 1942 to 1945. The country recently even changed its name from Burma to Myanmar simply because the former is an imposed English name. The name of cities, towns, and rivers bearing English pronunciation were also changed to signify their freeing themselves from past influence (Niyomtham, 1997b).

The relationship between Thailand and Lao PDR seems to be the most amiable. Their languages to a certain degree are mutually intelligible. Their people even think of each other as relatives. However, in the history of Lao PDR, Thai overran Vientiane, now its capital city, and took the Emerald Buddha image, the most revered national symbol, in 1778. Thai also burned, sacked, and razed Vientiane first in 1827 and again in 1830. This bitter part of Lao history, though far way back, is still found written in the most recent version of the booklet entitled Laos: Jewel of

the Mekong published by the National Tourism Authority of Lao PDR (1997). It can also be read from the 1992 UNICEF publication on Children and Women in the Lao People's Democratic Republic.

A typical response to a tourist's question these days on where the Emerald Buddha is, on a visit to Phra Keo (Emerald Buddha) temple in Vientiane, is simply, "Thais took him." Laos generally do believe this even though according to Thai history, the sculpture was just taken back to where it belonged. Now the Phra Keo temple in Bangkok, Thailand has the Emerald Buddha image. More recently, there was also a bloody border dispute between Lao PDR and Thailand, and the cease-fire was arranged in 1988 (UNICEF, 1992). Though it is hard to pinpoint whether the enmity can still be detected among the present generation of Lao people, what was written in history could possibly have a lingering effect. Lao people are likely to view their relatives on the other bank of the river negatively whenever there is a shadow of doubt.

In addition, there is a fear of being dominated. The Lao government is presently concerned about the influence in terms of cultural invasion of Thai media, due to the advancement of media technology. Thai television and radio programs, and also songs, movie stars, lifestyles, and

manufactured consumer goods that come with them, have gained increasing popularity among Lao people living along the border, especially in Vientiane, the capital city. It has been said that a Thai soap opera broadcast once kept Laotians from going out and delayed candlelight meditation on Buddhist lent (Chaipipat, 1996). For fear of the "social evil" that might come with the Thai media, the government also limits foreign songs, mostly Thai, played in public to thirty percent compared to seventy percent of Lao songs (Prompunthum, 1995).

There are also some improper expressions found in the press reports that have disturbed Laos. Specifically, one expression found in Thai media saying that Thai and Laotians are brothers, of which the connotation is of the two countries' kinship relation. However, the saying is often misinterpreted or misused by both Thais and Laos, bearing denigrating feelings, as Laos are Thais' younger brothers, implying the non-reciprocal relationship--Laos being dominated--a humiliating connotation showing racial and cultural bias (Ministry of Foreign Affairs, 1996). The protests of Laos and the attempts of some Thai persons to correct intentional or unintentional misdeeds led to a seminar in 1996 organized by Thai-Lao Association and the Thai Ministry of Foreign Affairs. It was well attended by

Thai and Lao representatives as well as the media people concerned. The essence of the seminar was to raise an awareness of sensitive issues regarding the language use that might affect the bilateral relationship being promoted.

In 1995, there was also a published research study focusing directly on the role of media in the Thai-Lao relationship (Theravit, Yucha, & Phromphanthum, 1995). It is pointed out in the study how a good relationship can be spoiled by unethical news reports or mistaken use of the language in the media. Unintentional use of ambiguous expressions would not have been taken seriously if there had not been the feeling of being dominated or taken advantage of on the Lao side.

One might argue that enmity is largely historical and seems relatively insignificant. Besides, countries in other parts of the world more or less were in bitter conflict with each other before. If historical hostility were to be taken seriously, all countries would turn their backs to each other. The poor GMS countries now have their economic development as their urgent national priority; there seems to be little or no use to bother with the past.

However, in the contemporary setting, the problems, resources, and perspectives of the six countries are often

divergent (Schwab, 1996). There are regional disparities, such as level of economic development, political regime, sizes of the countries, and population. Domestic problems confronting each country are also varied, ranging from ethnic or political conflict to struggle for political power and the instability of government. In addition, there are economic problems, though some are more common than others. These are lack of capital as well as communication and transportation systems, limited technical know how and low level of manpower with little education and training (Charoenmuang, 1998). By lacking knowledge and understanding, any move of one country would be interpreted as a way to dominate or to exploit another relatively less developed one.

According to the Asian Development Bank's publication in 1997, the gross domestic product (GDP) of the Subregion as a whole was about US\$235 billion in 1996. Thailand accounts for a large share of this (80 percent of the total GDP) and only 17 percent of the total population, yielding a per capita income of about US\$ 3,000. In the rest of the Subregion, per capita incomes range from US\$ 250 to about US\$ 400. The per capita income in Thailand was thus about ten times the average in much of the rest of the Subregion

before the 1997 economic crisis. Thailand is also in the process of upgrading to higher value-added industries.

The relatively higher stage of development of Thailand can be explained by the fact that the country has remained more politically stable as well as the market economy system, and because openness to trade and foreign investment has been in place for a long time. Economic development has been both positive and negative. A positive example is the long period of rapid growth; a negative example is the country has almost depleted its natural resources. As a result, there may be a fear among those countries in economic transition that a country with more experience in a market economy system would try to take advantage of them in the expansion of cross border trade and investment. The fact that natural resources, especially forest resources, still abound in Cambodia, Lao PDR, and Myanmar, but are almost depleted in Thailand, is well known by all. Thai businessmen are naturally eager to have access to those relatively untapped resources in the neighboring countries.

Therefore, the attempt Thailand has made to show that the country does not engage in subregional economic cooperation primarily and purely for economic gain, but for peace and order has been in vain (Panitchpakdi, 1996 quoted

in Manibhandu, Marukatat, Sawatsawang, & Tanoubhapol, 1996). There are enough reasons and suspicions that make other countries still think otherwise. The resource-rich countries may well be aware that their resource-starved neighbors may need them more than vice versa.

At the same time Thailand itself has openly shown the will to be a center for finance, transportation, trade and production in the Subregion. Before the economic crisis, there was even an ambitious thought of expanding the scope of Thai currency usage across borders (Ladavalaya, 1994). By taking a leading role in the Subregion, Thailand and also other countries outside the Subregion, not very surprisingly, can expect cynicism from their poorer neighboring countries.

The close economic and political relations between China and Myanmar have thus become a cause for concern in Thailand recently. China presently seeks the cheapest route to the sea for mineral and other exports from its landlocked poor southern province of Yunnan. In other words, the Chinese, in its "open door to the South" policy, have been keen to expand their economic interests southwards. Meanwhile Thailand seeks to find ways to minimize the impact of China's move (Adchariyavanich, 1996d).

In addition, even though all but one of the Mekong countries are in transition to market economy systems, countries like Lao PDR and Vietnam are still socialist states. Different concepts especially on sensitive issues can thus be expected between two such different types of political regimes.

In sum, there are both opportunities and constraints with regard to the economic cooperation in the GMS. On the brighter side, opportunities for cooperation abound in such areas as energy, transportation, tourism, and natural resources management. Moreover, socialist states in the Subregion have adopted "open-door" policies and are in transition to market economies. Besides, GMS countries are geographically contiguous.

However, there are also constraints, making cooperative efforts complicated. First, there is mutual distrust and risk in cooperation. Differences in economic strength might result in unfairness in cooperation. Secondly, there is a lack of capital, technology, management and trained personnel which is a hindrance not only to the economic progress but also for cooperative activities such as trade and investment. In a country like Myanmar, this is made worse by ethnic conflicts and political instability. Thirdly, the bilateral trading

activities in the Subregion, which is the basis for economic cooperation, though increasing, will need much more time to become well developed. This is because there is generally low productivity in some countries, and the products are oriented toward domestic markets. This works against the reciprocity in trade. In addition, there are differences in the political and economic institutions between GMS countries. On top of that, there exist external influences of developed countries as well as newly-emerged industrial countries. On the one hand, they provide the Subregion with foreign capital and technology. On the other hand, they add external constraints to its cooperation. For instance, the repressive practices and human rights abuses of the military in Myanmar has resulted in economic sanctions by some developed nations. There is also a hesitation by some corporations in doing business with or in Myanmar for fear of criticism. This may create additional obstacles for development of all the countries in the GMS (Shi, 1998).

Taking into consideration all of the above, it seems an appropriate approach would be a comparatively loose form, moving gradually from easier viable areas to more complex ones (Shi, 1998).

At this point in 1998, the approach to cooperation in GMS is not covered by any formal treaties. Besides, no attempt is being made to create the basis for any formal economic grouping such as ASEAN (Association of Southeast Asian Nations). Rather, the emphasis is on encouraging greater economic cooperation and coordination within the framework of existing relationships among countries (Asian Development Bank, 1996). In this regard, Serageldin (1993) contends that the aims of regional cooperation can be undertaken without worrying much about formal, all-encompassing or region-wide agreements. Removing obstacles day to day, issue by issue, will progressively build confidence and trust. In the long run, the larger objectives of broad-based regional cooperation can be translated into realities.

In addition, cooperation can and should be worked on at every level. Promoting cooperation should be considered the responsibility of all institutions, including academic institutions and professional associations. In this regard, all citizens in these six countries have roles to play because small daily acts of collegial partnership are seen as important as the breakthroughs of intergovernmental agreements (Peiji & Yugui, 1983; Serageldin, 1993).

Higher education cooperation seems to be an avenue available. First, there should be some common concerns among participating countries for regional cooperation to be successful (Schwab, 1996). An initial attempt should then lie in higher education cooperation because universities in the GMS countries face quite similar issues in their reform and renovation efforts. Secondly, regional cooperation should have significant added value compared to activities at the country level (Schwab, 1996). Higher education is then one of the areas to look at where transboundary exchanges or sharing of knowledge and information would lead to more progress. In other words, exchange of information and ideas enriches and promotes the growth of knowledge. Thirdly, knowledge, information, and facts would help promote mutual understanding. Cooperation may first involve educational institutions for the purpose of generating and communicating knowledge and information. Fourthly, language differences could be an obstacle to regional cooperation and communication. It may be then more viable to first focus on cooperation among higher education institutions, of which relatively more members are able to use a lingua franca of the region. Fifthly, regional cooperation is likely to be built up from activities in the area that would meet with the least

reservations (Schwab, 1996). Higher education cooperation should then be a good start because education is one of the areas that are relatively free of politics (Schwab, 1996).

Education has been viewed among authorities in the field to contribute significantly to the development of regional cooperation (Inotai, 1991). According to Serageldin (1993), educational cooperation can serve as the so-called "confidence building measures" in regional cooperative efforts. His idea is in line with Suwanwela's (1993) view on cooperation in higher education. Suwanwela argues that cooperation in higher education would meet with less suspicion and reservation than in any other area. It can, therefore, serve as a spearhead for cooperation on other fronts.

The importance of higher education is recognized both as an index of development and as a means for development. The high-level expertise and manpower that the countries need for their development efforts can be assured through the productivity and efficiency of their systems of higher education. In places like Hong Kong, Singapore, and Taiwan where there has been sustained economic growth, higher education is believed to be a key factor. On the other hand, in a GMS country like Cambodia, for example, long isolation and the deaths of many intellectuals as a result

of the Khmer Rouge's agrarian socialist revolution has prevented them from keeping abreast of international development. In Lao PDR, higher education is still very limited; many students have to study overseas because they cannot find training locally (Schwab, 1996). Thailand is in dire need to increase the number of engineering graduates to be able to regain its competitiveness. In the economic reform process of socialist countries, there is an urgent need to train and retrain professors and the development of new university programs in economics and management.

In sum, the GMS has an urgent need for human resource development. According to Glasser (1997), GMS lacks internal capital, and capital requirements must, in part, be met by outside resources. What attracts foreign investments is not only attractive returns on investments, political stability, reliable administrative structures and legal frameworks but also a well-educated and competitive workforce.

Despite the important role of higher education, experience shows that further significant increases in resource allocation in national budgets for higher education may not be possible in many developing countries. Any effort for the rebuilding or renovation of higher

education and linkage of higher education with development needs will thus have to be made within existing resource constraints (Ransom, Khoo, & Sevaratnam, 1993).

Developing universities through a regional cooperative approach makes it possible for participating countries to learn from one another's experience and to share resources. By focusing on cooperative problem-solving, developing complementary areas, and pooling of experiences and resources, university development cooperation helps to meet the imperatives of development (Raghavan, 1995). Growth and development will then provide an opportunity for further economic and political cooperation, and such cooperation should in turn reinforce development. In other words, as regions become more integrated economically, and in political spirit, the scope for strengthening existing links increases (Chidey, Chikamba, Pangweni, & Tsikirayi, 1986). In addition to the long term mutual regard and cooperation resulting from cooperation in higher education, the region will also benefit from the immediate educational gains (Patel, 1993). In sum, higher education as one major area of human resource development can be considered both in terms of its being a contributor to and a beneficiary of regional cooperation (Smallwood & Maliyamkono, 1996).

University development cooperation among developing countries deserves even more attention at present. The developed and developing worlds are increasingly growing apart; the "knowledge gap" is growing. Technological innovations and new production processes are enforcing that knowledge gap. Developing countries are thus finding it more difficult to educate the youth, and to create and adapt available knowledge to the new environment.

It is likely that universities in developing countries will continue to be patterned after western universities (Altbach & Selvaratnam, 1989). The adaptation of universities, according to Ashby (1966), to non-western societies is necessary; otherwise the institutions are likely to fail in their social function of helping the development of their countries. In other words, they are likely to remain unassimilated and separated from the people.

Cooperation with universities elsewhere can be useful, but importing solutions reached elsewhere is sometimes not a viable or desirable course. Institutions in developing countries themselves best know their situations and the needs of their society. The other participating countries in the region may benefit from already adapted or evolved technology received by another. Even though that country

may not be the original source of technology or knowledge, the adapted technology or knowledge could be more appropriate and relevant to their local conditions.

Rather surprisingly, so far there have been only a few opportunities for interaction and cooperation on a broad base among the universities and scholars of developing countries (Blumenthal, Goodwin, Smith, & Teichler, 1996). Existing interaction is mainly between the universities of highly developed countries and some of the institutions in their developing counterparts. In many cases, the relationship is one of looking outwards for guidance and training. Developing countries normally look overseas for academic partners, turning their backs on their immediate neighboring countries.

From the above, it has become quite clear how university development cooperation is necessary and how the cooperation itself could help promote regional cooperation. The internationalization and regionalization of universities, expanding their missions across borders, is in itself challenging. It is even more so when one considers that it is one of the important possible avenues for the development of regional cooperation. The question is whether this will hold true in the Greater Mekong Subregion.

Statement of the Problem

There can be little question that university development cooperation in the GMS is desirable. However, potential is often relatively easy to recognize, but realizing it may be another matter. The problems facing development are sometimes simply as enormous as the desired advantages.

It has all long been known that exchange of information and ideas contributes to the strength and growth of knowledge. Nowadays we have seen more and more cross-border studies that involve movements of people and networks of institutions as well as individuals. Thanks to recent advances in telecommunication, transportation, and information technologies, collaboration is even more viable. In many countries, developed and developing alike, we have seen more or less academics and researchers in higher education institutions that have keen interest in internationalization. They reach out for more extensive academic research, scholarly networks, international or regional meetings and conferences, as well as visits and exchanges. Their activities have led to cross-cultural understanding and appreciation (Skilbeck, 1994). However, not all academics, researchers, and students have made

efforts, been inspired, found themselves opportunities, or been given opportunities to do as such.

It is true that the government of each country plays a significant role in university cooperation. Its participation helps, for example, provide policy frameworks, facilitate staff and student mobility, and provide financial incentives. Nonetheless, internationalizing of higher education whether that be in terms of research consortia, cooperative research, student and faculty exchanges, or overseas study programs, can be achieved without the commitment and involvement of the education profession itself. It depends largely on the initiatives of individual researchers, scholars, and teachers and of individual institutions. It is the educators themselves and those being educated who have to perceive the value and make sustained efforts to bring the government policies to life or to make programs work (Skilbeck, 1994). In the GMS context, it is likely that this condition will hold true. Even if coercion by the governments can be expected, only voluntary effort would lead to sustainable and successful higher education cooperation.

In addition to the participation of governments and the education profession, there are supposed to be "rules

of the game"--agreements, principles, and procedures--if all, not merely some members, are to benefit in the cooperation (Skilbeck, 1994). It is not surprising that problems and obstacles can be expected even in the area of education. First, higher education in the GMS countries is not at the same stage of development; the question then is how meaningful the term cooperation or collaboration would be in this context in terms of reciprocity--equalities in partnership. Secondly, different political regimes might be a matter of critical importance in the GMS. There is an example in sub-Saharan Africa where the success of a regional approach to educational development depends to a large extent on the well-developed political will to pursue a regional cooperation (Smallwood & Maliyamkono, 1996). The flow of people, capital and resources, as well as information in certain countries may not be as free as can be expected in a democratic society.

Thirdly, while interinstitutional cooperation is not new, neither is it especially common, nor is its dynamics yet very well understood. While in theory its potential is great--to eliminate unnecessary duplication, pool resources into more effective combinations, provide new and expanded services, and so on--in practice the benefits achieved may fall short of the initial promise. With the sharing of

available resources clearly becoming more of an educational imperative, the need to understand the dynamics of interinstitutional cooperation then has become increasingly important.

In the past, cooperation was mostly between the GMS countries and their developed counterparts, and largely was in terms of aid reception. Thailand, a traditional recipient of assistance, recently has begun to also take a role or be in the position to provide assistance to its neighbors (Hanchanlath, 1994). Cooperation among developing countries themselves would definitely entail a changing role because each country will have to play both the roles of a recipient and that of a provider. There should be mechanisms and trained support staff ready to facilitate and help solve disputes, if any, arising from university cooperation.

Last but not least, there have been quite a few ongoing cooperative activities among GMS countries. There appears to be future benefit from strengthening and expanding the scope of the existing activities. However, the availability of resources would necessarily preclude addressing all aspects or areas of higher education. The deliberations should thus concentrate on priorities and

specific projects, especially during the economic crisis. Yet these need to be identified and agreed upon first.

Developing universities either at a country level or through a regional cooperative approach poses an important, perhaps the most important question; that is, where to get the money? The task involves both strengthening existing institutions with existing resources and establishing new institutions responsive to emerging and future needs, as well as new challenges in a changing environment. There are significant financial and resource constraints impeding the development of the educational and training systems in all GMS countries. A subregional network approach, which links institutions in the participating countries, tends to be less costly compared to some others, for example, building a regional focus institution. However, it still requires both physical and human capital for the establishment and maintenance.

The above are some of the problems that can be expected and they should be made known to any one involved. Certainly, some are discouraging; however, the awareness should help those concerned avoid past mistakes and proceed more confidently and successfully. GMS cooperation is still a young and activity-driven program. GMS university development cooperation is not much different. Even

though, at present, connections between individuals and higher education institutions in GMS have been made, the perception of those who have been involved has not yet been made known. The problems and satisfaction experienced is mostly untold. The situation, on the surface, might not do any harm to university development cooperation, but it will not do any good to future endeavors either.

There have so far been a few meetings--seminars, workshops, and conferences, focusing on the GMS university development cooperation. Others were more concerned about GMS economic cooperation, the scope of some was even limited to only four of the six GMS countries. Most of them were held in Thailand and aimed at providing forums for people concerned to share information and viewpoints, discussing the possibilities or activities GMS countries can do together.

The typical format of those meetings has been keynote addresses that stress and praise the role of universities in GMS development and the endeavors put forward. They are then followed by country reports of higher education or institutional development and group discussions. The meetings are often attended by representatives from each GMS country and from some relevant international organizations. It should be noted that attendance of GMS

representatives at the meetings is usually sponsored either by the host institutions or international organizations. This is because the travelling expenses are high for attendants who are government officials. The result then is only a limited number of representatives from non-host countries attending.

First and foremost among those meetings is the seminar on "The Role of Universities in the Development of the Mekong River Basin," organized by Khon Kaen University in Thailand and SEAMEO Regional Center for Higher Education and Development with the support of SEAMES and UNDP in 1995. It is notable that at that time the term GMS was not used in the title of the meeting. This typical meeting was well attended by the representatives from GMS countries and donor agencies as well as international organizations. The results of the meeting were some recommendations for future collaborative programs. Their recommendations include the establishment of a database on member universities for the development of the Mekong River basin, the development of economics and management curricula, university networking on agricultural education and research, and cooperation in prevention and control of water-borne diseases and HIV/AIDS.

Notably, one of the recommendations has really been implemented, resulting in a series of workshops for GMS economics educators and the establishment of the Mekong Institute, a Thai-New Zealand joint sponsored institution at Khon Kaen University. The objective of establishing the Institute is to foster regional cooperation, and, in particular, to train GMS personnel to serve better the recently adopted market-oriented economic system of the countries.

In one of the keynote addresses, it is interesting to note that the major idea is to establish the ASEAN University Network (AUN). This will encompass universities in the original six ASEAN member countries, Cambodia, Vietnam, as well as Lao PDR (the latter two have recently become the new ASEAN members) with the omission of China and Myanmar (SEAMEO RIHED, 1995). The record of the meeting does not directly indicate problems or concerns that can be expected in the university cooperation. In essence, the initiative was simply stressed and highly commended throughout.

Speeches, addresses, and papers delivered or presented at various meetings mostly reflected the personal view of experts in the field of higher education on the significant role of universities as well as how they can ideally go

about it. Though their views should be taken as valid, much of what needed to be said in the statements sometimes is left out. One of the reasons might be that the etiquette of the meetings and the honor that the host institution is supposed to be given did not allow direct criticisms or hard facts that might otherwise cause embarrassment.

There exist also two separate unpublished evaluation research studies. The studies, examining the performance of the Thai-Lao and Thai-Vietnam technical cooperation activities, were commissioned by the Thai Department of Technical and Economic Cooperation (DTEC) in May and September 1997 respectively (Mahidol University, 1997; Thailand Development Research Institute, 1997). As many Thai technical cooperation programs have involved Thai higher education institutions, many points of concern raised in the evaluation report are of interest. The evaluation teams point out the strengths and weaknesses of certain programs as well as causes of problems and then offer some suggestions. However, these studies' main aim was to look into the impact of DTEC technical cooperation programs, and only three out of six Mekong countries were involved.

Relevant research in the past, including unpublished doctoral dissertations and master theses, has focused on economic or political dimensions of regional cooperation. Attention has scarcely been given to university development through cooperation in the developing region, as well as to what role higher education institutions can play in the overall cooperation. The most recent thesis on the Mekong River basin (Inthavanh, 1996), for example, looks at the legal issues of cooperation in utilizing and conserving the water of the river itself.

The major themes that emerge from above are university development cooperation requires both the participation and the keen interest of the government and the education profession. On top of that, for the effort to be successful, problems and successes that have been encountered and can be expected should be made known. Suggestions in terms of viable options, approaches, and needs as felt by informed persons who are directly involved in policy making and implementation are necessary.

Research Questions

The purpose of this study is then to understand the role of universities in the development of Greater Mekong Subregional Economic Cooperation as perceived by GMS university people who have been involved in cooperation for

GMS university development. In order to achieve the purpose of this study, the answers to the following research questions are sought:

Question 1: What do university people think about university development through a regional cooperative approach?

Question 2: What role do university people think higher education has in the development of Greater Mekong Subregional Economic Cooperation?

Question 3: How do university people perceive past and present cooperation for GMS university development?

Question 4: What are some of the possibilities, given the present situation, and chances in the future for GMS university development cooperation?

Significance of the Study

The GMS initiative is pragmatic, activity-driven, and resource-oriented (Pante, 1997). The cooperative movement in Higher education has begun to take root and spread. The success and failure of efforts made at present then will certainly shape any endeavor in the future. The perceptions, lessons learned, and past experiences of those who have been involved will help serve as an orientation for the newcomers as the wider community has begun to take notice. In addition, much of what has been done so far

will also serve as a foundation for future activity. As mentioned earlier, the GMS is also known as "East Asia's Last Frontier." Whereas pioneers normally have a keen interest in reaching out first and do not mind taking risks, there are also other people whose confidence and motivation greatly depend on past experience of the pioneers. The future of the GMS university development cooperation relies on both groups of people.

The personal connections or linkages made now, for example, may develop into institutional linkages in the future. Also, a short-term training may be extended further into a diploma or degree program. At the same time regional conferences or seminars that have less impact but are costly might be lessened or fade away in the future. In this time of growing interest in GMS on the one hand and searching for the avenues to further promote the development of the GMS economic cooperation on the other, the significance of increasing understanding of the perception of those who have been involved is apparent. As GMS is not a formal grouping such as ASEAN, and it is not covered by any formal treaties, it may be more responsive to ideas and feedback from informed persons.

This study is intended to provide insight into the perceptions of university people, who have been involved in

GMS university cooperative activities, regarding the role universities have in the development of Greater Mekong Subregional Economic Cooperation. The study is intended to provide useful information on the topic for university administrators and academics, government officials, and educational program officers in international organizations as well as donor agencies.

The study is significant on two levels. Basically, the study helps create more interest in the area among researchers, educators, policy makers, and donors in both the public and private sectors to promote more research into either the same or other related issues. It also helps researchers discover areas of possible further research. Besides, this study may prove useful to some extent to any similar initiative in any other region of developing countries in the future. Thus, this study not only serves its own purposes but may also yield benefit to similar efforts elsewhere.

CHAPTER III

LITERATURE REVIEW

To better understand the initiative in Greater Mekong Subregional Economic Cooperation and the role of universities in the development of the GMS, the literature review in this chapter first examines theoretical frameworks for regional cooperation with an emphasis on developing country regional grouping. The second part is a review of related studies on higher education cooperation and on the role of universities in regional cooperation.

Regional Cooperation

The end of the Cold War, as symbolized by the dissolution of the Soviet system and the breaking up of the Berlin Wall, has resulted in a changing world environment. The political rivalry and ideological conflict between capitalism and communism of the two super powers that had extracted enormous resources and reduced their economic strength has become less relevant and is no longer the critical factor shaping the world order. Rather, economic liberalization is increasingly recognized as the major driving force of the new-world order. In other words, the threatening atmosphere of the Cold War is diminishing and being replaced instead by more acute economic or trade

competition in world markets (Kegley, Jr. & Wittkopf, 1997; Wongtrangan, 1994).

Various countries, without concern for the need to have political allies as was the case before, are then taking active measures to readjust their development strategies or seek new ones. They are either to maintain the economic growth and standards of living as is the case in developed countries or to accelerate development and economic growth in the developing ones. The post-Cold War era then has witnessed regionalism, the development of regional groupings for economic cooperation, as a development strategy, which again becomes evident throughout the world, paralleling globalism and nationalism (Ladavalya, 1994; Mytelka, 1997; Wongtrangan, 1994). Among such groupings are, for instance, the European Union (EU), the North American Free Trade Area (NAFTA), the Asia Pacific Economic Cooperation (APEC), and the ASEAN (Association of Southeast Asian Nations) Free Trade Area (AFTA). This emergence of several cooperative schemes reflects the need worldwide to bring greater economic benefits to one's society.

The trend toward regionalism can be seen in both developed and developing regions. However, policymakers in the developing countries appear to have a keen interest in

regional organizations in particular. First, there are more and more problems facing their societies such as environmental concerns that are transboundary in nature and cannot be properly solved at a national level. The most recent example was the devastating forest fire in Indonesia, in 1997, of which the smog engulfed the sky and threatened several of its neighboring countries.

Secondly, with the recent advent of globalization of world economies and the formation of powerful regional economic and trading blocs of the industrialized countries, intensified competition has resulted. Developing countries are forced to work out common positions and to join one of the influential groups in order to minimize economic losses and to avoid marginalization in the new economic structure of the world (Inotai, 1991; Serageldin, 1993). Recent years thus have witnessed even socialist countries like Vietnam become a new member of ASEAN. Its membership marks particularly also the changing world environment in the post-Cold War era since one of the underlying reasons for the formation of ASEAN several years ago was the fear of Communism, especially Vietnam (Tan, 1996). Similarly, Cambodia, Lao PDR, Myanmar, Vietnam, and Yunnan Province of China together with Thailand are now establishing another

grouping for economic cooperation in spite of their different political ideologies.

The Definition and the Frameworks

Intergovernmental regional cooperation is viewed as a process or a status whereby groups of countries are bound together with common interests in given issues and agree to cooperate within an agreed framework of policies and institutions (Bennett, 1991; Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific (ESCAP), 1997). The concept covers a full range of activities, encompassing the coordination of economic policies, regional security, human rights, education, health, research and technology, as well as natural resource management. However, the term takes on a predominantly economic slant in the literature (Lavergne, 1997) and is often used generically in reference to economic cooperation.

Usually, the grouping comprises member countries or parts of them that are geographically contiguous. This is because regional arrangements are motivated by the desire to reap the economic benefits gained from complementarities and economies of scale from an enlarged market across a wider geographical space. The contiguity is advantageous in terms of savings in transport and transaction costs as well as the chance of better understanding based on the

relative closeness of cultures (ESCAP, 1997). Nonetheless, the geographical proximity or natural linkage is not a single critical factor, even though it helps determine the regional character of many organizations. There have been growing economic ties among countries that are not immediate neighbors.

Regional cooperation and regional integration sometimes appear to be used as synonyms in the literature. However, there is a distinction. Regional integration is generally more demanding and more constraining, involving not only cooperation among countries but also the sharing of sovereignty (Berg, 1991). It thus demands an important degree of commitment from all participating countries. According to Langhammer and Hiemenz (1990), the process is aimed at abolishing discrimination between local and foreign goods, services, and factors. On the other hand, regional cooperation is much more limited in scope. The approach is relatively flexible and involves voluntary efforts at collaboration among the member countries in an ad hoc fashion and in areas of common interest (Berg, 1991). In this connection, the latter is thus considered relatively easier to achieve especially among developing countries, some of which are new independent states still struggling with nationalism.

Whereas the trend towards regionalism is gaining momentum in the post Cold War era, the phenomenon is not new. As early as the 1960s, developing regional country groupings were once a major policy issue. However, it fell far short of initial expectations, partly because of low-economic levels and different political and economic policy orientations of member countries. In addition, from the mid 1970s on, adverse changes in the world economy further negatively affected the environment for regional efforts (Inotai, 1991). The debt crisis of many developing countries in the 1980s and the urgent need to cope with it also constrained cooperation among them (Kamibepu, 1995).

However, despite negative experiences, new approaches to regional cooperation, according to Inotai (1991), started to reemerge in the 1990s partly due to changing economic policies and adjustment requirements in response to the debt crisis. Stabilization and adjustment policies have created more open, export-oriented, liberal and competitive economies. Higher exports generate higher growth and regional demand. Also, industrial restructuring improves competitiveness and attracts international capital as well as technology. At the same time, a number of developing countries are moving towards more democratic regimes. These changes together with the external pressure

as mentioned earlier bring more favorable prospects for the success and foster the comeback of the idea of regional cooperation in the developing regions (Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD), 1995).

Regional economic cooperation is not an approach exclusive to developing countries, as a response to the need to loosen themselves from their economic dependency on developed countries. The phenomenon actually first began in Europe when the Benelux countries, France, Italy, and Germany signed the Treaty of Paris establishing the European Coal and Steel Community (ECSC) to facilitate a common market for coal and steel in 1952. It was then followed by the Treaty of Rome which created the European Economic Community (EEC) in 1958, of which the outgrowth is the European Union (EU) (Hufbauer & Melani, 1996). The former EEC or the present EU has been a success and has served as a model for other similar experiments elsewhere.

There have been various theories that help explain motivations for or predict regionalism. Two of the major theories are communications theory and functionalism. It should be noted that as they were developed in the past decades, their inability and inadequacy can be expected at present (Haas, 1975). Furthermore, when they were applied to settings different from what they were originally

intended for, the result tended to be the opposite. Haas (1975) also points out that theories tend to overlook the importance of events and factors external to the region or regions under examination.

Communications theory as developed by Deutsch (1957) takes a bottom-up approach in terms of the development of a sense of community in explaining the integration process or the community building. In the process, changes in the political attitudes and behavior of individuals, or the development of a "we-feeling," are necessary. In essence, the objective to develop a community is to prevent conflict and war and thereby enhance the prospect of peace and prosperity among nation-states.

As the theory is defined, the success of integration can be measured empirically in terms of frequency and nature of border-crossing communications. These include mail flows, people to people contact, electronic media, student travel, tourism, and intra-regional trade. However, the attempt to quantitatively explain the regional integration in Western Europe led to criticism of the inadequacy of the theory (Haas, 1968). This is because the low level of transactions among the member countries found at that time could not explain the emergence and the development of the ECSC. Nonetheless, as the world today

becomes more and more integrated socially and economically, and as interdependence grows, Deutsch's idea of the formation of community holds much promise in today's revival of regionalism.

Functionalism, as developed by Mitrany (1946; 1975), rests upon the assumption that the functioning capacity of a nation state is not enough to satisfy the welfare needs of its people in today's interdependent world. There are common international economic and social problems that need to be solved. Thus, regional organizations are created to deal with them and to pool up or integrate resources for national development. The functionalist approach looks at regional cooperation as a process rather than as an end in itself. It is an incremental process and will gradually cover other areas. Functionalism presupposes cooperation in selected non-controversial or technical areas and is expected to result in spill over effects in other areas including political and strategic. In other words, as the role of regional organizations expand, in the long run nation-states will loosen their grips of sovereignty. Countries then may opt for total economic integration with a supranational authority.

However, this approach may seem to be an oversimplification in the sense that it ignores the

important role of politics in the cooperation process. Political factors may create obstacles to cooperation in discrete and non-controversial areas right from the start. In Western Europe itself, the process of integration has been influenced by political factors and pressures throughout (Pentland, 1973). The criticism resulted in another related theory that is neo-functionalisms as a revision of the former. In this theory, the role of external factors, including national and regional elites as well as pressure groups, are also considered (Haas, 1964).

In real life, however, as pointed out by Haas (1975), the theoretical constructs would hardly be followed as prototypes in regional cooperation arrangements. Regional cooperation is a formal and intergovernmental affair (Bennett, 1984), and the extent to which there can be people to people cooperation, at least initially, is determined by the national governments. But the fact remains that intergovernmental initiatives cannot go beyond a certain limit. Regional cooperation cannot be substantially meaningful if the individuals and agencies at the unofficial level do not cooperate and interact with their counterparts across the borders (Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development, 1995).

It seems that there is no single charted course for the process of regional cooperation. Each cooperation grouping is likely to go through a series of unique experiences with its own dynamics among the socio-economic and political surroundings of the region. However, those early starters in cooperative efforts may gain certain experiences that may have some relevance and learning value for the late starters. That is to say, the latter can choose to try the successful directions and avoid pitfalls that the former might have encountered.

Regional Cooperation among Developing Countries

The theories discussed above are more concerned with the success or failure of integration efforts in Western Europe. Many of the preconditions, such as diversified production patterns among member countries and a long history of trade and capital flows as well as efficient infrastructure, are rarely present among a group of developing countries. Their aggregate national income is modest and collective markets are small (Inotai, 1991). On top of the preoccupation with their own domestic problems, developing countries may not want to compromise national sovereignty when coordinating plans with their neighbors. In addition, their dependent ties with developed countries or past colonizers may keep them from cooperating with each

other. This is understandable since Third World countries are more or less dependent on the industrialized nations for capital, markets, and technology (Young, 1981).

Nonetheless, amid all the shortcomings, there exist quite a few regional groupings of developing countries around the world. Among these are the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN), coming into existence as early as 1967, the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS), established in 1975, the Latin American Integration Association, founded in 1980, and, more recently, in 1985, the South Asian Association for Regional Cooperation (SAARC) (Bennett, 1991). It is notable though that the approach taken has been more flexible and less intensive, focusing modestly more on regional cooperation not integration, which seems to be too ideal even among developed countries. In addition, the characters of these groups are more outward-looking, in part, due to the concern for their vulnerability and various degrees of economic dependence. Recent years have thus witnessed such an arrangement between Asian and European countries, marked by the ASEM (Asia-Europe meeting) and the ASEAN-EU Dialogue Forum in 1996 (Thuyen, 1996).

Regional cooperation has been one of the efforts of developing countries to increase their economic strength

and to strengthen their negotiating position in the global economy (Lazlo, Kurtzman, & Bhattacharya, 1981; Peiji & Yugui, 1983). The most recent economic crisis in Southeast Asia in 1997 appears to stress further the significance of such an effort. Duong (1998) states that it is time that ASEAN countries forge closer economic cooperation to get over financial turmoil.

