

## **Challenges and Trends Towards the Integration of Humanities and Social Sciences Research with the Emphasis on ASEAN Socio-Cultural Community Blueprint in the ASEAN Community**

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### **Abstract**

ASEAN community has recently experienced rapid economic, social and cultural changes resulting in emerging concerned issues to be handled in the past decades. In order to do this, researches in humanities and social sciences for knowledge and capacity building have been recently fostered and conducted. The primary focus of this paper is to explore the conditions fostering and strengthening research and integration in the areas of humanities and social sciences in ASEAN community. What are the factors influencing development of research in humanities and social sciences in ASEAN community? As shown in the official blueprint of ASEAN Community Blueprint, these factors are addressed in three broad areas – Socio-Cultural ASEAN Community Blueprint, ASEAN Economic Community Blueprint and ASEAN Political Community Blueprint. In this paper, the focus areas will be the ASEAN Socio-Cultural Community Blueprint (2009 – 2015).

This paper will address the current issues, challenges and trends towards the integration of humanities and social sciences. The main points of this paper are: 1) social, cultural, (mainly cultural pluralism) factors influence the development of researches in humanities and social sciences in the ASEAN Community; 2) emerging social problems in the past decades, namely, disaster management, terrorism and more as stated in the Socio-Cultural ASEAN Community Blueprint are influential factors in humanities and social science researches; 3) two selected approaches of system theory and rights-based approach have been employed for the applications to challenges for the community in humanities and social sciences research. These include, for examples, the flow of information, make existing data available, the development of network among researches and scholars from local, national and regional in relation to global system. Researches, policy, implementation, measures, practice including advocacy for specific target groups in need of assistance are also challenges.

Finally, similar to the main topics addressed in current issues under the official blueprint in social and cultural topics of the ASEAN community, trends in humanities and social sciences research cover the same areas. Suggestions reflect some final thoughts on the possible researches, for example, a comparative study among the ten or selected countries on topics under the official blueprint, networking researches, and knowledge buildings. The timeframe of this preliminary study is five months for documentary research. Documents will be employed from scholarly materials, contact persons in the field areas in the region, libraries, ASEAN and United Nations documents.

**Keywords:** humanities, social sciences, integration, research, cultural and social blueprint, rights-based approach, system theory, ASEAN

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## 1. Background<sup>1</sup>

Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN), established on the 8<sup>th</sup> of August, 1967 originally by the five member countries, namely, Indonesia, Malaysia, Philippines, Singapore, and Thailand. Brunei Darussalam joined in 1984, Vietnam in 1995, Laos and Myanmar in 1997, and Cambodia in 1999. This paper explores the conditions fostering research and integration in the areas of humanities and social sciences in ASEAN community. In reference to the official blueprint of ASEAN community, these factors are addressed in three broad areas including social and cultural ones. Two selected approaches of system theory and rights-based approach have been employed for the applications to challenges for the community in humanities and social sciences research. Suggestions reflect some final thoughts on the possible researches.

### 1.1 Background about Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN)

Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN), established on the 8<sup>th</sup> of August, 1967. As set out in the ASEAN Declaration, the aims and purposes are: 1) To accelerate the economic growth, social progress and cultural development in the region through joint endeavours in the spirit of equality and partnership in order to strengthen the foundation for a prosperous and peaceful community of Southeast Asian Nations; 2) To promote regional peace and stability through abiding respect for justice and the rule of law in the relationship among countries of the region and adherence to the principles of the United Nations Charter; 3) To promote active collaboration and mutual assistance on matters of common interest in the economic, social, cultural, technical, scientific and administrative fields; 4) To provide assistance to each other in the form of training and research facilities in the educational, professional, technical and administrative spheres; 5) To collaborate more effectively for the greater utilisation of their agriculture and industries, the expansion of their trade, including the study of the problems of international commodity trade, the improvement of their transportation and communications facilities and the raising of the living standards of their peoples; 6) To promote Southeast Asian studies; and 7) To maintain close and beneficial cooperation with existing international and regional organisations with similar aims and purposes, and explore all avenues for even closer cooperation among themselves (ASEAN, 2009).

After the Asian Financial Crisis, ASEAN countries shared the feelings that only by building various mechanism within the region, could ASEAN countries be resilient to challenges from outside and ensure regional security and stability. Hence, an idea of ASEAN Community was born (Xinhua News Agency, 2011). Social, economic and political factors play a key role in humanities and social science research in ASEAN community. These key factors are in need to be promoted to support and facilitate research in these areas in this community (ASEAN, 2011, ASEAN-U.S. Plan of Action, 2011 – 2015; 2009, Blueprint for the ASEAN Socio-Cultural Community, 2009 - 2015).

