

## Abstract

### **Work Integrated Learning as a Tool towards relevant Higher Education: Case of Thai Institutions.**

Pornchai Mongkhonvanit , President of Siam University

IAU Administration Board Member for Asia and Pacific

Cooperative and Work-Integrated Education is a format of education system that Integrates the classroom learning with real-life work experience in workplace. It aims to prepare the students to be ready for work and to develop their potentials for employability. Up until now, a good number of public and private higher education institutions in Thailand have provided cooperative education for their students. In the year 2015, the countries in the ASEAN region are planning to join hands and form ASEAN Economic Community (AEC). The new Thai graduates are expected to possess competitiveness for the expanding ASEAN's knowledgeable labor market and later for the global competition. Placement of cooperative and work integrated education students is a way to respond to the AEC since such placement will prepare the students to be a more competent workers.

In order to effectively implement WIL especially in the coop format a body called "Association of Thai cooperative Education TACE" has been founded. This Association works closely with Higher Education commission in order to set the direction and standards for cooperative education in Thai Higher Education. Presently, ten of thousands Thai students participate in cooperative education and other form of WIL annually.

Moreover, a forum called Business –University Forum of Thailand (TBUF) has been established with the support from BUF Japan and International association of university presidents (IAUP). This provide a forum for university presidents and CEO of major cooperation to work together in order to build effective cooperation not only in term of teaching and learning but also in research and services. This forum has a major meeting twice a year with sub committees and working groups meeting all year round. Recently the cooperation has expand beyond Thailand to includes some ASEAN partners and Asia –Pacific bodies. The area of discussion of the forum includes capacity building on both ways, curriculum reform, graduate competency both hard and soft skill, research cooperation and Ethics, Intellectual Properties and international cooperative education within and beyond ASEAN region. It is hoped that Thai BUF along with TACE will be a major engines for transformation of Thai Higher Education towards a more relevant one as well as of some universities to become real driving forces of economic development within and between the regions.

**Key words:** Work Integrated Learning, ASEAN Capacity building, Business University Forum transformation of Higher Education