The sharply depreciating value of the currencies in the region, for example, has resulted in a higher cost of imports. This in turn raises the cost of production and decreases the competitiveness of the export sectors, which otherwise is supposed to benefit from the relatively cheaper prices of the goods. It has been suggested that if high-cost imports are brought in from the neighboring countries at lower transport and tax costs, then costs of production at home will be reduced. This is because all the imported components that go into their own manufactured products will be bought more cheaply. In addition, the scales of production will get a boost and the economies of scale in domestic production will bring significant improvement if goods are also in demand from their neighbors (Raghavan, 1995).

Over the past years, there have also been some other motives for regional cooperation among developing

countries. According to York (1993), the push factor for the creation of regional agreements in Latin America and sub-Saharan Africa was the need to increase market access and to promote the gains from trade occurring as a result of specialization and rationalization of the industrial structure within the region. In the case of ASEAN, there was a mutual concern for regional security, due to the communist threat at that time. For the ANDEAN group, comprising Bolivia, Colombia, Ecuador, Peru, and Venezuela, regional cooperation is a means for individual development. These examples show that there are both political and economic motivations for cooperation to overcome both intra- and extra-regional problems.

Langhammer and Hiemenz (1990) also point out that there are economic and non-economic benefits for cooperative efforts. According to their view, what can be expected are, for example, enlarging the size of the domestic market achieving economies of scale, and enhancing industrialization. Regarding the latter, they remark, when domestic markets prove to be too small to allow efficient import substitution as the starting point of industrialization, the formation of a regional market is seen as a way out. Economic benefits include also the joint production of public goods and protection against

adverse developments in world markets, for example, in terms of erratic price fluctuations. On the other hand, regional cooperation is beneficial as a means to improve collective bargaining power of the group in international negotiations. And similar to the above, regional cooperation is seen as a means of consensus building on regional political and security issues.

Many of the political and economic motivations listed above have a sound basis in theory and are supported by some experiences in not only developing, but also developed countries. However, some of them are less relevant in light of the current realities of the global economy. For instance, developing countries rarely have had enough market power to influence the terms of trade or to reduce their susceptibility to external pressures through regional cooperation efforts alone. Nevertheless, the attempts to achieve political objectives as was the case of ASEAN or longer term trade policy goals through regionalism may be helpful in creating like-minded and free trade oriented alliances among developing countries in the group (York, 1993).

The perceived need for cooperation is thus only the preliminary step in the process. The existing conditions of any grouping may either work for or against the

developing of an economic association. Tang and Thant (1994) point out four general factors for the success of regional cooperation as follows:

1. There should be economic complementarity within a region. This complementarity derives from the member countries' different stages of economic development or from the difference in factor endowments. For instance, some of the participating nations may have strong industry sectors, well-developed financial markets, fairly advanced infrastructure facilities and well-trained labor forces. However, their limited supply of unskilled labor and the scarcity of land may have pushed up labor costs and property prices. This reduces the competitiveness of their economies in the world market. In contrast, neighboring areas that lack capital and managerial skills may have an ample supply of both labor and land. Thus, a redistribution of labor intensive industries from the well-developed areas to relatively less developed areas would be mutually beneficial. Similarly, there should be reciprocity in trade between participating countries, and only when reciprocity is greater than competition, then regional cooperation becomes more attractive than the course of normal relationships without cooperation.

2. There should be similarities in language and cultural background that often prevail between geographically proximate areas, conducive to better understanding and closer business relationships. Geographical proximity also helps minimize transportation and communication costs and hence, is considered one compelling factor.

3. There should be political commitment on the parts of the governments involved and policy coordination among the participating countries. At the national level, appropriate policies must be strongly supported and implemented by both central and local governments. In particular, all member countries should adopt an "open-door" policy and similar economic structure and operation so that cooperation in commerce and trade affairs can be easily coordinated. Besides, there should be common interest in international affairs and common grounds in multilateral negotiations. This will be further enhanced if there is also attention and support from the international community, especially donor agencies and international organizations that view the regional cooperative approach for national development a cost-effective strategy.

4. There should also be an infrastructure development program. For example, water and power supply, roads and navigation lines opened to traffic, and telecommunications opened to business. In this regard, a "soft" infrastructure is no less important. It includes efficient organization coordinating bodies and effective policies that facilitate all types of cooperation and give "lives" to the physical infrastructure.

On the other hand, according to Laszlo, Kurtzman, and Bhattacharya (1981), there are obstacles that act against the effective realization of regional efforts:

1. Narrow and short-sighted forms of nationalism have proved to be unfavorable to development in conditions of interdependence.

2. Self-centered economic thinking has given rise to the fear that assisting other countries will restrict national development.

3. Disparities in size and population has given rise to the worry that the larger regional members will use their potential power, or superior population size, to coerce the smaller countries into agreements.

4. Cultural chauvinism has aggravated the above fears and has made implementation of regional agreements ineffective.

5. Dependency on relationships with more industrial nations has produced a reluctance in developing countries to evolve regional relationships for fear of damaging their unwelcome but necessary North-South ties.

It is not surprising, therefore, why regional cooperation is most developed in Western Europe where clusters of states possess strong feelings of regional identity, based on geography and cultural affinities. On the other hand, a somewhat weaker sense of regional identity is found in the South and Southeast Asia as well as Africa. The latter regions face numerous barriers. Natural barriers caused by languages, for example, are problems faced by many countries in sub-Saharan Africa where a great number of vernacular languages are used. Besides, the majority of developing countries are still in the process of finding their national identity. A search for identity in African and Asian countries, where multiracial and multitribal societies exist, can constitute obstacles to regional cooperation. Even when natural and political barriers are not critical, economic barriers--such as income differences--can also lead to failures. Intra-regional trade imbalances can be speculated between low-income countries and the relatively more advanced partner countries. Under such conditions, countries in

certain regions will find it much more difficult to establish a platform for regional cooperation.

As mentioned above, there are quite a few well-established regional groupings encompassing more than 70 countries. They include, for example, Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS), West African Economic Community (CEAO), the Mano River Union (MRU), Eastern and Southern African Preferential Trade Area (PTA), Caribbean Common Market (CARICOM), Central American Common market (CACM), Latin American Integration Association (LAIA), the Andean Group, and Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN) (United Nations, 1996).

In the following section, ASEAN, one of the regional groupings in East Asia, will be discussed as an example of regional cooperation. ASEAN is chosen because of its longevity, stability, and external recognition. Besides, ASEAN is more relevant to the new grouping of the Mekong River countries than other associations. Three of the GMS countries, namely the Lao PDR, Myanmar, and Vietnam, in addition to Thailand, one of ASEAN's founding members, have already entered into the Association. In addition, as of 1998, after the July election, it is expected that Cambodia will follow soon.

The association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN) was founded in 1967 by five countries: Indonesia, Malaysia, the Philippines, Singapore, and Thailand. Brunei Darussalam joined the Association in 1984. It was born amidst underdevelopment, instability, inter-state conflict, and states of long colonial exploitation. The member countries have little in common apart from climate, natural resources, and similar political ideology. In addition to diversity in language, religion, and ethnic identity, these nations are isolated from each other politically and economically (Tan, 1996).

The declaration instituting ASEAN was signed with the objective of promoting the economic, social, and cultural development of the region through cooperative programs. Its aim is also to safeguard the political and economic stability of the region and to serve as a forum for the resolution of intra-regional differences (United Nations, 1995). The founding treaty is based on the spirit of equality and partnership and for the purpose of promoting peace, progress, and prosperity.

Contrary to what many believe, it is not an association geared solely to achieving freer regional trade or an economic union. Rather, its motivations are to increase members' political terms of trade in international

affairs, to help solve intra-and extra-regional problems of mutual concern, and to provide security in the region (York, 1993). In other words, ASEAN was established in order to protect member countries from foreign military threat and stabilize a geographic area that was important for ASEAN security. Tunku Abdul Rahman of Malaysia, the first leader who publicly suggested the reason behind the formation of ASEAN, stated that the regional cooperation would be the best means to meet the threats from the North (the People's Republic of China) and to assure their own stability (Suriyamongkol, 1980).

Economic cooperation within the group started only after 1976. In 1976, at the Bali Summit meeting attended by the ASEAN heads of state, the ASEAN Concord was signed. The ASEAN Concord focused on four major areas of regional cooperation. First, member countries agreed to allow each other preferential access to their markets and, in critical times, for food and energy. Secondly, member countries are to establish large-scale regional industrial projects, in particular, those that will contribute to the basic needs of the region and those that will utilize local raw materials. Thirdly, member countries are to take a unified stand in approaching the international community (York, 1993).

In the years that followed, however, intra-ASEAN trade has remained low and industrial cooperation has not been successful. The group has thus far not realized the benefits from economic cooperation which they had speculated (Indorf, 1984). More recently, at the summit meeting of ASEAN heads of state in 1992, the six countries agreed to establish ASEAN Free Trade Area (AFTA) by the year 2000. The objective is to lay the foundation for the creation of a single ASEAN market. The single ASEAN market concept is motivated, in part, by the perceived pressures coming principally from OECD (Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development) countries to form regional arrangements (York, 1993).

Indorf (1984) comments that despite ASEAN's undeniable success in international forums, intra-regional progress has stagnated. In other words, the intra-organizational performance has not kept pace with external recognition. He further states that one major aspect that appears to inhibit regional cooperation in Southeast Asia is the bilateral conflict among member states of ASEAN. His premise is that productive bilateral relations are the foundation on which broader regional efforts are built. Unwillingness to compromise on one controversial issue can indicate an inclination to be less accommodating on other

issues. Though ASEAN has been successful in overcoming some of the bilateral crises, this constraints still remains one of the strongest impediments to regional cooperation in Southeast Asia today.

In addition, it has been said that member states have cooperated primarily not for regional development but basically for national development (Indorf, 1984). It is this economic nationalism, along with diverse economic interests, that works against the regionalism in ASEAN. Besides, the smallest member of ASEAN, Singapore, is the most economically advanced, while Indonesia, the largest and politically most influential country, is comparatively less developed economically. Such disparity of economic development has led member countries to search for national solutions to problems (Indorf, 1984). Lastly, the economic structures of the ASEAN countries, excluding Singapore, are basically similar. They are competitive rather than complementary with each other. This lack of complementarity has probably contributed to their outward orientation and the discouragement of efforts to forge closer economic cooperation among themselves. These three major obstacles explain well the lack of progress in economic cooperation.

However, trade and industrial cooperation are not the only areas of cooperation. The cooperation also encompasses finance and banking; food, agriculture, and forestry; transportation and communication; and minerals and energy. Tourism, science and technology, drug abuse, culture and information, and human resource development are also included. Some of these latter areas of cooperation have significantly expanded, and a number of projects have been developed and are completed.

ASEAN cooperation in human resource development, in particular, has been successful, and it is one of the promising spheres of cooperation. There have been numerous exchange programs, joint research projects, and seminars based on the principle of intra-regional sharing of expertise and resources for the maximum benefit of the region as a whole (Srisa-An, 1996).

According to Luhulima (1988), even though human resource development (HRD) has been an integral part of the national development plans of each ASEAN member country since the middle of the 1970s, it was in the beginning of the 1980s that it became a major area in ASEAN cooperation. ASEAN's regional HRD program was essentially a Japanese initiative. Because the development of human resources

itself needs capital input, the Japanese government stepped in to finance such a project on a regional scale.

The fields of development the Japanese proposed were essentially rural and agricultural development, energy resources development, and promotion of small and medium industries. With Japan's grant aid, the projects have been sustained by establishing centers in each of the ASEAN member nations except Brunei. This has been done either by setting up new institutions or by strengthening existing institutions in the field to be agreed on with the objective of achieving full implementation of HRD projects (Luhulima, 1988).

The objectives are to contribute HRD in ASEAN member countries through technical cooperation. Those centers are: the Training Center for Vocational Trainers and Small Scale Industry Extension Workers in Indonesia; the Training Center for Vocational Trainers and Senior Technicians in Malaysia; the Human Resource Development Center in the Philippines; the Project for Improvement of Productivity in Singapore; and the Training Center for Primary Health Care in Thailand. Each of these five national centers has developed HRD programs which are characteristic of each member nation. For example, Malaysia is more interested in

advanced skill training as well as teacher and supervisory skill development (Luhulima, 1988).

ASEAN projects grow out of perceived national needs. They are then extended onto the regional level. This has been done either by developing the training programs in the national HRD institutions or by designing specific training programs on a particular topic in each member nation for nationals of other ASEAN member countries (Luhulima, 1988).

The major objectives of those programs are to develop and improve the managerial and organizational capabilities of nationals of ASEAN member countries. They thus simultaneously facilitate the exchange of knowledge and experience among ASEAN experts involved in HRD. The components of the programs are decided by the ASEAN coordinating board. The board determines and coordinates areas of cooperation as well as curriculum development criteria for selection of participants and engagement of experts. Furthermore, the board monitors and evaluates the implementation of such projects (Luhulima, 1988).

In addition to the ASEAN-Japan HRD programs which started with institution-building, there has been the ASEAN-Pacific cooperation in HRD (APC-HRD) which started with programs in existing institutions. The objective is to promote HRD cooperation for development of the Pacific

region. ASEAN member countries and five developed countries (Japan, the United States of America, Canada, Australia, and New Zealand) help support all the projects. For instance, Thailand offered four APC-HRD courses. One of these is a seminar on HRD: Concepts, Policies, Needs, and Cooperation in the Region. It was organized by the Human Resources Institute, Thammasat University in Thailand and the Australian Ministry of Foreign Affairs and was attended by participants from ASEAN and the South Pacific countries. Another example is that Canada has offered scholarships for nationals of ASEAN member countries at the Asian Institute of Technology (AIT) in Thailand since 1983 (Luhulima, 1988).

There has also been another important regional body related ASEAN, that is the Southeast Asian Ministers of Education Organization (SEAMEO) (UNESCO Principal Regional Office for Asia and the Pacific, 1991). SEAMEO is made up of ten member countries, including Cambodia, Lao PDR, Myanmar, and Vietnam in addition to the six original ASEAN nations. The organization has its secretariat, named as the Southeast Asian Ministers of Education Secretariat (SEAMES). It is headquartered in Bangkok, Thailand.

The major aim of SEAMEO is to promote regional cooperation among the member countries through programs in

education, science, and culture. In this regard, fourteen regional centers of excellence with programs of training and research in particular fields were established under SEAMEO. They are to help serve the needs for development in the areas of tropical biology, educational innovation and technology, through science and mathematics, language, agriculture, vocational and technical education, archaeology and the fine arts (Haas, 1989; Srisa-An, 1996).

One of SEAMEO regional centers, Regional Institute of Higher education and development (RIHED), was originally founded in Singapore in 1970. However, it was shut down in 1985 due to some financial irregularities and a lack of direction in the organization (Haas, 1989). The Center was reestablished in 1993 in Thailand and was renamed SEAMEO Regional Centre for Higher Education and Development, retaining its acronym RIHED. The aims are to promote efficiency and effectiveness of higher education in the region and to foster development cooperation among member countries. SEAMEO RIHED also serves as the regional center and the clearing-house for higher education information and documentation (SEAMEO RIHED, 1994).

Since its reestablishment in 1993, RIHED has been successful in organizing workshops, seminars, as well as meetings, arranging study visits, and commissioning

research studies. Reports on the seminars and research findings have been published and distributed among the member countries and other international agencies concerned. The Center also publishes the RIHED Bulletin, a quarterly publication, to publicize its activities. Recently, SEAMEO RIHED has also extended its scope to cover the Greater Mekong Subregion. Workshops, seminars, and meetings have been organized to help develop higher education in GMS countries. Among those activities were the workshop on Curriculum Development for the School of Foundation Studies of the National University of Laos (NUOL) and the Greater Mekong Subregion Economic Educators Mini Series workshop (SEAMEO RIHED, 1997).

The scope of the ASEAN HRD programs is vast because the needs of its societies are so vast and diverse. There is a felt concern to narrow down the scope of the HRD and to set priorities among those vast areas of cooperation, for example, management and entrepreneurial skills, science and technology, transport and communications, research and planning. Without prioritization, future cooperation may be difficult because ASEAN members are, as mentioned before, reluctant to utilize their own funds to finance the programs at the regional level. To maintain and develop activities, each regional center needs continuous

contribution from external sources. Besides, each member country has to provide overhead expenses to help the center meet the total budget requirements. During the economic crisis, a country like Thailand, for example, that hosts the SEAMEO RIHED will find it difficult to fund planned and proposed activities, compared to the previous period.

The above has discussed some major theories or frameworks for regional cooperation, followed by a brief review of ASEAN, as an example of one long established regional cooperation among developing countries. The review now turns to previous literature that relates to the role of universities in regional cooperation.

Related Studies on the Role of Universities in Regional Cooperation

The literature search reveals the limited number of publications in the area of regional cooperation in higher education. Studies that focus on regional cooperation mainly deal with the economic or political dimensions of such endeavors. In addition, those focusing specifically on academic cooperation tend to look at cooperative activities in Europe and North America where higher education is well developed. Moreover, university development through cooperation and collaboration in the developed countries has been studied and discussed for more

than two decades (Department of Health, Education, and Welfare, 1971; Leskiw & Moir, 1982; Blumenthal, Goodwin, Smith, & Teichler, 1996).

Generally, the idea of university development through cooperation is based on the assumption that due to increasing financial constraints, unnecessary duplication can be eliminated and resources can be pooled into more effective combinations as well as provide new and expanded services (Department of Health, Education, and Welfare, 1971). This seems to be relevant to both developed and developing countries. However, Smallwood and Maliyamkono (1996) contend that it would be a mistake to assume that the concept and policy of regional cooperation in higher education, which have worked so well in Europe, would necessarily be effective in regional groupings of developing countries. Nevertheless, it should also be noted that European Community Action Programs, such as ERASMUS (the European Community Action Schemes for the Mobility of University Students), have inspired and served as possible role models for similar efforts in other regions.

The scarcity of studies on university cooperation in the developing regions is partly explained by the fact that traditionally cross border cooperation in education has

been between developed and developing countries. The initiatives for developing countries to cooperate, in practice, among themselves are relatively new. This is quite disappointing because the idea of technical cooperation among developing countries has been developed at least since 1978 (United Nations, 1978). In addition, existing cooperative activities in many developing regions may exist but may not be well documented. The limited number of publications reviewed here does not give enough emphasis to what can really be done through university cooperation for developing country regional development. In addition, no research study has been found to discuss the potential roles or to look into the existing university exchange programs and institutional collaborations in the GMS that contribute to the broad scheme of regional economic cooperation.

In an early work on, "International Co-operation and Development: The Role of Universities," Ramphal (1979) discusses the new international economic order. He makes a case that developing countries should cooperate and get together for its own development and survival. He also urges universities in Africa to respond to the felt needs of their communities by adjusting or reforming themselves according to the changing world. His discussion does not

include any concrete measures for the universities to follow.

Closely related to Ramphal's work in terms of context, Kamba (1986) elaborates the idea of South-South technical cooperation (cooperation among developing countries located mostly in the southern hemisphere as opposed to the North) put forth by Peiji and Yugui (1983). His major idea is that it would be short-sighted to leave the universities out of any scheme for scientific and technological cooperation in the South. He argues that universities in the South retain a great deal of the best professional scientific talent to be found within their respective societies. Even though technology transfer from the North is still necessary, it is not enough. The universities of the South should augment their capacity for the independent generation of scientific and technological innovation that springs from and suits the needs of their own regional environments.

However, he emphasizes that the role of the universities of the South must be seen within the context of a number of different categories of scope and focus. The broadest of these is the global one. This is because there can be no such things as "endogenous development" solely within the South. In other words, the development

of the South should take place within the context of a larger system of global interdependence.

Reyes (1993) discusses UNDP's concept of human development for the Mekong basin countries. His view regarding the need for developing countries to cooperate among each other is similar to the views of the above two authors. One interesting point is that there is a need to train economic managers on market economies and on the role of the state in a market-based economic system in Lao PDR. In this regard, he believes that because of geographical proximity, language similarity, and the long experience of Thailand in a market-based economic system, Thai universities are logical and appropriate institutions to provide the required training.

In the most recent publication on Academic Mobility in a Changing World (Blumenthal, Goodwin, Smith, & Teichler, 1996) emphasis is placed on academic cooperation in Europe and North America. Limited contributions focusing on Asia, sub-Saharan Africa, and the Middle East/Arab world convey a sense that regional groupings among developing countries are still very tentative. Besides, there is little evidence of a strong instinct for bonding as there is in Europe and as there may be emerging in the Americas. In addition, there is a feeling that many small nations lack

resources or effective leadership to develop cooperative endeavors and with their mainly authoritarian governments, academics are considered a dangerous source of instability. Some of the scholars of the South also imply that they cannot foresee the implementation in their regions soon of a program similar to ERASMUS.

Three papers in the publication (Blumenthal, Goodwin, Smith, & Teichler, 1996) stand out as they are related to the idea of higher education cooperation among developing countries. Srisa-An (1996) on "Academic Cooperation among ASEAN Countries" mentions that Thailand has begun to help her neighboring countries since the return to normal peaceful political situations in Indochina. He contends that Thai higher education institutions have been able to strengthen the human resource development of Indochina by providing consulting services or training programs relevant to their needs. It can reasonably be expected that academic mobility or cooperation will grow still further in the years to come. This is because the three countries have been drawn into regional activity in Southeast Asia, thereby fueling the benefits of greater regional mobility. Nonetheless, according to the idea, Thailand in this case is the country that provides technical assistance to Indochina, the recipient. It is still questionable because

the mobility of staff and students would appear to be just a one-way movement.

Smallwood and Maliyamkono (1996) put a focus on regional cooperation in sub-Saharan Africa (SSA). They discuss the relevance of European initiatives in higher education cooperation for SSA. It is not surprising that there are not many parallels to draw between the two regions. Some of the European community initiatives are simply not transferable to SSA. This is because of the poor basis for regional cooperation of SSA itself, i.e. uneven economic development, ideological differences, war, and territorial disagreements. They contend that no regional approach to human resource development will succeed if the political will to pursue a regional solution is not sufficiently well-developed.

However, there are examples of human resource development at the regional level which function and can be adapted in the light of European experience. The authors also stress that African educational planners must consider new ways to maximize the limited resources available to them, and regional cooperation should be considered one viable option. The donor community should also be convinced that the regional approach is a way to minimize the high costs of study abroad in the West. It is a cost-

effective solution for certain types of high-level training and a solution to the brain drain phenomenon.

In "International Academic Cooperation in the Arab Region: Past, present, and Future," Morsi (1996) offers some suggestions that seem to fit into other contexts as well. Some of these recommendations he believes, if carried out well, can intensify and enhance the quality of higher education cooperation for the development of the region. They are:

1. There should be coordination of efforts involved in writing, translating, adapting information to the Arab context, and final publication of material.

2. New locally based education and scientific research institutions should be established, to encourage greater excellence in a less costly manner.

3. Every effort should be made to insure improved coordination of scientific research, with increased support for research data banks and information networks. High cost research programs in areas of major importance should be undertaken by the Arab countries on a joint basis.

4. Greater emphasis should be attached to the potential of higher education in enabling the Arab states to implement their development plans. Scientific research and cooperation should be encouraged in fields related to

successful exploitation of the region's human and material resources.

In addition to related research work reviewed, as a result of international meetings, seminars, and workshops regarding GMS cooperation in recent years, there exist a few keynote addresses and statements of experts or high-ranking officials in higher education on plans and possibilities of GMS university cooperation. In essence, there is a consensus that GMS university cooperation is necessary, and there are opportunities that GMS universities can work together for the development of the Subregion. Whereas the initiative was praised and stressed highly in those statements, important details regarding the implementation were generally left out.

However, among those speeches, Wongsathorn (1997)'s statement, delivered in his capacity as the director of the ASEAN's SEAMEO RIHED, stands out in terms of his more concrete and informative contribution regarding how and what to do to promote cooperation. It is notable that his idea appears to be that GMS university cooperation can be built upon the ongoing activities of the ASEAN's regional center of higher education, that is SEAMEO RIHED. This is quite logical as Vietnam, Lao PDR, and Myanmar have already recently become new ASEAN members. Besides, merging the

new cooperative effort to the old well-established association would help avoid unnecessary duplication or overlap, which would waste already limited resources. However, the idea would lead to the omission of China, a complex deviation of the original six country GMS grouping.

In his most recent contribution (Wongsothorn, Sophoan, Nakhavith, & Thiep, 1997), Wongsothorn outlines the objectives of higher education cooperation in the GMS and identifies priorities and possibilities regarding cooperative activities. He also proposes a generic model for higher education cooperation. However, whether the model can be applied to the GMS is an interesting future research question.

There seem to be various ways that GMS can benefit from university cooperation. Possible benefits include sharing the costs of training programs and of permanent centers in certain technologies as those occur in ASEAN HRD; exchanging information and staff as well as students; and networking of universities in terms of internet linkage are what have been talked about recently. Whether these possible benefits can be implemented would largely depend upon the situation and the state as well as quality of higher education in each GMS country.

Summary

This literature review seeks to place the role of universities in Greater Mekong Subregional Economic Cooperation in a theoretical context and looks into the role of the university, as it has been studied by others. In this regard, the review first looks into some of the major theoretical frameworks of regional cooperation. Then, the review covers previous studies on the role of universities in regional cooperation.

The results of this review indicates renewed interest in regional cooperation, which was once prominent on the development agenda in the 1960s and 1970s, but failed to meet expectations. Regional cooperation has become a phenomenon of the 1990s. Some of the major contributing factors to renewed support of cooperation are the end of the Cold War's ideological confrontation and the transformation of economic policies. These changes potentially create more favorable prospects for regional cooperation. In addition, there is a growing perception that regional cooperation is critical to the dynamic competitiveness of economies and to the resolution of development problems in many areas of the world. This is because the development of human and physical capital and sustaining the environment, for example, are seen as

regional issues. Besides, some donor countries or multilateral agencies are now adding regional bases to their aid programs, because a regional approach complements a national one.

The theoretical frameworks that help explain regionalism in Western Europe were found to have some limitations when applied to regional cooperation among developing countries. However, what has been learned in the review is that, first, no single theory can explain the regional cooperation process; instead a combination of theories is more appropriate. For example, past experience shows that regional agreements, which are conducted only by politicians and bureaucrats, require sufficient popular support. Thus, better communication at non-governmental levels, that is among the people, is at least as important as fostering better intergovernmental relations. Secondly, it has been learned that regional cooperation among developing countries should strive for mutual gains and place less emphasis on integration. In a comparatively loose form, regional cooperation among developing countries should proceed from less controversial issues to more complex political and economic matters.

Regional cooperation in higher education has been placed at the forefront of regionalism. First of all, a

well-educated workforce is essential for economic growth. Secondly, under the constraint of still limited resources, governments of developing countries cannot perform the challenging task of higher education development alone; dependency on external assistance and international cooperation are necessary. Therefore, cooperation among countries that have similar higher education needs, within the same region, is necessary. There are possibilities for economies of scale, mutual learning, and information sharing, which can justify the pursuit of regional initiatives. Academic cooperation among developing countries is seen as complementary to the traditional one-sided transfers of technology from developed countries.

However, although regional cooperation in higher education has been recognized as important, most studies on regional cooperation focus on the economic and political aspects. Literature that focuses on international university cooperation among developing countries was found to be lacking. Likewise, available literature on university development cooperation in the Greater Mekong Subregion was limited.

CHAPTER IV
RESEARCH DESIGN AND METHODOLOGY

Methodology

The research design of this study focuses on the qualitative method for better understanding the role of universities in the development of Greater Mekong Subregional Economic Cooperation. It is based primarily upon the perceptions of attentive and well-informed university people, who are key players in cooperative GMS university development. It is a view from within and as such has a special value.

The study is conducted to get at both tangible and intangible information. Specifically, it is based upon in-person interviews mainly with university academics and administrators, government officials, and program officers of international organizations and visits to their offices during field studies in the major cities of the six GMS countries. They are Phnom Penh in Cambodia, Vientiane in Lao PDR, Yangon in Myanmar, Bangkok and four other provinces in Thailand, Hanoi in Vietnam, and Kunming in Yunnan Province of China. The data from the interviews are supplemented with those from the written questionnaires designed as live interview substitutes. Official documents were also reviewed.

The field study is also supplemented with my participation in and observation of three regional seminars and conferences on the topics related to Greater Mekong Subregional Cooperation, which took place in Thailand on various occasions during the period of the field research. In one conference, I served on the secretariat committee, helping the organizing committee with the correspondences and conference programs. In the other two meetings, I attended as a participant and an observer. The attendance gave me the opportunities for informal conversation with other participants, who were representatives of GMS countries. It also helped me gain relevant information as well as some insight into GMS cooperative activities.

The Interviews

The in-person, face to face interviews were to obtain the information and first hand views of university people as key informants. Key informants as defined by LeCompte & Goetz (1982) and Zelditch (1962) are "individuals who possess special knowledge, status or communicative skills and who are willing to share that knowledge and skill with the researcher."

Only those university people who have been involved in the GMS cooperative activities were interviewed or asked to

complete the questionnaires. In this regard, key informants were:

1. Vice-presidents for international affairs in GMS universities where GMS cooperative activities exist. This category includes also directors or deputy directors for foreign affairs or similar job titles in higher education institutions.

2. University academics who have been involved in the cooperative activities such as seminars or conferences, research studies, trainings, international academic programs, and so on. Their connections have been made either through institutional linkages or through personal contacts.

3. Government officials in the Ministries of University Affairs, Departments of Technical and/or Economic Cooperation, Ministries of Education, or other related government sectors. They were solicited based upon their direct or indirect involvement in the GMS university cooperation.

4. Program officers for education in international organizations whose work, in part, concerns the development of the GMS. They are, for example, those officers at ADB and UNESCO.

There were altogether 93 key informants participating in this study, a combination of key informants giving interviews and those completing questionnaires. Any key informant that both gave an interview and completed a questionnaire was counted as one. The breakdown of the number of key informants in each GMS country and international organizations is presented in Table 1.

Table 1

Number and Characteristics of Key Informants

Category	CBD	LPDR	MYM	TL	VN	YN	IO
Sex (M/F)	8/1	12/1	19/1	12/9	8/1	10/2	8/1
Education: BA	2	0	2	0	2	2	0
Beyond BA	7	13	18	21	7	10	9
Total (93)	9	13	20	21	9	12	9

Notes. Cambodia (CBD); Lao PDR (LPDR); Myanmar (MYM); Thailand (TL); Vietnam (VN); Yunnan Province (YN); International Organizations (IO); Male (M); Female (F); University first degree (BA).

This group of 93 key informants does not include those attentive and informed persons I met and had conversations with during the field study. These people provided

information about and shared with me some of their views on the Greater Mekong Subregion. However, formal interviews were not given or requested due to varying reasons such as limitations of time, difficulty in scheduling a mutually convenient time for the interview, and cancellation of the interview.

The background data were obtained in two ways. In the interviews, the key informants were either asked directly or the information was sought after from the clerical staff or his/her colleagues. In the questionnaire, the data were filled out by the respondents themselves. For those completed the questionnaires, their genders were identified by their titles, known to me before the forms were given out or after they were handed back. In this regard, the majority (83%) is male. Although genders are not treated as significant factors in this study, it is worth noting that the majority of university people in the Greater Mekong Subregion are male. Except for those key informants from international organizations, all interviewees or respondents are affiliated with public organizations or government sectors. This is because, generally, in GMS countries, private higher education institutions do not have an active role in international university cooperation in the GMS. Only 9 percent of the informants have only a

college degree or a first university degree; the majority of them have a more advanced degree, namely, a master's degree or a doctoral degree. The nationality of informants from international organizations are not indicated because they were treated in the first place as representing their organizations not their countries of origin.

Some of the interviews were tape-recorded; in other cases, when taping was declined, notes were taken. In some cases, when an interview was not viable, a respondent was asked to provide written replies to a self-administered questionnaire supplied to him or her. The questions in the questionnaire are similar to those used in the interview.

In the main, the semi-structured open-ended interview method was used to solicit the information and viewpoints, allowing the respondent to structure responses according to his/her perception and experience. As almost all of the key informants are high-ranking officials or senior academics, the protocol in the Asian culture allowed little or no control on the part of the interviewer. However, the questions were formulated in advance, and some of the informants were cooperative and understood well the data collection procedure.

Interviews focused on the perception of university people in four central issues:

1. University development through a regional cooperative approach;
2. University development cooperation as an important avenue for the development of economic cooperation in the Greater Mekong Subregion;
3. Past and present cooperation for GMS university development; and
4. Expectations and future possibilities for future cooperation among GMS universities.

In addition, the interviews were conducted in-person at the offices of the informants. Because most informants are busy people operating under demanding time constraints, the interviews generally lasted from twenty to fifty minutes, depending on the length of visit granted. The interviews were sometimes interrupted with phone calls or visits. One interview was conducted in an empty restaurant before its business hours. Due to the limited time and budget constraints as well as the protocol consistent with certain government offices, a second meeting for a follow-up interview was not possible. The situation was apparent especially in Lao PDR and Cambodia where the absorptive capacity and the number of government officials serving on particular jobs was relative low. It is this limited number of efficient personnel that calls for an urgent

development of human resources as mentioned before. The sharply increasing needs derive in part from the economic reform and the "open door" policy. There have been complaints that the countries do not have enough personnel to attend various international meetings as a result of increasingly becoming members of various groupings such as ASEAN.

The interviews were conducted in English, my foreign language, during the field study in Cambodia, Lao PDR, Myanmar, Vietnam, and Yunnan province of China. Almost all of the interviews conducted in Thailand were conducted in Thai, my native tongue. Since the Lao and Thai languages are mutually intelligible to a certain extent, Thai was also used during the Lao PDR interviews. In general, English was chosen because it is well understood that English is the most suitable lingua franca in the GMS. Moreover, since the informants have all been involved in cooperatively activities in one way or another, they are supposed to have a command of the English language. Notably, the question of whether English is the most appropriate lingua franca was also included in the interview. A few problems were encountered during the field study in Yunnan Province. However, the host

institution helped provide two students majoring in the English language to serve as interpreters.

Gaining Access to the Research Sites

Prior to the field study that took place from December 10, 1997 to June 30, 1998, I made initial contacts with prospective individuals and institutions in the GMS. In this regard, letters of request to help identify prospective informants or to request an interview were sent out by mail together with a letter of introduction obtained from the University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign (see also Appendix C) and the study abstract. They were sent to GMS embassies in Washington D.C. and in Thailand as well as eleven Thai universities. Certain letters were addressed to individuals whose names were provided by a Thai government official in the Ministry of University Affairs. The preliminary results were two positive responses from Cambodia and Lao PDR as well as six similar letters from universities in Thailand.

The second attempt was made at various stages during the field study in the GMS. With the assistance of a high-ranking university administrator in Thailand, the letters of request were sent out to higher education institutions in Cambodia, Yunnan Province, and Vietnam where his university has connections. Positive replies agreeing to

be participants of my field research were received at different times. Similar assistance was also received from other Thai informants with whom I had interviewed before. Follow up contacts were made through various modes of communication, namely air mail, overseas long distance telephone calls, electronic mail, and facsimile, depending upon which option was available. As communication systems in the GMS countries are not yet well developed, I experienced some difficulties. For example, the follow up letters sent via fax machine to a university in one of the GMS countries apparently were not received even though the transmitting fax machine confirmed the copies went through successfully. I did have a chance to see the machine myself at the university and found out that it is an old appliance kept in an unattended room.

During the field study in each of the GMS countries, I was also introduced to the other respondents with the help of the ones first responding to the letters of request. A similar strategy was used to solicit other key Thai informants. In Myanmar, more than three attempts were made in vain. Finally with the help of one key informant who agreed to write a letter of introduction for me, I was able to finally visit the country. There, the initial contact was made at the Foreign Economic Relations Department, the

Ministry of National Planning and Economic Development. From there, I was then granted permission and was introduced to other key informants.

Normally, once access to the field was attained, depending on the protocol of the organization, a visit or a telephone call was made to arrange for an interview. Regarding the questionnaires, each was either sent out or received by mail or handed to the respondent directly.

Also gained from the visits and the interviews were official documents and materials, published and unpublished, related to the university cooperative activities. These include brochures, statistics, newsletters, and reports. The quality of the materials is not quite satisfactory though. Some have no date; others are incomplete. Some could not be borrowed to make copies. This frustrating situation was experienced even at my own university in Thailand.

Syntheses and Presentation of Findings

Data from oral responses from the interviews and written responses from the questionnaires are presented together and treated equally. This is because the questionnaire was designed as a substitute for an interview when the latter was not viable. Besides, the questions and the order of questions used in the questionnaires, in

essence, were similar to those used in the interviews and served the same purposes. Some key informants, besides giving the interviews, provided written response to the questionnaire.