The focus of this paper is to explore the conditions fostering, strengthening research and integration of humanities and social sciences<sup>2</sup> in ASEAN community. What are the factors influencing the integration of research

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<sup>1</sup> Paper presented at the 4<sup>th</sup> International Conference on Humanities and Social Sciences, April 21<sup>st</sup>, 2012 Faculty of Liberal Arts, Prince of Songkla University, Hadyai, Songkla, Thailand

<sup>2</sup> The term “humanities” refers to the study of the following: language, both modern and classical; linguistics, literature, history, jurisprudence, philosophy, archaeology, comparative religion, ethics, the history, criticism and theory of arts, those aspects of social sciences having humanistic content and referring to humanistic methods, and the application of the humanities to human environment. (National Foundation of the Arts and the Humanities Act of 1965 As for social sciences, from <http://cnx.org/content/m14161/latest/#footnote1>); Social Science is defined as scholastic disciplines investigating human society. The branches of social sciences include anthropology, sociology,

in humanities and social sciences in ASEAN community ? European experiences reveal three influential factors including economic development, privatization and internationalization. The integrative framework has been recently developed among European countries in reference to challenge issues such as doing research for knowledge or for profits, market oriented, problem centered approach, autonomy or ivory tower oriented, liberal study or vocational training, and more (Krebs and Wenk, 2005, pp. 5 - 19).

In the case of ASEAN, as shown in the SCC official blueprint of ASEAN community, though the focus on people-centered approach has become the key in the blueprint covering thirteen areas in humanities and social sciences, the possible debates still remain as the ASEAN region still progressively move towards the three influential streams on economic development, privatization and internationalization. Similar to European experiences as indicated above, these moves intertwined with the research and educational orientations among ASEAN countries. For example, doing research for profit or for knowledge has become debatable in this region as well. Plenty of examples can be identified for country experiences. Therefore, it is likely to view these moves in terms of the contributions towards the challenge of integration of humanities and social sciences.

This paper will address selected current issues in doing researches, challenges and trends towards integration in humanities and social sciences in reference to the ASEAN socio-cultural blueprint. Because there are several issues concerned, this paper focuses on problems of recent disasters, women and children, illegal labor movements, and terrorism as examples. There are many approaches ranging from conflicting to functional ones, this paper addresses two selected approaches on knowledge construction and research in humanities and social sciences. The main reason in selecting these two approaches is to enable to focus on the use of system and networking and rights-based approach is helpful in making understandings on social problems and disadvantage groups, for examples, victims of disasters in need of helps. These are the application of system theory and rights-based approach to integrate humanities and social sciences research, for examples, the use of networking system for the flow of information, make existing data available, the development of network among researches and scholars from local, national and regional in relation to global system. The challenged key focuses on integration of humanities and social sciences in terms of knowledge construction, researches, policy, implementation, measures, corporate social responsibility, practice including advocacy for specific target groups in need of assistance and more. This may be developed by educational and research networking and cooperation among educational, research and relevant institutes in the region.

Documents have been employed from scholarly materials, contact persons in the field areas in the region, online libraries, and United Nations documents. As for the limitation of this paper, the available information is limited to researcher. Also the some sources of information appear in native languages, not available in common ground and not yet translated into English.

## **2. The usefulness of knowledge and the construction of knowledge in the humanities and social sciences**

### **2.1 Current issues in social and cultural blueprint in the ASEAN community**

There are many ways to study and understand the usefulness of knowledge and the construction of knowledge in humanities and social sciences. In this paper, possibly in reference to the ASEAN official Blueprint on key issues in Social Cultural Community (SCC) Blueprint, the Blueprint identifies thirteen major areas consisting of cultural and arts, disaster management, education, environment, haze, health, information, labor, rural development and poverty eradication, science and technology, social welfare and development, women, and lastly youth.<sup>3</sup> These key areas have been influenced by at least three key factors including economic development, privatization and internationalization. For examples, education involves economic development, privatization and internationalization.

