

The Necessity of ASEAN Community in Producing Pilots

Mr. Thanoo Saowaros
Lecturer-Airline Business, St. Theresa International College, Thailand

Dr. Vichian Puncreobutr*
Lecturer-M.Ed. English Program, St. Theresa International College, Thailand

Abstract

The main objectives of this study are to identify the reasons for the shortage of pilots; the necessity of producing Pilots and the obstacles and problems faced by ASEAN Community in producing pilots. The study is conducted by official documents, observations, in-depth interview from personnel who are working for Airports Authority of Thailand, Aeronautical Radio of Thailand Ltd., Civil Aviation Training Center, The Aviation Training Units, Airlines Administrative College and people who have passed in their flight training courses and are waiting for their Pilot Licenses as a whole. Primarily, there are 30 respondents who have given the required information. The study has found that: 1) the shortage of pilots is because of the growth of Low-Cost Carriers, due to the increase of its routes, increase in number of passengers who fly in and out of the country, the increase in aircraft producing process and pilot resignations. 2) There is necessity to produce more pilots, because of few institutions that offer pilot programmes. Besides, there are not too many students who opt to undergo the programme of Multi Crew Pilot License (MPL), usually this program takes at least 1 to 3 years to complete. 3) The obstacles and problems in producing pilots in ASEAN countries are the expensiveness of the teaching equipments, the high tuition fees and the stress encountered by most trainees in clearing tests.

Keywords: producing pilots; shortages; obstacles; ASEAN Community.

1. Introduction

Travelling in an airplane has the least accident rate as per statistics than any other means (Alamdari & Black, 1992); however, accidents can happen while travelling with airplane as well and each accident could cause more damage than any other mode of travelling. An accident once in a while will cost many dear lives and invaluable loss to property, reputation and reliability, that cannot be measured (International Civil Aviation Organization, 1993, 1994, Maldonado, 1990). However, most of the loss happens with the wrong decision or the lack of leadership of the pilot in charge during the critical situation, even though the aircraft has been installed with various developed and advanced warning systems (De Neufville, 1985, 1986).

The ASEAN Economic Community was established for the purpose of manufacturing products, promotion and services within the ASEAN country members. Thai Government has an aggressive policy of promoting Thailand as tourism and airlines destination for the south east region. Airlines industry has expanded highly with the low capital airlines and the increase of many new born airlines too. Therefore, what will happen next is the increase in need for qualified pilots (Thi da Chokesuchart, 2010). When the need of pilots is higher, pilot training institutions must be able to handle this situation (Booton, 2013). If the situation of pilots shortage is not handled properly then, the shortage of pilots will affect many airlines and that will cause delay and suspension of the operations. (Bellitto, 2012). So, the plan to produce enough pilots in the department must be urgently planned between Airlines and the Aviation Training Units in order to prevent inadequacy in the numbers of pilot in the future (Phat Vinmoon, 2013).

In order to plan the process of producing pilots appropriately and in order to have qualified pilots who possess leadership qualities during critical times and to respond to the expansion of Airlines Industry (Pimkarn Yothathammasit and Nantarath Charoenkul, 2014), researchers have understood to the current need of producing pilots in order to have benefits from the planning together with the public who are involved in the same business.

2. Research Objectives

This research has the following objectives:

1. To study the reasons for shortage of pilots in ASEAN countries.
2. To study the necessity of producing pilots in ASEAN countries.
3. To study the problems and obstacles in producing pilots in ASEAN countries.

3. Research Methodology

The present research is the Qualitative Research which is studied from documents, observations, in-depth interview with Airport Authority of Thailand, Aeronautical Radio of Thailand Ltd., Civil Aviation Training Center, Flight Training Units, Airlines Administrative College and trainees who have passed the flight training course but at the same time still waiting for their Pilot Licenses too. 60 people were approached but only 30

people had given valid information. The main information received from the respondents is through Snowball Sampling method. Tools used for data collection are Document Analysis, Observation Form, Interview Form, Recorder and Researchers themselves. The information received had been checked by Triangulation before further analysis. Researcher collected information between the time periods November 2014 – January 2016.

4. Research Findings

1. The shortage of pilots

From the study it is found that, the situations of pilot shortage are due to the following reasons:

1.1 ASEAN Airlines Scenario

As the Thai Government Policy aims to push Thailand as the center of airlines in the region, Thai Airlines Industry is now having a great expansion. The important growth is the increasing number of low cost airlines. The study revealed that there is increasing number of Low Cost Airlines in the ASEAN member countries and their numbers are indicated in Table 1-2.