The syntheses of responses are arranged on the basis of the four research questions rather than the questionnaire (see also Appendix D). This is because in the interviews, one question was often answered in terms that connected it with others. Some open-ended questions were treated more intensively or elaborately when key informants seemed more knowledgeable or more interested. In these instances, respondents were not interrupted because, generally, such responses provided a richness of information that specific answers alone might not have indicated. Some oral responses therefore encompassed and addressed more than one discrete question from the questionnaire.

In addition, in designing the questionnaire, the research questions were intentionally broken up into several discrete items to compensate for the inability to ask follow-up and clarifying questions on the self-administered questionnaire. For live interviews, I mainly focused on the four research questions instead of the string of questions in the questionnaire. Whenever, there

was a time constraint, the interview needed to be kept short and to the point, eliciting only the four major points from the key informants.

In the synthesis, themes and patterns are searched for consistency. The patterns that are consistent, or more consistent than not, are confirmed; otherwise, inconsistent patterns are disregarded. As a result of syntheses, the overall patterns and themes for each issue of each country emerge or become evident. Wherever appropriate, individual's responses are directly quoted so as to maintain his/her speaking voice. The final synthesis of data arriving at the overall perceptions of university people is then presented and discussed in chapter twelve.

An attempt is not made to classify the data from different groups of informants (see also the four major groups of informants under "The Interview") within one single country. This was because some informants belonged to more than one group, and, in certain countries, data collected are not substantial enough to be meaningfully otherwise.

Protection of Human Subjects

The main ethical issue in this study concerns the risks to the respondents involved in the interviews. The reason is most of them are government employees who are, in

most situations, not supposed to act or speak against the government. Even though the aim and the area of research is purely education, certain questions asked during the interviews unavoidably led to some criticism of one's government or immediate affiliation. Most informants seemed insecure in giving their opinions to me, whatever they were, and in many circumstances, totally declined to give comments. The attempt made was establishing positive rapport with respondents in this study to help elicit serious, well thought out, honest, and accurate answers as much as possible. To protect them from any negative consequence regarding their colleagues and supervisors, written commitment to confidentiality was indicated in the letter given to each respondent or informant. In addition, only a summary of the data is presented. All key informants are also referred to as male in this study, for reasons of confidentiality, and their responses, where necessary, are quoted in an anonymous manner.

Limitations of the Study

The study has certain limitations that I recognize and that might have influenced the results of the research findings. They are:

1. Due to the limited time and money constraints together with the concern for my own welfare and safety, a

more in-depth study was not possible. Major expenses incurred in the field studies were not funded. Besides, in certain countries, the political situation has not been stable and there was a risk in the field study.

2. The field study had to comply and be sensitive to the protocol established by each country and each institution. Accesses to institutions, for example, needed prior permission and responses given during the interview appeared not to be spontaneous.

3. Closely related to the second limitation, informants in certain countries seemed insecure or uncomfortable to be involved in the research study. Taping was declined; information or viewpoints seemed to be withheld; sharing of information was kept to the minimum; answers given seemed evasive or ambiguous. Consequently, complete interviews were aborted and efforts yielded only incomplete data.

Even though the pattern of being reserved or avoiding answering the questions does reflect an important and interesting point regarding the state of the subregional cooperation, spontaneous responses might have yielded more useful information.

4. Whenever appropriate, I felt obliged to identify myself as a Thai government official affiliated with

Chulalongkorn University in Thailand. This resulted in both a positive and negative effect. On the one hand, as a government official, I was given privileges to get visas and was exempted from visa fees. At present, a government official from Thailand is permitted to enter China and Vietnam without any necessary visa for a maximum one-month stay. As a staff member of Chulalongkorn University, I was able to use my status to get access to certain institutions in the GMS; the visits for interviews were regarded as a return courtesy visit.

On the other hand, identifying myself as a Thai university official led to suspicions. Perhaps some respondents thought I was trying to get at sensitive information to be used selfishly by my university or that might hurt the bilateral relationship. Besides, informants appeared to hesitate openly criticizing government officials of their neighboring countries, for fear of any negative impact that might cause. An interview done by a typical graduate student may not have raised the same concerns by the respondents.

5. I had to rely on documents that government offices or other institutions and agencies chose to supply or allowed me to consult or make copies of. Privilege to files or records was sometimes denied. In addition, in the

GMS countries, efficient record-keeping systems have not yet been developed even with the advent of computing facilities. In some cases, bureaucracy also caused further problems and delays. For example, a letter of introduction was required from my immediate government office before the initial formal contact could be made with the officials in my own country.

However, there are many factors validating the research and help make up for the limitations. One of those is that as a native of the GMS, I am relatively familiar with the cultural and physical background of the field. Besides, the study was conducted by a GMS citizen who will continue to live in the area. There is the future possibility that any fallacy or imperfection made in this study will be corrected.

Introduction to the Series of Findings Chapter

The purpose of the series of seven chapters on findings to be followed is to present the responses given by the key informants in the study to the four research questions stated in Chapter two. The syntheses of the collective responses are presented in six different country case studies plus the one of international organizations. This presentation of the findings helps to clarify whether

the country and donor perspectives diverge or converge and facilitates comparison. In other words, the arrangement is intended to respect the views expressed by treating each GMS country as an individual, no matter how similar or different their views were.

Preceding each country case is the overview of the higher education system of the respective country, including a description of the research site. Each overview is in part based upon the government documents and relevant materials collected during the field studies in the six countries. The overview serves as a background to facilitate critical examination of the collective responses. Without this up to date background and information on higher education of each participating country, it would be difficult to understand the responses and their underlying reasons given by the informants.

CHAPTER V

FINDINGS ON CAMBODIA

Overview of Cambodian Higher Education

The effect of the Khmer Rouge Regime or the Pol Pot Era from 1975-1979 has been devastating and long lasting. The Khmer Rouge's revolution that ravaged Cambodia (formerly Kampuchea from 1976-1989) inflicted damage throughout society, and no sector was more damaged than education. After two decades, the rebuilding and reestablishment of the higher education system in Cambodia, which is believed to be most affected (National Higher Education Task Force, 1997), still has a long way to go. This reflects how seriously higher education was destroyed and, in general, how any reconstruction or reform in education will take quite some time for its desired results to be realized. Before the state of the higher education system in Cambodia is discussed, it is worthwhile to look back briefly over its original development and tragic destruction.

Higher education in Cambodia, where the Angkor civilization and rich literacy culture flourished between the ninth and the fourteenth centuries (Lambin, 1995), came into existence in 1949. It was the National Institute of Law, Political and Economic Sciences founded that year in

Phnom Penh, the present capital city, that marked the history of Cambodian higher education (Can, 1991). However, according to Sophoan (1997), it was not until 1960 when the first so called public university--the Khmer Royal University--was established. All other institutions established before 1960 were simply post secondary schools confined to civil servant preparation but somehow also considered higher learning institutions. Actually, the National Institute of Judicial, Political and Economic Sciences was only transformed into the Faculty of Law in 1953.

It should be noted that the higher education system in Cambodia has been influenced by various external interests in addition to internal ones. The French and then the Vietnamese and the former Soviet influences could be seen during the past decades, and recently higher education institutions in the region and donor agencies by means of educational assistance have also lent their influence on the system (Clayton & Ngoy, 1997; Sophoan, 1997). The institutionalized higher education such as the National Institute of Judicial, Political and Economic Sciences was, for example, a phenomenon during the French colonial period (Clayton & Ngoy, 1997; Can, 1991).

Under the French control started in 1863, higher education was aimed at training colonial civil servants to facilitate the exploitative process of the French. Thus, the medium of instruction in higher education institutions was French. Despite the inability of French administrators to speak the native language of Khmer, they were able to function as a colonial power through the westernized Cambodian graduates (Clayton & Ngoy, 1997).

Upon independence in 1953, as an attempt to break the pattern of past subordination, King Narodom Sihanouk launched a campaign of massive educational expansion. As a result, higher education developed tremendously. Besides the Khmer Royal University, which was renamed the Royal Khmer University, eight new universities were created. These were the Royal Technical University, the Royal University of Fine Arts, the Royal University of Kompong Cham, the Royal University of Takeo/Kampot, the Royal University of Agronomic Science, the Popular University, the Royal University of Battambang, and the Buddhist University. Six of these new institutions were located in Phnom Penh; the rest were in the provinces. Under the Royal Khmer University, there were four faculties, namely Law and Economics, Medicine and Pharmacy, Natural Sciences and Technology, Social and Human Sciences, and one

professional school, the National Institute of Pedagogy (Clayton & Ngoy, 1997; Sophoan, 1997; Can, 1991).

This dramatic move of the strong nationalist King Narodom Sihanouk resulted in an important step away from colonial dependency. A large number of students were provided with higher education and training, and they developed skills necessary for economic, political, and technical posts once held by French nationals. In addition, Cambodian identity was regained through the use of Khmer instead of French as a language of instruction (Clayton & Ngoy, 1997). The expansion encompassed all levels of education, resulting in a sharp increase in the number of schools and students.

These educational gains were reversed upon the ascent of the communist Khmer Rouge in 1975. Actually, this reverse was not abrupt. King Narodom Sihanouk was first ousted by Lon Nol's coup d'etat and fled to form a government in exile in Beijing. The country then entered a period of devastating war, and the higher education institutions closed down. The American bombs and artillery shells caused widespread destruction of school buildings (Lambin, 1995; Can, 1991; The Europa World Year Book, 1997). However, it seemed that this was just the beginning of the country's doom.

The real destruction that followed in 1975 was the genocidal terror campaign by Pol Pot and the Khmer Rouge (Thac Can, 1991). That short but shocking period from 1975 to 1979 was aptly described as "The school is the rice paddy and the pen is the hoe" (Curtis, 1989). This is the Pol Pot's vision of self-reliance, an escape from dependency on international structures to advocating agricultural isolationism (Buckley, 1996; Clayton & Ngoy, 1997). Interestingly, Clayton and Ngoy (1997) went further to compare Pol Pot's reaction to the dangers in the formal educational systems to King Narodom Sihanouk's campaign against the French influence. In this regard, both postcolonial leaders moved against the external threat, but the results were totally different.

Because Pol Pot viewed the existing educational system as supportive of class differentiation and at odds with communism, he then systematically set out to destroy it. In his pre-arranged program of radical social deconstruction, 90 percent of the school buildings together with the libraries and equipment were demolished or put to other uses such as prisons, weapon factories, or storehouses. Seven of the nine universities established during the last two decades were torn down, and the rest badly damaged. Books and teaching materials were also

either banned or burned. Educated persons like technicians, teachers, doctors, or even monks, viewed by the Khmer Rouge as "traitors," were horribly killed or died due to ill-treatment and hunger. Approximately three million people died during the Khmer Rouge Regime, 75 percent of teachers, 91 percent of university faculty, 67 percent of primary and secondary students, and 96 percent of university students were officially reported dead (Clayton & Ngoy, 1997; Curtis, 1989; The Europa World Year Book, 1997). According to Lambin (1995), these numbers also included those who fled the country. In 1979, Cambodia was simply without an education system.

On top of the destruction, the country was sealed off from the outside world. According to Buckley (1996), there were no transport, no telephones, and no newspapers. Imported technology like medical equipment, holidays, and music were all banned; even Buddhism, the principal religion, was forbidden. Cities and towns were evacuated, their urban inhabitants were sent to the countryside to work under cruel supervision in agricultural collectives (Clayton & Ngoy, 1997; The Europa World Year Book, 1997). This was done by the Khmer Rouge in an attempt to turn the whole nation into the rural paradise as Pol Pot visualized (Buckley, 1996).

During the ten-year period from 1979 to 1989, the country was occupied by Vietnamese who drove the Khmer Rouge into Thailand. As the Vietnamese were allied to the former Soviet Union during the Cold War period, Cambodian higher education at that time was not only influenced by the Vietnamese but also by the former Soviet interests. During this time, the new Cambodian government had to completely rebuild the education system from scratch because there were only a few intellectuals left available to assist in the recovery (Clayton & Ngoy, 1997; Lambin, 1995; Sophoan, 1997).

The rebirth of schools and universities in Cambodia was made possible through financial aid, educational personnel, and educational materials as well as equipment provided by Vietnam, the former Soviet Union, and other Eastern bloc countries (Clayton & Ngoy, 1997). Consequently, six higher education institutions were reopened besides primary and secondary schools, teacher training colleges, and specialized educational institutes. The first among those institutions was the Faculty of Medicine in response to the urgent needs of health care for those Pol Pot's victims (Can, 1991).

Since the teaching faculty in higher education institutions was primarily provided by the donor countries,

the language of instruction was determined accordingly. For instance, for an institute supported by the former Soviet Union, Russian was thus used as a medium of instruction in classes. Students then had to spend their first year to study the language. According to Clayton and Ngoy (1997), one may be suspicious that this use of external languages was quite similar to the prior use of French as a medium of instruction in order to establish and maintain the colonial structure. However, it is argued that once Cambodian graduates assumed the teaching positions, they lectured in Khmer. The use of Vietnamese and Russian as languages of education was thus only temporary until there were enough Cambodian lecturers to replace those killed or those that fled the country during the Khmer Rouge Regime (Clayton & Ngoy, 1997). In the long run it did not go against the government's effort for its Khmerization policy. However, the Vietnamese and Soviet's agenda was not to promote the languages but instead to politically train Cambodian youths to favor the socialist ideology, ready to fight against capitalism and imperialism. The higher education curriculum as developed by the Vietnamese and the Soviets in Cambodia thus served their external agenda still.

It should be noted that during the Vietnamese intervention decade, besides the Faculty of Medicine, the Khmer-Soviet Friendship Higher Institute of Technology, the College of Agriculture, the College of Economics, and the College of Foreign Languages were either reopened or established. The College of Foreign Languages, which was founded to serve the need for interpreters to facilitate the country in receiving international assistance, was later merged with the Teachers Training College to become the University of Phnom Penh (Clayton & Ngoy, 1997; Can, 1991).

It was unfortunate in terms of the continuity of the reconstruction process that Cambodia was left in a difficult position again after the Vietnamese withdrawal and the reduction of aid flows from the USSR and the Eastern bloc countries in 1989. This change was too soon for Cambodia to stand on its own regarding its rebuilding of the higher education system. This vulnerable position entailed the need for foreign assistance and thereby subordination to external interests.

According to Clayton and Ngoy (1997), although the political education was removed, French has been made the language of instruction again in certain higher education institutions, through France's assistance. These include

the Institute of Technology of Cambodia, formerly known as the Khmer-Soviet Friendship Higher Technical Institute, and the Faculty of Law. A similar proposal for assistance was also made to the University of Phnom Penh; however, the university agreed only to offer French as a foreign language course.

The Cambodian government and educators are well aware of this neocolonial motivation, and they have voiced their discontent. In the 1994 Education Sector Round Table with Donors in Phnom Penh, Cambodia, this was made evident. It was mentioned in the meeting that whereas the country is inundated with foreign language instruction and training, not enough attention is given to the Khmer language. Pou Darany, Under Secretary of the Ministry of Education, Youth, and Sport, was outspoken in his speech that Cambodians were curious why it was easier to get foreign assistance for the teaching of foreign languages than for the development of the Khmer language (Ministry of Education, Youth and Sport, 1994).

In this present post-occupation independence period, despite a still unstable political situation, Cambodia has now nine higher education institutions and fifteen other technical and professional training institutions (Sophoan, 1997). Among those nine institutions, the Royal University

of Phnom Penh, formerly the University of Phnom Penh, is the largest in terms of student size. It comprises the faculties of science, letters and human sciences, pedagogy, foreign languages, and social sciences. Others are the Institute of Technology of Cambodia, Institute of Business, Faculty of Law and Economic Sciences, Maharashi Vedic University, Royal University of Agriculture, University of Fine Arts, Faculty of Pedagogy, and Faculty of Medicine.

Similar to its neighboring countries, higher education institutions in Cambodia are under the jurisdiction of various Ministries. The Ministry of Education, Youth and Sport supervises the Royal University of Phnom Penh, the Institute of Technology of Cambodia, Maharashi Vedic University, the Faculty of Law and Economic Sciences, the Faculty of Business, and the Faculty of Pedagogy. The Royal University of Agriculture is under the governance of the Ministry of Agriculture; the Faculty of Medicine is under the control of the Ministry of Health; and the Royal University of Fine Arts operates under the administration of the Ministry of Culture. All these institutions are public; however, as the country has adopted the free market economy system, there are also a few other private institutions offering non-degree programs (Sophoan, 1997).

At present, there are several higher educational issues that need to be addressed in Cambodia. First, there is an infrastructure problem; university buildings are still insufficient and dilapidated even after all that has been provided through foreign assistance (Klap, 1994; McNamara, 1998). There are simply not enough funds in recurrent budgets to repair or maintain the buildings. The budget allocated for higher education only covers the staff salaries and student subsidies (Asian Development Bank, 1996).

Secondly, there are shortages of textbooks, teaching materials and supplies, and other educational facilities (Curtis, 1989; Klap, 1995; Lambin, 1995). The lack of textbooks and reference materials is critical because it is not just the present lack of funds for reproduction, but it is the lack of textbooks written in Khmer, which were destroyed during the Khmer Rouge Regime. Books in English and French donated to the library are difficult for Khmer students to read. There is a suggestion to translate agreed core texts into Khmer language rather than write new texts from scratch (Asian Development Bank, 1996). It would be a difficult task for those few surviving intellectuals to develop textbooks on their own. It has been very difficult for the Cambodian government to launch

its Khmerization policy. Nevertheless, in the future, Khmer tertiary staff now being trained will have the capacity to Khmerize university curriculum, texts, and teaching.

Thirdly, the teaching staff is a serious problem because they are poorly trained and have low professional morale (Asian Development Bank, 1996; McNamara, 1998). The poorly trained staff are partly the result of the rapid expansion during the previous decades after the Pol Pot's era that was achieved at the expense of quality education (Curtis, 1989). In response to this, in-service training sessions have been provided, and some lecturers have been sent overseas to further their study (McNamara, 1998). Similarly, educational administrators are not well qualified either; the problems in management and assessment are therefore not unexpected.

The situation has been made worse because university staff, including lecturers, receive insufficient salary. They then come to work late, work part time or simply leave the university, or are inactive in university activities, including the training mentioned above. It is unnecessary to mention other responsibilities like research; there are no research funds either. University administrators cannot do anything but continuously encourage them not to quit

(McNamara, 1998). This creates a vicious circle because the present university students are ill prepared by the under-qualified and undevoted teachers, yet some of them will soon assume their teachers' posts.

The situation may be different in some institutions and some courses where the lecturers are expatriate staff who get paid by the donor countries, the international organizations, or the non-governmental organizations. Nonetheless, when foreign lecturers use a foreign language to teach some scientific and technical subjects, and students are not proficient enough in the language, Khmer interpreters are employed. The result is an inevitable loss of the content and of learning. Besides, due to the shift of external influence by means of foreign assistance, a lot of university staff once trained in the former Soviet Union and Eastern bloc countries have become of less value (Asian Development Bank, 1996). English and French have gained more importance. The spread of private English language schools in Phnom Penh reflects the increasing need to learn English (Lambin, 1995). As long as the government or the universities are not able to attract well-trained lecturers in terms of a respectable salary, the trend will not change soon.

Fourthly, the curricula are outdated; they do not yet meet the social and economic needs. Specifically, while the country is in transition to a more liberal market economy, there is an urgent need for a reform in curriculum. Skills in international law practices and cross-cultural skills in business, for example, are necessary for students and other in-service government officials to be equipped with (To, 1995). Business-oriented and technology programs should also be enhanced. In short, mechanisms should be in place to ensure that higher education becomes more responsive to the market (Asian Development Bank, 1996).

As a result of the above, the quality of higher education is questionable. The situation has been made worse by the fact that though there exists a competitive university entrance examination, many students have been admitted in an anomalous manner. According to the Asian Development Bank 1996 Sector Study, first, there is weakness in the validity and reliability of the official examination itself. Secondly, university admission is known to be determined primarily by ability to pay. It is said that a corrupted administrator or staff member earns between US\$ 2,000 to US\$ 5,000 a student, depending on the program. This wrongful practice further constrains access

to higher education for students without financial resources. Whereas the university entrance examination is competitive, a standardized and systematic student assessment, including student assignments, grading and testing procedures, as well as final examinations, during the program is scarce or totally absent.

Last but not least, there is a problem of the organization of higher education. The structure of higher education is disparate, having four Ministries involved in the supervision of the nine higher education institutions. Each institution only responds to the jurisdiction of the Ministry to which it belongs. The lack of policy coordination among those institutions makes it difficult for cost-effective and efficient planning and management. This results in a waste of already-stretched resources (Sophoan, 1997). There has been an attempt to rationalize and coordinate higher education institutions' planning and management; however, so far little progress has been made (Asian Development Bank, 1996).

Buildings, textbooks, trained staff, and curriculum development are some of the problems or critical issues that have plagued the higher education system. The government is aware of these issues, and with the technical assistance from the governments of Australia and the United

States as well as of the World Bank, a National Higher Education Task Force (NHETF) was established in 1995. The major task was to develop a National Action Plan (NAP) for the development of higher education. According to the ten-year plan (1997-2007), six critical higher education development issues should be addressed. They are legislation and structure, academic programs, access and output, language, resources, and institutional management (Ministry of Planning, 1996; National Higher Education Task Force, 1997; Sophoan, 1997). This plan is considered the most comprehensive one ever made in Cambodia. If there is no political intervention, the implementation of the plan would yield a major positive change to the higher education system in Cambodia.

It should also be noted, due to the grave concern in the overall quality of the education system in Cambodia, the Asian Development Bank in its 1994 Sector Review suggested that the Cambodian government focus more on qualitative aspects of education. This can be explained by the fact that among other things teachers are unqualified and textbooks as well as materials are inadequate (Lambin, 1995). Unfortunately, this advice was not heeded; the government turned instead to the quantitative expansion (Ayres, 1997). This resulted in an educational system

filled with unqualified teachers having inadequate textbooks and materials that often produced illiterate students (Lambin, 1995).

Higher education development in Cambodia today still depends much on foreign assistance. The National Action Plan for a higher education reform requires a great amount of resources to be accomplished. In this regard, arrangements with higher education institutions in its neighboring countries are no less important than similar efforts with those afar. The Faculty of Business in Phnom Penh has recently developed its curriculum to meet the needs of the market economy with technical assistance provided by Georgetown University and the University of San Francisco in the United States (To, 1995). Similar cooperative activities or twinning arrangements could also be developed with universities in Southeast Asia (Asian Development Bank, 1996). The imported knowledge and the experience gained will be more relevant and easier to apply to the Cambodian context.

The Research Site

As of April 1998, the Royal University of Phnom Penh on Pochentong Boulevard, the Faculty of Business and the Faculty of Pedagogy in the downtown area, and some other institutions in the capital city of Phnom Penh were not in

such bad shape. Although these areas looked very poor, yet the buildings were not so run down, taking into consideration the budget constraints as well as the political conflicts and instability that are still going on. Yet instability permeates the atmosphere. When the national election was approaching, one could expect a hand grenade exploding in any spot at any time. Nevertheless, thanks to the financial support of donor countries and international organizations as well as a number of non-governmental organizations, there exist relatively well maintained buildings, classrooms, and libraries that facilitate learning and academic activities. However, the student canteen was simply a thatched shelter.

The Royal University of Phnom Penh has a new building for its library, and even though the number of books is still small, it creates an atmosphere of learning and is a symbol of recovery. Quite a number of students were seen walking in and out of the library. One of the interesting things was that at the entrance, there were two tin boxes, one full of pebbles and the other seashells. I was told that they were devices to keep track of the number of library patrons. There were quite a number of English textbooks and magazines in the library. A female Japanese

volunteer was seen cataloging a pile of old edition National Geographic magazines.

I was told before the visit that one cannot expect much from universities in a war torn country. It was said that there was no electricity and no running water in the deteriorating buildings, though they were comparatively new. This was partly true as the swimming pool on the campus of the Royal University of Phnom Penh was empty and cracked during the visit. However, the light was on, a part of the library was air-conditioned, and the teachers were seen using tape cassette recorders in the classrooms. On the last day of the visit to the Royal University of Phnom Penh, a faculty member was seen installing an air conditioner in his room, considered quite a luxury for a government office in a developing country.

The classrooms were bare and looked more like those of secondary schools than university lecture rooms. Other equipment or teaching aids were out of the question. The offices of the faculty members looked almost empty too. There were desks and chairs, but in general no books or shelves. Although I was told that no funds were available for paper, pens, water, electricity or fuel even in the Ministry offices, this was not true. Yet conditions were far from western standards.

As the visit was during the dry season, the sun parched the campuses and made them look even more unpleasant. This was because there were few big shade trees. The Royal University of Phnom Penh covers a lot of empty space; however, buildings take only a small part of it, and the rest has not been developed for any use. There was little sign of any vitality in the open space between the academic buildings. The areas far from the buildings were not well kept, and the weeds ran wild.

In Phnom Penh, the protocol for the interviews was not that tight and complicated even though there were only a few key informants available on campus to share their views with me. It was not clear why most lecturers and administrators were absent, though it might have been they were at their second or third jobs. In general, those available that gave interviews were quite cooperative even though they seemed reserved and appeared to withhold information from me.

Findings

Question One: What Do University People Think About University Development Through a Regional Cooperative Approach?

All key informants unanimously agreed to the idea of working together for university development. The major

reason given was collaboration provided for the best use of human and financial resources. They believed that people in the Subregion could learn from one another and from the lessons and the experience gained in the past. One respondent added, "One does not have to reinvent a new wheel." Notably, quite a few interviewees expressed their concerns of the limited resources Cambodia had, and they contended that without cooperation and external assistance, Cambodian higher education development and reform could not succeed.

However, all key informants felt that technical assistance from academic partners in the West was better than from neighboring countries. Interestingly, the explanation was not simply that the West is best. One key informant said that, first, a much greater percentage of external assistance came from the West; secondly, there were still historical threats from neighboring countries that were widely felt. Another argued that it was not that GMS countries turned their backs to each other, but GMS universities needed to prove themselves that they were equally good. One key administrator commented on the difference in quality between universities in Thailand and Singapore, implying why cooperation with the latter would be more beneficial. Still, one respondent mentioned that

cooperation needed to be diversified. He felt regional cooperation was important as a complement to cooperation with the West.

Question Two: What Role Do University People Think Higher Education Has in the Development of Greater Mekong Subregional Economic Cooperation?

This question probed beyond the benefits in university development itself to GMS economic cooperation. In general, they all believed in the idea that education helped eliminate conflicts and misunderstanding. One government official added that the relationship or the connections made between university people would bring understanding among governments of different countries. However, it seemed they were a little less confident in the capacity of universities in spearheading and developing more trust as well as understanding among GMS countries specifically.

Similar to other respondents of different nationalities, most of the Cambodian academics and other government officials indicated that not much of the contents and activities in the university programs helped promote a sense of community. They all agreed that general knowledge about the Mekong River countries should be incorporated into university curricula. One key informant

did mention about the similarity of culture among GMS countries and of the benefit for the younger generation to learn about what they had in common.

Question Three: How Do University People Perceive Past and Present Cooperation for GMS University Development?

Almost all of the respondents expressed no dissatisfaction with past and ongoing university cooperative activities they have been involved in. However, one key informant revealed, "Ordinary people have a lot to do, and another level of effect [of university cooperation] demands time and energy." He went on to say that Cambodian administrators did not know much of what to do to make cooperation effective. Seniority and politics made things worse, and the trend would hardly change soon.

On the other hand, most respondents were satisfied with the cooperative activities they were involved in, and they appreciated what they have gained. Some of the positive aspects cited were the knowledge and experience gained, the connections and relationships established, and the changes in thinking and perception. For those who participated in the regional training, they found the training to be useful, and they wanted to see more of such activities in the future. They also stressed that long-term training was preferable. Another key informant viewed the

institute in the neighboring country offering training programs for GMS participants as a way to expand its horizon and broaden the scope of its service.

Even though not all informants commented on the top three critical issues as requested, the consensus was the insufficiency of funding. It was overwhelmingly pointed out how financial issues could be a critical problem. Other issues also considered as problems were the lack of incentives and staff and the lack of clear stable mechanisms for financing academic cooperation.

Notably, the majority of them did not consider the language difference a problem. However, two respondents did express their concern regarding the language competency of university staff and students. Their concern was when it came to sending students or university staff abroad for training or advanced study, the proficiency in the language used in the target country was often times the major or the only criterion. There were many complaints from those that were not selected that their ability in the content was not considered. Therefore, the majority that received the scholarships were those in the department of foreign languages. He added that although there existed language training in the university for the staff, the fact was most of the staff were not motivated to attend due to their

second jobs. Another respondent put it strongly that they would not participate in the training or any activity if they did not get paid.

Even though the language issue was not raised among the majority of the informants, I asked them further about the appropriateness of English as a GMS lingua franca. Again, their views converged in this area. English, according to the respondents, was the most suitable lingua franca. Among the reasons given was the precedent set by ASEAN, which uses English as its official language. Besides, English was more common among the GMS countries than any other single language, and it was used in business, science and technology. Remarkably, according to one key informant, two Cambodian students who got their university degrees from a university in Thailand returned to Cambodia and wrote textbooks for their students on "Introduction to Organic Spectroscopy" and "Polymerscience and Synthesis" in English not Khmer. In their view, besides avoiding unnecessary translation to Khmer or creation of English technical terms in Khmer, they expected their students to be able to read English text. Their students simply could not advance in their studies and careers if their English was not good enough.

One informant gave an inside view of the situation. He commented that French was still used in certain university classes, so there were classes where Cambodians taught Cambodians in French. However, the trend has been towards English. Students know that they needed to study English to get a good job even though the French would pay them ten dollars a month to study French.

When asked to assess the language competency of their peers, most of the respondents viewed academics very positively in language ability. The rest of university people such as administrators and supporting staff were rated as only having "fair" capability.

The respondents were asked further about how they perceived university people in general regarding international academic activities. The majority had positive attitude towards their peers, stating that they were interested in international cooperation. A couple of respondents remarked that interest has been increased among the younger generation, and they were learning to become internationalized. Only one respondent criticized Cambodians for being quite narrow-minded and ethnocentric.

Cambodian informants were relatively more open than the other informants to point out the sensitive issues university people should be aware of. They pointed out

border issues, history issues like past political conflicts and intervention, and natural resource exploitation issues like logging. There was one key administrator who suggested that GMS countries should think more about the future and forget the bitter conflicts in the past for the sake of development.

Convergence of opinions was evident in the last issue regarding the different stages of higher education development among the GMS countries. One informant stated that there would be the feeling of inferiority and superiority. Besides, one had a concern that different academic standards would prohibit certain cooperative activities. On the other hand, another expected there would be a problem only at the early stage when universities in Cambodia were not yet well developed. Even though the universities in Cambodia could not be equal academic partners to universities elsewhere at the time, young Cambodians would be graduating from overseas. These rising Cambodian scholars were perceived as bright and motivated, and it was hoped they would help improve the Cambodian higher education system.

Question Four: What Are the Possibilities, Given the Present Situation, for Future Cooperation among GMS Universities?

The suggestions diverged a bit; however, the range of possible measures cited were not very different from those in other countries. They viewed cooperative research studies, program development and staff development through international attachments and secondments of personnel, and international sharing and exchange of expertise and intellectual resources to be possible. One respondent noted that Cambodian academics might not be able to initiate or take a leadership role in research, but there seemed to be no problem in joining their counterparts or contributing something in such activities.

The areas or fields of study they suggested as viable and necessary were economics, education, language training, environment, tourism, engineering, and agriculture. In the area of economics, in particular, the respondents argued that Thailand could help Cambodia with economic reform, training government officials, and helping design university programs, as well as assist in curriculum development. One informant stressed that Thailand had a long experience in tourism and could help Cambodia promote key tourist attractions like the world famous Angkor Wat and train the necessary personnel.

Lastly, as mentioned earlier, Cambodian respondents had a critical concern regarding financial support. Though

most respondents were not very specific; a couple pointed out what they expected from the governments, donor agencies, and private sectors. They expected political will or commitment from governments concerned, capabilities or expertise from the private sectors, and resources from donor agencies to assist university development cooperation.

One key administrator, when asked if the economic crisis of 1997 would be a threat or hindrance to university cooperation, argued that money was not always the problem, and it depended on how one defined the term "cooperation." He cited cooperative educational research among universities in Cambodia and Thailand and contended that such an activity would not cost much money, only time, energy, and commitment.

Summary

1. The majority of key Cambodian informants agreed that a regional cooperative approach was beneficial to and necessary for university development.
2. They also believed that university development cooperation would encourage or facilitate cooperation on other fronts; however, the belief was not very strong.
3. In general, they were satisfied with the past and ongoing university cooperative activities. The critical

issues they viewed as obstacles to university development cooperation were the insufficiency of funding, the lack of incentives, and the lack of clear and firm policies and mechanisms for international academic cooperation.

4. What they saw as practical measures in the near future were cooperative research studies, international sharing of expertise and resources, and staff development through international secondments of personnel.

CHAPTER VI

FINDINGS ON LAO PDR

Overview of Lao Higher Education

In 1986, a few years before the end of the Cold War, the socialist country of Lao PDR (formerly Laos until 1975) was forced by the economic stagnation to transform its centrally-planned economy into a market-oriented system. Realizing that economic development is an urgent national priority transcending political ideology, the Lao government has adopted a policy called the New Economic Mechanism (NEM). NEM exposes its economy to market forces and opens up the economy to the outside world (Suzuki, 1997; Than & Tan, 1997). Unfortunately, Lao PDR has had to face a major obstacle in this economic reform, that is, the insufficiency of an educated, quality workforce. Though the country is known to have an abundance of natural resources--hydroelectric power, forest, and minerals--competent human resources are insufficient (Spaulding, 1992; Than & Tan, 1997). According to Than and Tan (1997), human resources is considered one of the most important development policy instruments. For the time being, it is difficult for the country to proceed with its new policy.

This landlocked country has been categorized as a low-income economy by the United Nations and the World Bank

(Spaulding, 1992, Weidman, 1997). According to Spaulding (1992), besides the lack of people with higher education and vocational skills, the country lacks adequate physical infrastructure and domestic as well as foreign savings. Sonnasinh and Haq-Perrera (1994) point out that in 1992 about half of the development assistance in Lao PDR was technical cooperation.

Before the fall of the Soviet system, the assistance mainly came from the Soviet Union and Eastern Europe. Nowadays, technical assistance is provided instead by UNDP and other United Nations agencies, Japan, Sweden, Australia, and France. The dependence on foreign technical assistance reflects the dire need of human resource development in Lao PDR.

There are reasons that help explain this shortcoming. First, during the French colonial era (1893-1955), an indigenous educated labor force was not promoted since the colonizing power felt it was unnecessary. Upon its independence, the country was left vulnerable due to widespread poverty and the relatively low level of human resources (Than & Tan, 1997). The French did introduce to the country a modern school system, which coexisted with the traditional schools run by Buddhist monks (Dommen, 1985). During the colonial period, French was made the

language of instruction and was still used in secondary schools until 1975. Since then, Laos has been the medium of instruction at all levels (Duberg, 1995).

Secondly, the country later went into two decades of civil war that ended with the victory of the communist movement in 1975 (Duberg, 1995). The warfare together with the limited institutional capabilities aborted the aim of the government in educational improvement.

Thirdly, the macro-educational policy in the following decade (1975-1985) was focused on quantitative expansion. The massive expansion that was primarily supported by external assistance from Vietnam, the Soviet Union, and Eastern Bloc countries entailed a large number of teachers. As the country lacked trained teaching personnel partly due to the exodus of many professionals after the revolution, unqualified and poorly trained teachers were recruited. Undoubtedly, deficient teaching had a serious negative impact on the students, who in turn proceeded to the next level and kept the vicious cycle continuing. The poor quality of teachers was coupled with the budget constraints that resulted in insufficient instructional materials and poor physical facilities. The educational administrators and other concerned personnel were no better trained than the teachers. The administrators remaining lacked training

and relevant experience to administer and manage educational reform and policy. Inappropriate curricula was the result (Duberg, 1995; Spaulding, 1992; Tan & Than, 1997).

Higher education in Lao PDR is relatively new. In 1958, the Royal Institute of Law and Administration was established in Vientiane, the capital city. Later in 1964, the National Institute of Pedagogy of Vientiane was established. In 1988, the Institute was renamed the University Pedagogical Institute, a higher learning institution for prospective schoolteachers. In 1969, the Royal School of Medicine in Vientiane was founded and in 1975 renamed the University of Health Sciences. Not until 1984 was the National Polytechnic Institute set up, offering 5-year programs in fundamental sciences and engineering. These higher education institutes in the early days were specialized institutions; arts and sciences universities were nonexistent at that time (Can, 1991; Weidman, 1997). According to Nakhavith (1997), the Royal Institute of Law and administration, the National Institute of Pedagogy of Vientiane, and the Royal School of Medicine, together with the Institute of Buddhism Education were grouped under the name "Sisavangvong University" in 1969.