### **2.2 Three Categories of key areas in reference to the ASEAN blueprint**

On cultural and arts, disaster management, education, environment, haze, health, information, labor, rural

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economics, history, political sciences, psychology. (Source: Your Dictionary  
<http://reference.yourdictionary.com/word-definitions/define-social-science.html>)

<sup>3</sup> See more details in the official website of the Association of Southeast Asian Nation (ASEAN) at <http://www.aseansec.org>.

development and poverty eradication, science and technology, social welfare and development, women, and lastly youth, all can be further studied in several areas. There are many ways these keys can be categorized. Perhaps a way to categorize these keys can be done as follow: 1) researches for *knowledge and theoretical buildings*, 2) researches *in responses to short and long-term problems*, and lastly, 3) researches for *institutional development*. Researches for knowledge and theoretical buildings then cover cultural and arts, science and technology, environment, health, and information. Secondly, researches in responses to short and long-term problems in the region refers to disaster management, poverty, some problems concerned in key areas, and lastly, researches for institutional development possibly involves social welfare and development, rural development, women and youth development.

Research for knowledge building and theoretical development can be exemplified by the United Nations research on indigenous rights under international law (Perkins, 2010), research on reviewing theoretical basis for regional development including rural and urban development, centralization and decentralization in Philippines (Mercado, 2002), research on United Nations Models and how they can be applied to countries in Asia and Pacific (United Nations, 2012, Asia-Pacific Model United Nations Conference 2012).

Research in responses to short and long term problems are for examples, trafficking in women and children, poverty, labor health problems, disaster management. Disaster management, as an emerging field area in the past decade, concerns the countries in the region that have faced the problems of natural disasters including earthquakes, floods, fire, the Asian Tsunami of December 2004. As the Asian Tsunami of December 2004 affected communities, left 13,000 children without parents (Tan, 2007, p. 44). These children are most vulnerable in need of protection, support or rehabilitation in sustainable manners. Furthermore, build policy and programmes on people's resilience. Also provide the needed psychosocial and community supports. These children can be called the tsunami generation (Tan, 2006, pp. 43-56; Tan, 2007).

At the same time, researches on disaster management can contribute to knowledge buildings as well. Considering the disaster models, there are many of them employed to conceptualized the phases of an event including warning, threat, impact, inventory, rescue and recovery, and responses. For example, model PPRR – prevention, preparedness, response and recovery, used internationally, becomes the concept linked to the management of disaster in various phases (Tan, 2006, pp. 2-3). Complex disasters often reflect the traumatic experiences of countries and individuals and social effects of chronic stress (Spiegel, 2005).

### **2.3 Knowledge construction in humanities and social sciences and tendencies towards the integration of humanities and social sciences**

#### **2.3.1 Becoming Otherness: Victimization or Liberalization ?**

Country experiences in doing research in humanities and social sciences in ASEAN and Europe, in addition to be influenced by the economic development, privatization and internationalization, reflect how current cultural and social issues influence the ways how researches and education have been integrated. For examples, doing researches contribute to knowledge and theoretical buildings, alleviate some problems and institutional building. However, there are critiques concerned doing researches on cultural and social issues. As exemplified by C. Wright Mills in 1956, the emergence of a “power elite” whose members occupied the top positions in three overlapping organizational hierarchies: the state bureaucracy, the military, and the larger corporations (Spivak, 1999, p. 5; Krebs and Wenk, 2005, pp.12 - 19). Also researches influenced by hegemonic European historiography as pointed out by Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak, in *A Critique of Postcolonial Reason: Toward a History of Vanishing Present* (1999), mentioned a conference with the title “Europe and Its Others” in 1982 in Essex with the suggestion of the alternative title: “Europe as an Other” (p. 199). Followed by the critique about the hegemonic nineteenth-century European historiography designated the archives as a repository of “facts” with proposal that these archives should be “read” (Spivak, 1999, pp. 203, 217-219; Naraya and Harding, 2000).<sup>4</sup> Do humanities and social sciences researches result in liberalization or victimization ?

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<sup>4</sup> See details in Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak, *A Critique of Postcolonial Reason: Toward a History of The Vanishing Present*, London, England: Harvard University Press, 1999: 198 – 311.

Another example reflecting the influence of European model was mentioned by Professor Ahmad Murad Merican, Social Science and Humanities in Malaysia is based on a European model which relegates religion to the private sphere. The structure of Eurocentric epistemology is disconnected from Asian society whose lives are centered on religion. This makes it difficult (for social scientists) to subscribe to (Eurocentric) Social Science,” says Murad.<sup>5</sup> (See also Krebs and Wenk, 2005).

