

ASEAN Awareness of Filipino High School Students: Basis for Promotional Strategies

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The Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN) is often described as the most exemplary regional project in the developing world. Though it has been relatively successful for the past five decades, one perennial critique of the organization is its failure to engage the greater number of people in its endeavors. This results to citizens' low awareness and shallow understanding of the nature of the regional organization. In light of the ambitious ASEAN Community launched in 2015, it is important to gauge the ASEAN awareness of Filipinos, particularly the youth sector which is viewed as the region's future drivers and leaders. Utilizing a descriptive survey research involving Grades 7 to 10 students of a laboratory school in Quezon City, the study aims to: (1) to assess the respondents' basic knowledge of ASEAN in terms of member-states, founding date, and flag; (2) to identify their primary sources of information about ASEAN; and (3) to devise promotional strategies to increase Filipinos' ASEAN awareness based on their suggestions. Some of the secondary information and survey questions are adapted from Thompson and Thianthai's (2007) *Awareness of and Attitudes towards ASEAN: Findings from a Ten Nation Survey of University Students*. General findings on the respondents' ASEAN knowledge mirror the conclusion of Thompson and Thianthai's (2007) study – "Filipino students are among the least cognizant of ASEAN as a regional grouping." Furthermore, the results exhibited a significant divide between the ASEAN knowledge and sources of information of Grades 7-8 and 9-10 students. Such phenomenon proves that the Social Studies curriculum, particularly lessons on Regionalism in Asian History and Civilizations, plays a crucial role in the development of respondents' ASEAN awareness. To further improve Filipino youth's ASEAN awareness, four key suggestions regarding its more effective promotion were noted in the study.

Keywords: *ASEAN, ASEAN awareness, education*

Introduction

The Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN) is often described as the most exemplary regional project in the developing world (Annan, 2000; Fry, 2008; Fukushima, 2011; Jetschke, 2012; Severino, 2008; Solidum, 2003). Initially founded during the Cold War era by five states, it has successfully incorporated all nations in the region, save for Timor-Leste, and is gradually evolving into a community that envisions political, economic, and socio-cultural cooperation. Though ASEAN has exhibited success in many endeavors, one outstanding critique of the organization is its failure to engage its ordinary citizens. Many scholars criticize ASEAN as a talkshop of elite ministers that does not consult and involve the common people in the decision-making process (Acharya, 2003; ASEAN Civil Society & ASEAN People's Forum, 2015; Benny & Abdullah, 2011; Benny, Yean, & Ramli, 2015; Daño, 2007; Lambino, 2014; Moorthy & Benny, 2012;). This results to a low awareness and shallow understanding of the nature of the regional organization, a significant hindrance to greater citizen support and participation. Former Secretary General Surin Pitsuwan (2007) stressed this problem:

In order to convince the 567 million in ASEAN to join and support the community-building endeavor, they must first be informed of what ASEAN is all about and what important objectives ASEAN is trying to achieve. To be able to raise awareness of ASEAN, we need to consolidate our efforts to make sure that a growing number of these 567 million people feel ASEAN and would like to contribute to ASEAN. In order to achieve this, we need a network across the sectors in every ASEAN Member State, which includes professional groups, civil society organizations, other stakeholders and well-wishers. But most of all, we count on the ASEAN citizens.

Among the different sectors in the region, ASEAN leaders wish to greater engage the youth, which comprises around 27 percent of the total population (ASEAN Secretariat, 2015, p. 5). Former ASEAN Foundation Executive Director Apichai Sunchindah (2007) described them as the “movers, shakers, drivers, and leaders of ASEAN in the years ahead” and will play a great “role in building and

sustaining the vital essence of ASEAN.” To ensure the youth’s involvement in ASEAN activities as well as develop in them a greater awareness of ASEAN, the ASEAN Foundation launched numerous projects. Among these are seminars and conferences such as the ASEAN Students Leaders’ Summit and Cultural Festival, workshops and community immersion activities such as ASEAN Logics, video games such as ASEAN Quest, and youth exchanges such as High School Exchange Programs. Sunchindah (2007, p. 20) puts his hope in the youth: “By instilling the awareness of ASEAN at an early age, we will be able to produce future leaders who can think in terms of ASEAN as one Community.

Aside from the efforts by the ASEAN Secretariat and ASEAN Foundation, governments from a number of member-states have answered the call for greater promotion among the youth. In 2009, Singapore launched the ASEAN NewsMaker Project where student representatives from the member-states showcased their country’s culture and lifestyle through videos and software. Thailand’s Office of Fund for Protecting and Developing Vulnerable Groups initiated an ASEAN Youth Camp in 2013 with the theme “ASEAN Common Identity” which also involved students from the different member-states. Brunei’s Minister of Culture, Youth, and Sports addressed the country’s youth to be resilient, determined, and responsible to society within and beyond their borders during the ASEAN Youth Award and Tayo ASEAN Award Presentation Ceremony 2014.