However, shortly after the changes in curriculum at each institution, Sisavangvong University system was dissolved.

In addition to the above institutions providing university-level programs, there were also postsecondary technical colleges in various specialized fields. These colleges were under the supervision of different ministries and served as pre-service training colleges of line ministries (Nakhavith, 1995). So, after graduation, students typically went to work for the corresponding ministry departments. For instance, the Ministry of Communication, Transport, Post, and Construction supervised the College of Communication and Transportation. The College of Forestry was under the responsibility of the Ministry of Agriculture and Forestry. Besides, there were teacher training colleges that were controlled by the Ministry of Education (Nakhavith, 1997; Weidman, 1997).

The overspecialization and the lack of unity regarding the control of higher education institutions led to the consolidation and rationalization of existing postsecondary education institutions in 1995 (Nakhavith, 1997). Under the technical assistance of the Asian Development Bank, the National University of Laos (NUOL) was established by amalgamating the University Pedagogical Institute in Dong Dok, the University of Health sciences, and the National

Polytechnic Institute. The institutions once under the control of several ministries have been transferred to the Ministry of Education. The NUOL reorganized the combined institutions into seven departments called faculties (Nakhavith, 1995, 1997; Weidman, 1997).

Since the first academic year of NUOL in 1996, there have been 7 faculties, namely the Faculty of Education, Faculty of Sciences, Faculty of Social Sciences and Humanities, Faculty of Economics and Management, Faculty of Engineering and Architecture, Faculty of Agriculture and Forestry, and Faculty of Medical Sciences. These faculties are located in four different campuses: Dongdok--the main campus--Sokpaluang, Phiawat, and Nabong. The purpose was to utilize the existing buildings from the previous institutions (Nakhavith, 1997). A further plan is to offer shorter programs by transforming teacher training colleges and other postsecondary institutions into "regional colleges," affiliated also with NUOL (Weidman, 1997).

Notably, the education system in Laos is quite unique in having a 5-year primary education, followed by 3-year lower secondary education and 3-year upper secondary education. The number of formal school years students have had prior to their first year in any higher education institution, excluding pre-school, is eleven instead of

twelve as is in the education system of many other countries (Duberg, 1995; Phannolath, 1998; Spaulding, 1992). However, a bachelor's degree program at NUOL lasts five years or more. The program normally consists of two years of foundational studies followed by three or more years of professional studies at the specific faculties. However, some diploma programs at NUOL may take less than five years (Nakhavith, 1995, 1997).

Admission to NUOL is based upon the National Entrance Examination and the quota system. Entrance by quota has been established for many years, even before the set up of NUOL. Quotas help provide for equity of opportunity for students in both city and remote provincial areas alike (Spaulding, 1992). The quota system is also linked with the scholarship provision. However, according to Nakhavith (1997), the role of the quota system will soon be lessened in the admissions process. Often students have been nominated by their provinces for reasons irrelevant to their academic attainment. Some are placed in programs or institutions not of their choice or interest. Moreover, there have been various operational problems, in part, due to the inabilities of provincial administrators (Nakhavith, 1997).

Higher education institutions face similar problems to those of other levels of education. Under-qualified teaching staff together with inadequate facilities and limited textbooks as well as equipment are problems affecting the quality of institutions. According to Nakhavith (1997) and Weidman (1997), at the country's key institutions like the former University Pedagogical Institute, approximately 80 percent of the staff have only bachelor's degrees or diplomas. Among the remaining 20 percent, five percent are now in training. Academic staff and students were once sent to the Soviet Union and other Eastern European countries for advanced degrees. However, after the dissolution of the Soviet system, the economical opportunities to further one's studies were dramatically reduced. In addition to the fact mentioned before about the emigration of the elite and many professionals after 1975, low salaries and poor working conditions discourage both new graduates and those already in service from the teaching profession.

Nonetheless, the recent consolidation and rationalization of higher education institutions will hopefully result in the efficient utilization of existing staff. The reform will make possible the pooling of qualified staff in relevant subject areas as well as

efficient utilization of physical facilities and equipment. It should be noted as well that the need for the reform also derived from the fact that higher education institutions in the past were under the supervision of and received budgets through separate government agencies. Poor coordination undoubtedly led to the inefficient use of scarce resources.

In general, the governance of higher education institutions rests with the Department of Higher, Technical and Vocational Education (HTVED) in the Ministry of Education. It is in charge of policy matters, quality control, including supervision, monitoring, and management. According to Phannolath (1998), at the time when postsecondary institutions were with related ministries, HTVED approved their curricula. Now that the National University of Laos has been established, high level administration and academic decisions still remain with the Ministry of Education. However, with the exception of policy and planning, accreditation, and budgetary recommendations, the Ministry will gradually delegate decision-making functions and authority to the University Council. The Council consists of the President, Vice-President, Deans or Directors, and representatives from teaching staff and students. At present, the Minister of

Labor and Welfare has been appointed as the NUOL Council President (Ministry of Education, 1998).

According to Than and Tan (1997), even though the country recently has attained a relatively high growth rate, due to the many problems encountered especially regarding human resources, the country will be dependent on external resources and assistance for some time to come. With fiscal constraints and increasing demands on the government, there will not be much increase in budget allocation for the educational reforms planned. Nakhavith (1995) contends that many NUOL projects can only be made possible with external assistance, especially from the Asian Development Bank. It is very likely then that the ensuing years will witness the complex impact of involvement of international donors on the Lao educational system. Furthermore, Lao PDR has also been affected by the economic crisis in Southeast Asia in 1997, especially the sharply depreciating value of its currency--the kip. The crisis will certainly affect not only the country itself but also other countries like Thailand that have been providing Laos with bilateral assistance.

According to the concern expressed by the key informants in Lao PDR and Thailand, Lao PDR is still presently short of personnel and qualified officials to

manage the inflow of foreign assistance efficiently and effectively. Furthermore, the technical assistance provided by donors in the past was of little relevance to conditions and problems in the country. In the past decade, many Lao students were sent to the former Soviet Union and the Eastern Bloc countries for advanced degrees. However, dissatisfied with the performance of returning students, the government sent fewer students there in the latter part of that period. Since 1986 when the economic reform started, the places for study have shifted to countries with market economies that provide Laos with bilateral assistance (Than & Tan, 1997). Thailand is important because of its being closest in cultural and linguistic terms. Besides, Thailand has dealt with several similar developmental issues addressed now in Laos (Sonnasin & Haq-Perrera, 1994).

NUOL has arranged contacts with universities in Australia, Thailand, and Vietnam. In search of financing and technical assistance, the University now participates in such organizations as SEAMEO RIHED and UNESCO PROAP. Several projects have been developed with assistance from France, Germany, Switzerland, Japan, the United States, China, Thailand, and Vietnam. The Japanese government, through JICA, in particular also helped NUOL develop the

Faculty of Economics and Management (FEM) that was established in June 1995 (Ministry of Education, 1998). FEM is considered the first faculty of this kind in Lao PDR, and it was established in response to the shortage of qualified people to support the economic transformation process. FEM will certainly need assistance from foreign scholars regarding the program and curriculum development at this preliminary stage as the faculty members lack experiences and the number of lecturers are insufficient (Nouansavanh, 1998). I was told that senior teachers from the Faculty of Engineering and Architecture were recruited as FEM faculty.

The emphasis of macro-educational policy in Lao PDR has shifted from the quantitative expansion in 1975-1985 to the current emphasis on qualitative improvement (Than & Tan, 1997). There is a lot to be done regarding the quality of higher education. At present, there are approximately 40 foreign visiting scholars from countries like Germany, France, Australia, and the United States, teaching at the National University of Laos (Ministry of Education, 1998). Qualified and well-trained Lao lecturers will need to assume those positions in the future. They will need to produce textbooks and materials in the Lao language and translate educational manuals for students to

use in classes and libraries. The country and the university cannot depend on foreign scholars and assistance forever. Secondary school graduates will not have to acquire knowledge through a second or foreign language if textbooks and teaching is conducted in their native language.

The inability of each NUOL faculty to develop curricula that are responsive to the changing needs of society is another important quality issue. Each faculty was once a highly specialized training institution under the supervision of its related Ministry. It served narrowly with predetermined programs to train prospective personnel for its parent Ministry. Since that linkage was dissolved, the faculty and its personnel have not been prepared to do the job differently than they are accustomed to. It will take quite some time after training of existing staff for adequate curricula and materials to be developed.

The establishment of NUOL has given a new meaning to higher education in Lao PDR. This is because it is considered a university--an institution for higher learning--in a true sense. Than and Tan (1997) put it bluntly, "There is no university in Lao PDR although there are three institutions that serve equivalent purposes and

award bachelor's degrees" (p. 163). I was also informed by both Lao and Thai informants that starting in 1998 the Lao government would send only graduate students to Thailand to study for either master's or doctoral degrees since the country is now able to offer undergraduate programs on its own. It should be noted here that Thailand has provided bilateral assistance to Lao PDR, offering scholarships for Lao secondary school graduates to study for bachelor's degrees in various disciplines since 1992 (Thailand Development Research Institute, 1997).

The Research Site

The National University of Laos (NUOL) at Dong Dok, the core campus, is located in the outskirts of Vientiane, about nine kilometers away from downtown. The university buildings are scattered but not very far from each other in the vast field that is dotted with palm trees. The entire scene of the campus is not much different from the other parts of Vientiane, with the exception of the downtown center. The slow pace and traditional way of life in this very sparsely populated country can be seen on the campus, the same as elsewhere. The administrative building and the library are in good condition. Most of the textbooks and magazines in the library are either in English or French. The size of the library is relatively small for being the

main library of the National University. The classrooms are well maintained, but most of them look more like those of secondary schools. In one classroom, students were seen gathering closely around the teacher during a demonstration of a scientific experiment.

The high ranking university administrators interviewed were cooperative and appeared to be very knowledgeable about the university and the education system as a whole. They shared some interesting views even though he appeared quite reserved at the same time. Prior to the appointment for the interview, I was first issued a pass by a high ranking official at the Ministry of Education. The interview was arranged also by the same official with the permission from his immediate supervisor. The interview was not tape-recorded; however, I was allowed to take notes. I was also allowed to walk around the campus, giving me an opportunity to visit the library as well as the classrooms and to talk with some of the students.

The Sokpaluang campus where the Faculty of Engineering and Architecture (FEA) is located looks more modern. The campus is closer to the downtown area. FEA has seven departments: Civil Engineering, Electrical Engineering, Mechanical Engineering, Architecture, Irrigation Engineering, Transportation and Communication, and

Electrotechnics and Electronics. The current enrollment is over 2,500 students with approximately 280 teaching staff, among these 42 have doctoral and master's degrees and 238 have bachelor's degrees or no college degrees. It has several new buildings and appeared to be better maintained than the campus at Dong Dok. The administrative building and the offices of the administrators and staff do not look much different from those in western countries. The campus is shady with big trees, and the lawn is well kept. Here, I met with the other key informant who is another high-ranking administrator of the university. He appeared to be even more reserved than the first one.

The officials interviewed appeared to be very careful about giving away information. Even though the interviews were conducted in Thai and Laos, which are mutually intelligible between the key informants and me, a good rapport seemed difficult to establish. This was disappointing as Thailand and Lao PDR are known to be closest to each other in terms of culture and linguistics. However, this supports the hypothesis that while there is a cultural bond between the two countries, there is also a lack of trust that can be felt even in education circles.

Findings

Question One: What Do University People Think About University Development Through a Regional Cooperative Approach?

The views of Lao academics and other key government officials converged when asked if university development would benefit from international university cooperation. The key informants thought higher education reform in Lao PDR would need a lot of support, either human or financial, from neighboring countries and those in the West. Some of them mentioned the Thai training programs and scholarships for Laotian university students and in-service government officials. Also mentioned was aid and technical assistance offered by the Asian Development Bank, Australia, Canada, and the United States.

Quite a few respondents cited examples to support the positive view they had about subregional university development cooperation. One concern was that Laos was largely an agrarian economy, making assistance from highly advanced technology countries in the West irrelevant. For the time being, the belief was that what the neighboring countries had to offer seemed to match Laos' absorptive capacity better.

On the other hand, none of the key informants viewed international competition as a strategy to develop universities, at least for the time being. One respondent explained further that the educational standards in Laos were still relatively low when compared with those of neighboring countries. What the country was focusing on was how to establish more linkages with universities overseas, especially those of neighboring countries like Thailand rather than competition with neighboring universities.

The common answer whether GMS universities still gave more importance to their counterparts in the more advanced countries was affirmative. Among the reasons given was that Western universities or developed countries could provide more, especially in terms of financial support. Furthermore, one respondent conjectured that it might be because information about their counterparts in the Subregion was still lacking. In other words, each university in the Subregion knows very little about what its counterpart needs or has to offer.

Question Two: What Role Do University People Think Higher Education Has in the Development of Greater Mekong Subregional Economic Cooperation?

All key informants believed that education could help promote mutual understanding and alleviate enmity among people. Specifically, they thought that the assumption could be applied to the Greater Mekong Subregion as well, though the belief was not that strong. In this regard, one respondent remarked that education facilitated a channel for people to communicate with each other; and educational cooperation could lead to more cooperative activities on other fronts. When talking about the Thai-Laos Association, he also cited the example of his subordinate who went to Thailand for a short study visit and developed good friendship with Thai counterparts. In addition, he believed that through education, conflicts and misunderstanding could be talked over, thereby problems or disputes being more likely to be settled.

In response to what extent university programs or curricula helped promote the unity in the Subregion, the respondents felt that there was a lot that had been left undone. They also all agreed that general knowledge about the neighboring countries should be incorporated into university courses. One respondent informed me that there were only a few courses in upper secondary and tertiary education to equip students with knowledge of their neighboring countries.

Question Three: How Do University People Perceive Past and Present Cooperation for GMS University Development?

According to one key informant, so far Lao PDR has only had university linkages and cooperative programs with China, Thailand, and Vietnam. Since 1992, the Thai government through its Department of Technical and Economic Cooperation and a few other government sectors has provided Laos with technical assistance as well as financial support in terms of scholarships, equipment, and infrastructure development costs. Lao students have enrolled in Thai university undergraduate and graduate programs, and government officials in Thai training programs and study tours. China and Vietnam also accept Lao students for advanced study in fields such as medicine, agriculture, economics, and engineering. Thus, the satisfaction or dissatisfaction expressed about GMS educational cooperation was applied to China, Vietnam, and especially Thailand.

In general, the key informants have been impressed with the outcome of academic and technical cooperation. In particular, they were satisfied with what the returning students or trainees could directly apply to their work. Training was perceived as easier in Thailand than in other countries due to the similarities in the Thai and Lao languages. Besides, Laos have been exposed to Thai culture

and language through television broadcasts along the border. In many areas or fields of study, the university programs and staff in the neighboring countries were appropriate for the current developmental needs of Laos. The expertise and academic qualifications of teachers in the host institutions on average were perceived as acceptable. Moreover, one respondent mentioned that he believed there was a positive change in attitude towards other GMS countries among people concerned because of the cooperative activities.

Still, the academic standards of some host institutions in neighboring countries caused difficulty or failure for some Lao students. Some Lao students have dropped out or changed their majors to less demanding ones. In addition, English-speaking countries like Australia were considered more desirable than the neighboring countries for English language training.

On the other hand, Lao informants expressed their concerns over the complicated bureaucratic procedures that slowed down cooperation in general. This was sometimes coupled with misunderstanding. Inadequate preparation of students and trainees sent abroad and selection not based on merit are problems that were mentioned. As a consequence, the benefits from training or scholarships was

not fully gained or simply wasted. In addition, the inconsistency and frequent changes of policy at the government level causes complications. Another complaint was the high cost of training or study offered in a Thai higher education institution when such activities were not directly sponsored. Nonetheless, the key informants felt there had been some improvement, and they hoped for a better future. One added that higher education in Laos had recently been given more freedom and autonomy to directly contact their counterparts abroad, making cooperation less complicated and cumbersome.

When asked to enumerate some of the issues that might be obstacles to university cooperation, the majority of informants were quick to point out the insufficiency of funding. In addition, Lao respondents were concerned with the lack of staff, including academic and support staff, and the insufficiency of information networks. This latter issue is consistent with the view that GMS higher education institutions still lack information about each other.

Grave concern over the economic crisis in the region, in full effect since 1997, was also raised by many informants. They cited that many plans and programs had been cut short or not fully developed because of a country like Thailand that had recently provided Laos with

financial aid was now in a difficult position itself. One respondent believed that future cooperative programs should maintain and concentrate more on quality, as the number of programs would certainly reduce.

Most respondents seemed to focus on cooperation with Thailand, where language differences were not viewed as critical. According to a conversation with a few Lao students in Thailand, I was told that speaking skill was not a problem; however, when it came to reading and writing skills, difficulties arose. Some Lao students met during the field study also mentioned the difficulty students and government officials have had in the study or training programs abroad. Besides Thailand, Vietnam, and China, there are countries like Japan and Australia where language proficiency could be an issue. Students, for example, are to study the language of the host countries at least a year before they get into the programs. One respondent mentioned that even though the country was once a French colony, English has become more popular. One of the reasons was Laos has become a member of ASEAN. Another is the increase in study abroad opportunities in English speaking countries.

When asked to assess the English proficiency of university people, most informants had confidence in the

language ability of administrators and academics, but less with support staff, students, and trainees. During the field studies, especially in the seminars and conferences, I found quite a few Lao officials who could speak relatively fluent English. On the other hand, in Thai universities where Lao students were enrolled under Thai scholarship, there have been complaints that many Lao students are not doing well in English classes.

In response to the question regarding the perception of their peers' attitudes towards international academic activities, the majority of respondents converged in confirming that university people were interested in joining cooperative activities with their peers abroad. However, two key informants expressed their concerns that due to limited human resources, the increasing need to participate more in various international activities would not be fully met. The problem was not only the relatively limited number of officials but the qualifications of those officials also.

Regarding the sensitive issues university people should be well aware of, the major concern among respondents was the domination issue--a more developed country taking advantage of Laos. One respondent stressed that sincerity was the key issue. He also cited some

incidents where Thailand seemed to take advantage of Laos economically. The implication was that Laos still needed to be careful when it came to the area of education.

Another respondent pointed out that equality and sovereignty made receiving aid a sensitive issue.

The last issue raised regarding the perception of past and present university development cooperation was the different stages of higher education development in the Subregion. Most of the informants recognized the differences as problems; however, they were quite optimistic that the problem could be solved. Regarding unequal partnerships, I perceived during the field study at the research site that there was suspicion felt toward Thailand's recent provision of aid to Lao PDR. That is, what will Thailand get in return? One academic contended that the neighboring countries should be aware of what Laos could and could not offer. He cited the large difference in capacity and budget available at his institution as compared with its counterpart in Thailand. He cautioned that the Thai academic partner should not have unrealistically expectations from his institution in return for cooperation.

Question Four: What Are the Possibilities, Given the Present Situation, for Future Cooperation among GMS Universities?

The suggested activities or actions that Lao respondents gave were cooperative research studies, regional documentation and information services, and international study and teaching visits. Even though other measures were also mentioned, the majority agreed on these three. A couple of informants pointed out that in their opinions bilateral cooperative activities were more likely than multilateral ones, especially in the area of higher education. When asked to suggest the areas or fields of study the informants viewed as appropriate or possible for cooperation, economics, education, environmental studies, agriculture, health science, and engineering were pointed out.

As reported earlier, the Lao informants believed external assistance was needed for the development of the country. When asked to be more specific, some key informants said that the government first needed to facilitate and promote more cooperative activities. Secondly, they needed donor countries to supply financial support and technical assistance. In particular, one respondent said that the country needed experts. For

example, experts in education to help Laos design and develop curricula and programs of study. Funding for educational equipment or teaching facilities are also needed. Besides, help is needed in textbook production. At present, the Asian Development Bank provides incentives for university teachers to write textbooks for students and libraries.

Summary

1. There was a convergence among the view of Lao informants that university development would gain benefits from international university cooperation.
2. All key informants believed that generally education could help promote mutual understanding and alleviate enmity among people; however, when it came to GMS in particular even though they agreed, they seemed to be more cautious.
3. The informants were impressed with the outcome of academic and technical cooperation with the other GMS countries. What they considered critical issues were insufficiency of funding, the lack of staff, and the insufficiency of information networks.
4. Most of them proposed cooperative research studies, regional documentation and information services, and

international study and teaching visits as future practical measures.

CHAPTER VII

FINDINGS ON MYANMAR

Overview of Myanmar Higher Education

The fact that Myanmar (formerly Burma until 1989) has been secluded for many years helps explain why so little information is available about the country's present higher education system as compared with other GMS countries. In the two most recent publications related to Asian higher education by Postiglione and Mak (1997) and Wongsothorn and Yibing (1998), there is no chapter on Myanmar. The omission may be explained either by the fact that the authors chose not to include Myanmar or current information is simply not available. Even so, it is known that universities across the country have been closed by the military government since December 1996 to deprive students of places for political gatherings (Marukatat, 1998). This temporary shut down is not the first in its history; universities and colleges were closed before in 1991 shortly after they were reopened earlier that year (The Europa World Year Book, 1997).

It may be inappropriate for an outsider to judge the military government's actions; however, the frequent disruption of higher education would seem to have a tremendously negative effect on the making of professionals

and the cultivation of skills badly needed for the development of the country.

Nonetheless, Myanmar educational tradition is relatively strong and its higher education can be traced back as early as the late nineteenth century (McLean, 1992). According to Crellin (1995), Myanmar has achieved a high level of literacy, approximately 84 percent, which is relatively high for a low-income country. Myint (1995) contends that education in Myanmar has been given the highest priority since the era of King Anawrahta during the mid-eleventh century. In the early days, before the adoption of the western type of formal schooling, Buddhist monasteries everywhere in the Myanmar Kingdom provided the youths with religious and basic elementary education. Higher learning could also be found at that time in famous monasteries especially in upper Myanmar. Not until the beginning of 1825 when the Myanmar education system was westernized. Britain colonized Myanmar and introduced British schools alongside the traditional monastery schools.

The first University of Rangoon (now Yangon) was established in 1920 as an affiliation of the University of Calcutta in India (McLean, 1995; Myint, 1995). It was originally Rangoon College that was founded in 1878.

According to McLean (1995), higher education in Myanmar was once highly respected. Based upon the American standards, its quality was regarded as higher than that of Indian equivalents in the early twentieth century.

However, the quality of education has declined. First of all, the slow rate of economic growth during the past decades constrained the development of education (Din, 1992). Secondly, educators have been deprived of current curriculum development practices and techniques because of the country's isolation. Thus, very few changes have been made to curriculum development and teaching methodology, compared with those of most other Asian countries (Crellin, 1995). Thirdly, as a result of the military government's attempt to stabilize the political situation in the urban areas, the two original large university systems of Yangon and Mandalay were regionalized and weakened in the process. Steinberg (1989) terms the process as "administrative fragmentation of higher education." Because university students tend to be allied with the Aung San Suu Kyi's National League for Democracy (NLD), especially in urban areas like Yangon, the government wanted to spread out the students. To disperse university students, the government upgraded colleges once affiliated with the two urban universities to degree colleges and universities. The

government also established regional colleges where students study for two years before proceeding to the Yangon and Mandalay Universities (Crellin, 1995; McLean, 1995; Steinberg, 1989). Within a few years, the number of universities, excluding colleges, rose from three to eleven (Nyunt, 1996).

Diversification and regionalization of higher education have positive and negative impacts. From the government's point of view, regionalization and diversification of the higher education has brought higher education to almost all states and divisions. Young people no longer have to travel long distances to acquire higher learning, making it more affordable and cost effective. Since Myanmar is a country of various races residing in different areas of the country, regional colleges will enable more ethnic minorities to access higher education. Similar reasons underlie the logic of the recent establishment of the University of Distance Education, a means to acquire higher education without having to leave home. It is this equal access to higher education that is claimed to contribute to national consolidation (Nyunt, 1996). This approach seems reasonable for a country that has been plagued by widespread ethnic insurgency and rebellion.

Myanmar has not maintained links with the British, yet the education system continues to be based on the British system (Crellin, 1995; Din, 1992). Myanmar's education system includes basic education, higher education, and technical education. The basic education system consists of three levels of schooling--primary, middle, and high schools, including teacher's training institutions. The higher education system covers universities, colleges, and institutes of various fields of studies. The technical and vocation education system encompasses technical, vocational, and agricultural schools (Din, 1992).

The educational standards are also comparable to those of the British (Din, 1992). Myanmar has inherited the highly selective education system of the British. Generally, the examination system controls almost every aspect of the education system. All levels of education are considered as a preparation for the next stage on the academic ladder. Thereby, end-of-year examinations at each grade level are extremely important (Crellin, 1995). Badgley (1990) remarks that the education system is designed to help students pass examinations but ill-prepares them for jobs.

According to Crellin (1995), approximately four percent of the primary and secondary schools' graduates are

fed into the higher education system. The Myanmar Board of Examinations administers an annual countrywide high school examination. All examinations are declared either "A" or "B." Subjects to be taken in the examination include English, Myanmar, mathematics, integrated science, and social science. Only those in the "A" list are eligible for admission to the universities, colleges, and institutes. Those in the "B" list are only eligible for admission to the technical or vocational schools. Alternatively, those on the "B" list may sit for the whole examination a year later in hopes of getting on the "A" list (Ministry of Education, 1997).

There is a need to foster national unity and to purge the country of its colonial past. Therefore, some want to strengthen the use of Myanmar as the national language. However, English has been taught as a subject or used as the medium of instruction in schools and universities on and off over the last six decades (Crellin, 1995). When English is taught as a subject, the emphasis is placed on reading and writing skills, not on speaking, with a modest aim to prepare students for the use of textbooks written in English. According to Crellin (1995) and Than (1992), English was used as the medium of instruction in colleges

and universities in the late 1980s, and in 1991 English was also used in certain high school level classes.

Myanmar language is generally the medium of communication of the vast majority of people and is spoken as a second language by ethnic minorities (Ministry of Education, 1997). The government's attempt to de-anglicize the country and to strengthen the national unity has inhibited the wider use of English. The change in the country's name from Burma to Myanmar and the name changes of cities, rivers, and roads, as well as the taking down of English signs are good examples of the recent attempt to limit English (Cummings & Wheeler, 1996; Niyomtham, 1997). As Myanmar continues as the medium of instruction, especially at the primary level, it is expected that less people will be comfortable with using English. Cummings and Wheeler (1996) contend that the older generation has a higher percentage of English speakers. Amidst this, an English newspaper in Myanmar, "The New Light of Myanmar," has remained in operation since 1914.

In the Myanmar higher education system, institutions of higher education can be grouped into two major categories, i.e. professional institutes and non-professional institutes. Examples of the former are the Institute of Economics, the Institute of Pharmacy, the

Institute of Medicine, the Institute of Education, and the Institute of Computer Science and Technology. Examples of the latter are those colleges and universities of arts and science. The First University of Yangon is in this category. Some other institutions of this type are Mandalay University, Mawlamyine University, University of Distance Education, and those upgraded degree colleges like Magway University, Taunggyi University, and Sittewe University (Ministry of National Planning and Economic Development, 1997a; Nyunt, 1996). It should be noted that the University of Mandalay and the University of Mawlamyine were originally colleges affiliated with the University of Yangon. Also, almost all of the professional institutes in Myanmar were at one time faculties of the University of Yangon. Recently, the Institute of Foreign Languages, once affiliated with the University of Yangon, has also been upgraded to the University of Foreign Languages.

It should be noted that most previous sources on Myanmar higher education, such as Din (1992) and Chutintaranond and Cooperat (1995), indicated that there are only three universities in Myanmar (Yangon, Mandalay, and Mawlamyine opened in 1991). Government documents (Ministry of Education, 1997; Ministry of National Planning and Economic Development, 1997a; Nyunt, 1996) are also

inconsistent regarding the total number of each type of higher education institution in the country.

Nyunt (1996), Myanmar Director General of the Department of Higher Education, states that there are at present eleven arts and sciences universities, six professional institutes, five degree colleges, and twelve colleges. These 34 institutions are under the jurisdiction of his Department in the Ministry of Education. At present, the Department of Higher Education still practices a centrally planned system of management (Ministry of Education, 1997).

These 34 institutions are not the only ones in Myanmar. There are other similar institutions conducted by other Ministries. Under the Ministry of Health are found the Institute of Medicine, the Institute of Nursing, the Institute of Pharmacy, and the Institute of Paramedical Sciences. The Institute of Forestry is with the Ministry of Forestry; the Institute of Agriculture is with the Ministry of Agriculture; and the Institute of Animal Husbandry and Veterinary Science is with the Ministry of Livestock, Breeding and Fisheries. Some of these institutes were transferred from the Ministry of Education to promote efficiency. Placing universities under the

supervision of different Ministries is quite common among the GMS countries (Nyunt, 1996).

A typical university in Myanmar is made up of various departments such as Anthropology, Chemistry, English, History, International Relations, Law, Mathematics, Philosophy, Psychology, and Zoology. There are two kinds of undergraduate courses offered. The first is the four year ordinary degree course, and the second is the five year honors degree course for students of high calibre. At the University of Yangon, the doctorate program was instituted in 1994 in Chemistry, Mathematics, and Physics. There are plans to offer more such advanced programs in Geography, the Myanmar Language, Botany, Geology, and History. The goal is that it will no longer be necessary for scholars to go abroad to further their studies in such fields (Nyunt, 1996). Furthermore, professional fields of study such as medicine, education, agriculture, and computer science are offered in separate professional institutes. The courses in those professional institutes take one or two years longer than the normal four year programs at the universities of arts and sciences.

As mentioned earlier, education has a solid tradition in Myanmar, and the existing culture serves as a positive foundation. The five year national plan of the country

(1996/1997 to 2000/2001), states the goal "to promote human resource development efforts through improved educational and health facilities with special emphasis on...development of modern, advanced technologies"

(Ministry of National Planning and Economic Development, 1996, p.3). It seems that the government is truly concerned with the current status of education in Myanmar. Actually, in 1990 and 1991, UNESCO and UNDP commissioned an Education Sector Study which was quite a landmark as little had been changed in the education system of the country for over three decades (Crellin, 1995).

Even though Myanmar has a relatively well-developed school infrastructure, the problems regarding the content, organization, and management of the education processes still exist. In addition, the country is now in transition from a centrally planned economic system to a market-oriented one. Thus the need for education reforms is more urgent than ever. The aim is to keep abreast of the entailing social and economic changes. At the higher education level, one of the measures taken according to the Myanmar Education Committee is to teach subjects that are in line with the prevailing economic system (Ministry of National Planning and Economic Development, 1997b; UNESCO/UNDP, 1995).

According to the report of the UNESCO/UNDP Education Sector Study (1995), six priority projects specifically for higher education have been proposed. These are improving the curriculum development process, improving teaching staff development, improving facilities and instructional materials, finding and using additional resources, designing an educational management system, and designing a credit system for possible use in higher education. These proposed programs of action reflect the state and quality of the higher education system in the country. As a result of the slow economic growth, for example, there is a severe lack of adequate physical resources such as adequate libraries, laboratories, and research facilities. In addition, there are high attrition rates among teaching staff due to the high cost of living (Myanmar Education Research Bureau, 1993). It is interesting to see how the proposed education reform will evolve and what will be the result of it. The Education Sector Study, however, should be considered the first step towards the much-needed reform.

Badgley (1990) points out that the higher education system in Myanmar has been plagued for at least two reasons. First, the competitive university and professional school entrance examination entails costly

private tuition that only children from well-off families can afford. Secondly, there is a fissure that evolved between civilian and military education. Civilians that graduated from arts and science institutions, as opposed to the military academy, are viewed by the government with suspicion. This contributes to the rift currently dividing the country.

Although this country prizes education, universities have been closed due to the political and social unrest. This deteriorates further the quality of higher education and delays reforms. According to Chutintaranond and Cooparat (1995), the disruption has resulted in an enormous backlog of students who wait to start and finish their degrees. Some suspect that in order to reduce the backlog, the government has failed a very high percentage of students taking the annual entrance examinations during the last few years. Consequently, students have been discouraged; they give up hope to further their studies and look for jobs instead.

In July 1998, the news in Thailand reported that universities would reopen soon (Marukatat, 1998). This is indeed welcoming news because the country cannot be developed without educated workforce and better technology and skills. The recent establishment of the Universities

Research Centre, once affiliated with the University of Yangon, requires highly trained staff members to handle research equipment and instruments that have been installed thanks to the support of the donor countries such as Japan. It would be totally wasteful if the costly equipment and instruments intended to facilitate students' learning are left unused.

Owing to the long isolation of the country, educators in Myanmar lack contacts with their peers abroad. At the same time, the tight control of the government constrains the sharing of information with outsiders. This inhibits the benefits that can be gained from internationalization that has become a trend for higher education worldwide. Recently, the government has expressed the needs for higher education institutions to cooperate or develop linkages with those in other countries, especially neighboring countries. One of the latest publications of the Ministry of Education (1997) stated that "Further possibilities of linkages with universities of repute in other countries is also being considered" (p.12).

At present, there exists a bilateral relationship between a Myanmar university and overseas universities in Australia and Thailand. As the country pursues economic reform and adopts policies of economic openness, there will

be an increasing need to develop and strengthen relationships with institutions abroad. One urgent need, for example, is language training. This requires providing native speaking trainers from cooperating institutions. At present, increasing trade and investment activities between Myanmar and Thailand has made the study of Thai language for communication necessary. As of 1998, two Thai university lecturers are teaching the Thai language at the University of Foreign Languages in Yangon, Myanmar.

The Research Site

The University of Yangon campus, located on the beautiful University Avenue, is quiet and clean. Old, western style buildings on the campus are typical and practical, rather than aesthetic. Most of them are decades old, and some need painting. The campus is lush with big tropical trees, and the lawn is well kept. The military government has attempted to conserve all the trees in the city. It was in the news on the first day of my field study that two young Myanmar men were imprisoned because they cut down some trees.

However, the campus seemed lifeless with no students on campus. The few people seen on campus looked like academics and administrative staff. The sign written in English and Myanmar reading "No Trespassing" was seen at

every entrance. I took a cab to the main gate and was escorted to the administrative building right at the appointment time. All male academic staff and administrators that were seen wore non-western clothes--longyi, ankle-length skirt-like waistclothes. The women were in calf-length longyis. Notably, Myanmar is the only Southeast Asian country where everyday dress has not been affected by western-influences (Cummings & Wheeler, 1996).

The University of Foreign Languages nearby looked the same. The small compound is well kept and shady. I was told there were language classes held there for university staff. The protocol of the meeting here was similar to that experienced at the University of Yangon. Other institutes like the Institute of Education and the University of Distance Education appeared equally serene.

The Department of Foreign Economic Relations is located in the huge western style building belonging to the Ministry of National Planning and Economic Development. The front gate was secured by two guards, and it took some time to get a pass to enter. This was in part because the guards did not speak English. There was also another armed guard in front of the building, but he did not pay any attention to me that dressed differently from the rest of the people in the building. The offices looked very old

and not very well maintained. Even though there was no trash, thick dust could be seen everywhere, on the stairways and on the floor. On the first day of the visit, the lights went out. I was told that there has been an increasing demand for electricity. Therefore, electricity was cut alternately in various parts of the city. The documents and other materials seen inside the offices were not tidy. However, some of the officials here spoke fluent English and appeared quite cooperative. It was because of the assistance of the officials here that I was able to make appointments with those academics described above.

Findings

Question One: What Do University People Think About University Development Through a Regional Cooperative Approach?

Myanmar respondents unanimously agreed that cooperation among universities would be beneficial to develop higher education in the Greater Mekong Subregion. They believed that collaborative efforts--sharing experiences and intellectual as well as technical resources--would minimize expenses and raise human resource levels, thereby making institutional development possible. Experiences and lessons can be and need to be exchanged within the Subregion. One respondent strongly stated that

globalization entailed cooperation, and no one could survive by living alone. Another put it simply, "Two heads are better than one."

Respondents were asked further whether they also considered competition a good strategy in developing universities. All of them did not think it reasonable. Universities in the highly developed countries, while cooperating, compete with each other for students, scholars, and funding. Yet Myanmar informants found collaboration the only approach for university development. One respondent remarked, "What do we have to compete [for]?" It should be noted that the question was focused on the competition or collaboration among international higher education institutions.

Quite a few informants, especially university academics, viewed that in order to live peacefully, countries in the Subregion needed to agree and to cooperate with each other. They stressed that it was necessary for the governments of each country to initiate agreements. Some cited that there had been good examples of such agreement like the ASEAN University Network (AUN) that encompassed some universities of ASEAN country members. Notably, more than one respondent, especially among those government officials outside of the universities, referred

quite often to Myanmar being an ASEAN member. By doing so, they pointed out how Myanmar's government was willing to establish relationships with other countries in the region and elsewhere.