### 2.3.2 Researches on sensitive topics

Among the above mentioned thirteen blueprint of the community, it is inescapable to deal with researches on sensitive issues. These issues concern some current short and long-term problems like cross-border problems such as terrorism, human trafficking, topics on violence against women, sexual harassment, modernity, transgender, gender and sexualities, human exploitation, tsunami generation, communities and generations affected by chemical warfare, child rights, HIV/AIDS, and more.<sup>6</sup>

In doing this kind of research, the methodology is different from doing research on another topics. According to Dennis Altman, a scholar interested in research on globalization and modernity, the primary focus on representation of subjects experiences a central point coming out of Altman’s reflections on the problem of doing research is the impact of globalization in Southeast Asia. This is not the place to explore the complexities of globalization per se, except to note that, as Jonathan Friedman has argued, globalization theory itself is a product of parameters of modernity; that is, of the ways that modern subjects identify the world. Altman clearly points to the ways that global discourses inevitably construct the very terms in which his “subjects” experience and represent themselves and in which the researcher understands and represents those experiences (Altman, 1997, p. 88; Stivens, 1997).

Cross-border issues can also be exemplified by interdisciplinary research on trafficking in women and children in selected countries in the areas of social welfare, model of welfare mix and problems of human trafficking, in this case women and children. As globalization has been developed worldwide, one of the problems concerning women and children in the Mekong Region is human trafficking. Countries in the Mekong Region – Cambodia, China, Lao P.D.R., Myanmar, Thailand and Vietnam have faced this problem of illegal and undocumented labour movements. These women and children are from countries in this region. Some of them are indigenous people and live in remote areas where they experience difficulties in accessing to public services such as education and health care. Being exploited in intolerable working conditions has pushed these women and children further in vicious circle of dehumanization.<sup>7</sup>

The problem of illegal labor movement, particularly the exploitation of women and children in the Mekong Region is the indicator of the extreme form of human rights violation. As we are approaching the year concerning trafficking in women and children should not be permitted to transform to the new decade of the 21<sup>st</sup> century. In light of this, the welfare mix model can be used as a conceptual tool not only to seek supports for the victims of trafficking from major sources of welfare such as advocacy, empowerment, healing and so forth. Based on the welfare mix model, victims of trafficking may receive both in-cash and in-kind supports from three major welfare providers, namely, the government organizations, non-government organizations both domestic and international, and households.

Another current sensitive research topic concerns terrorism. In the article, “ASEAN’s Stance on Terrorism,” published in the official website in early 2000s reflect the threats on security and peace, which affect social and cultural communities in this region (ASEAN 2001, ASEAN’s Stance on Terrorism). In Terrorism

<sup>5</sup> See details in Suzieana Uda Nagu and Sharifah Arfah. Escaping from the Clutches of colonization. New Starits Times, July 17, 2011; Hiriko Kawanami. Introduction: Power, Authority and Contested Hegemony in Burmese-Myanmar Religion. Asian Ethnology, September 22, 2009.

<sup>6</sup> See details in Ismail Baga, Challenges in Caring for People Living with HIV/AIDS in Malaysia, In Challenge of Social Care in Asia. Ngoh Tiong Tan and S. Vasoo. Singapore: Marshall Cavendish Academic, 2006: 183 – 190; Kachadpai Burusapatana, Minorities in Thailand: Burmese migrants, Bangkok: Phraepitaya, 2003; Paibul Busapathumrong, Chemical Warfare: Issues and Towards National Security, Thesis, National Defense College 30 (Unpublished Thesis), 1987; Raymond M. Lee, Doing Research on Sensitive Topic, London, England: Sage Publications, 1993.

<sup>7</sup> See details in International Organization for Migration (IOM), 1999.



as a Product of Choices and Perceptions , James J.F. Forest (2009) addresses the need to understand relationships between individual, organization and environment. At the analytical level, two analytical framework has been introduced. The first framework is static frame of analysis referring to individual and organizational characteristics and the environment. The second analytical framework refers to dynamic interactions frame suggesting the understanding of action and reaction that are structurally frame by relationships such as social, economic, cultural etc.). What produce terrorism are the interactions between individual choices, organizational choices and the environmental dimensions influencing that choices. To combat terrorism, one requires essential elements such as knowledge and intelligence.<sup>8</sup> Moreover, the problem terrorism is complex as it involves ethnic group so called “ethnic terrorism” which differing from violence carried out for ideological, religious or financial motivation. This kind of terrorism seeks to foster the communal identity and to create the fear climate for the community and population.<sup>9</sup>