Table No 1: National Airlines of ASEAN Countries

Country	Names of Airlines	No. of Aircrafts
Thailand	Thai Airways International	180
Myanmar (Burma)	Myanmar Airways International	13
Indonesia	Garuda Indonesia	102
Malaysia	Malaysian Airlines	100
Philippines	Philippines Airlines	51
Singapore	Singapore Airlines	107
Vietnam	Vietnam Airlines	91
Brunei	Royal Brunei Airlines	16
Cambodia	Cambodia Angkor Air	14
Lao	Lao Airlines	20
Total		694

From the Table no 1 it is found that every ASEAN country has their own national airlines. Total number of aircrafts is 694 aircrafts.

Table No 2: ASEAN Countries airlines that operate with Low-Cost (LCCs) Carriers

Country	No. of airlines	Names of Airlines	No. of aircrafts of each Airlines
Thailand	8	Nok Air, Thai Air Asia, Thai Air Asia X, Thai Lion Air, Nok Scoot, Thai Smile, Solar Air and Thai Viet Jet Air.	120 (102)
Myanmar	1	Golden Myanmar Airlines	
Indonesia	7	Lion Air, Indonesia Air Asia X, City link, Tiger Air Mantala, Indonesia Air Asia, Batik Air and Wings Air.	250 (235)
Malaysia	3	Air Asia, Air Asia X, and Malindo Air	125
Philippines	4	Air Asia Zest, Cebu Pacific, P.A.L. Express and Philippines Air Asia.	90 (88)
Singapore	3	Scoot, Jet star Asia and Tiger Air	52
Vietnam	2	Viet Jet Air and Jet star Pacific	34
Total			671

From the Table No 2 it is shown that in 2015 the total number of airlines in ASEAN countries that operate with Low-Cost Carriers (LCCs) is 671 aircrafts.

Thus, when comparing the number of national airlines according to Table No. 1 and the total number of Low-Cost Carriers (LCCs) according to Table No. 2, we can figure out that the total number of national airlines and the total number of the Low-Cost Carriers (LCCs) is almost the same. Nevertheless, during the interview made with the national airlines administrative officials it is found that in the next 5 years period of time there will be no tendency in aircraft increasing for the national airlines. Then during the interview with the Low-Cost Carriers (LCCs) administrators it is found that, the new increasing tendency figures of aircraft will be averagely increased between 20-30 aircrafts per year. However, when merging all airlines together, the new estimate of 1,000 aircrafts is predicted. This happens because Low-Cost Carriers (LCCs) have increased more flight destinations in both domestic and international routes which are the indication of the rapid growth of Low-Cost Carriers in ASEAN regions and it is the reason why we require more additional pilots.

1.2 Airlines Routes Scenario

During the Study about current airline routes it is found that more than 23 Low-Cost Carriers (LCCs) of the ASEAN countries fly to more than 1,000 routes in the ASEAN regions. And during the interview with the Low-

Cost Carriers Administrators, they have plans to fly for 1,300 routes in the next 5 years. Due to the rapid increasing of the Low-Cost Carriers routes in ASEAN regions, therefore, the need for more pilots is realized.

1.3 Trip by Airplane Scenario

When Airport Ranking was done with the passengers flying in and out of the country in ASEAN regions and from the records of the Airport Council International (ACI), it shows that the busiest airport is Soekarno-Hatta International Airport. The record shows 42 million travelers flying in and out of the country during the year 2014, followed by Changi Airport of Singapore, with 40 million travelers travelling in and out of Singapore. The Kuala Lumpur International Airport is ranked third with 36 million travelers travelling in and out of the country and the fourth rank is the Suvarnabhumi International Airport, Bangkok, Which has about 33 million travelers travelling in and out of the country. In the overall view, there are more than 200 million people travelling in and out of the ASEAN regions. This figure could be reflecting the increasing number of passengers flying in and out of the country continually. From the information, the passengers' preference shows that in 2014 more than 45% travelers from Thailand, Singapore, Malaysia and Philippines are travelled with the Low-Cost Carriers (LCCs) more than the national airlines. Yet, during the year 2015 more than 55% of travelers from Thailand, Singapore, Malaysia and Philippines also chose to fly with the Low-Cost Carriers than the national airlines. So, in the next 5 years this growth is expected to increase rapidly. Therefore, the need for qualified & trained pilots also expected high in number.

1.4 Aircraft Manufacturing Process Scenario

The aircraft manufacturing information shows that in the next 15 years, 20,000 new Boeing and airbus bodies are required to be manufactured, that means there must be at least 9,000 pilots each year in order to support the growing requirements. The number of pilots required for ASEAN regions, is not less than 1,000 pilots. Therefore, there must be some arrangement to produce new pilots to meet the future requirements.