The majority still found that while university development cooperation in GMS was beneficial, GMS universities still considered Western academic partners more desirable than GMS countries. The main reason given was that higher education in the West was of better quality. Western universities were perceived as well established and well recognized. Respondents believed that GMS universities would benefit from the advanced technology and knowledge by partnering with universities in the West. One respondent noted that there have been some institutions whose quality could be compared to universities in the West. Yet this was the result of having been linked to the West. Respondents also viewed the linkages with universities in the Subregion as complementary to those with Western universities. They cited various contacts and agreements made with various foreign institutions such as University of Canberra in Australia as well as Chulalongkorn University and Chiang Mai University in Thailand.

Question Two: What Role Do University People Think Higher Education Has in the Development of Greater Mekong Subregional Economic Cooperation?

In this area opinions diverged among Myanmar respondents. Only half of them agreed with the assumption that higher education cooperation could contribute to the elimination of political hostility. The other half seemed to hesitate to answer the question. Many of them simply said they did not know whether the assumption could be applied to the Greater Mekong Subregion. One said, "The assumption is farfetched, and the word political hostility is questionable." In the in-person interviews, two respondents refused to answer the question. It appeared that many Myanmar respondents wanted to avoid giving opinions relating to politics. For those that agreed with the assumption, they went on to confirm their belief that higher education cooperation could encourage and facilitate cooperation on other fronts.

The respondents totally agreed that general knowledge about the six Mekong River countries should be incorporated into university courses. One academic remarked that neighboring countries were mentioned in school subjects or university courses on history. However, he was not sure

whether it could be set up as an individual course in the university.

Question Three: How Do University People Perceive Past and Present Cooperation for GMS University Development?

All of the respondents have been satisfied with the cooperative activities that they have experienced. It should be noted that the activities they have been involved are varied. Some attended regional training, seminars, or conferences; others visited and accepted administrators and academics from higher education institutions in neighboring countries. They derived satisfaction from the good relationships made with their counterparts in GMS countries and the knowledge gained about their neighboring countries, especially knowledge about academic programs. One added that the activities gave him a chance to appreciate the similarities among the people in the Subregion. One academic cited that, thanks to the cooperative activities between universities in Myanmar and Thailand, a Thai language program could be established at his institute. This program was able to offer Thai language training for government officials.

On the other hand, the majority expressed no dissatisfaction; only one mentioned bureaucratic procedures. However, most of them still had a feeling that

more could be done to promote university cooperative activities. One academic commented that more activities should be planned and implemented, and an awareness should be created among GMS people that there were opportunities to go further in developmental efforts.

When asked to identify the significant factors that worked against university cooperation, the majority of informants who gave their opinions found the insufficiency of funding, the lack or insufficiency of information networks, and the lack of clear stable mechanisms for financing academic cooperation or a firm policy, to be critical. Notably, language differences was not mentioned as frequently as these three factors. In one interview, a key informant contended that he has found government officials in his country and elsewhere in the Subregion to have quite a good command of English.

Regarding the issue of English as a lingua franca for the Subregion, all informants viewed the language as the most suitable medium of communication. Among the reasons given were English was a universal or international language, and more and more GMS people were learning it. Some put it quite strongly that English was a universal lingua franca, and everyone wanted to learn it more than any other language.

The majority assessed the English ability of academics and administrators as good. On the other hand, they had less confidence in the English proficiency of support staff and students. This was consistent with what I perceived while on site.

Almost all respondents confirmed that their peers were interested in international academic activities. Some commented that whereas Myanmar academics and administrators focused on the national educational objectives, their interest also went beyond the national boundaries.

When Myanmar respondents were asked about their views on what they thought were sensitive issues university people or others concerned should be well aware of, the majority declined to give answers. However, some said that they were aware of none. There was one informant who said, "Anything that could disturb political stability." (It is worth noting that the government of Myanmar put a signboard on the street in Yangon listing four "People's Desires." The third one reads "Oppose foreign nations interfering in internal affairs of the State." What is on the signboard also appears in the local English newspaper, "The New Light of Myanmar." It is not clear then whether that informant responded that way from personal feeling or out of duty as a government official.)

Regarding the unequal stages of higher education development in GMS countries, the informants diverged in their opinions; about half of them thought there would be a problem whereas the other half did not. However, it was noticed that most of them were not quite clear in their explanation, supporting their particular views. Only one respondent, who did not see it as a problem, stated, "Because opportunities are there, the developed institutions have to take more responsibilities for human resource development in the GMS and share the intellectual resources with other institutions." On the contrary, one informant who thought it was a problem urged that more patience, more contacts, and more understanding were needed.

Question Four: What Are Some of the Possibilities, Given the Present Situation, for Future Cooperation among GMS Universities?

Respondents viewed cooperative research studies, international study or teaching visits, and international sharing and exchange of expertise and intellectual resources as the most promising measures or practical actions for higher education development cooperation in the near future. Notably, Myanmar respondents did not think of international exchange of senior and middle-level staff and

the establishment of locally-based research institutions as practical. One university administrator stressed that it was important to conduct cooperative research in the area of culture. He explained that it was considered easiest and, at the same time, beneficial to the mutual understanding among the GMS countries. For the rest of the respondents, when asked about the specific fields or areas of study that could be further developed from international university cooperation, the fields suggested were, science and technology, education and human development, economics, management, finance, public administration, and cultural studies.

As one of the major concerns was the insufficiency of funding, all respondents expected to get financial and technical support from the governments, donor agencies, and private sectors to facilitate university development cooperation. Notably, their responses were not at all specific, even though a few indicated the sources of funds like UNESCO or UNDP.

Summary

1. Key Myanmar informants unanimously agreed that cooperation among universities would be beneficial to GMS higher education developmental efforts.
2. Only half of the informants believed that higher education cooperation could contribute to the elimination of any political hostility.
3. All of the respondents were satisfied with the cooperative activities they experienced. According to those that mentioned critical issues, there would be problems arising from the insufficiency of funding, the lack of information networks, and the lack of clear stable mechanisms and policy for financing academic cooperation.
4. The informants viewed cooperative research studies, international study or teaching visits, and international sharing and exchange of expertise and intellectual resources as practical measures.

CHAPTER VIII

FINDINGS ON THAILAND

Overview of Thai Higher Education

During the past decades, the political situation in Thailand has not been stable; many coups and a few popular uprisings have taken place. However, the political turmoil has not seriously affected the development of higher education or the education system as a whole, particularly in comparison with those in neighboring countries (Chutintaranond & Cooperat, 1995). The favorable political environment has contributed to the quality of the Thai higher education system. Recently, Thailand, which used to be a recipient of foreign technical assistance, has begun providing similar services to neighboring and more distant countries through its institutions of higher education (Information Department, 1993).

Historically, the establishment, in the late nineteenth century, of Thai higher education has been viewed as a response to the threat of colonialism. Recognizing the force of colonial power and the significance of modern science and technology, the Thai ruler, at that time, founded schools that would teach civil servants how to modernize the country while working in various government sectors. According to Tongsovit (1992),

it was understood that the Thai people, in order to survive the advances of Western colonialism, would have to learn to live with the ways of Western people. Thus, at the turn of the century, specialized schools, such as the Medical School, the Law School, and the Royal Pages School, were founded.

Although Thailand, in the early twentieth century, was one of the developing countries that did not fall under the political control of the Europeans, its higher education system was strongly influenced by the West (Altbach & Selvaratnam, 1989). Notably, according to Watson (1989), the Thai specialized schools for training future civil servants were indeed patterned upon the French model.

In 1917, the Royal Pages School, later named the Civil Service College, merged with the Engineering School, the Medical School, the Faculty of Arts and Sciences, and the Faculty of Political Science to form the first Thai university, Chulalongkorn University (Chutintaranond & Cooperat, 1995; Watson, 1989; Wiratchai, 1992).

Later on, Chulalongkorn University and other newly established universities continued training secondary school graduates for different government ministries. At that time, most university students aspired to public service employment. The trend continued until the mid

1970s when the government could no longer absorb an increasing number of university graduates (Watson, 1989). However, the tie between the universities and the government, though somewhat changed, still exists. Public institutions are the mainstay of higher education in Thailand. Universities are entirely staffed by government officials and are governed by the Civil Service Act. As a result, although university staff benefit from welfare and tenure security, they lack the freedom and autonomy enjoyed by their counterparts in Western universities (Watson, 1989; Wiratchai, 1992).

The specialized institutions also developed into full-fledged universities. Thus, in the first half of the twentieth century, four more universities were founded, namely, Thammasat University, Mahidol University, Kasetsart University, and Silpakorn University. It should be noted that these universities formerly concentrated on different disciplines, the first on law and political science, the second on medicine, the third on agriculture, and the fourth on the fine arts. Today, each is more or less a comprehensive university but is still largely recognized by the concentration that formerly defined its name. These four institutions, together with Chulalongkorn University, are located in Bangkok, the capital city. The

concentration of universities in Bangkok contributed to change that would take place in the second-half of the century (Watson, 1989).

Because admission to the universities is based on the competitive university entrance examination, students in the provinces are inevitably disadvantaged. In other words, the entrance system favors children from well-off families residing in Bangkok. Also, since the universities were concentrated in the capital city, students in the provinces, in order to receive higher education, had to leave their hometowns. There was increasing pressure on underprivileged students as the demand for higher education increased every year. The government then responded to the problem by establishing new regional universities in Chiang Mai in the north, Khon Kaen in the northeast, and Songkhla in the south. The government was motivated not just by the need for university expansion to serve the growing demand. At that time, the government was concerned with political instability in neighboring countries and with the threat of the communism in the rural regions, which had long been neglected, and, as a result, lagged far behind in their economic development (Teichler & Winkler, 1994; Watson, 1989).

It should also be noted that in the early days, those regional universities were viewed with disdain by students and their families as well as by the academic staff in the established universities in Bangkok. The latter disliked being transferred to the new institutions. This was understandable because the new institutions were not well-equipped, and infrastructures in the provinces were far less developed than those in the capital city. At the same time, students lacked confidence in the faculty, who were inexperienced and lacked higher degree qualifications (Watson, 1989).

The expansion of higher education, in response to the growing demands and frustrations of students who failed the rigorous selection procedures, resulted in the establishment of two successive open universities and the passing of a Private Colleges Act (Watson, 1989). The latter led to the establishment of many private colleges, some of which were subsequently upgraded to private universities. It should be noted that private colleges and universities in Thailand supplement various fields of study in the public institutions, except teacher education (Boonchuay & Siaroon, 1995). As a result of the open admission policy, the number of students in higher education increased sharply. This helps explain why the

overall enrollment rates in Thailand are so high, compared with those in other countries with similar per capita incomes (Information Department, 1993). The broadening of education created by the open universities has been quite a success in Thailand. The open universities serve the demand for higher education by secondary school graduates and working adults (Boonchuay & Siaroon, 1995). Another factor in the expansion of education in Thailand is that communication devices, such as transistor radios and televisions, are available even in the rural areas. Moreover, to resolve further the problem of unequal access, a quota system was introduced in the regional universities. The plan reserves seats for local students who do well in their upper secondary schools, but who may not be able to compete equally in the entrance examination, with their urban counterparts.

Another pressure for change came from the increasing demand for a more highly skilled workforce. Therefore, in addition to the expansion, there was also a diversification of institutions. In 1966, the National Institute of Development Administration (NIDA) was founded. This postgraduate institution offers master's and doctoral programs in development economics, business administration, public administration, and applied statistics. In

addition, the Asian Institute of Technology (AIT) and the King Mongkut Institute of Technology (KMIT) were formed in 1967 and 1971, respectively (Watson, 1989). AIT provides training not only to Thai students, but also to other students in the Asian region. Recently, a branch was established in Vietnam, and students from the Mekong countries have been admitted into training programs at AIT's main campus in Thailand. KMIT, which is geared more towards local needs, is the amalgamation of a number of small technical institutes in and around Bangkok.

The development of higher education in Thailand, through expansion and diversification programs, has been supported continuously by Western countries. During the Cold War, Thai governments adopted the capitalist ideology and developed close ties with the United States. Thailand also joined the Southeast Asian Treaty Organization (SEATO) and, as a result, received military and economic assistance from the United States and other western countries (Chutintaranond & Cooperat, 1995). For example, AIT was developed out of the former SEATO Graduate School of Engineering. Technical as well as financial assistance have been provided to AIT through the Ford, Carnegie, and Rockefeller Foundations, USAID, the Thai-German Technical Cooperation Scheme, the British Council, the Canadian

Government, and the Overseas Development Administration. As a result, western influence can be seen throughout the Thai higher education system (Watson, 1989).

However, western models and western influences have not been unduly imposed on Thailand. Watson (1989) argues that Thai policymakers have been able to choose those things they find most appropriate for meeting the needs of society. Many aspects of Thai culture and tradition have been preserved. Besides, Thai has always been the language of instruction in the universities, except in certain programs, in selected institutions, and in courses taught by foreign expatriates. Other elements of Thai culture are present in the universities as well. Rote learning is still required, and university students generally remain submissive. Foreign lecturers and foreign advisers are often expected to adapt to Thai customs. Usually, Thais are not expected to adjust to foreigners.

Nowadays, Thai institutions of higher education can be divided into four categories. One, the public universities and institutes under the jurisdiction of the Ministry of University Affairs. Two, the private universities and colleges under the supervision of the Ministry of University Affairs. Three, the institutes and colleges under the other Ministries. Four, the specialized training

institutions. The coordination of the Thai higher education system, in terms of administration is typical among GMS countries. Universities and colleges are under the supervision of more than one Ministry. Besides the Ministry of University Affairs, which controls public and private institutions, there are four other Ministries. The Rajamangala Institute of Technology and the Rajabhat Institute of Teachers' Colleges are under the jurisdiction of the Ministry of Education, as are the technical and vocational colleges, agricultural colleges, physical education colleges, dramatic arts colleges, and fine arts colleges. Nursing colleges belong to the Ministry of Public Health. Military academies are under the supervision of the Defense Ministry, while the police academies are supervised by the Interior Ministry (Bavornsiri, 1998, Wiratchai, 1992).

At present, there are seventeen public universities and five public institutes, seventeen private universities and sixteen private colleges, and thirty-six campuses of the Rajamangala Institute of Technology and thirty-six Rajabhat Institutes with various colleges, and twenty-four other institutions belonging to the other three Ministries. It should be noted that there are two institutions of higher learning for Buddhist monks, namely, Mahamongkut

Buddhist University and Mahachulalongkorn Buddhist University. In addition, two newly established universities, which were formed in keeping with recent policies of deregulation and liberalization, meaning they are detached from the civil service bureaucracy, are worth noting. These universities were created to promote flexibility, academic excellence, and academic freedom. (Boonchuay & Saiaroon, 1995; Fungtammasan, 1997). They are Suranaree University of Technology and Walailak University. These two provincial public universities are external to the government administrative system and are more flexible in their governance. However, they still depend on government financing (Bavornsiri, 1998).

Universities and colleges, especially private schools, are, in large part, under the control of the Ministries concerned, in terms of legislation, funding, quality control, and accreditation. For public universities and colleges, the Civil Service Commission is also involved in all matters relating to the staff, who, after all, are government officials. At the institutions, a university council is in charge of policy matters and general supervision. All other administrative tasks are rendered by university and college presidents, deans or directors,

and department heads and their associates (Bavornsiri, 1998; Wiratchai, 1992).

As mentioned earlier, admission to public universities and institutes, which, in general, are considered more prestigious than private schools, is gained through highly competitive country-wide entrance examinations. The examination is held yearly by the Ministry of University Affairs. Those who pass the written test then have to be interviewed and must take the medical examination. According to Bavornsiri (1998), in 1995, only 38,377 out of 140,515 examinees passed the written examination. The highly selective screening process has been controversial. Critics maintain that the system favors students in big cities and those from wealthy families who can afford tutoring. Still, certain well-known private universities also make prospective students take the same entrance examination. The government has responded to the criticism by setting up a quota system for local students, increasing the number of seats in the universities, and establishing open-access universities. Recently, there has also been a change in admission requirements. Student performance in the upper secondary school level will be considered along with the results from the entrance examination. Whether

this will help underprivileged examinees remains to be seen.

In Thailand's public universities, there are approximately 160 research offices. In addition, the Office of the National Research Council and the Thailand Development Research Institute supplement the research that is conducted and disseminated at the regular universities. Although the relevance of university training for employment in a "real-work" environment is questioned, collaboration between universities and industry has taken place in recent years. Regional universities have also served as agents of rural development and rural modernization for several years (Fungtammasan, 1997; Watson, 1989; Wiratchai, 1992).

The internationalization of Thailand's system of higher education has been receiving attention. The goal of internationalization was made evident in the Seventh Higher Education Development Plan (1992-1996), which took measures toward achieving internationalization, such as offering more programs taught in English. Actually, technical cooperation, educational exchanges, study visits, English degree programs, and other international activities are not new to Thai universities. Quite a few Thai universities and colleges have developed academic links with their

counterparts in foreign countries. Certain degree programs in the universities have long been taught in English. Joint degree programs with foreign universities have been established. For instance, Chulalongkorn University has established an English MBA program in cooperation with the Kellogg Graduate School of Management, at Northwestern University, and with the Wharton School, at the University of Pennsylvania, in the United States. Khon Kaen University, together with Deakin University in Australia, provides a doctoral program in education at the Khon Kaen University campus in northeast Thailand. Various international conferences, seminars, and workshops are held on various topics each year.

Most universities and colleges have either offices that specialize in international and foreign affairs or have staffs that are designated for international relations. This is not surprising because Thailand is an open country and has received foreign technical assistance for a long time. Thailand, among other things, has to ensure that its programs and courses meet international standards and that its academic and support staff are qualified to conduct international activities. Also, all concerned will have to develop positive attitudes towards internationalization. More recently, Thai universities

have accepted students from neighboring countries into their undergraduate and graduate programs. This has been quite an experience for Thai universities to change from being a recipient to being both a recipient and a provider of assistance.

According to Watson (1989), Thai university students have traditionally been passive. They have been accustomed to rote learning and, as such, they are not inclined to participate actively in learning. Consequently, the spirit of inquiry has been lost. These characteristics still exist because the teachers, too, received traditional training. Thailand's style of teaching and learning helps explain why its program for teaching the English language has not been successful, even though several years have been spent on it. In Thailand, English holds the status of a foreign language, rather than a second language. However, the attempt to introduce interactive language instruction in the classroom has been weakened due to the passivity of the students. Typically, Thai students are receptive toward learning English, but, at the same time, they lack proficiency (Watson, 1989). English is not the only subject of concern; student achievement in science and mathematics is not adequate either (Downer, 1997).

The need for reform is not limited to rote learning. According to Wiratchai (1992), even though the National Education Plans and the National Education Commission (NEC) are responsible for policy and planning, there are unbalanced enrollments among the fields of study. Whereas the country needs manpower in science and technology, there is an excess of graduates in the social sciences and humanities, but a scarcity of them in the sciences and engineering. Downer (1997) notes that greater effort should be made to meet the increasing demand for engineering graduates. In 1992, only thirteen percent of the graduates had majored in science and technology, compared to fifty-six percent in Taiwan and forty-seven in Malaysia. Thailand is also concerned about the quality of its graduates. One suggestion is for the universities and secondary schools to work closely together. They need to raise the quality of education and encourage more students to pursue science and technology as a field of study. This will enable the country to become more competitive and to sustain economic growth.

In addition, Wiratchai (1992) states that the expansion of higher education has led to a trade-off between quality and quantity, due to budget constraints. Moreover, the education system is not sufficiently

responsive to the changing needs of society or of the market. The theoretical aspects of subjects taught are emphasized over the practical aspects. There have been various attempts to resolve the problems in the quality of education, and it seems the situation is improving (Fungtammasan, 1997).

The Research Site

In comparison with higher education institutions in some neighboring countries, Thai universities undoubtedly are better-off and more modernized. Buildings and other facilities are in good condition and are well-equipped. Even though Thailand, like neighboring countries, has experienced budgetary constraints, for example, staff payrolls account for nearly eighty percent of the education budget, the universities have managed to stay in relatively good condition. This can be explained by past successful economic development and a once high growth rate. However, the effects of the economic crisis that started in 1997 are being felt in the area of education.

Nowadays, universities in Bangkok and in the provinces are the same, in terms of their facilities and with regard to the qualifications of faculty and staff. Although urban universities are well-established, their campuses are not as beautiful as those in the provinces. Provincial

university faculty also enjoy more free time and are not bothered by the traffic jams and high costs of living found in the cities. These differences are significant in that provincial university faculty having more time to devote to academic activities. In Bangkok, the critical traffic problem can be a major hindrance to academic work and other kinds of activities.

Faculty, staff, and students generally have access to computers and on-line networks. The lecture rooms facilitate all kinds of academic activities. They are relatively well-equipped with overhead projectors and sometimes with closed circuit televisions. Some provincial universities have student dormitories and staff housing. Textbooks, materials, and teaching aids are available. In particular, they have a good combination of vernacular and foreign textbooks for students, especially those in English.

Each institution visited had its own foreign affairs office. This is either directed by the vice-president of foreign affairs or by designated support staff, who act as the director and are in charge of all international activities. In addition, sometimes each faculty has its own office for taking care of international activities. Faculty members and support staff assigned to international

relations are often those officials that are proficient in English or other major foreign languages, such as French and Japanese. Sometimes language proficiency is the major criterion for assigning officials to positions in international affairs.

It should be noted that international activities carried out by the universities and those by individual faculty members can be relatively independent of each other. Usually, individuals can make connection with foreign counterparts without having to report the results of any cooperative activity to the university or its office of international affairs. Sometimes, however, the activity needs support or recognition from the university; the university then gets involved. The university may also assign certain individuals or faculty members to international relations. This helps explain why some cooperative activities go unrecorded.

It appears that there is a lack of communication among university officials, faculty and staff members, and other government sectors. Recently, academic cooperation with neighboring countries has gained more attention from universities in Bangkok and the provinces. At the same time, individual faculty members and universities pursue separate relationships with foreign universities. Whereas

this helps diversify and enrich academic exchange and academic cooperation, it wastes resources due to redundant, duplicate activity. The Division of International Cooperation at the Ministry of University Affairs should organize and coordinate international academic relations and act as a clearinghouse of cooperative activities.

However, during the visit, there was a complaint from the officials about a previous attempt to coordinate international activities, which did not receive much cooperation from the institutions involved. The Department of Technical and Economic Cooperation and the Office of Regional Economic Development Cooperation Committee have experienced the same thing. Only activities that require the support of the two offices for financial or human resources are made known. Within the university itself, actions taken by individuals or faculty members are sometimes off-the-record and are not reported to the university office of international affairs. One key source at the main office of international affairs even remarked that individuals do not have to report their activities. Furthermore, he pointed out that the main office was busy enough with routine, day-to-day work and did not have time to keep up with the international activities of individual faculties.

It also appears as if Thai universities have been competing with each other to develop connections with neighboring institutions. The grants for various international projects are not provided by the universities, but rather are mostly funded by the Thai Department of Technical and Economic Cooperation (DTEC). One cannot help thinking that the motivation for establishing relationships with universities in neighboring countries is not purely academic. It was mentioned indirectly in more than one interview that faculty members earn more through international cooperative activities. However, key informants were not directly asked about this topic. It is understandable, though, that cooperative activity yields financial benefits.

Most key Thai informants were cooperative and had a keen interest in this research project. Some were very kind and helpful and introduced other important individuals to me. These individuals then allowed me to make copies of relevant material. Some of them gave candid and interesting viewpoints and agreed to be tape-recorded. However, others were quite reserved and suspicious of what I was doing. Access to materials and records were denied. The relationship between key informants and me was sometimes like those between junior and senior faculty

members or between students and teachers. So as not to offend, I was customarily deferential. Practicing expected behavior was beneficial to me.

Notably, although I am a native of Thailand and a Thai government official, I was not helped by my standing to gain easy access to the informants and government documents. I had to follow the protocol established by government offices and bureaucratic procedures. In certain cases, even when protocol was followed strictly, access was still denied.

As in other developing countries, a good system of record-keeping, for activities and other statistics, was lacking. Only a few of the institutions visited had complete information regarding their international cooperative activities at hand. At one university, having requested a piece of information regarding the school's cooperative activities, I was transferred to three different offices, successively. Even though the information pertained to recent activity, tracing its source was very complicated.

Findings

Question One: What Do University People Think About University Development Through a Regional Cooperative Approach?

Key Thai informants all agreed that cooperation among universities in the Subregion would be beneficial to the development of higher education. However, their responses were quite different from those given by key informants in other GMS countries. In their view, Thai informants regarded themselves as providers, who had something to offer neighboring institutions. Most of the informants believe that Thailand, because it has long been a recipient of technical assistance, and, as a result, has been able to advance its development, should now provide similar aid to some of its neighboring countries. Many of them contend that by helping others, Thai university faculty can further develop their skills and gain more knowledge by applying what they know in different contexts. Helping others to attain the level of development they have attained would also inspire members of the Thai universities to continue improving themselves. In other words, academic stimulation among neighboring institutions is one potential benefit of regional cooperation. The opportunity to improve knowledge and enhance skill levels would, in turn, lead to the

further improvement of the universities in one's own country.

Two Thai academics pointed out that, above all, the Subregion needs to have peace. People cannot live well together if there are disparities and suspicions. More developed countries in the Subregion should help those less developed to narrow the gap between them and decrease the chances for conflict. At the same time, one informant said that love between countries is important and that generosity, in terms of sharing what one has with others is one step towards achieving the ultimate goal of peace.

In the view of the Thai informants, their regional counterparts, such as Vietnam, Lao PDR and Cambodia, grant more importance to their more developed associates in Western countries. The reason for this favoritism is due to the quality of Western universities, which are well-recognized, whereas universities in the Subregion are still in the early stages of development. Most of those interviewed mentioned that whenever there was a choice, GMS universities still preferred their Western counterparts.

However, many respondents have noticed changes. One person argued that because certain programs of study in Thai universities have been well-developed, countries like Vietnam and Lao PDR find them more cost-effective compared

to universities in the far West. They explained that ten officials could receive an acceptable level of training at a Thai university for the same amount of money it would take to train only one official in Germany. Nonetheless, one key informant cautioned that it was possible that the Vietnamese government, for example, chose Thailand as a training site instead of another country because of the donor's requirement.

Question Two: What Role Do University People Think Higher Education Has in the Development of Greater Mekong Subregional Economic Cooperation?

First, Thai informants unanimously agreed that education could help eliminate political hostility. Most of them also thought that this idea was particularly applicable to the Greater Mekong Subregion. In other words, they thought that university development cooperation programs provided opportunities for GMS university people to learn and understand more about one another. Many of those interviewed, especially the academics, mentioned that Thai academics who had been trained in Western countries normally developed good attitudes towards the host countries. GMS participants in the university development cooperation program, especially those enrolling in educational programs or attending training projects, are

also likely to develop positive feelings toward and positive opinions of their host country. These favorable attitudes could, in turn, be handed down to future students of these graduates. In the long run, they believed, there would be a spillover of goodwill throughout the Mekong community, as a whole. One informant stressed that individual, person to person relationships are just as important as good relationships between governments. Educational cooperation provides the opportunity for both types of relationships to develop.

However, many did agree that negative political developments could be a hindrance to educational cooperation. They have experienced delays and non-cooperation. They think the problems can be solved only if government-to-government relationships improve. A key government official at the Ministry of University Affairs mentioned there was a plan for a meeting of the GMS Ministers of Education in mid 1998. At the time this report was written, there was no confirmation about the meeting from the Ministry of University Affairs. However, the meeting was supposed to be an important step in establishing improved government to government relationships. It was hoped that a meeting of policy and

decision makers would facilitate future contacts and cooperative activities.

The majority of Thai informants, who are academics, observed that university courses and activities, at the time, did little to facilitate a sense of community among GMS countries. However, according to the information given, language courses, such as Chinese, Myanmar, Khmer, Thai, and Vietnamese, are taught in some Thai universities as are courses, in the general education track, that teach students about neighboring countries. One academic mentioned that at her university, Myanmar was in the process of being made into program of study. Also, undergraduates have the option of either studying in or about one neighboring country for their last semester. This option, if chosen, can substitute for regular enrollment. Notably, another academic complained that GMS area studies have not received enough attention from Thai university administrators, who wrongly believe that they are not career profitable to students and to the country. The informants all agreed that general knowledge about the GMS countries should be a part of university courses and activities.

Question Three: How Do University People Perceive Past and Present Cooperation for GMS University Development?

In general, key Thai informants were satisfied with the cooperative activities that have taken place. The majority of them said they derived satisfaction from the good relationships that have been established with their counterparts and from the knowledge they have gained about neighboring countries. Many of them pointed out that in the past, it would have been almost impossible to make contact with or visit the GMS countries. Even though it was not stated directly, it could be inferred from their responses they were also pleased with the financial benefits they earned and from the recognition they received from their peers and affiliates. It should be noted that academics and other university staff members usually get paid during training or when they are involved in other projects, from either the Thai government or international organizations. They are paid per diem or by reimbursement.

On the other hand, most of them complained about the complicated bureaucracy and the inefficiency of government sectors, in Thailand and other GMS countries. The informants were also frustrated by the frequent recruitment of prospective trainees and students for programs sponsored by the Thai government or by donor countries, that was not based upon merit and qualifications. Children from powerful families unfairly get more Thai scholarships than

ordinary children; the same government officials regularly get nominated to travel to Thailand to receive training. Another problem cited is the unreasonably long delays in communication between countries and within government offices in Thailand. It was also noted that representatives from neighboring countries invited to regional conferences or seminars were unable to participate at the last minute, for unknown reasons. However, many Thai informants agreed that things are getting better. Communications with Vietnamese counterparts, for example, have been made easier and more systematic.

When asked to point out further the critical issues involved in university development cooperation, other than bureaucratic procedures, the three most frequently cited issues were the insufficiency of funding, negative attitudes toward the idea of development through regional cooperation, and the insufficiency of information networks. All of them pointed out that many plans and programs have been cancelled because of the economic crisis Thailand has faced since 1997. This is because the Thai government has been allocating money to promote various cooperative activities. For example, the government has commissioned universities and their staff to accept students from neighboring countries.

Most of those interviewed pointed out that negative attitudes still exist among some university administrators, academics, and key government officials toward people in neighboring countries. Those disinclined toward cooperation did not see any use in helping neighboring countries develop, for fear of being overtaken in the future. Some looked down upon their counterparts as inferior. Others were easily frustrated by the difficulties they encountered from their foreign associates and said that the latter, by being so difficult, did not deserve help. One government official shared with me what he was told by a Lao student enrolled in a Thai university. A Thai classmate told the Lao student that he did not think a Lao student would be able to study at the university level.

Thai informants also identified a lack of information as a problem. Many of them complained that those involved in cooperative university development are insufficiently informed, in one way or another. Those who work in government offices outside the universities blame the university administrators and academics who bypass them by making personal connections with their associates abroad, and, as such, make it difficult to record their activities. University administrators and academics, on the other hand,

criticized government officials for being inconsistent in their procedures. Both groups expressed their concerns about the insufficiency of information networks, which, though not quite harmful, do not assist university development cooperation. Due to poor communication systems, the waste of limited resources can be expected.

Language barriers were not perceived as a critical issue by key Thai informants. More than half said that most of their counterparts did not have language problems. Furthermore, they have noticed, in recent years, that their counterparts have improved their English proficiency. On the other hand, for those who found it a problem, they complained that many trainees and students had difficulty using English. However, they, like the former group, have also seen improvement.

English was considered by Thai respondents to be the most suitable lingua franca. In this they agreed with neighboring counterparts. They all recognized that English has gained more importance in the Subregion. Some of them cited the increasing number of English language schools in the former French colonies as examples. Only a few of them mentioned that, at the time, GMS languages like Chinese, Myanmar, Thai, and Vietnamese were being taught in the universities. There is an increasing number of GMS

participants who speak the language of their neighboring countries, and these people can serve as interpreters in cooperative activities. However, one academic said she did not think Thai students would be interested in learning other GMS languages. One reason is that GMS languages are not beneficial to future employment.

When asked to assess English proficiency in Thai universities, most said academics are the only group who can use English effectively. One openly critical respondent said that even in a key university, in a big city like Bangkok, English language proficiency could be an issue. Because the support staff does not have a command of English, the universities' efforts at internationalization are hindered. He pointed out that even the operator did not know how to handle international phone calls.

Most of those questioned did not detect any significant changes in the interest their peers showed toward international academic activities, compared with the enthusiasm they displayed in past decades. Many informants pointed out, either directly or indirectly, that benefits gained, in terms of either money or recognition, from international academic involvement are still a major factor

in attracting university people to international or regional academic activities.

The negative attitudes of some Thai officials and academics are, as the majority of those questioned pointed out, important sensitive issue. In general, respondents said the Thai should avoid making their counterparts feel that advantages are being taken of them. Many respondents were also concerned about the careless use of certain terms and expressions, by ordinary Thai, which might hurt the feeling of their Lao colleagues or destroy good relations between the two countries. Others mentioned the political instability in Myanmar and the closure of universities there. One government official reported that in many meetings held by GMS representatives, it was agreed by those who attended that it was inappropriate to mention the political problems in Myanmar.

Most informants do not consider the different levels of higher education an issue. As reported earlier, key Thai informants viewed themselves as providers in the arrangement for cooperation, and they did not expect much from their associates in return. They explained that, in the beginning, there would not be genuine collaboration, but there would certainly be positive changes in the long run.

Question Four: What Are the Possibilities, Given the Present Situation, for Future Cooperation among GMS Universities?

Suggestions given by Thai respondents to promote further cooperation for university development were the international exchange of information, exchange of academic staff, and cooperative research studies. The exchange of students was also cited as a necessary element of cooperation. Many informants stressed the importance of training GMS participants, which would need to be funded by multilateral or donor agencies. In this regard, Thai universities would function as training institutions, with support from a donor country that would provide funding for GMS participants. They explained that this would allow cooperative activities to continue even during the economic crisis, which has caused many plans and projects to be terminated.

Notably, many talked about the need for an educational information network among GMS countries. They were sure that such a network would be beneficial. They were also aware that it would be difficult to operate and maintain an up-to-date information network. One key informant acknowledged that his affiliate has long been trying to establish such a network but had not yet succeeded. A lack

of readiness among those concerned was cited as the major reason for the failure of this network. For the time being, because internal political situations in certain countries are still sensitive, there will be a problem in developing the criteria for what kind of information one country can share with another, even with regard to educational information. Differences in political regimes can also obstruct the creation of meaningful information networks.

The fields of study cited for further cooperative programs are economics, education, agriculture, health science, history, engineering, tourism, and environmental studies.

As reported above, Thai informants were well aware of the constraints imposed on regional cooperation as a result of the current economic crisis and limited government funds. Thus, they were not expecting much from the government. Notably, a few Thai respondents said that all GMS governments should contribute to cooperative activities and not expect the Thai government to be the only one to pay for all the costs. One noted that when GMS representatives attended a seminar in Thailand, all expenses were paid by the Thai government. He also indicated that the same could not be expected, even in

part, from the governments of any of the neighboring countries. Aside from the problems of financial support, those questioned believed the consistent enthusiasm shown by the Thai government and by university administrators for GMS university cooperation is significant. According to them, the lack of enthusiasm and of a clear policy for academic cooperation could be a major obstacle to the success of cooperative educational efforts. In addition to government funding, support from donor agencies and international organizations would further promote cooperative activities. As reported above, Thai respondents discussed the value of a kind of trilateral cooperation, in which Thailand would join with a third country and with cooperating GMS countries, during the economic crisis.

Summary

1. Key Thai informants all agreed that cooperation among GMS universities would be beneficial to the development of higher education.
2. Almost all of them believed that cooperative university development would facilitate and encourage cooperation on other fronts. However, some of them also believed that favorable political developments would also be a prerequisite for the success of educational cooperation.

3. Generally, they were satisfied with cooperative GMS university activities; however, they also experienced frustration as a result of complicated bureaucratic procedures and government involvement in education. They listed the insufficiency of funding, negative attitudes towards regional cooperation, and information networks as critical issues.

4. Suggestions for promoting further cooperation in university development were international exchanges of information, cooperative research studies, and trilateral financial agreements. Trilateral arrangements would take place among two or more GMS countries, donor agencies, and/or international organizations.