### 3. Challenges and Trends Towards the Integration of Humanities and Social Sciences Research

In this section, the challenges highlight at least two key areas in relation to selected approaches which are relevant to torch the lights on humanities and social sciences researches – system theory of Richard Scott , regional development, and right-based approaches from human rights viewpoints. There are a few reasons why the focuses are on these keys. First of all, the community experiences followed by struggle for independence. The arrival of the European traders in the 16<sup>th</sup> Century followed by the beginning of European Hegemony (1800 – 1849), the expansion of the European Empire among countries in Southeast Asia including Indonesia, Thailand, Philippines, Singapore, Vietnam, Myanmar, Cambodia, Malaysia, Laos, the Rise of South-East Asian Nationalism (1914 – 1944) and the struggle for independence (1945 – 1966) and the Emergence of ASEAN (1967 – 1996) (Strean, 1997, pp. 71 – 86, 88 – 123, 154 – 231; Levinson and Christensen, 2007, Vols 1 and 2, Chandler, 2000; Day 2002; Narayan, 2000, Osborn, 1997). Secondly, the brief chronological events shown above reflects the participation and engagement in the world system. Southeast Asian countries have engaged in the world system and another state boundaries both within the region and outside the region. Challenges primary concern the interdependence within the system boundaries of the community and beyond the geographical territories of each country. And lastly employing rights-based approach, the existing oppression of colonization has brought into the use of rights-based approach to further facilitate, mobilize and the use of resources between and among the involved parties throughout the region. At least these few reasons call for the integration and application of system theory both within and outside community boundaries and right –based approach (United Nations, 2002, Model United Nations; Ishay, 2004).

3.1 System theory. System theory as developed by Richard Scott is applicable to organization and/or system such as political system, social system. Applying to the areas of humanities and social sciences researches in the community, one can consider research community as rational, natural, or open system. For rational system perspective, the community designed as instrument to attain specific goals. Formalization structures, and the power and influence of leaders are among key areas. Examples of researches in this perspective will be research under bureaucratic system researches under the government and formal authority. Secondly, natural system analysts insist that highly centralized and formalized structures are ineffective and irrational as they wasted the resource, the intelligence and initiative of its participant, though the formality is not totally denied. Individual participants are never merely ‘hired hands’ but bring along their heads and hearts: they acquire ideas, expectations, and agendas and they bring with them differing values, interests, and abilities (Scott, 1992, pp.29 – 55). Examples of research organizations of this natural system are for examples, non-government organizations, community organizations. Lastly, open system perspective as a recent area, created new areas of study such as information theory, transformation of existing disciplines. Open system approach highlights interdependence between and among parts

<sup>8</sup> See details in James J. F. Forest, “Terrorism as a Product of Choices and Perceptions,” Paper prepared for the CATO Institute Conference on “Shaping the New Administration’s Counterterrorism Strategy,” January 12, 2009; Clark McCauley and Sophia Moskalenko, “Mechanisms of Political Radicalization: Pathways Toward Terrorism,” in *Terrorism and Political Violence*, 20: 415 – 433, 2008; Roy J. Eidelson and Judy I. Eidelson, *Dangerous Ideas: Five Beliefs That Propel Groups Toward Conflict*, *American Psychologist*, March 2003: 182 – 192.

<sup>9</sup> See details in Daniel Byman, “The Logic of Ethnic Terrorism,” in *Studies in Conflict & Terrorism*, 21: 149 – 169, 1998.

in all. Open systems are capable of self-maintenance on the basis of a throughput of resources from the environment (Scott, 1992, pp. 76 – 83). If apply the open system approach to humanities and social science researches, the use of network and flows of information possibly become the focus.

### 3.2 Rights-based approach

While system theory has contributed to the understanding of current humanities and social sciences research system and further development of flow of information, research collaboration, cooperation and research networking in the community and another concerned issues, right-based approach is also an essential element. The four pillars of the declaration as “dignity, liberty, equality, and brotherhood.” As mentioned in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights (UDHR), the twenty-seven articles of the declaration were divided among these four pillars. Articles 28 – 30 refer to the rights of individuals to be realized with society and the state (Ishay, 2004, pp. 3 – 4).<sup>10</sup> It will be one of the suitable approaches to the community blueprint in terms of ensuring basic rights in civil, social, cultural, economic, community rights of parties involved. Rights may be classified into three categories: civil and political; social and economic; and environmental, cultural, and developmental. These categories can be called first, second and third generation rights. Liberty-oriented or first generation rights provide freedom to think and access to information, freedom to act and to choose their actions, ability to join the political life in communities. Security-oriented or second generation rights protect people from having basic materials taken away. These are for examples, the four basic needs including food, shelter, and health care. Lastly, environmental, cultural, and developmental rights or third generation rights. These rights recognize that people have the right to live in an environment that is clean environment, free from pollution and well protected (O’Brien, Greene and McQuoid-Mason, 1996, pp. 11 – 12). This right-based approach can be applied for humanities and social science researches, policy, implementation, and practices including advocacy to those in need of social assistance and specific target groups such as victims of disasters, children of Tsunami generation, human trafficking, stateless people, the poor and more. Yet, foster peaceful environment for the community in connection to the international and global system in terms of rights.<sup>11</sup>