1.5 Pilot and Co-Pilot Group Brian Drain Scenario

From the information sourced from pilot and co-pilot group that resigned from the national airlines and from the Low-Cost Carrier, it is found that they resigned from their own countries internal airlines and many of them shifted to work with the rapidly growing airlines and international airlines of other countries. This is the scenario in many ASEAN regions airlines and it leads to cancel many flights because of pilot shortage. As mentioned, the current scenario of ASEAN community is the shortage of pilots. In other words, there must be some arrangements in producing pilots, as according to the fact that in every year additional pilots are required.

2. The Need of Producing Pilots in ASEAN countries

From the study it is found, and considering the current situation, there are various reasons for producing pilots as mentioned below:

2.1 Institutions that can train pilots in ASEAN countries

From the study of Pilot Schools or Pilot Institutions in ASEAN regions it is found that there are only Pilot Institutions in some countries and many countries are still not having any institution for pilot courses. And about the countries that has Pilot Institutions; it is found that there are only 1-4 Pilot Institutions in each country. Normally, when summing up Pilot Institutions in the whole ASEAN region, there are only 12 Institutions all together. Hence, the number of Pilot Institutions is only few; then the number of pilots produced will also be less in number.

2.2 Pilot Teaching Programs

From the survey, the majority programme that is available for pilot teaching in ASEAN countries are the following. The Programmes taught are Commercial Pilot License (CPL) and Private Pilot License (PPL). However, most commercial pilots have graduated from the Commercial Pilot License (CPL) program, while many airlines prefer pilots to be graduated from the Multi Crew Pilot License (MPL) program. The reason is that there are only a few qualified institutions that offers Multi Crew Pilot License (MPL) program. Apparently, the need for Multi Crew Pilot License (MPL) program is highly required to the greater extent.

2.3 Duration in Pilot Teaching

From the study of the Commercial Pilot License (CPL) program, it takes at least 1 to 3 years in learning the program and students must have accumulated specified hours. Each Pilot Institution cannot accept new students every year without the previous batch graduating. When pilots produced are less then, the need for pilots is high.

3. Problems and Obstacles in Producing Pilots

3.1 Teaching Equipment

Teaching equipment for training pilots are very expensive and it must be imported from the Western countries especially equipment for Flight Simulators.

3.2 Tuition Fees

From the study, the tuition fees for Commercial Pilot License (CPL) programme in order to graduate as commercial pilot, the expenses are between 2.3 – 3.5 million baht per year. Even though it is the profession that could make high income after completing the programme, but not many can afford this cost.

3.3 After graduate from Pilot Program

Pilot students have to pass the Medical Class 1 Test in order to apply for Pilot License. The study shows that only 30% of the students passed in such tests and that is the reason why more than half of pilot students could not obtain their licenses. There are 100 to 300 students in each and every country per year that are unable to Graduate and still are Unemployed.

4. Research Summary

A. The shortage of pilots occur due to

- The rapid growth of the Low-Cost Carriers (LCCs).
- The high frequency of flights and routes of the Low-Cost Carriers (LCCs).
- The passengers that fly in and out of the country are increasing more and more 55% of Thai, Singaporean, Malaysian and Filipino passengers are choosing to fly with the Low-Cost Carriers (LCCs) than their own national airlines.
- There are more increasing in aircraft manufacturing especially manufacturing of Boeing Airbus.
- The increase of pilot and co-pilot group resignations in search of greener Pastures.

B. The necessity to produce more pilots arises due to following reasons:

- There are only a few Pilot Institutions in ASEAN countries.
- Most Pilot Institutions are teaching Commercial Pilot License (CPL) program while learners of the Multi Crew Pilot License (MPL) are less.
- Trainees must spend long period of time of at least 1 – 3 years to study the programme.

C. The problems and obstacles for ASEAN in producing pilots are

- The expensiveness of equipment especially the Flying Simulator.
- Tuition fees are rather expensive.
- It is mandatory to clear Medical Class Test, of which only 30% of each year students pass this test.

Suggestions

From the study it is revealed that the shortage of pilot is in high level. Therefore, there should be futuristic planning to handle the shortage of pilots in any scenario. There should be a cooperative planning between airlines network and national airlines network to prevent the problem of pilot poaching or to let pilots carry excessive work which will affect passenger's safety. ASEAN as a community should have mechanism to plan, control, promote, and follow up and to evaluate systematically.

From the study it is found that the problems and obstacles in producing pilots are the teaching equipments especially the Flying Simulator which is very expensive and the tuition fees is also another issue that affects the students. Likely, the ASEAN Community should come up with the development of training technologies in order to support the learning of Pilot Program. The students encounter Psychological problems. In general, there should be a primary test of psychology before students could continue to study the actual Pilot Programme in order to increase number of trainees who graduate as commercial pilots.

Recommendation for future research

From the study it is revealed that the number of pilot and co-pilot group's resignations is high. There should be additional procedures to study the cause of pilot and co-pilot group resignations. Mostly pilots quit for better compensation and working conditions which should be taken consideration.

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