CHAPTER IX

FINDINGS ON VIETNAM

Overview of Vietnamese Higher Education

Vietnamese people are known to be hard-working. They take pride in overcoming adversity and in their history of survival (Dao, Thiep, & Sloper, 1995). In this period of social and economic renovation, the challenging task of revitalizing and renovating the higher education system, among other things, though it is still in the process of being accomplished, is expected to be successful. It is interesting that a Thai respondent mentioned that concerns exist with regard to the Thai provision of bilateral technical assistance to Vietnam. Some warn that sooner or later Vietnam will move ahead of Thailand. This fear is not invalid when Vietnam's long history of higher education is taken into consideration and, specifically, its renovation program for social and economic reform, known as "Doi Moi" (Dao, 1995; Thiep, 1997).

The first university in Vietnam, Quoc Tu Giam (Royal College), was founded as early as 1076, during the reign of King Ly Thanh Long (Bernard & Can, 1995; Son, 1998). It provided students, mostly from aristocratic families, with the necessary training in poetry, literature, ritualism, and philosophy to become mandarins, that is high ranking

government officials (Nhuan, 1992; Thiep, 1992). According to Berlie (1995), the stone pillars inscribed with the names of graduates who passed their doctoral examinations at the university can still be found at their original site in Hanoi. The Chinese influence was evident at that time. Courses and examinations focused largely on Confucianism. Teaching materials were also in Chinese (Lam, 1997a). This is not surprising since the country was under Chinese domination for eleven centuries (Lam, 1997b). This traditional form of education was gradually changed and replaced by Western education, which was introduced into the country by the French colonists, from 1887 to 1945.

It was not until 1917 that the first modern university was established (Nhuan, 1992). At first, besides primary and secondary education, there were only a few modern schools that trained indigenous people to help the colonists with their communication with and governance of the natives (Do, 1995; Thiep, 1992). The first university, named the University of Hanoi or Indochinese University, was located in Hanoi. It was actually a grouping of the specialized professional schools that had been established for French auxiliaries in Indochina. They were, for example, the School of Medicine and Pharmacy, the School of Administration and Law, the School of Forestry, Agriculture

and Veterinary, and the School of Public Works. These professional schools were later transformed into colleges and faculties. Courses were lengthened and curricula were improved. Notably, the teaching staff of the university was entirely French, and French was also the language of instruction (Berlie, 1995; Do, 1995; Lam, 1997b; Nhuan, 1992).

Vietnamese resentment of French oppression was expressed in the form of active resistance throughout the period of French rule (Hac, 1996). Ill-will and defiance were created, in part, because the French colonists made an attempt not just to disseminate their language and culture, but also to dismantle traditional Vietnamese culture and the entire education system (Do, 1995). Lam (1997b) remarks that following the 1945 revolution, there were two tasks, with regard to educational reform, that had to be done immediately. These were to reestablish Vietnamese as the language of the educational system and to replace French teachers with Vietnamese instructors.

French colonization ended in 1945, after the revolution; however, the struggle was not yet over. This was because after World War II, the French staged a comeback to regain their control of Vietnam. The French were finally forced out after their military defeat at Dien

Bien Phu, in 1954. During the war against the returning French, higher education was disrupted; some colleges were evacuated and relocated in the rural areas (Lam, 1997b). The nationalization process and educational reform were further disrupted, this time by the Geneva agreement, in 1954, which divided the country into two zones. The agreement, and subsequent division of Vietnam, took place when the Vietnamese defeated the French (Do, 1995; Thiep, 1992).

After 1954, higher education in North and South Vietnam thus developed separately. According to Dao, Thiep, and Sloper (1995), during this period, the number of colleges and universities increased sharply. In South Vietnam, also called the Republic of Vietnam, with the influence and assistance of the United States, the University of Saigon, the University of Hue, the Catholic University of Dalat, the Buddhist Van Hanh University, and the Public University of Cantho were established. The opening of private institutes, in addition to public universities, was also authorized (Do, 1995). In North Vietnam, known as the Democratic Republic of Vietnam, under the control of the revolutionary government and with assistance from the former Soviet Union, universities, polytechnic colleges, and specialized institutions were

either founded or reestablished. Among them were the University of Hanoi, the Teacher Training College of Hanoi, the University Technology of Hanoi, the Hanoi College of Medicine, the Hanoi College of Agriculture, and the College of Economics (Hac, 1996; Lam, 1997b). In these universities, undergraduate and graduate study programs were offered.

Nonetheless, the development of modern higher education in Vietnam was soon disrupted again by war. This time the United States fought with South Vietnam against North Vietnam to prevent the reunification of Vietnam (Lam, 1997b). During the war, which lasted another two decades, air raids by U.S. military forces on the big cities, especially in the North, put all university activities in danger. Classes were either cancelled or held in the mountainous areas. Courses were oriented toward science and technology, in response to the country's urgent need for more engineers and physicians (Berlie, 1995). In the South, the establishment of universities like Thu Duc Polytechnic University, was also made difficult, especially as the war intensified. Thu Duc University, patterned as a typical Western university, was finally lost when the Communists took control of South Vietnam (Do, 1995).

The devastating Vietnam War ended after a cease-fire in 1973, and in 1975, North and South Vietnam were reunified (Berlie, 1995). After reunification, a unified socialist higher education system was established throughout the country (Lam, 1997a, 1997b). The influences of the former Soviet Union and of Eastern Europe on the higher education system, once limited to North Vietnam, were extended throughout the whole country. The development model was based upon a command economy and a highly centralized administration. Higher education and university training were highly specialized. Institutions of higher education provided pre-service training for their specific lines of Ministry. Universities concentrated more on natural and social sciences. Courses offered in polytechnic institutes focused on heavy industry. Private colleges and universities in the former South Vietnam were abandoned (Do, 1995; Lam, 1997b). Students were supported financially, and, when they graduated, were assigned jobs in state enterprises or state offices (Can, 1991).

The question of whether the socialist model of higher education was right or wrong seemed, at that time, insignificant. Besides, it was well acknowledged that education and training had to play an essential role in the reconstruction of the war-ravaged country. According to

Can (1991), the system worked smoothly during the first five years. Subsequent reforms in higher education were, in fact, triggered by more desperate circumstances that increasingly put more and more pressure on the government. After three decades of war, which ended in 1975, Vietnam was in an extremely difficult position. The backward agricultural country was subsequently made more vulnerable by the United States' trade embargo, which was lifted only in early 1994, and by reductions in assistance from the former socialist countries (Buckley, 1996; Thiep, 1995). Moreover, the war in Cambodia against the Chinese, during the 1980's, further drained the already limited resources of the country. These external factors were made all the worse by the failure of the socialist planned economy and by the famine that struck various parts of the country (Buckley, 1996). These serious economic problems had a great impact on higher education and signaled the need for urgent reform.

In 1986, at the sixth Congress of the Communist Party of Vietnam, the "Doi Moi" (new life) renovation program for social and economic reform was adopted. The policy reform, in essence, transformed the economy from a centrally-planned to a market-based system (Dao, Thiep, & Sloper, 1995). According to Thiep (1995), the Vietnamese "Doi Moi"

abolished bureaucratic centralism as well as state subsidies and established a state-controlled market system. Since the adoption of "Doi Moi," the country has begun establishing diplomatic relations with other nations. When isolation ended in 1989, Vietnamese troops withdrew from Cambodia. The lifting of the U.S. trade embargo and the reestablishment of foreign relations with the United States have resulted in a renewed inflow of foreign assistance. Funds have also been pledged by the Asian Development Bank, the World Bank, and the International Monetary Fund.

As a response to the "Doi Moi" renovation program, higher educational policies have been developed and implemented in line with new economic and social needs. In fact, according to Lam (1997a), the development of human resources is a top priority of the new renovation policy. The higher education and training programs will now serve the state and the collective economic sectors, as they have in the past, as well as all other economic sectors. The system, as such, is more diversified and responsive to the changing requirements of society and the economy. Furthermore, the financing of higher education is no longer just the state's responsibility. Contributions from other sources, such as from student fees, are also expected (Dao, Thiep, & Sloper, 1995).

At present, there are approximately one hundred institutions of higher education in Vietnam (Thiep, 1997). They are categorized as multidisciplinary (comprehensive) universities; universities and colleges of technology; universities and colleges of agriculture and forestry; universities and colleges of medicine, pharmacy, and sports; and universities and colleges of social sciences, culture, and the arts. Teacher training universities and colleges, open universities, central teacher training colleges, provincial colleges, and private universities also belong to the system of higher education (Thiep, 1995). Notably, the large comprehensive universities were established only in 1993, as a result of the amalgamation of smaller institutions. These multidisciplinary universities are located in major cities such as Hanoi and Ho Chi Minh City. Furthermore, in response to learning needs at the level of higher education, two open universities, one in Hanoi and another in Ho Chi Minh City, were established in 1993. Alternative forms of higher education are also offered through private institutions, which had previously been abandoned (Thiep, 1995, Thiep, 1997). Thang Long University, founded in 1989, is a pilot private institution that offers courses in mathematics and computer science (Thiep, 1992).

The management of the higher education system in Vietnam is the responsibility of more than one Ministry. The Ministry of Education and Training supervises approximately thirty major institutions. The rest, some of which are the mono-disciplinary universities and colleges, are under the jurisdiction of provincial authorities or other Ministries, such as the Ministry of Health and the Ministry of Culture and Art. However, all aspects of university academics, such as curricula and admissions regulations, are under the control of only the Ministry of Education and Training.

At the university and college level, an institution council and an administrative team, consisting of the rector, vice-rectors, deans, and academic section leaders, carry out the management of the institutions. For the comprehensive universities, which were recently established, the organizational structure has not yet been determined. Likewise, administrative relationships between institutions and their related Ministries have not yet been well-established; a full system of legal documents does not exist. In general, the line Ministry deals with budget allocations, personnel management, and core curricula. An evaluation and accreditation system is lacking.

Student admissions, once based on the entrance examination that was organized by the former Ministry of Higher Education, are now determined by each individual institution. However, each institution still has to observe the regulations put forward by the Ministry of Education and Training. Many institutions now use standardized objective tests developed by the Ministry for their entrance examinations. In this way they can select students on their own. A typical university degree program consists, in its first phase, of general education and, in its second phase, of training in professional areas. Typically, a program lasts from four to six years, depending on the field of study. Graduates are eligible to apply to master's and doctoral programs. Short-term training programs are also offered in teacher colleges and some other colleges. These training programs focus less on theory and more on practices that suit local needs (Thiep, 1995; Thiep, 1997; Thiep & Hai, 1998).

Vietnamese institutions of higher education have only recently played a significant role in research. Previously, research was conducted by approximately three hundred different state research institutes, under the supervision of various ministries and government sectors (Lam, Nung, & Sloper, 1995). In this "Russian-imposed"

model, teaching was separated from research (Dao, Thiep, & Sloper, 1995); universities and colleges were the only training institutions for the country's cadres. However, since 1989, universities and colleges have been allowed to establish scientific-research programs, for which funding has been allocated (Lam, 1997b). According to Lam (1997a), the research mission of institutions of higher learning have been clearly identified. To date, universities and colleges have contributed greatly to the area of research and development.

As mentioned earlier, the "Doi Moi" renovation policy, adopted in 1986, has led to international cooperation and to the revival of foreign relations with countries in the region. The value of international relations in systems of higher education has also become more evident. The study abroad program, which has been in operation for decades, has shifted from countries like the former Soviet Union and those in the Eastern Bloc, to Australia, India, Japan, and the United States. Vietnamese universities also accept foreign students from other countries in their programs. Students from Lao PDR and Cambodia have enrolled in degree programs. In addition, technical assistance has been provided for educational reform by UNESCO, UNDP, the World Bank, and the Asian Development Bank. At the same time,

Vietnam has sent its education experts and technicians to the Congo, Algeria, Angola, and Mozambique to help with education and training. University contacts with associates elsewhere have increased. Recently, the Ministry of Education and Training, after Vietnam became an ASEAN member, also became a member of the Southeast Asian Ministries of Education Association (SEAMEO) (Lam, 1997a; Nhung, 1995).

In keeping with trends in international cooperation, Vietnamese academics and administrators need to learn foreign languages. Throughout history, Vietnam has had foreign languages, like Chinese, French, and Russian imposed upon it. In recent times, English has gained more and more importance. This has been especially true since Vietnam became a member of ASEAN, for which English is the official language. Furthermore, proficiency in French and Russian has become less popular and financially less beneficial. In 1994, the government even urged their officials to learn English. Students and graduates are now taking time to learn English (Berlie, 1995).

There have been many positive and marked changes in higher education in Vietnam since the adoption, in 1986, of the radical program of renovation. However, according to Dao (1995), Lam (1997b), and Thiep (1997), the higher

education system still faces major obstacles that challenge the country. First, Vietnam remains poor. Limited resources constrain the development of higher education. In particular, although teachers are still highly respected, their salaries are so low that they have to take second jobs to supplement their incomes, in order to make ends meet. According to Nghi and Sloper (1995), in 1993, a professor received about twenty U.S. dollars a month. Academic staff with lower ranks undoubtedly receive less. Low salaries will inevitably have a negative impact on the quality of education. In addition, when financially rewarding jobs are available, many qualified and competent academic staff members simply leave higher education permanently (Lam, 1997b; Thiep, 1997).

Because the opportunity for additional training in the former socialist countries has become rare, and training positions in Western countries are limited, professional development has become difficult. Since teacher salaries do not keep pace with the increasing cost of living, in-service training, which does exist, is not likely to receive much attention. According to Lam (1997b), at present there is not an institution in charge of training university and college teachers.

The professional development of teachers in higher education is critical. Eighty percent of academic staff members only have bachelor's degrees. In general, those academics with postgraduate degrees are located in the universities and colleges in major cities like Hanoi and Ho Chi Minh City. Although the trend is expected to change, as more graduates obtain higher degrees, especially from abroad, the current generation's skill levels are in question because their teachers were insufficiently trained (Nghì & Sloper, 1995; Thiep, 1992).

Limited resources, which are common in developing countries, also mean inferior equipment and insufficient facilities. According to Thiep (1995), textbooks are in short supply, while libraries and laboratories are inadequate. Universities and colleges in big cities may be better equipped. However, regional disparities are also serious problems in Vietnam. Unequal educational facilities as well as unbalanced student-teacher ratios do exist among urban and rural areas or highland and coastal regions. Limited socio-economic conditions decrease learning motivation (Dan & Hoe, 1997; Dao, 1995; Hainsworth, 1993). In addition, as a consequence of higher education reform, public institutions are now allowed to charge tuition and fees. Moreover, guaranteed public

sector jobs for graduates are being phased out. The change will make it more difficult for students from poor families to receive higher education or training.

Secondly, even though there has been a rationalization and diversification of higher education in recent years, irrationality still exists in educational structuring and in networking among institutions with similar programs, goals, course contents, and methodologies (Dao, 1995). According to Dao (1995) and Thiep (1997), there is an urgent need to improve the linkage of higher education with research, business, production, and employment. Other countries in the GMS region also have similar problems. In Vietnam, particularly because there are both state research institutes and institutions of higher education, the duplication of resources and the dispersal of limited equipment, materials, and funding are inevitable (Nghii & Sloper, 1995). In other words, the system lacks integration.

Moreover, the legacy of overspecialization in higher education and training, from past decades, is the system's weak responsiveness to changes in the socio-economic environment. Narrowly trained teaching staff and specialized equipment and facilities are likely to be obstacles of reform. The amalgamation of small, segmented

institutions is the first step that has been taken. As mentioned before, recent years have witnessed the establishment of large comprehensive universities as opposed to the mono-disciplinary universities and colleges already in existence. The objectives, curricula, and methods of education and training have to be further improved and have to take into account the changing and growing needs of society and of the economy (Lam, 1997b). Networking among small universities is also important so that teaching staffs, physical facilities, and equipment, already in short supply, will not be underutilized (Dao, 1995).

Vietnam stands out among the three countries of Indochina, namely Cambodia, Laos, and Vietnam, in terms of the quality of its higher education and for the state of its educational system as a whole. The country has a high literacy rate. In 1996, it was approximately ninety-one percent (Lam, 1997a). This is considered high when the country's low per capita income level is taken into consideration. Young Vietnamese students have won several prizes in international academic competitions. In mathematics, they have won seventeen gold medals since 1974. In physics, Vietnamese upper secondary students recently won third prize in an international competition

held in the United States (Ministry of Education and Training, 1995). This reflects well on the quality of education in Vietnam, even though the winners represent only a tiny percentage of the whole student population. In higher education, in particular, a lot of progress has been made since reform began in 1986, even amidst major obstacles caused by the present socio-economic conditions (Dao, 1995). This progress is a good sign for the continued renovation of higher education, which in the long run, will benefit the country's social and economic development.

The Research Site

Even though the word "Indochina," which refers to the three former French colonies, has a colonial connotation, it is widely known, as the name suggests, as the area where Indian and Chinese civilizations met. According to Do (1995), among the three Indochinese countries, Vietnam alone belongs to the sphere of Chinese cultural influence. For an outsider, like me, the people and universities in Hanoi looked very similar to those in the Yunnan Province in China. However, one key Thai informant remarked that the Vietnamese do not like the idea that their country is seen as a southern state of China. This is understandable, since China ruled the country for more than a thousand

years, and, more recently, when Vietnam invaded Cambodia, China then attacked Vietnam in return.

The Hanoi National Pedagogic University, where I stayed during field study, was established in 1951. It is now part of the Vietnam National University and is under the jurisdiction of the Office of the Prime Minister. On the campus, which is close to the downtown area, there are quite a few buildings; the biggest one is the administration building. Three buildings are under construction. Because the country is poor and has limited resources, it was quite surprising to see three new buildings going up, right near each other. Perhaps this is consistent with the information given by Tri, Sang, and Sloper (1995) who state that the trend is not to build new institutions of higher learning, but instead to improve the physical facilities of existing institutions. As such, money has been allocated for the construction of new buildings. These buildings are going to be permanent, modern, and professionally built. I was told that one of them was going to be a library.

The campus buildings and their surroundings are in good shape, but are relatively poor. The two-storied university hostel I stayed in is located next to a small farm where a water buffalo was seen roaming around. About

fifteen students from Lao PDR were staying on the second floor of the building. These students were in either undergraduate or graduate programs at the university. Some of them were government officials who went to Vietnam to study further. They spoke fluent Vietnamese, and I was told that they had to study from textbooks written in Vietnamese. Farther behind this building is a row of dormitory buildings for Vietnamese students.

As expected, university students are industrious. They were seen studying in the shade of trees and inside the buildings early in the morning. In the evening, many students also attended language classes. One of the students I talked with, in English, was studying French at night. He said knowing two foreign languages is beneficial. Like students in neighboring countries, Vietnamese students pay high respect to their teachers and are well-disciplined. The key informants were enthusiastic about GMS university cooperation and were quite cooperative in their interviews.

The building for the National Institute of Public Administration of Vietnam (NIPA) is more modern. Key informants here spoke fluent English. This institute has a good relationship with the National Institute of Development Administration (NIDA) in Thailand. In recent

years, lecturers from NIDA have visited NIPA and offered courses and training. Some NIPA officials have also gone to Thailand for study visits. NIPA was established in 1959 and is affiliated with the Office of the Government. The Institute serves as a center of training and research in the field of public administration. Some of their major academic partners, besides Thailand, are Australia, Canada, France and Germany. NIPA represents one of the state research institutes mentioned earlier.

The other place visited is the National Institute for Educational Development (NIED). Established in 1994, the Institute serves as a research center for the development of education and training under the supervision of the Ministry of Education and Training. It also offers postgraduate training for government officials working in educational institutions. Contacts have been made and cooperative activities have been arranged with international organizations such as UNESCO and UNDP; with SEAMEO in Southeast Asian countries; and with institutions of higher education in France and Thailand. Key Vietnamese informants are involved in university cooperative regional activities and are quite active in the area.

In general, the key informants were reserved and very careful when giving interviews. A request to tape record

the interview was denied in most cases. Although English proficiency was not a problem, the information and the opinions shared with me were brief and not very candid. Most of the time, the people interviewed appeared to be fearful of giving information and stating their opinions, as if they might damage their relationships with their colleagues.

More often than not, their concerns about the funding of cooperative activities were quite obvious. This was reasonable because the country has to allocate its limited resources carefully in order to meet increasing demands arising from the open policy and the establishment of relations with foreign countries. Active participation entails huge costs for travelling and accommodations, among other things. While there is interest in cooperative activities, concerns about limited human and financial resources are overwhelming. For example, key individuals who were interviewed were very enthusiastic about participating in international and regional conferences held in neighboring countries, but could attend only if part or all of their expenses were funded.

Findings

Question One: What Do University People Think About University Development Through a Regional Cooperative Approach?

The idea of university development through a regional cooperative approach was uniformly welcomed by all key Vietnamese informants. In general, the reasons given were similar to those of their neighboring colleagues. They pointed out that knowledge, experience, and resources could best be shared on the basis of common economic and political issues. One informant stated that every participating country has both strengths and weaknesses in developing its universities, and he believed one country could help the other.

Vietnamese informants also noticed that GMS universities still prefer Western academic partners over regional academic partnerships. The two most common reasons were the high levels of Western accomplishment and the amounts of support received during cooperation. One respondent said, "They think that Western countries have higher education and experiences, and funding from Western countries is higher than those in the Subregion." Another added that GMS countries do not fully realize the potential their neighboring countries have.

Question Two: What Role Do University People Think Higher Education Has in the Development of Greater Mekong Subregional Economic Cooperation?

When asked if they believed that educational cooperation could lessen political hostility and promote trust, respondents unanimously answered, "yes." Likewise, most respondents agreed that higher education cooperation among GMS countries could serve as a "confidence building measure" and could facilitate cooperation on other fronts. In this regard, one respondent reasoned that because any plan or policy for economic cooperation would have to be based on valid and updated information, studies conducted by university staff could help provide some of the information that would be needed.

Along the same line, they also saw the importance of creating additional university courses and services that would familiarize students with neighboring GMS countries. Many respondents thought that the contents and activities of current university programs were already promoting a sense of Mekong community to a great extent.

Question Three: How Do University People Perceive Past and Present Cooperation for GMS University Development?

Vietnamese informants were reserved and inarticulate when talking about either their satisfaction or

dissatisfaction with the cooperative activities with which they are involved. As such, their responses were not revealing. In general, they were satisfied with collaborative practices to the extent that these activities allowed them to learn more about neighboring countries and gave them the opportunity to exchange expertise and knowledge with their colleagues. On the whole, they did not express any frustration. However, one government official, when discussing recruiting procedures for participants in cooperative activities, commented that contacts should be made directly with or between partner institutes and not through the parent ministry, which subsequently gives instructions to the partnerships under its jurisdiction.

Informants identified the following issues as likely obstacles to university cooperation: language differences, bureaucratic procedures, insufficient funds, and deficient information networks. One respondent complained that despite his keen interest, he was unable to participate in regional and international conferences, as well as other activities, because he did not receive funding.

Regarding the language issue, the respondents considered English the most appropriate lingua franca for the Subregion. They reasoned that English is an

international language, spoken around the world, and that people in GMS countries were studying it. However, they were not confident that university personnel could use the language; only key administrators and academics have a good command of English. One language professor noted that senior professors know more French than English, but that the trend for professors in science and technology is to become more competent in English.

The informants also perceived enthusiasm among their peers for international academic activities. One respondent mentioned that academics and students in the universities and researchers in various research centers were eager to know more about the outside world. He added that major universities and research centers in Vietnam have established connections and developed good relationships with their colleagues overseas. For example, one of the universities in Ho Chi Minh City, in southern Vietnam, has a Thai instructor who teaches Thai to Vietnamese students.

According to Vietnamese respondents, cultural sensitivities were not an issue in academic circles. On the other hand, most informants viewed the unequal development of higher education, among GMS countries, as a concern. One respondent pointed out that differences in

educational backgrounds and academic qualifications of university staff could constitute a problem. Among the few who did not perceive educational differences as an issue, one individual stated that whatever benefits a university could contribute toward the cooperation were desirable.

Question Four: What Are the Possibilities, Given the Present Situation, for Future Cooperation among GMS Universities?

The suggestions the informants gave to further promote university cooperation were quite varied. However, the three most cited were greater participation by institutions of higher learning in national development, cooperative research studies and analyses, as well as subregional consulting, joint programming, and monitoring university programs. International sharing of resources and study visits were also mentioned. The fields of study recommended for cooperative measures were education, public administration, economics, information technology, and environmental studies. However, the respondents were not specific about the type of support, for cooperative activities, they expected from the government and from international organizations. Interestingly, one key informant said it would be difficult to expect support,

either financial or non-financial, from all but the private sector.

Summary

1. The idea of university development through a regional cooperative approach was uniformly welcomed by all key Vietnamese informants.
2. Most of them agreed that cooperation in higher education could serve as a "confidence building measure" for collaboration on other fronts; however, they did not stress this point.
3. In general, they were satisfied with past and present cooperative activities. They thought language differences, bureaucratic procedures, insufficient funding and information networks were important issues for university development.
4. The most mentioned measures for cooperative university development in the future were greater participation by institutions of higher education in national development, cooperative research studies, and subregional consulting, joint programming, and monitoring university programs.

CHAPTER X

FINDINGS ON YUNNAN PROVINCE OF CHINA

Overview of Higher Education in the Yunnan Province

Higher Education in the Yunnan Province of the People's Republic of China has not been discussed in the literature as much as higher education, in the country as a whole, has. Likewise, Yunnan Province, one of China's twenty-two provinces, has not been well-documented and has not received much attention compared to other provinces or municipalities in eastern China. Perhaps the Yunnan Province is neglected because it is a distant, landlocked southwestern province in a relatively poor, underdeveloped region of China (Barnett, 1993).

According to Barnett (1993), Yunnan Province is an area full of tall mountains, high plateaus, and deep ravines. In other words, only a small part of the whole area can be cultivated. The province lacks adequate transportation. This frontier area is also home to at least twenty-four ethnic minority groups, creating a complicated ethnic composition. These factors help explain why poverty and backwardness are the fundamental economic problems facing the Province. Nonetheless, the recent rapid economic development of the country as a whole has allowed the Province to make important strides toward

modernization. In certain parts of Kunming, the Province's capital, traditional run down buildings can be seen along with modern high-rise buildings, which line the major boulevards in great numbers. The poverty and backwardness certainly affect the development of higher education. It is understandable why Yongquan (1992) states that higher education in the southwest, including the Yunnan Province, is relatively underdeveloped, compared to that in the east.

As the Chinese higher education system is under the unified control of the Central and Provincial Government, higher education throughout China will be briefly discussed.

The modern Chinese higher education system was established in the late nineteenth century. It was the establishment, in 1898, of the comprehensive Metropolitan University, now known as Peking University, that symbolized the beginning of modern higher education (Min, 1997; Yongquan, 1992). Before that, ancient higher learning can be traced back to as early as the eleventh century B.C., during the Zhou Dynasty, which was over 3,000 years ago (Min, 1997). The century after that witnessed dramatic changes in Chinese higher education. These included both quantitative and qualitative changes, which reflect the struggle to keep up with worldwide developments. Even

while changing, China has sought to maintain the characteristics of its own culture.

After the success of the Communist Revolution in 1949, the People's Republic of China was founded. In 1952, this socialist country, with a centrally-planned economic system, adopted the Soviet higher education model, which was characterized by highly specialized universities and a single unified curriculum for all institutions. Six years later came the "Great Leap Forward," a nationwide mass movement for social and economic development. This entailed a major change in the higher education system. There was a dramatic expansion of the provisions for higher education; the number of new institutions increased sharply, as did student enrollments. However, the expansion of education was not matched by equal economic development or prosperity. The quality and efficiency of the universities were thus compromised. As a consequence, adjustments occurred; the number of institutions of higher education was reduced, and the system was more rationalized (Hayhoe & Zhong, 1995; Min, 1997).

The trend toward rationalization of higher education was shortly disrupted by the Cultural Revolution, which began in 1966 and lasted ten years. During that period, higher education institutions were blamed for supporting

bourgeois ideologies and many were then shut down. The national university entrance examinations were replaced by political criteria, which influenced not only admissions but also graduation. Teaching and research came to a halt. Socioeconomic and scientific development were set back about twenty years (Min, 1997).

Nonetheless, it has been said that although China periodically falls apart, its leaders always put it together again (Barnett, 1993). After the end of the Cultural Revolution, higher education regained its strength. At the same time, China adopted new national policies for modernization, reform, and opening the country to the outside world (Min, 1997; Yongquan, 1992). In particular, the former centrally-planned economy has gradually been changed into a socialist market-oriented one. This shift has resulted in successful economic development during recent years and created a favorable environment for the further development of higher education.

At present, there are two major categories of higher education in China: regular institutions of higher education and adult institutions of higher education. The former offer full-time programs for degrees and diplomas in various fields of study. This group encompasses both

comprehensive universities and specialized institutions, the latter are more prevalent in China and refer to those institutions that offer less formal and more flexible courses, which are mostly tailored for in-service staff (Mayuan, Dunrong, Jianling, 1998; Min, 1997; Teng, 1995). This category includes the so-called "big schools"; they are, for example, radio and television universities, correspondence colleges, workers' universities, and farmers' universities.

In addition to these two major classifications, there is a self-study system of higher education, which was established in the early 1980s. In essence, examinees, on the basis of their self-study courses, can obtain a diploma or a certificate from a regular college if they pass the examination held by the college (Huang & Mao, 1992; Yongquan, 1992). The variety of courses and programs demonstrates the government's efforts to provide higher education to its vast population, which numbers over 1.2 billion (Mayuan, Dunrong, & Jianling, 1998). At the same time, it indicates a trend toward increased social and private demands for higher education in China (Min, 1997).

In 1981, the government also designated ninety-six schools as prestigious national "key institutions." They were selected on the basis of their long histories,

superior staff, and greater resources. They include famous universities such as Beijing University, Nankai University, and Nanjing University. These special universities and colleges have been allocated more funding for better faculties and better facilities. The purpose is to facilitate research and quality teaching. Later, these prestigious "key universities" will be able to assist other institutions with their expertise. This policy is still controversial. While it improves the quality of Chinese higher education at select institutions, it also compromises equity and discourages those staff and students at less adequately funded universities (Huang & Mao, 1992; Min, 1997; Yongquan, 1992).

The higher education system in China is further stratified according to institution types. First, there are comprehensive universities that formerly included the liberal arts, the humanities, and the sciences. Later, many new disciplines and interdisciplinary specializations, linking basic sciences with applied sciences and technology, were added. Secondly, there are a great number of specialized colleges and institutes. These first two types of institutions offer baccalaureate programs; some also provide graduate study and grant master's and doctoral degrees. The other two types are short-cycle specialized

institutes and short-cycle vocational colleges and universities. These two latter types train students for practical work at junior colleges (Huang & Mao, 1992; Min, 1997; Yongquan, 1992).

The unified control and coordination of higher education in China exists at two main levels. At the upper level is the Central government; at the lower level are the provincial governments. Through the State Education Commission and the State Council, the government develops and implements policies and decrees, establishes long-term and annual development programs, allocates budgets, administers personnel affairs, and supervises teaching and research. The State Education Commission, which was set up in 1985 (Huang & Mao, 1992), is responsible for keeping national planning of higher education in line with plans for the social and economic development of the country (Mayuan, Dunrong, & Jianling, 1998; Yongquan, 1992). The State Education Commission also organizes the national unified higher education admission system. This uniform entrance examination is given simultaneously in all parts of China every year (Mayuan, Dunrong, & Jianling, 1998; Yongquan, 1992). The State Education Commission also coordinates relationships between various Ministries, which have their own departments of education and are in charge

of certain regular universities under their jurisdiction. Some of these Ministries are the Ministry of Agriculture, the Ministry of Electronic Industries, and the Ministry of Public Health (Min, 1997). It should be noted here that the State Education Commission was formerly the Ministry of Education (Yongquan, 1992).

At the institutional level, the president is usually the highest executive. He is under the jurisdiction of the Communist Party Committee of the institution. The president is in charge of operations, such as the organization of teaching, research, and social services as well as the coordination and development of external relationships. Beneath the president are vice presidents, deans, and department heads who are in charge of academics, personnel, and international affairs, accordingly. There are also administrative bodies within a university or college such as the academic committee, the congress of staff, and the degree council. Representatives for the congress of staff are drawn from faculty and staff members (Mayuan, Dunrong, & Jianling, 1998; Yongquan, 1992).

The centralized model of higher education administration in China has gradually changed, in keeping with the country's transformation from a centrally-planned economy to a socialist market-economy. The rigid over-

centralized control of the past left little room for the autonomous management of curricula and programs in accordance with the requirements and needs of the particular institution (Mayuan, Dunrong, & Jianling, 1998). Under these conditions, the enthusiasm and creativity of individual institutions were constrained. According to Min (1997), there is a trend toward decentralization. This is characterized by, for instance,

giving more autonomy and decision-making power to higher education institutions; increasing and diversifying the sources of financing higher education; broadening and updating curricula so as to make universities and their graduates more flexible and adaptive to the rapidly changing labor market; and changing the rigid graduate job assignment system into a graduate-employer 'two-way selection' system to allow more individual choices. (p.48)

Regarding the last two issues, it should be noted that in previous years the state prepared the overall plan of work assignments for graduating students (Huang & Mao, 1992). In universities and colleges, students were trained according to specialities that broke down disciplines into special fields of study. This system, which was

implemented in 1952, is based on the Soviet model of higher education. According to Min (1997), the influence of the Soviet model still exists today. At one time, socialist construction needed a large number of specialized personnel. Students then were required to master specialized knowledge, techniques, and skills. According to Yongquan (1992), in 1980, 1,039 specialities were offered altogether in regular universities. Min (1997) even remarks that there were 1,419 specialities designed to serve planned manpower needs. However, in today's rapidly changing world, it may not be appropriate for students to be trained so narrowly. In a more dynamic market economy, there is a need for graduates to be more flexible and more adaptive to the needs of the changing labor market. In fact, the trend in China is now to broaden the training in each field of study. Also, the number of specialities was reduced to 870, in 1988 (Min, 1997; Yongquan, 1992).

According to Huang and Mao (1992), over the past decades, the development of higher education in China has been successful, except during the Cultural Revolution. In this regard, Hayhoe and Zhong (1995) contend that although the country, as a whole, is still developing, higher education has contributed successfully to the visibility of Chinese scholarship in the international academic

community. Since its adoption of the "open door" policy, the country has made great progress in scientific research. China's international ranking, based upon the number of publications, was fifteen in 1990. This was a significant placement among predominantly Western scientific powers. It is not known whether the rank would be higher if there had not been a massive loss of brain power. A large number of talented young Chinese have gone abroad to further their studies and only a few have returned.

Scientific research has been given a lot of attention in institutions of higher education. In China, besides the research conducted in universities and colleges, scientific studies are also performed in two other major centers whose branches are located in various provinces of the country. These two important sites are the Chinese Academy of Sciences (CAS) and the Chinese Academy of Social Sciences (CASS). These institutions also provide training for master's and doctoral students. At present, the research units in other institutions of higher education compete vigorously for research funds. (Hayhoe & Zhong, 1995; Min, 1997). It has also been said that research has been an important university objective since the late 1970s. Faculty members are expected to teach and to do research.

Research and publications make them eligible for promotion (Min, 1997).

As a result of China's policy to open itself to the outside world, the trend for the internationalization of higher education has become more and more evident. According to Min (1997), in past decades, China has witnessed the following activities: the study-abroad movement, the reception of foreign students, visits by foreign experts and scholars, the organization of and the participation in international conferences and seminars, the establishment of contacts with foreign institutions, and the implementation of international projects with worldwide organizations like the World Bank and UNESCO. All these programs promote the further development of higher education and stimulate necessary reforms. The series of World Bank projects, for example, aided faculty development and contributed to the improvement of facilities, thereby accelerating research activities. Exposure to the outside world has given faculty, staff members, and students the chance to learn about new ways of thinking and gain different perspectives. While foreign languages have been studied and tested for many years in the unified college entrance examination, the "open door" policy has given new meaning to the study of foreign

languages. According to Chen (1996), a professor at Peking University, English has now become the most popular subject and the most important language on campus. Individual and institutional connections with foreign counterparts have gradually been institutionalized. These changes will have a positive effect on the visibility of China in the international academic community (Min, 1997).

In the 1990s, in addition to the need for administrative reforms in higher education, in response to the problems of over-centralization and over-specialization, the literature has identified other areas in need of improvement. First, Chinese higher education needs to focus more on quality rather than quantity, in terms of scope and expansion (Yongquan, 1992). Improving quality might be difficult for the government, on account of climbing enrollment levels that result from increased social and private demands for higher education (Min, 1997). Secondly, the education system has not yet adapted to the overall needs of the national socialist development program (Teng, 1995). Huang and Mao (1992) add that education does not meet the needs of the market and does not pay enough attention to morality and ideology. Thirdly, according to Min (1997), there is an urgent need for Chinese institutions of higher education to rationalize

their structures and to improve efficiency. However, the budget constraints might inhibit any future reform. In 1992, Yongquan, as well as Huang and Mao, identified inadequate funding and low professor salaries as serious problems. The relatively low budget also results in the bad maintenance of buildings and other facilities. However, in a well-developed province in the east, universities might be able to raise faculty incomes, with revenue generated, since they now have more freedom with regard to administration and management (Min, 1997).