The publications and literature on trends in humanities and social sciences have emerged recently.<sup>12</sup> Overall, the trends in humanities and social sciences research towards integration require knowledge construction, researches on emerging issues in cultural and social ones, coping with the influences of economic development, privatization and internationalization and more. Trends also reflect further cooperation in humanities and social sciences research, knowledge and research dissemination, knowledge building, initiatives, common values, sharing, networking at the regional, nation, locals towards peace and security among countries in ASEAN region.

### 4. Conclusion and suggestions

To conclude, knowledge construction and research in humanities and social sciences in the ASEAN Community has been reflected more or less in the SCC Blueprint, which is successful regional experiences in coping with recent

<sup>10</sup> The first two articles of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights (UDHR) stands for human dignity shared by individuals regardless of race, religion, creed, nationality, social origin, or sex. As specified in articles 3 – 19 of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights (UDHR), refers to the first generation of civil liberties and other liberty rights. Then, articles 20 – 26, addresses the second generation of rights in reference to political, social and economic equity. As outlined in articles 27 – 28, the third generation of rights, associated with communal and national solidarity in the late nineteenth century and early twentieth century (Ishay, 2004: 3 – 5, Morsink, 1999)

<sup>11</sup> ASEAN, Blueprint for the ASEAN Socio-Cultural Community (2009 – 2015) Items 4 – 9.

<sup>12</sup> See Maire Geoghegan-Quinn, The future of Social Sciences and Humanities in Horizon 2020, Speech at the British Academy, European Commissioner for Research, Innovation and Science, London – 10 November 2011; Anne C. Herrman and Abigail J. Stewart, Theorizing Feminism: Parallel Trends in the Humanities and Social Sciences, Second Edition, Westview Press, 2001; European Commission, Emerging Trends in Socio-Economic Science and Humanities in Europe, The METRIS Report, 2009; British Library, 2020 Vision Project: Trends in Universities, Research and Higher Education, Internal Discussion Paper, February 2011; Harriett Zuckerman and Ronald G. Ehrenberg, Recent Trends in Funding for the Academic Humanities and Their Implications, Cornell University Working Papers, 2009; Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council, Alternative Wor[ld]ds: The Humanities in 2010, Report of the Working Group on the Future of the Humanities, Ontario, Canada: Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council, March 2001; Rommel A. Curaming, Towards Post-Structuralist Southeast Asian Studies, Journal of Social Issues in Southeast Asia (2006), Volume 21, Issue 1, pp. 90 – 112.

rapid economic, social and cultural changes resulting in emerging concerned issues such as disaster management, gender and sexualities, children, and more. In order to do this, researches in humanities and social sciences for theoretical and knowledge construction towards the integration of humanities and social sciences are possible. Cooperation in dealing with short and long term problems, and finally institutional building have been recently fostered and conducted in relation to the global communities and international organizations such as the United Nations. The primary focus of this paper is to explore factors fostering and strengthening research and development in the areas of humanities and social sciences in ASEAN community. The paper explores selected current issues including doing research as previously shown and also referred to sensitive topics based on the cultural and social blueprint.

Two theoretical approaches of system approach and rights-based approach have been introduced in order to challenge the current issues and doing researches on sensitive topics which are inescapable for the global communities. System theory suggests the flow of information, make existing data available, the development of network among researches and scholars from local, national and regional in relation to global system. Researches, policy, implementation, measures, practice including advocacy for specific target groups in need of assistance are also challenges. At the same time, rights-based approach suggests the advocacy and address human rights for all.

Final thoughts on suggestions involve searching for the paths towards the integration of humanities and social sciences both knowledge construction, advocacy, and research for development of research areas in reference to the issues addressed in the SCC blueprint in comparative research framework for knowledge and theoretical buildings, alleviate short and long term problems, development of public policies and good practices for the community.

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