Despite the poverty and backwardness that characterize Yunnan Province, its institutions of higher education are well-established. At present, such universities as Yunnan University, Yunnan Normal University, Yunnan Polytechnic University, Yunnan Agricultural University, and Yunnan Radio and Television University contribute to the economic development of the Province. The Chinese Academy of Science and the Chinese Academy of Social Sciences also have branches in Yunnan Province. In addition to these major institutions, Yunnan Province has a number of smaller schools. They are the Yunnan Institute of Nationalities for Minorities, the Yunnan Academy of Art, the Yunnan Institute of Finance and Trade, the Yunnan Institute of Technology, and Kunming College of Medicine. All in all,

these schools provide a wide variety of higher educational opportunity for students in the Province.

The Yunnan branches of the Chinese Academy of Sciences are the Yunnan Observatory, the Kunming Institute of Botany, the Kunming Institute of Zoology, the Kunming Institute of Ecology, and the Xishuangbanna Tropical Botanic Garden. Overall, approximately 1,000 scientists and technologists are employed at Yunnan's various institutes, where they work together with other staff. Because Yunnan Province possesses impressive biological resources and has a wide array of animals, plants, and microorganisms, it serves well as a huge natural laboratory for researchers. The Kunming Institute of Zoology, for example, is very active in wildlife conservation and in the sustainable utilization of animal resources. The Institutes of Yunnan Province also publish two periodicals, Acta Botanica Yunnanica and Zoological Research, which are distributed nationally and worldwide.

One of the institutions of higher education in Yunnan Province, Yunnan University, founded in 1923, has been listed among the top fifteen world famous Chinese universities in the Concise Encyclopedia Britannica. This comprehensive university offers undergraduate and graduate degree programs in various disciplines. The faculty has

been very active in research, and a lot of its research has been linked to industrial productivity. In 1998, the university, together with UNESCO PROAP and the Association of Universities of Asia and Pacific organized an international conference on the relationship between university research and enterprise. The organization of this conference indicates that universities are becoming more responsive and adaptive to the changing market. The university has also established many academic connections with institutions in foreign countries, including the United States, Canada, Australia, Japan, and Thailand. At present, there are approximately 120 international students who are studying Chinese or are otherwise enrolled in university programs (SEAMEO RIHED, 1997a).

Two other institutions in Kunming that have academic relationships with foreign institutions are the Yunnan Normal University and Yunnan Radio and Television University. Yunnan Normal University, formerly known as the Kunming Teacher's College, is a key provincial university. It mainly provides education for teachers in various fields of study such as physics, history, geography, and audio-visual education. Yunnan Normal University contributes to the educational development of the Province. Both undergraduate and graduate programs are

offered. The institution has its own technology research center and its solar energy technological development center is highly commended. Cooperative activities have been arranged with institutes in Germany, France, Australia, the United States, and Thailand (SEAMEO RIHED, 1997b).

Yunnan Radio and Television University was established in the late 1970s. It is one of the "big schools" in China, which offers distance higher education to a large number of students in the Province. The university provides two- or three-year-long programs in various disciplines, such as law, medicine, foreign languages, agriculture, and economics. Regarding agriculture, the university has produced radio and television programs on, for example, planting, breeding, forestry, fruit growing, and environmental protection. These programs are useful to farmers and to the people working in the rural areas of Yunnan Province. Recently, it has established cooperative relations with open and distance education universities in Thailand, Australia, Japan, the United Kingdom, and the United States (SEAMEO RIHED, 1997b).

The Research Site

The two universities visited, Yunnan University and Yunnan Normal University, are located on either side of

Cuihu North Road, in Kunming, the provincial capital of Yunnan Province. The campuses were clean, shady, and quiet. There are many big and old western style buildings near to one another. Some of the buildings, although in need of repainting, were well-kept. In keeping with Chinese custom, students take turn cleaning the campuses. It is interesting to see groups of students, with wooden sticks and dustbins, walking merrily along the campus streets picking up trash and fallen leaves. Given that the buildings and offices are not well-equipped or modern, they still are at their best.

The academic atmosphere was very impressive. Early in the morning, students were seen everywhere reading books or reviewing their notes. This is to be expected because most students live in university dormitories and are always looking for places where they can study quietly on their own. Generally, they seemed friendly and, although not all of them were majoring in English, they could still converse quite well in the language. The faculty members appeared to be very industrious. They worked until late in the evening. After dinner, the key informants at Yunnan University went back to their offices to continue working.

The key informants, in general, were cooperative and enthusiastic about the idea of cooperative university development in GMS countries. It should be noted that the faculty of typical universities in China are academics whose level of education ranges from bachelor to doctoral degrees. The majority have bachelor's degrees but not higher academic degrees. Some faculty members do not have academic degrees because China did not have an academic degree system until 1981 (Min, 1997). As a result, some of the faculty and individuals interviewed were very young. Because university faculty positions are highly respected in Chinese culture, as they are throughout East Asia, students and junior faculty members are submissive to senior faculty members.

Two of the students who served as interpreters in two of the interviews spoke very fluent English. They were English majors in their junior and senior years. Although it is said that fewer and fewer students want to become teachers, these two had very good attitudes toward the profession. At the hostel for Yunnan Normal University, where I stayed, there were quite a few Western students who were taking courses at the university. The presence of Western students gives Chinese students the opportunity to practice their foreign language skills. One faculty member

told me that the reason the two student interpreters were provided was to give them a chance to use English in a real situation. However, according to Min (1997), in 1993, the enrollment rate of regular universities was approximately three percent of the normal age group. This helps explain why it is so hard to find even one person who can speak English outside the universities. Bank clerks cannot speak English and neither can hotel staff members who work at the information desks.

The Kunming Institute of Zoology and the Kunming Institute of Botany, the two branches of the Kunming Chinese Academy of Science, were vital and impressive. The large buildings are well-equipped, far more than can be expected. It should be remembered that Yunnan Province remains one of the poorest regions of China. The key informants who met with me at the Institutes spoke fluent English and were very energetic in their work. Representatives from the Kunming Institute of Botany had recently attended a seminar, in Thailand, on Upper Mekong Basin Cooperation. Also, the Kunming Institute of Zoology had just organized an international conference on wildlife that was well attended by participants from all over the world, including Thailand. Notably, the Kunming Institute of Zoology is located far from the downtown area. The

province is poor and, therefore, the Institute's main buildings stand out from their surroundings.

Findings

Question One: What Do University People Think About University Development Through a Regional Cooperative Approach?

Key Chinese informants all expressed hope and confidence in what could be gained from sharing resources and information with GMS universities. One academic said that universities in this Subregion could not always develop alone, and therefore needed cooperation. Another mentioned that, according to his experience, regional cooperation always benefited the development of his university. As an example, one respondent said that his colleagues had gone to Thailand and brought back valuable information to the institution.

On the other hand, all of those questioned disagreed with competition. One respondent explained that while competition might be relevant to universities from the same country, it was not an issue among countries in the Subregion. Instead, he was concerned with how universities, in general, could meet the increasing demands for higher education. It was agreed that regional cooperation made universities more competitive because it

widened the scope of knowledge and generally enriched the university and its staff. In this regard, another respondent added that regional cooperation could accelerate university development.

However, more than half of the respondents observed that GMS universities were still more interested in academic partners from the West, rather than from neighboring countries. One of the reasons cited was finances; the limited resources of their poor neighbors constrained cooperation. But, according to some, GMS universities considered, as they should, both eastern and western partners. One person said that favoritism of the West was changing because recent economic reforms and the "open door policy to the outside world" were creating more opportunities for GMS countries to establish relationships with each other.

Question Two: What Role Do University People Think Higher Education Has in the Development of Greater Mekong Subregional Economic Cooperation?

Key Chinese informants believed that cooperation in higher education could serve as a "confidence building measure" for Greater Mekong Subregional Economic Cooperation. One respondent said, "Because we are going to have economic cooperation, we need to cooperate first in

academic areas." However, one informant believed political development was a prerequisite for academic cooperation.

Most of those interviewed thought that universities in the Subregion had not done enough to improve their programs and courses and thereby promote regional unity. They believed that university students should learn more about neighboring countries and gain a better understanding of their peers in different cultures. One respondent also said university students should be made aware of economic cooperation in the Subregion.

Question Three: How Do University People Perceive Past and Present Cooperation for GMS University Development?

The informants were generally satisfied with the activities with which they had been involved. They cited the good relationships they established with their counterparts as one reason and the exchange of information and experiences during seminars and conferences as another. One respondent was impressed with the many connections his university has made, in recent years, with other institutions in the Subregion. He mentioned the success of the recent regional conference hosted by his university.

On the other hand, the informants pointed out some of the shortcomings of cooperation and acknowledged their resulting frustration. First, complicated bureaucratic

procedures, established by the governments, hindered full participation by GMS representatives in cooperative programs. One respondent said, "Sometimes it is difficult to get permission from some governments." He added that his university had exchange programs with universities in Thailand, Cambodia, and Vietnam and wanted to establish them with universities in Myanmar. He thought Myanmar academics would be interested, but that their government might not like the idea.

Secondly, some key informants complained that there were not enough chances to get involved in international academic activities. Thirdly, one respondent, who attended a Subregional workshop, noted that the content of the workshop did not match his needs or expectations. He commented that need analysis should have been conducted by the organizer before giving the workshop. I also noticed that at the regional workshops and conferences I attended more attention was paid to the matter of inviting as many GMS participants as possible, rather than to the merit of the meetings themselves. Besides, representatives from GMS countries sometimes were not qualified or what the host countries expected.

When asked to identify key issues in university cooperation, the insufficiency of funding was unanimously

chosen. Chinese academics and researchers expressed concern about financial problems; limited and unavailable funds often thwarted their plans and initiatives. One person noted that his affiliate once initiated a cooperative project, but because it was not within the interests of the government, it did not receive attention or funding. In addition to funding, insufficient information networks and differences in educational policies were also cited as problems.

On the topic of language, most informants viewed English as the most suitable lingua franca for the Subregion. They argued that English is more widely used and more popular than any other language. When asked why they did not recommend Chinese, one respondent said Chinese would be difficult for other countries to learn. Moreover, increasing numbers of Chinese academics and researchers now speak English. One researcher added that young professors tended to be more competent in English than their seniors, and the same was true in neighboring countries.

The respondents believed university people, in general, were interested in international academic activities. However, some again commented that faculty and staff still had limited opportunities to get involved in cooperative activities. In particular, it was difficult

for them to go abroad for advanced study, or to travel to neighboring countries. Even when the travel was funded, bureaucracy got in the way and either aborted or delayed intended activities. Also, professors visiting from neighboring countries could stay at the host universities for only a short period of time, and thus there was not enough time for meaningful intellectual exchange.

When asked whether there were any sensitive issues that university people needed to be aware of, most respondents were not specific, but acknowledged that sensitive political issues existed. Two respondents mentioned China's problem with ethnic minorities. One of them said, "We should not try to make any influence upon the political, ethnic social issues of other countries." Another informant suggested the GMS countries put all conflicts and enmity behind them and look towards the future. It is worth noting that one academic mentioned that sensitivities might exist between China and Vietnam.

The informants were also asked if the different level of educational development at institutions of higher learning, among GMS countries, would be a problem in cooperative efforts. Most of them expected it would be a problem, but in general, they did not provide clear or articulate answers. However, one respondent commented

that, "Different needs, purposes, and values for different people may be the main problem." Another added, "The differences can be an issue, but we do not have to wait until all catch up with each other." On the other hand, another academic, with an opposite point of view, said, "One of the reasons why we are going to cooperate is we are at the different level of higher education development."

Question Four: What Are the Possibilities, Given the Present Situation, for Future Cooperation among GMS Universities?

Most Chinese academics recommended cooperative research studies, international exchanges of expertise, international study programs, and faculty visits. The preferred fields of study for cooperative university programs were economics, education, agriculture, and environmental studies. Notably, at present, universities and research centers in Yunnan Province have already been participating in cooperative exchange programs with universities in Thailand, in economics, environmental studies, and resource studies.

In further promoting cooperative activities, Chinese informants, as reported earlier, complained about constraints in funding and about limited resources. They expected governments, donor countries, international

organizations, and private industries to support such activities. One researcher said that since his affiliate had received some government funding, he too wanted to apply for grants from neighboring governments, but did not have the information to do so. She mentioned that cooperative research in the Subregion was still limited, and that extending the range of collaborative programs would be possible only if external assistance were available.

Summary

1. Key Chinese informants all expressed optimism and confidence in what GMS universities could gain from working together.
2. All of them agreed that university development cooperation in GMS countries would facilitate economic cooperation.
3. The informants were generally satisfied with the activities with which they have been involved. From their perspective, insufficient funding, inadequate information networks, and differing educational policies were hindering cooperative university development.
4. They said GMS universities should participate more in collaborative research studies, international exchanges of expertise, international exchanges of intellectual

resources, and intra-regional study programs and teaching visits.

CHAPTER XI

FINDINGS ON INTERNATIONAL ORGANIZATIONS

Background Information of Key Informants

Key informants from international organizations involved in GMS regional cooperation were included in this study because donor perspectives are also important. Some of them were GMS natives. Still, they identified with their international organization instead of their particular GMS country. Because these respondents do not teach or work in GMS universities, questions regarding contents and activities of university programs in the GMS posed to other groups of GMS university people were not relevant. Representatives from the international organizations did not have the same information to share with me. During the interviews, such questions were thus omitted.

The key informants in this group were affiliated with the Asian Development Bank (ADB); the Ford Foundation; the Southeast Asian Ministers of Education Organization: the Regional Center for Higher Education Development (SEAMEO RIHED); the Mekong River Commission Secretariat (MRCS); the United Nations Educational, Scientific, and Cultural Organization (UNESCO), in Bangkok, Thailand and Phnom Penh, Cambodia; the Mekong Institute at Khon Kaen University,

Thailand; and the Southeast Asian Ministers of Education Organization Secretariat (SEAMES). It should be noted that even though the Mekong Institute is located at Khon Kaen University, Thailand, the Institute was supported by the governments of both New Zealand and Thailand. It is considered a regional institute, not a national one, and provides training for GMS participants.

Most of the key informants were officers in the education programs of their international organization. They are of varied nationalities such as Chinese, Korean, American, Thai, Indonesian, and New Zealander. Although this was a small group of informants, the same procedures for the presentation of the findings were used for the sake of anonymity and to keep this case study in line with the six cases presented before it.

Findings

Question One: What Do University People Think About University Development Through a Regional Cooperative Approach?

All of the informants supported the idea of developing higher education by means of regional cooperation. The limited resources of GMS countries were their major concern. They realized participating countries needed to share resources, avoid duplication, and make use of each

other's strengths. One key informant said, "University students in all GMS countries require similar courses, and future graduates from the various countries are likely to be working with each other in the future."

The individuals questioned agreed that GMS universities still sought academic partners in the West. Western universities were perceived as better, and GMS universities themselves were not well-off. However, some of them also mentioned the issue of cost-effectiveness, which favored GMS universities. One respondent said, "The high cost of Western education makes it difficult to realize the dream [of sending students and government officials for further study]." Another added, "More contacts and resources for exchanges and joint work would help," when expressing hope that there would be changes in the favoritism of the West in the future.

Question Two: What Role Do University People Think Higher Education Has in the Development of Greater Mekong Subregional Economic Cooperation?

Those interviewed unanimously agreed that cooperation in human resource development contributed to the elimination of political hostility. They thought that cooperation in the development of higher education cooperation in the Greater Mekong Subregion would spearhead

cooperation on other fronts. Some explained that university students and trainees in cooperative programs would subsequently serve the GMS countries by working in national development. Some would hold positions, as policy makers, key administrators, or practitioners, from which they could further promote regional cooperation.

One key informant, who organized training for GMS participants, told me that he had arranged training sessions and activities for GMS trainees, so they could get to know one another and develop personal relationships. For example, he organized group aerobics in the mornings before real training started. Although the benefits of such "little" activities could not be concretely evaluated, he believed they at least helped the trainees become familiar with each other. Based on his experience working with other officials from GMS countries, he learned to better understand his associates and, as a result, is not as easily frustrated by what they do. He believes his trainees, all of whom are GMS government officials, will be able to reach agreements in their future negotiations.

Question Three: How Do University People Perceive Past and Present Cooperation for GMS University Development?

Key informants, who have been directly involved in cooperative activities, reported that they were satisfied

with the events they participated in. They were pleased because participants got to know each other, created personal connections, developed mutual understandings, and agreed on certain matters. One informant noticed that some GMS participants were very interested in improving education in their countries and were eager to discuss problems and seek solutions. One said that he, too, gained more knowledge and experience through his involvement in cooperative activities.

More than half of them did not express any dissatisfaction. However, for those who did, the reasons for their dissatisfaction varied. It is worthwhile to list them here. One respondent said the low level of English proficiency among participants in the training programs made communication difficult. This view was echoed by another respondent who affirmed that language differences were a critical problem in training. Knowledge and technology transferred during training sessions could be partially lost because of the language barriers. Provisions for interpreters added extra costs to training programs. Furthermore, one respondent said, "People are often only keen to do something if they will be paid." Another talked about the limited knowledge academics had about other countries; they tended to know more about the

West. Lastly, another respondent wrote that during the meetings people debated over issues of vested interest.

When asked to list the issues they believed were critical to cooperative university development, they cited the insufficiency of funding, the lack of incentives, and the lack of clear stable mechanisms for financing academic cooperation or the absence of firm strategies for cooperative activities as the top three. In addition, one key informant stressed that he was struck the most by the lack of coordination among various agencies and donor countries. He said that if they could work together, in a more concerted way, cooperative activities could be more effective; otherwise, they would waste time and resources.

They all agreed that English was a suitable GMS lingua franca. They argued for English because it is widely used as an international language and is central to international research and publications. One informant added, "The trend is [that] all of them try very hard to learn English...It will take quite some time. I have heard the younger generation can speak more English." Most of them thought the language abilities of GMS university people, in general, were only "fair." Only academics and administrators were rated as "good."

Most of them also perceived GMS university people as interested in international academic activities. However, some of them, when asked further whether they saw any significant changes in recent years, could not give definite answers. One respondent, who had extensive experience with GMS people, said, "[They] think nationally rather than regionally and not very concerned about [the] welfare of the poor. Most will only do non-core work if they are paid by an international donor." Given this respondent's experience, his opinion, although singular, is worth noting.

The sensitive issues cited by the key informants were the differing levels of democracy, education, and wealth in each country. Another mentioned the matter of human rights in certain countries. For those who said there were none, they further explained that there might be political sensitivity but thought it was not that serious.

Informants diverged in their opinions as to whether they thought the differing levels of development in higher education were a problem. For the majority who believed it was not a problem, they argued that it was this very fact that helped GMS countries cooperate. One respondent said, "There are many areas where they can learn from each other, i.e. language, arts, culture, and environment."

Interestingly, another added, "I do not think some advanced universities want to get much in return; spirit of assistance can be felt." However, on the other hand, there were a few informants who thought the differences could be a problem. Regarding this, one said, "Unless there are financial rewards, cooperation will be difficult."

Question Four: What Are the Possibilities, Given the Present Situation, for Future Cooperation among GMS Universities?

Most key informants suggested that there should be cooperative research studies, international exchanges of expertise, and the sharing of intellectual resources. Program development and staff development through international attachments and secondments of personnel in the future were also recommended. One informant remarked that student exchanges might not happen soon. He explained that this was because he still saw only one-sided participation. For example, Khmer students have studied in Vietnam, but no Vietnamese students have gone to Cambodia for advanced study. On a related point, one respondent mentioned that systems of accreditation still had to be established in certain GMS countries. Accreditation would require standardized curricula and programs and would provide for more student exchanges.

The fields of study the informants thought were viable for cooperation were engineering, agriculture, language, natural resources, community development, education, economics, and health science. The arts were mentioned, too.

Respondents expected GMS governments to further promote cooperative university development by providing more definite policies and other forms of support. On the other hand, they thought donor agencies, multilateral agencies, and the private sector should provide funding and technical assistance. One respondent said that it was still premature to expect any support from the private sector.

Summary

1. All of the informants supported the idea of developing higher education by means of regional cooperation.
2. Almost all of them agreed that cooperation in human resource development would contribute to the elimination of political hostility. This principle applies to the Greater Mekong Subregion as well.
3. Respondents were satisfied with cooperative activities to the extent that they helped establish relationships with other GMS countries and promoted mutual understanding among GMS participants. The issues they saw as critical were the

insufficiency of funding, the lack of incentives, and the lack of clear stable mechanisms or the lack of firm policies for cooperative activities.

4. To promote further university cooperation, they suggested that there should be cooperative research studies and international exchanges of expertise and of intellectual resources. Program as well as staff development through international secondments of personnel were also recommended.

CHAPTER XII

SUMMARY AND DISCUSSION OF FINDINGS

Summary of Findings

Comparatively, the perceptions of university people from the six different countries and those of respondents from the international organizations did not vary much. Key informants generally agreed on the idea of university development through a regional cooperative approach and on the role universities have in the development of the Greater Mekong Subregion (see also Table 2 and Table 3). Overall, they considered regional cooperation beneficial to GMS university development. At the same time, they also believed that cooperation in various higher educational activities could encourage mutual understanding and improve attitudes. Both are necessary for the success of economic cooperation in the Greater Mekong Subregion and for building a peaceful GMS community.

In addition, they were satisfied with the cooperative activities with which they were involved, and they wanted to see more of such activities in the future. On the other hand, they experienced some frustration over problems that arose from complex bureaucracy and language differences (see also Table 4). They viewed the insufficiency of funds, the lack of information networks, and the lack of

firm and precise policies for international academic cooperation as critical issues in collaborative university development (see also Table 5).

Most respondents proposed modest measures for future cooperation among GMS universities. In this regard, international sharing of expertise and resources, cooperative research studies, international study visits, and international teacher exchanges were suggested. More demanding projects, like transfers of student credit, satellite broadcasts for distance learning, and new textbooks that could be used between countries were rarely mentioned (see also Table 6). The fields of study recommended for further cooperative programs are economics, education, agriculture, engineering, health science, tourism, and environmental studies (see also Table 7).

The individuals interviewed expected enthusiasm and a clear policy for Subregional academic cooperation from governments. They also expected financial and non-financial support from donor agencies, and international organizations. The private sectors were not much mentioned. According to the informants, it seemed unrealistic, for the time being, to expect any support from private businesses.

Table 2

GMS University Development through a Regional CooperativeApproach

Country
Opinion/Reason
Cambodia
Agree/ Best use of human and financial resources; rebuilding of higher education needs cooperation and external assistance.
Lao PDR
Agree/ Needs a lot of human and financial support from neighboring countries; too sophisticated technology in the West sometimes does not match Lao absorptive capacity.
Myanmar
Agree/ Collaborative efforts minimize expenses and raise human resource levels; no one could survive by living alone.
Thailand
Agree/ Regard themselves as both recipients and providers of technical assistance; opportunities to develop new skills and gain more knowledge.
Vietnam
Agree/ Every participating country has both strengths and weaknesses; one country could help the other; knowledge and experience could best be shared on the basis of common economic and political issues.
Yunnan Province
Agree/ A lot could be gained from sharing resources and information; cooperation makes universities more competitive.
International Organizations
Agree/ GMS countries have limited resources; GMS university cooperation is consistent with the main objective of international organizations

Table 3

University Cooperation and the Development of Economic
Cooperation in the GMS

Country	Opinion/Reason
Cambodia	*Agree with the general idea that education helps eliminate conflicts; the younger generation should learn about what the GMS countries have in common.
Lao PDR	*Believe that education helps promote mutual understanding; education facilitates a channel for people to communicate with each other.
Myanmar	*Agree with the assumption that higher education cooperation could contribute to the elimination of political hostility
Thailand	Agree with the idea that universities promote mutual understanding; participants in cooperative programs are likely to develop positive feelings toward the host country.
Vietnam	Agree that higher education cooperation could serve as a "confidence building measure"; university staff could help provide the information needed in economic cooperation.
Yunnan Province	Agree with the idea that university development cooperation would facilitate economic cooperation.
International Organizations	Believe that higher education cooperation could spearhead cooperation on other fronts; participants in cooperative programs would subsequently serve the GMS countries, holding positions as administrators and practitioners, from which they could further promote regional cooperation.

Notes. The asterisk (*) denotes that informants did not strongly agree with the idea of university cooperation promoting mutual understanding among GMS countries.

Table 4

Perceptions of Past and Present Cooperation for GMSUniversity Development

Country	Opinion/Reason
Cambodia	Satisfied/ gain knowledge and experience; establish connections/ want to see more of cooperative activities.
Lao PDR	Satisfied/ returning students and trainees can directly apply knowledge and experience to their work.
Myanmar	Satisfied/ gain knowledge and experience; establish relationships.
Thailand	Satisfied/ gain knowledge, recognition, and financial rewards; establish relationships. Dissatisfied/ complex bureaucracy; political intervention.
Vietnam	Satisfied/ learn more about neighboring countries; exchange expertise and knowledge.
Yunnan Province	Satisfied/ establish connections; exchange information. Dissatisfied/ complex bureaucracy; not enough chance to get involved in international academic activities.
International Organizations	Satisfied/ participants get to know each other; create personal connections; develop mutual understanding. Dissatisfied/ low level of English proficiency of participants; vested interest.

Table 5

Issues Critical to Cooperative University Development

Country	Critical Issues
Cambodia	Insufficiency of funding; lack of incentives; lack of clear and firm policies and mechanisms for international academic cooperation.
Lao PDR	Insufficiency of funding; lack of staff; inadequate information networks.
Myanmar	Insufficiency of funding; lack of information networks; lack of clear stable policy and mechanisms for financing academic cooperation.
Thailand	Insufficiency of funding; lack of information networks; negative attitudes toward the idea of development through regional cooperation
Vietnam	Insufficiency of funding; Language differences; complex bureaucracy.
Yunnan Province	Insufficiency of funding; inadequate information networks; differing educational policies.
International Organizations	Insufficiency of funding; lack of incentives; lack of clear stable mechanisms and policies for cooperative activities.

Table 6

Practical Measures for Future Cooperation among the GMSUniversities

Country
Practical Measures Recommended
Cambodia
Cooperative research studies; international sharing of expertise and intellectual resources; staff development through international secondments of personnel.
Lao PDR
Cooperative research studies; regional documentation and information services; international study or teaching visits.
Myanmar
Cooperative research studies; international study or teaching visits; international sharing and exchange of expertise and intellectual resources.
Thailand
Cooperative research studies; international exchange of information; international exchange of academic staff.
Vietnam
Cooperative research studies; greater participation by institutions of higher learning in national development; subregional consulting, joint programming, and monitoring university programs.
Yunnan Province
Cooperative research studies; international exchange of expertise and intellectual resources; intra-regional study programs.
International Organizations
Cooperative research studies; international exchange of expertise and intellectual resources; program as well as staff development through international secondments of personnel.

Table 7

Fields of Study Viable for University Cooperation

Country	Fields of Study Recommended
Cambodia	Economics; education; environment; language training; tourism; engineering; agriculture.
Lao PDR	Economics; education; environmental studies; agriculture; health science; engineering.
Myanmar	Economics; education; management; finance; public administration; cultural studies; science and technology.
Thailand	Economics; education; agriculture; health science; history; engineering; tourism; environmental studies.
Vietnam	Economics; education; information technology; public administration; environmental studies.
Yunnan Province	Economics; education; agriculture; environmental studies.
International Organizations	Economics; education; engineering; agriculture; language; natural resources; community development; health science.

Discussion of Findings

It was my intention, in the first place, not to merge the case studies, but to present them separately. Accordingly, the above summary may obscure some interesting points. First, although the key informants unanimously agreed that collaboration is a good strategy for university development in the Subregion, the reasons given were quite varied.

Cambodia and Lao PDR, for example, seemed to view university cooperation with a country like Thailand as a supplement to cooperation with Western countries. As the two countries are in urgent need for external assistance to help them with the rebuilding and reform of their higher education systems, all sources of foreign assistance are necessary. However, it would be wrong to say that Cambodia and Lao PDR regarded university cooperation with Thailand as just better than nothing. Key Lao informants recognized that many training programs in Thailand were more relevant and useful to the needs of their country than training programs of Western countries.

In addition, as a victim of wars, intervention, and domination, it was not surprising that Lao PDR is seen as more careful in establishing relationships with other countries. Lao PDR has become selective and sensitive to

the inflow of foreign assistance. This was evident in the need to have more information about their counterparts available, in order to channel the assistance appropriately to their specific needs. According to what was told by the persons I met during the field study, students and government officials were sent for further study or training to specific countries, possessing or being recognized in needed fields of study like agriculture, irrigation, and health science. In the case of cooperation with Thailand, the Lao government is selective and favors sending students and trainees to provincial universities, instead of to universities in big cities like Bangkok. This is because the academic standards and environments of the provincial universities are more akin to those of Lao PDR.

Whereas Myanmar and Vietnamese informants were not articulate in sharing their views or generous in giving out their opinions and information, their interest in the idea of university through a regional cooperative approach cannot be doubted. Each key informant has been involved in cooperative GMS activities in one way or another, for instance, by participating in conferences and meetings, attending training programs, having personal connections with their peers in another country, and teaching students

from GMS countries. They cited these activities, and all wanted to see more of them. This is a good sign for the future of GMS university cooperation. Their perceptions of the benefits of university cooperation should also be considered as different from those of Cambodian and Lao informants. This is because the need to rebuild and reform their higher education systems may not be so acute as in Cambodia and Lao PDR. Taking into consideration the state and quality of their higher education systems, Vietnam and Myanmar may not treat GMS university cooperation as international academic cooperation in general.

There has been evidence of increased interest and willingness of Vietnam to contribute to university cooperation. For instance, recently, in July 1998 when an international conference on curriculum and instruction took place in Bangkok, Thailand, a Vietnamese representative attended the meeting. His travelling expenses were funded by the Vietnamese government--his research institute--not by the host of the conference. Even though this may be considered a normal practice in the West, it is a very good sign to many that have been involved in cooperative GMS activities. Usually, as mentioned earlier, participation by GMS representatives is fully paid for by the host agencies, donor agencies, or the international

organizations concerned. Organizers understand that constraints on resources in GMS developing countries do not allow their governments or their participants to pay for costly cooperative activities. The Vietnamese government also hosted the 1997 meeting of the interim committee for the Southeast Asian Ministers of Education Organization/Regional Centre for Higher Education and Development (SEAMEO RIHED). Hosting this meeting was important because it showed Vietnam's commitment to and interest in regional cooperation.

Chinese key informants in the Yunnan Province were also enthusiastic about the idea of GMS university cooperation. However, their enthusiasm seemed to be based on the broad-based need for Chinese people to learn more about the international community. Academics are enthusiastic about getting involved in international academic activities, and most of them want to study abroad or visit another country.

On the other hand, Thai informants viewed GMS university cooperation as a way to promote mutual understanding and to help some of its neighboring countries attain a higher level of economic development. Whereas Thailand does not expect much in return, there is a desire for the country to become a leader in the Subregion,

especially with regard to higher education. In other words, many Thai informants did not envisage Thai university students or government officials travelling to neighboring countries to further their studies or receive training in the near future. At the same time, they mentioned the government's desire to have Thailand become a "gateway" to Indochina and a regional hub for the development of higher education.

One key Thai informant even mentioned that, in 1987, General Chatchai Choonhavan, the late Thai Prime Minister, thought of changing the battlefield of the GMS into a marketplace. Thai, not others, thus deserve the leading role in the economic and educational development of the Subregion. Notably, another Thai informant said that Laos did not like the term a "marketplace" because they felt they would be taken advantage of, as if the "marketplace" was just another battlefield. The same informant, when talking to her Lao associates, thus used the expression "sanam rak" or literally, a love field.

At present, it is not unreasonable for Thailand to take the leadership position because its system of higher education is relatively more developed than some of those in the Subregion. However, the systems of higher education in the Yunnan Province of China and in Vietnam are also of

comparable quality to some universities in Thailand. If cooperation means equal partnership, then the ongoing leadership of one country might not be appropriate. Other countries might want to take that role, too, when they feel they are ready. Many key Thai informants warned that Thailand should not approach cooperation with an attitude of superiority. At the same time, during the interviews, some of them also said that Thailand should be a leader in certain fields of study.

One explanation for the varying reasons for higher education cooperation given by the informants from GMS countries is, perhaps, because they responded to the potential benefits of cooperation, on behalf of the Greater Mekong Subregion, with national interests in mind. It is not surprising that participating countries approach regional cooperation with their own interests and priorities in mind. What is important is that the participants can align themselves with one another to make cooperation successful in the long run.

Among those interviewed from international organizations, there was also a consensus that GMS universities had to cooperate to achieve the desired higher education reforms. They confirmed that the idea of cooperative GMS university development was exactly in

keeping with the main objective of their organizations, namely, promoting cooperation among countries in the Subregion. As one informant said, "I believe truthfully the idea is one of the (his organization)'s major mandate and major programs in the post-Cold War era. (His organization) pays attention to promote mutual understanding among [the] younger generation [and] between universities and between professors." As providers of technical assistance and financial aid, international organizations view regional cooperation as a cost-effective strategy for developing countries to share resources, for which there will be increased demands.

It is encouraging that providers are in agreement with recipients. Agreement between providers and recipients is significant because sometimes cooperation and goodwill can deteriorate into forced support and misunderstanding, which are not beneficial to either party. During field study, I was told by a key informant from one of the GMS countries that a report on educational reform, which was developed by one of the international organizations, was distorted and did not match the real situation and needs of his country.

Secondly, key informants generally grant more importance to their more developed associates in Western countries. However, key informants from Thailand, for

example, who provide training and offer degree programs for GMS participants were not offended by the fact that their neighbors still overlooked Thai universities in favor of Western institutions. This is because they themselves also recognize the superior quality of Western universities. However, they emphasized the cost-effectiveness of attending Thai universities and the relevant course content of training and educational programs within the Subregion. It should be noted that there used to be a trilateral training project that was organized by the Prince of Songkhla University, in Thailand; Washington State University, in the United States; and the National Economics University, in Vietnam. The project was entitled "Training Program Assisting Vietnam's Conversion to a Market Economy through the National Economics University," and both Thailand and Vietnam were used as the training sites. This was a good example of a trilateral arrangement that combines the expertise of a Western university and the familiarity of a Thai university, which, in turn, has a background similar to that of a Vietnamese institution. It is a strategy that is cost effective and recognizes the superior quality of a Western academic partner as well.

Thirdly, whereas there was a general consensus that academic cooperation could diminish animosity or lessen any

likely conflict between countries, informants from certain nationalities had less confidence in universities promoting mutual understanding than others. Some believed that political development could be a prerequisite to successful academic cooperation. Others thought political development should go together with educational cooperation. Some countries have suffered from wars and/or foreign intervention, and their people feel too vulnerable to have strong faith in the positive intangible benefits cooperative university development might yield.

Cambodian informants, in particular, were not very hopeful about the idea of university cooperation as a confidence building measure for cooperation on other fronts. It seemed as if they were still sensitive about the bitter conflict in the past. One respondent said, "People who lived through the Khmer Rouge will have difficulty with relationship, with affection." The political instability that still plagues the social and economic development of the country might make the idea of universities promoting mutual understanding too far-fetched for the informants.

Fourthly, while it can be reported that key informants were generally satisfied with cooperative university activities, some chose not to talk about whatever

dissatisfaction they might have. It seems they did not want to complain for fear of jeopardizing their positions or destroying relationships between countries. Therefore, whereas it is encouraging to know that the informants were satisfied with and enthusiastic about their activities, it should be noted that they did not disclose all of their thoughts.

Furthermore, the fact that informants in Myanmar did not express much their satisfaction and dissatisfaction with past and present university cooperative activities can be may be explained by another reason. That is the country so far has not had much activity with the outside world, especially the GMS countries.

On the contrary, Thai informants were forthcoming with information and were candid in their opinions about cooperative university development in the Greater Mekong Subregion. The relatively larger amount of information given by those interviewed and their outspokenness cannot be explained only by the fact that I am also a Thai native. There are two other important reasons as well. First, in recent years, Thai universities and certain government sectors have been involved in various kinds of cooperative activities with neighboring universities. They have organized regional conferences and seminars, provided

training programs, visited their associates, and developed personal relationships with neighboring peers. These activities have exposed them to knowledge, information, and experiences in cooperative GMS university activities. The amount of exposure they have received is greater than the amount their neighboring associates have. This is because the Thai Department of Technical and Economic Cooperation (DTEC) has been providing Thai universities with financial support for cooperative university activities since 1992. Secondly, most Thai informants are university academics, and, although they are also government officials, they have relatively more freedom to express their opinions than their colleagues in socialist or military societies.

Fifthly, although the issues like bureaucratic procedures were not cited as critical to the development of GMS university cooperation by the majority of informants from certain countries, the omission can be misleading. In Myanmar, for example, according to Thai informants and those from international organizations, it is still difficult and complicated to invite Myanmar people to attend or participate in any activity outside the country. Based upon my experience when involved in a university cooperative activity, I found that it was quite complicated to get Myanmar government officials to participate in the

activity due to the rules and regulations of Myanmar. During the meeting, a representative from Myanmar was even heard joking about how difficult a time the host had in inviting him to attend the meeting. Practical measures Myanmar informants proposed regarding international study or teaching visits are then questionable. Taking into consideration the political situation in the country itself, it is unlikely to see the mobility of teaching staff and students, from outside and inside the country in the near future. However, the informants might be foreseeing some improvement in the future and may have responded accordingly.

Similarly, in Yunnan Province of China, government policies and complex bureaucratic procedures, while they were not mentioned by most informants, need to be addressed also. Excessive governmental involvement and excessive governmental regulations limit, and even obstruct, cooperation. At one Subregional workshop I observed during the field study, four representatives from each of the GMS countries were expected to attend. However, only one Chinese representative was able to make it. Complicated bureaucratic processes made it impossible for the other Chinese participants to leave the country.

The control of the Chinese government has been mentioned in other sources. Hayhoe and Zhong (1995) note the aftermath of the political incident of 1989, in Tiananmen Square, has caused some difficulty for Chinese scholars and researchers. Scholars must comply with the Communist Party if they want to continue writing. Political influences affect research and its findings especially during periods of political repression. More recently, in U.S. News & World Report, Fang (1998) reports that the Chinese government has tried to maintain control over computer Internet services. Any World Wide Web site that the Communist Party considers politically taboo is blocked to prevent citizens from conducting undesirable political campaigns on the Net. Nonetheless, some Internet users have managed to tap into forbidden sites.

Closely related to the issue of complex bureaucracy is the political intervention. Again, the point is the reason certain issues were not mentioned may be explained by the fact that the informants might have been afraid of hurting the feelings of their counterparts or jeopardizing their positions. However, not mentioning an issue does not mean it is not problematic. In Lao PDR, sometimes politics gets involved and jeopardizes cooperative efforts. Students and government officials have been sent abroad, especially to

Thailand, not on merit alone. Children of influential persons, for example, have a better chance to get scholarships or other privileges. According to the evaluation study of the Thailand Development Research Institute (1998), there have been students whose academic background are not strong enough to enroll in programs in Thai universities. Consequently, these students are not doing very well. Some either have already dropped out of the programs or changed to programs that are less demanding. One Lao official I met during the field research also commented that some grantees studying in Thailand are not serious about their study. This is an example of how cooperative efforts can be thwarted due to political intervention.

In addition, when informants from one country contended that bureaucratic procedures and government intervention in another country hindered the development of university cooperation, this does not mean their country is free of such problems. A country like Thailand has just taken a new role as a provider, while still serving its traditional role as a recipient of foreign assistance. The administrative and management systems of the government, especially its Department of Technical and Economic Cooperation, need to be adjusted to fit the country's

additional role. When it comes to cooperation, one side should not always expect the other to adjust its practices; the willingness of both parties to compromise is necessary.

The informants from international organizations stressed that the interest in cooperation by the governments of the GMS countries is, by itself, not enough. Without clear policies, "soft" infrastructure regulations, and other mechanisms that facilitate cooperation, foreign assistance will either fail or be inefficiently used. However, the need for the various donor agencies to work more with one another in helping the Mekong countries should also be taken into consideration. Differing interests among donor agencies and international organizations in GMS initiatives can be a factor that works against successful cooperation.

Likewise, language barriers and English proficiency of university people were not stressed or viewed as critical issues by certain groups of informants such as Chinese. However, I found them to be a problem. At one seminar I attended, an invitation to a key Chinese administrator, sent by a Thai organizer, was written in English. However, the response was written in Chinese. Apparently, the Thai organizer was expected to read Chinese. Communication was made difficult, and responses were long delayed by language

differences. The Chinese administrator, who finally did attend the seminar hosted by Thailand, was unable to speak English, and, therefore, needed to have an interpreter at the meeting. The problem of language barriers cannot be underestimated in university cooperation. When communication is made difficult or impossible, activities must come to a halt.

Among Myanmar informants, language differences were not regarded as potential obstacles in university cooperation. Since the country is a former British colony, and as English is still used as a medium of instruction in universities, not surprisingly, the informants did not think there was a problem in using English in cooperative activities. Academics and high-ranking officials also spoke English well during the interviews. However, not all of those involved in cooperative activities have a good command of the language. This can be a problem when the cooperation develops to a further scale, and support staff besides academics and administrators need to be involved.

The donors also identified the English proficiency issue as being particularly important. They believed more people had to start speaking English, but also that English instruction in GMS countries had to improve significantly.

Sixthly, even though the majority viewed cooperative research studies as a practical measure for the near future, some participating countries, including the one that suggested so, were not yet ready to meaningfully participate. The point remains that it is inappropriate to assume that cooperative research studies, and other recommended measures, are promising, without taking national interests and states of higher education into consideration.

In Cambodia, for example, low faculty salaries and the limited qualifications of academics could hinder international cooperative research, especially when external support is unavailable. Other problems may be the commitment, time, and energy academics and administrators have to devote to cooperative activities. The future is quite gloomy if the salary and welfare of faculty members and staff remain low. Certainly, increasing the salary and improving the well-being of university people alone will not help much. One key informant said, "Cambodian university staff do not have a sense of professionalism." Training in specific job duties and development of professional attitudes are also needed.

The future of higher education in Cambodia and international cooperation rests with the younger

generation. It is essential that the younger generation does not become discouraged and/or leave their jobs entirely. Students have been sent abroad for further study, and the government hopes that these grantees will return to the country after graduation to help develop it. However, according to one key informant, some have not. I was also told that the process for sending students or staff overseas for training needs to be improved because the present practice is tainted with politics.

Vietnam also faces the similar situation. The opinions regarding practical measures for GMS university cooperation are somewhat realistic, considering the increased capacities of universities and staff. However, it is still questionable to what extent university staff members are willing to participate in university cooperation. At present, the remuneration university staffs receive from the government is still very low. Increased salaries or other forms of incentives are necessary.

In addition, opportunities to participate in international academic activities are still limited to universities in Vietnam's major cities, especially Hanoi. Students and university staff from other locations also need to be exposed to international activities, especially

in the practical measures recommended. Expanding the range of opportunity will benefit the country and the Subregion as a whole. However, given the regional disparities in Vietnam, increased access is not likely to happen soon. Universities in the "center" will have to share their regional experiences and get those on the "periphery" involved, by providing guidance.

Taking into consideration the absorptive capacity, practical actions suggested by key Lao informants may be impractical for Lao PDR. The limited absorptive capacity is due to the minimal qualifications of many government officials and the limited number in the workforce. According to information gained during my field study, many government offices are anxiously waiting for those sent overseas for training and study to come back. The qualified personnel remaining are often times overwhelmed with work. The shortage of human resource is a problem not only for the national development but also for development of regional cooperation. One key informant remarked that no institution or person has been designated by the government to officially coordinate Lao activities in Greater Mekong Subregional Economic Cooperation.

Lastly, it can be noticed that most informants were not very specific about what kinds of external support the

country needs. In this regard, Hanchanlash (1994) remarks that there exists a fundamental problem of aid reception—a lack of efficiency in terms of the utilization of foreign or external assistance. In other words, he calls it an “accept first and then later decide how to use it” attitude. This creates a problem to donor countries, international organizations, and counterparts like academic partners within the Subregion. Resources tend to be wasted. The research findings are consistent with Hanchalash’s comment. However, the question that addressed the needed support itself might have been too vague, or the respondents did not have specific information at hand to give more specific answers.

Based upon the above discussion, there was a consensus among those interviewed, regarding the role universities have in the development of economic cooperation in the Greater Mekong Subregion. It seems not an issue whether they are willing to participate in university development cooperation; whether they viewed cooperation as beneficial; or whether they believe in the role of universities in the development of the Subregion. The issue then is, first, to what extent and in what manner universities in the Greater Mekong Subregion can meaningfully participate in cooperative activities. Secondly, in regional cooperation,

all parties may have their own agendas and may be more concerned with national interests. Successful cooperation will be achieved when participating countries get some, but not all, of what they want.

CHAPTER XIII

CONCLUSION

There has been an attempt in this study to understand the role of universities in the development of Greater Mekong Subregional Economic Cooperation as viewed by the university people who have participated in past and present cooperative GMS university activities. In this regard, four research questions were developed to elicit responses from key informants. They are:

1. What do university people think about university development through a regional cooperative approach?

2. What role do university people think higher education has in the development of Greater Mekong Subregional Economic Cooperation?

3. How do university people perceive past and present cooperation for GMS university development?

4. What are the possibilities, given the present situation, for future cooperation among GMS universities?

What we have learned in this study is the role universities have in the development of economic cooperation in the Greater Mekong Subregion as perceived by the key informants in this study is two-fold. First, under the constraint of limited resources, international university cooperation in the GMS should be regarded as a

way to cost-effectively utilize the resources of developing GMS universities. There are possibilities for economies of scale in training and research in the Subregion. Regional academic institutes and training institutions, like the Mekong Institute or the well-established Asian Institute of Technology (AIT), in Thailand, are good examples. They accept students and trainees from not only the host country, but also from other countries in the Subregion. Another alternative is the attachment of regional programs to national institutions. A regional training program in economics teaching may be attached to Thammasat University, in Thailand, where a degree program in economics taught in English is already in place. The regional institutions should help avoid duplication and rationalize unnecessary too many specialized institutions. They should also help resolve the recurrent cost problems that higher education entails.

In addition, although the nature and magnitude of higher education issues may vary from society to society in the GMS, some of the problems in higher education are quite similar from society to society. It would therefore be fruitful for the societies in the Subregion to learn from each other about their problems and experiences. Thus, there are also possibilities for mutual learning and for

information sharing in training, research, and technology. The cooperative activities should help GMS universities further develop despite their limited resources.

Logically, a better educated workforce, as produced by the universities, should contribute further to the economic development of the countries in the Greater Mekong Subregion. By working together, GMS universities have the potential to develop the Subregion. This dynamic for the future development of the Subregion should further create both the need and opportunity for mutual cooperation in higher education.

The development of higher education systems in GMS countries like Cambodia and Lao PDR, for example, will require external assistance from both western and other GMS countries. However, the level of technology the countries require during the present developmental stage can be provided to or transferred from neighboring countries at lower costs. On the other hand, a project developed by a Western partner that is too sophisticated, for the sake of it, may not correspond to the absorptive capacity of the country. Once technical cooperation or western resource persons are withdrawn, the country cannot pick it up. Appropriate knowledge and technology that have already been applied and adapted in countries facing similar development

issues should be more ready to adopt than those in the West. In this regard, the time it took a GMS country with a higher level of development and reform already in place to design and implement its development process may be reduced for another GMS country who has just started a similar kind of development. This is why GMS university cooperation is no less important than the traditional kind of cooperation the GMS has received from Western academic partners. Indeed, both are complementary.

Secondly, university cooperation may yield another benefit, which is less tangible. In this regard, university cooperative activities, such as study abroad or regional education and training programs, provide opportunities for participants to learn about one another. Knowledge and understanding, in turn, may foster good attitudes and trust towards other countries because of the international exposure gained during the course of study and training. Mutual trust and understanding are important for establishing cooperation in other areas and sustaining cooperation. Trainees and students involved in cooperative programs, for example, are likely to serve their respective governments in various positions. The acquaintances and connections made with people from neighboring countries should facilitate successful contacts in the future.

The government of Thailand, for example, has recently thought to use academic cooperation as a foreign policy tool to establish relationships with its neighbors. Increasingly larger amounts of money have been allocated, in recent years, to the Department of Technical and Economic Cooperation (DTEC) to further promote the Thai International Cooperation Program, which works with neighboring countries. Through this program, scholarships, equipment, consultations, and training programs have been provided for students and government officials in neighboring countries. In this regard, Thai public universities have been commissioned by DTEC to serve as either host institutions or executives of the cooperative projects to which they have been assigned. Institutional programs that link Thai universities with their GMS counterparts are examples of such DTEC programs. It is unfortunate that the economic crisis, in 1997, is causing dramatic cuts in the budget for aid to Thailand's neighboring countries. According to Ashayagachat (1998), in 1999, the aid budget will be cut by almost two-thirds. However, realizing the potential benefit of providing technical assistance to Subregional countries, DTEC, according to Ashayagachat, will continue financing existing

projects and will look to yet third countries for help with funding.

For Thailand, university cooperation is not only a way to promote mutual understanding, as mentioned above, but is also a means to lessen the gap between GMS countries in which there are still differing levels of development in higher education. University cooperation is an opportunity to transfer knowledge and technology to less developed countries and to bring them to the level of the more advanced countries in the Subregion and elsewhere. Amidst the uncertainty of 1998, due to the economic crisis, any GMS country with relatively higher levels of economic and educational development does have a potential role to lessen the disparity. Still, it is too soon to expect that once GMS universities establish a level of equal partnership with one another, that disparities of economic development will also be improved or narrowed.

As evident in the findings of this study, this two-fold responsibility of GMS universities is not fully or unanimously perceived by all GMS informants. Informants from Cambodia and Lao PDR, for example, while agreeing to the immediate benefits of sharing resources and information, did not place as much emphasis on the second task of promoting mutual understanding among GMS countries.

The varying degrees of confidence in this challenging task of the universities might stem from their awareness of the states of higher education in their countries. That is to say, when the rebuilding and reform of higher education is a country's first priority, the less tangible task of encouraging and facilitating regional economic cooperation may seem less relevant compared with the urgent task of improving the universities in one's own country. The other possible reason is the difficulty participants have experienced, due to the inadequate relationships between governments and to the internal problems complex bureaucracies create. Opinions were then divided. Some participants thought positive political developments should precede educational cooperation, and others believed political change and educational cooperation could occur simultaneously.

According to Simandjuntak (1997), regional cooperation is more promising in times of good economic performance than it is in times of poor performance. In 1998, when a GMS country, like Thailand, is facing economic downturn, it is certain that there will be additional constraints on the budget, including for higher education. Regional cooperative plans will certainly be affected by budget cuts. However, whereas plans for building the costly

regional infrastructures, such as road construction, will come to a halt, university cooperation does not have to end as well.

As mentioned above, it is true that the Thai government will have to reduce the funding that has been allocated to DTEC, to support such cooperative university programs as regional seminars, training programs, and scholarships for students and government officials from neighboring countries. Money for establishing regional academic centers will also be cut. Many proposed programs will have to be delayed. However, university cooperation, which should cost less than road, railroad, or airport construction, does not have to be completely interrupted. Inexpensive cooperative research studies, for example, can continue. Likewise, contacts between universities can also be maintained, as can exchanges of information. Forming partnerships with a third party, such as a country outside the GMS, that can provide funding and other support for GMS training programs is another possibility. Any third country that has an interest in the Subregion can get involved, with guidance from a GMS country like Thailand, which has experience and is familiar with local GMS residents.

The potential role of GMS universities in collaborative regional development has yet to be fully realized. This is because Greater Mekong Subregional Cooperation, as well as GMS higher education cooperation, are still young. Various activities, such as seminars and training programs, have been conducted in recent years, and key informants have expressed some satisfaction with the outcomes. However, the scope and the magnitude of cooperative programs have been limited. The full potential of the two-fold role of GMS universities will take quite some time to reveal itself. This is especially true with regard to the second task of promoting mutual understanding. It is also too early to say with confidence, to what extent attitudes have changed among GMS participants. A separate study will be needed to make this determination.

Certainly, there are critical issues working against the potential role of GMS universities. First, the complex bureaucracy, which is considered an internal issue, can cause delays and misunderstandings and waste resources. Likewise, the different policies of the various political regimes can hinder university cooperation. Awareness of the problems in each country, along with reform, are necessary to facilitate future university cooperation.

Also, clear and decisive policies from each participating government are necessary for international academic cooperation.

Secondly, language barriers can be problematic in university cooperation. Generally, the language of regional communication is English. When the participants in any cooperative program are not proficient in English, it is a critical matter. Training programs, for example, may not be effective, or as effective as they might be, when communications between trainer and trainees, or among trainees themselves, break down.

Learning languages used only within the Subregion is not economical, compared with learning English, which equips one with a language for wider communication. It is unlikely that students in any one GMS country will study, for example, Thai, Khmer, or Vietnamese simply for general purposes. However, this does not mean that learning Khmer or Myanmar is not useful.

English is regarded as the most appropriate lingua franca of the Subregion, and it is important that participants in GMS university cooperation have a command of the language. Certainly, academic and non-academic staff are not expected to acquire the same level of English proficiency. Likewise, students enrolling in a degree

program in a GMS country and officials attending a short term training program do not need to do equally well on the English test. However, a reasonable level of English proficiency is necessary.

Thirdly, there is an issue of insufficiency of funding. In the meantime, significant contributions from the participating governments cannot be expected. Besides, cooperative programs are usually not self-supporting or cannot be, because participants would then be required to bear the costs if the programs are not sponsored by a third country. Donor agencies and international organizations are then still expected to be the major sources of support for cooperative activities. However, external support cannot always be expected, especially in the future. In the long run, each GMS government will be expected to contribute financially, or by providing labor and training sites, since both the Subregion and its own country benefit from collaboration. In this regard, as there will be disparities in the levels of income and economic and social organizations, the benefits from cooperation may not be similar for all the participating countries. Thus, the cooperative university development programs will have to be carefully designed and implemented in terms of cost sharing and benefit distribution. Constraints on resources and the

difficulties countries have faced during the economic downturn have made funding one of the critical issues.

Fourthly, inadequate information networks can obstruct university cooperation. There are three reasons for the poor information and poor communication systems. First, record keeping in GMS countries is not yet efficient. Secondly, the coordination of concerned people and various responsible sectors is inadequate. Thirdly, mechanisms for making the information system work and for maintaining it have yet to be established. It is often said that GMS university development cooperation needs an information network. However, the shortcomings just cited make having one unrealistic at the moment.

Closely related to this issue is the fact that communications, especially international communications and information sharing, are not that accessible in some GMS countries, such as Lao PDR and Vietnam, compared with communications in Western democratic countries. During field studies in the GMS countries, I was informed that online communications, such as the Internet, are still under strict governmental control. The point is, if the information network for university cooperation were to become a reality, available information would be under the scrutiny of the respective governments. Delays and the

arbitrary availability of information could be expected. In addition, for an information network to be a successful tool in promoting cooperative university development, it would require the complete availability of information.

Fifthly, opinions and mental dispositions of GMS people are important. Negative attitudes, no less than positive outlooks, have an impact on university cooperation. Misconceptions, ethnocentricity, ancient animosity, and stereotypes all work against cooperative efforts. Sufficient international exposure and adequate amounts of information are necessary.

In addition, for a GMS country like Thailand, which has been active in promoting Subregional cooperation, to assume a leadership role in the area may be questionable. In higher education, attitudes of superiority remain relevant. Whereas Thai universities would like their colleagues in neighboring countries to develop to their level, and to that of other more developed regional countries, they would also like to have a leading role as a regional center in higher education development.

Lastly, sensitive issues require attention. Certain conditions such as differing levels of wealth, of educational development, and of political policy are unavoidable. In this regard, understanding and patience

from all participants are necessary. Complicated issues like human rights, which are internal to each particular country, can be a concern for the entire Subregion. In part, this is because support for cooperative activities may be withheld by donor countries to pressure countries that abuse or disregard human rights into changing their practices. In such a scenario, intervention from other neighboring countries might not be desirable because it could deteriorate the relationship GMS countries are trying to establish. However, other more minor sensitive issues, such as the inappropriate use of certain prejudicial terms or expressions, are avoidable. Information about what should be avoided should be made available, and those concerned should be well aware of it.

If the above issues are left unaddressed, universities will be unable to play an important role in developing the Greater Mekong Subregion. Certainly, the critical issue of insufficient funds does, in major part, depend on the future economic recovery of the region. In the meanwhile, there are some promising cooperative measures that could be taken in the near future. Among them are collaborative research studies, international exchanges of expertise and resources, staff or program development through

international secondments of personnel, and study or teaching visits.

Notably, demanding cooperative activities such as academic credit transfers between two GMS universities appear to be unrealistic. Such an activity is both an effective means of academic recognition and entails a need for standardized GMS university programs and curricula. According to the Thailand Development Research Institute (1997), Lao students that have been accepted to degree programs in Thai universities under DTEC scholarships, are required to enroll in a one-year academic preparation course at Kasetsart University in Thailand. This is, in part, because normally Lao students have only eleven years of study before they enroll in university first degree programs, which, on average, take five years, whereas their Thai peers spend twelve years of schooling before the typical four year first degree university programs. The point is it might be difficult for a Lao student at the National University of Laos (NUOL) to have his/her credits transferred to another GMS university, for example, Thai institution. Besides the differences in the educational system, there is still a concern about quality. Courses taken in one GMS university may not be acceptable to another GMS institution.

Even though the options recommended are relatively modest compared to more demanding cooperative programs, it is clear that certain countries still will not be able to participate meaningfully or equally. The lack of qualified staff is one obstacle. In the meanwhile, study or teaching visits, another example, might have to be just one-way, with participants from a less developed GMS country going to a relatively more developed one. Reciprocity in terms of benefits and contributions would then be questionable, and the term "cooperation" as defined in this study might not be appropriate in this context.

However, as mentioned before, each participating country may not come to Greater Mekong Subregional Cooperation with the same expectations and interests, even though their ultimate goal may be more or less the same. There should be no question that peace, security, and prosperity are desirable. Therefore, while it may seem that one country will be seen playing the role of provider, and the other of recipient, it does not necessarily mean that reciprocity cannot be realized.

For instance, when Thailand provides Lao PDR with trainers and consultants, Thailand can also benefit from having those resource persons improve and enhance their knowledge and skill by working in different conditions and

circumstances. Such international expertise or global competence Thai trainers and consultants will gain through international cooperation programs is essential and consistent with the effort toward internationalization of Thai higher education. Assisting their neighboring associates, Thai universities can also develop expertise and an international standing in the Greater Mekong Subregion.

Likewise, when accepting Lao or Vietnamese students into their degree programs, Thai universities are providing international exposure for their students, which they would not have the opportunity to acquire on their own. Exposure to foreign cultures and ideas are important because they are part of the students' growth and development as educated persons. Some of these students will work in their neighboring countries and will communicate with their neighboring counterparts in the future.

As Greater Mekong Subregional Economic Cooperation develops, Thailand would require more of its people, especially concerned government officials, to be more familiar with neighboring countries, for example, in the areas of trade and law. Thailand's international cooperation program for neighboring countries provides those government officials with learning opportunities.

This same logic could be more or less applied to any one country in the GMS. In the meantime, then, expectations of similar or equal immediate benefits of cooperation should be considered irrelevant in Greater Mekong Subregional Cooperation.

Given the scope and constraints of this study, there remains the need for further investigation of either a similar research topic or of other aspects of collaborative GMS university development. I would also like to look further into the perceptions of trainees and students who participated in cooperative GMS programs after they have returned to their respective countries. In addition, I would like to examine the contents of present day Thai textbooks, as used in universities, regarding their treatment of the GMS countries. While research opportunities are yet to be taken up in addressing those issues just mentioned, I hope that the present study represents a contribution, however small, to the understanding of perceptions of GMS university people regarding the role of universities in the development of Greater Mekong Subregional Economic Cooperation.

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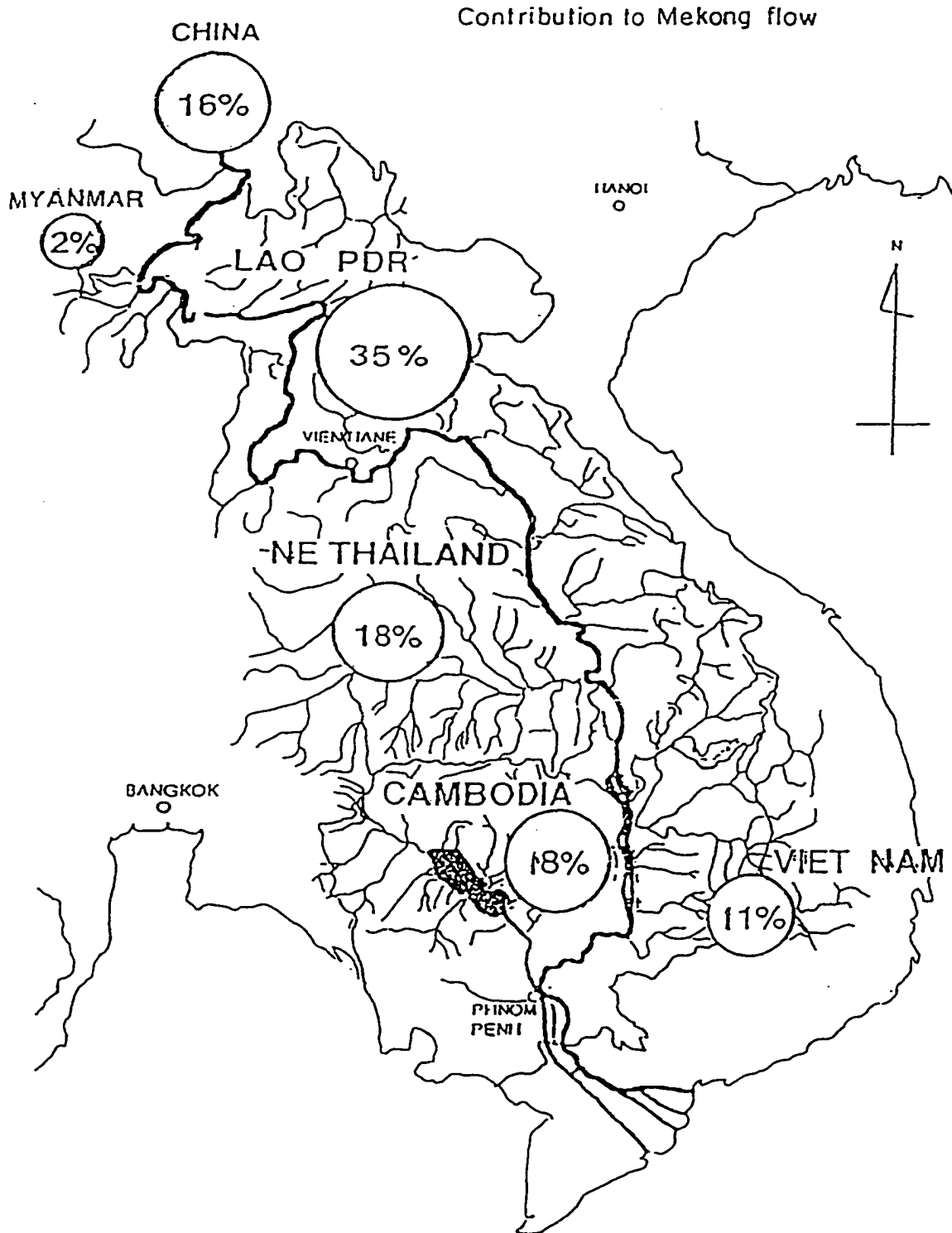
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APPENDIX A
GREATER MEKONG SUBREGION



Source: Asian Development Bank, Subregional economic cooperation (Manila, Philippines: Author, 1993), 2.

APPENDIX B
CONTRIBUTION TO MEKONG FLOW



Source: Ounthouang, T., Lao national development perspectives in the cooperation programmes of the Mekong Basin Commission. In Mekong River Commission (Ed.), Basin development plan (Bangkok, Thailand: Mekong River Commission Secretariat, 1996), 24.

APPENDIX C
LETTER OF INTRODUCTION

UNIVERSITY OF ILLINOIS
AT URBANA-CHAMPAIGN

Office of the Dean
College of Education
38 Education Building, MC-708
1310 South Sixth Street
Champaign, IL 61820-6990

September 12, 1997

To Whom It May Concern:

Mr. Chuenchanok Kovin is a doctoral student in the Department of Educational Policy Studies, College of Education, University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign. He is studying "The Role of Universities in the Development of the Greater Mekong Subregional Economic Cooperation" for a dissertation.

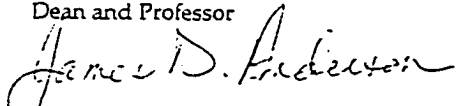
In this study, Mr. Kovin will interview the responsible persons in universities and other government offices who are involved in higher education cooperation in the Mekong River Basin. The aim of this study is to understand the perceptions of these administrators and academicians in the potential role of universities in the development of the Subregion. The data gathered will be used to analyze the past and ongoing university cooperative activities, as well as what ought to be done and can be done in the future to facilitate further cooperation. This study is significant in providing necessary information as a basis for future formulation of policy on university cooperative efforts in the area.

Your cooperation and participation would contribute greatly to his study and also to the future development of higher education in the Subregion. Any help and courtesy accorded Mr. Kovin will be greatly appreciated.

Sincerely,



Mildred Barnes Griggs
Dean and Professor



James D. Anderson
Professor and Head
Department of Educational Policy Studies

MBG/JDA:srs

Phone 217-333-0960 • Fax 217-333-5847

APPENDIX D
INTERVIEW QUESTIONNAIRE

THE ROLE OF UNIVERSITIES IN THE DEVELOPMENT OF GREATER MEKONG
SUBREGIONAL ECONOMIC COOPERATION

INTERVIEW QUESTIONNAIRE

DEFINITION

The Greater Mekong Subregion (GMS) comprises Cambodia, the Lao People's Democratic Republic, Myanmar, Thailand, Vietnam, and China's Yunnan Province.

INSTRUCTIONS

This questionnaire has been designed as a substitute in the case that an in-person interview is not viable. There are four major sections in this questionnaire. Please indicate your answers by either checking one of the choices or filling in the blanks provided. You may add your own comments wherever you like. Please do not identify yourself in any way on the questionnaire. I am trying to protect all the subjects by keeping very strict anonymity.

I want to thank you for your help--without your participation, this research would not be possible. Please do contact me if there are questions at the following address:

Mr. Chuenchanok Kovin
Department of Foundations of Education
Faculty of Education
Chulalongkorn University
Phyathai Road, Bangkok 10330
Thailand

GOALS OF HIGHER EDUCATION COOPERATION IN THE GREATER MEKONG SUBREGION

1. It is believed that university development can benefit from regional cooperation, maximizing the use to which limited resources are put by increasing collaborative efforts among institutions within the region and learning from one's another experience.

(i) Do you agree with this view?

Strongly Agree Agree Don't Know Disagree Strongly Disagree

(ii) Why do you think so?

(iii) Do you think collaboration is a viable option in the development of higher education in the Greater Mekong Subregion?

YES..... NO.....

If your answer is NO, do you think competition is a better strategy?

If the choice of either YES or NO is irrelevant, what, in your opinion, is the best strategy?

(iv) Do you think most countries in the Mekong Subregion still look overseas, especially to the West, for academic partners and turn their backs on their neighbors when it comes to technical or academic cooperation?

YES..... NO.....

(v) Why do you think so?

2. It is assumed that cooperation in human resource development contributes to the elimination of political hostility. This is because similar educational roots and mentality may help develop an influential group favoring regional cohesion.

(i) Do you agree with this assumption in terms of its relevance to the Greater Mekong Subregion?

Strongly Agree Agree Don't Know Disagree Strongly Disagree

(ii) To what extent do you think higher education cooperation can serve as the so-called "confidence building measure," spearheading cooperation on other fronts in the Greater Mekong Subregion? (Please circle the number that comes closest to expressing your opinion.)

VERY LITTLE TO A GREAT EXTENT
 1 2 3 4 5

(ii) Do you agree that English is the most suitable lingua franca in higher education cooperation?

YES..... NO.....

(iii) Why do you think so?

.....

(iv) In your opinion, how competent on average are participants of the university cooperative activities in using the lingua franca?

a. Key level personnel (e.g., academic administrators, policy makers, etc.)

..... Poor Fair Good

b. Non-academic administrative staff (e.g., librarians, laboratory technicians, etc.)

..... Poor Fair Good

c. Participants in cooperative activities

1. Professionals

..... Poor Fair Good

2. Non-professionals

..... Poor Fair Good

(v) How do you perceive the characteristics of university people in your country or the country of your present residence in general? (For instance, are they nationalistic or localistic? Are they interested in international academic activities? etc.)

.....

5. The cooperation in the Mekong River Basin was limited because of wars and political turmoil until recently when a renewal of economic cooperation has received interest by the six Mekong River countries as donors as well as multilateral agencies.

(i) What, in your opinion, are some of the sensitive political, social, and economic issues that we should still be well aware of?

.....

6. The Mekong Subregion's countries are not at the same stage of higher education development.

(i) Do you think there will be any problem arising from the lack of reciprocity in partnership between or among universities in participating countries?

YES..... NO.....

(ii) Why do you think so?

.....

PROMISING MEASURES AND POTENTIAL AREAS OF HIGHER EDUCATION DEVELOPMENT COOPERATION

7. It is believed that there is future benefit from strengthening and expanding the scope of the existing university cooperative activities. However, the availability of resources would necessarily preclude addressing all aspects or areas of higher education.

(i) What do you think are some of the most promising measures or practical actions for higher education development cooperation in the next ten years? (Please check only THREE.)

- regional documentation and information services
- greater participation universities in national development
- cooperative research studies and analyses
- inter-country sharing and exchange of expertise and intellectual resources
- consortia of institutions for implementation of activities
- inter-country exchange of senior and middle-level staff
- inter-country study or teaching visits
- program development and staff development through inter-country attachments and secondments of personnel
- subregional consultations and joint programming, monitoring and evaluation
- establishment of locally-based research institutions, working towards greater self-sufficiency and excellence in a less costly manner
- Others (please specify)

(ii). What fields or areas of study that could further be developed through or benefit from regional cooperation? For example, teacher education, nursing, economics, etc.

8. Funding or any other kinds of support can come from external sources like bilateral and multilateral agencies, or it may come from internal sources like domestic investment that is either public or private.

(i) What kind of support do you think is necessary to facilitate the university development cooperation? The support can be either financial or non-financial.

- a. From concerned government(s)
- b. From donor or multilateral agencies (e.g. UNESCO, ADB, etc.)
- c. From private sectors

BACKGROUND INFORMATION

Finally, I need a little information about you in order to help make your opinions meaningful for the study. Please note that your responses will be kept confidential.

9. What is your citizenship?

1. Cambodian 2. Lao 3. Myanmar 4. Thai
5. Vietnamese 6. Chinese
7. Other (please specify)

10. What is your affiliation? (If you are affiliated with more than one institution, please indicate only the one where you are most involved in higher education cooperation.)

1. Public university
2. Private university
3. Government office (excluding academic institutions)
4. International organization
5. Other (please specify)

11. Which of the following educational categories are you in?

1. College graduate
2. Graduate or professional school
3. Other (please specify)

12. Your college or graduate degree(s) is in what field of study (please indicate as many as applicable)?

.....

If this questionnaire is sent to you by mail, please return it in the addressed envelope provided. Otherwise, please fold the questionnaire in half and staple it upon return.

Thank you very much for your cooperation.

VITA

Chuenchanok Kovin was born in Bangkok, Thailand. He attended Chulalongkorn University where he received a Bachelor of Education with first class honors and was awarded the Gold Medal for graduating first in the English major.

While pursuing his undergraduate degree, he was granted a joint scholarship given by the Bangkok Bank Limited and the Living Language Centre in Folkstone to study English in England. In 1984, he was delegated by the Thai government to participate in the Ship for Southeast Asian Youth Program, a trip on board the ship to visit Southeast Asian countries and Japan for educational and cultural exchange. He was also awarded the 1984 Student Teacher of Distinction of the Faculty of Education, Chulalongkorn University.

Upon graduation, he worked as a coordinator of the Traditional Medicine Program at the UNHCR Indochinese Refugee Camp in Thailand. Subsequently, he taught technical English at Southeast Asia university, and, later, at King Mongkut's Institute of Technology in Thailand.

In 1989, he won a Fulbright scholarship to further his graduate study at Southern Illinois University at Carbondale, where he received his Master of Arts in Applied

Linguistics. After graduation, he returned to Thailand and has been an English instructor at the Faculty of Education, Chulalongkorn University.

In 1995, he won a Chulalongkorn University Scholarship to study for a doctoral degree in Educational Policy Studies at the University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign. His research interest includes international education and development education.