Unfortunately, the Philippines is one of the member-states that lags behind in the effective promotion of ASEAN among the youth. Such fact is mirrored in a number of comparative studies conducted among primary, secondary, and tertiary students in the region. Thompson and Thianthai (2007) examined undergraduates’ ASEAN awareness by looking at the following variables: (1) level of familiarity, (2) listing of member-states, (3) identification of ASEAN flag, and (4) identification of founding year. Among the participants from the ten member-states, Filipino students ranked fifth in the level of familiarity,

seventh in the identification of the founding year, second to the last in the identification of flag, and last in the listing of member-states. Majority of the respondents affirmed that they are familiar with ASEAN, yet such familiarity did not translate into knowing basic information about the organization. The same pattern is observed in a similar study by Hirata et al. (as cited in Morishita, 2015) which involved Grade 6 and 10 students. Among the eight participating member-states, Philippines ranked fourth in recognizing the symbolism of the flag, fifth in the pinpointing the start of the ASEAN Community, and last in identifying the founding year.

Such studies prove that even though Philippines is a founding member-state, Filipino students possess very low awareness of ASEAN compared to their regional counterparts. They usually place at the bottom half in many variables. Given this reality, there is also a need to examine the students' sources of ASEAN information, which plays a major role in the promotion of ASEAN awareness. Inglehart (1970) argues that formal education and mass media are integral in soliciting public awareness and support for regional integration. Between the two, the former has the stronger influence to the general populace; the latter complements the effect of education and appeals to groups who were not able to go through formal schooling. Various studies prove that such is the case in the ASEAN region. Schools, television, and newspaper are the youth's primary sources of information about ASEAN (Barbin & Nicholls, 2012; Hirata, 2011, as cited in Morishita, 2015; Thompson & Thianthai, 2007). In the Philippines, schooling is the leading source of ASEAN information among university students, and it is the only member-state where formal education is at the top. Schools are followed by television and newspaper, while movies, work experiences, and music ranked last (Thompson & Thianthai, 2007). Unfortunately, an evaluation of the instructional materials used in Philippine elementary and high schools exhibited a glaring lack of ASEAN-related content compared to other member-states (East-West Center, 2009). Under the Revitalized Basic Education Curriculum,

ASEAN is discussed extensively only in Social Studies Grade 8 under the topic Regional Organizations in Asia¹. Also, ASEAN and its member-states are not given emphasis in television programs and news coverage as compared to non-ASEAN countries like United States, Japan, and China (Esposito-Betan, Santos, & Anday, 2015; Morales, 2007). It is not surprising then that Filipino students possess limited awareness of ASEAN.

Purposes of the Study

One of the primary purposes of the study is to address to the dearth of local research on this topic. Many of the studies on citizen's ASEAN awareness were conducted in Malaysia, Indonesia, Thailand, and Singapore. At present, there is a glaring lack of research that entirely focuses on the Philippines which, along with the aforementioned countries, is a founding member-state of ASEAN. In light of the recently launched ASEAN Community which has major implications on the lives of its citizens, it is imperative to gauge the state of ASEAN awareness of Filipino students to ascertain their readiness in the regional community-building. If majority of Filipinos, especially the youth, remain ignorant of ASEAN, there is a possibility that the Philippines will lag behind in the ASEAN Community project. The study also seeks to develop promotional strategies from the suggestions of the respondents. Gathering ideas from high school students can help boost ASEAN's prominence in the modern world and at the same time provide a venue where they are somehow consulted and involved in ASEAN affairs. With these goals in mind, the study intended to address the following questions:

1. What is the state of the respondents' awareness of ASEAN in terms of familiarity and knowledge of member-states, flag, and founding date?
2. What are the respondents' sources of information about ASEAN?
3. What strategies do respondents suggest to further promote ASEAN awareness in the Philippines?

¹ At the time of the study, i.e. Academic Year 2014–2015, RBEC is still the curriculum being implemented in grades 8 to 10. With the implementation of the K-12 Program, Asian History and Civilizations was moved down to Grade 7. For a detailed discussion of the gradual implementation of the K-12 curriculum in Social Studies, see DepEd Order No. 20, Series 2014.

Methodology

The study employed a descriptive survey research design to quantitatively describe the current state of ASEAN awareness of high school students. A structured survey questionnaire consisting of enumeration, multiple choice, and open-ended questions was utilized to gather the responses of the students (See Appendix). Some of the questions are lifted from Thompson and Thianthai's Awareness of and Attitudes toward ASEAN: Summary Findings from a Ten Nation Survey of University Students (2007).

The population of the study are Grades 7 to 10 students of a laboratory school in Quezon City. Each grade level is composed of around 100 students distributed to three sections. A sample size of one section per level, which constituted around 30 percent of the population, was randomly selected through draw lots. A letter of request was sent to the principal and was approved. The researcher coordinated with the faculty of the Social Studies Department for the schedule and the conduct of the survey administration, which was done during the third quarter of Academic Year 2014–2015.

The resulting sample included a total of 130 students. The largest size is Grade 9 with 38 respondents while the smallest are Grades 7 and 10 with 29 respondents each. The average age of the sample is 14 years old, with their age ranging from 11 to 17 years old. 71 respondents are male while 59 are female.

Responses from multiple choice and enumerations questions were classified into correct, wrong, and no answers. Frequency, percentages, and mean scores were computed and data were presented in graphical and textual forms. Responses to these type of questions were organized by grade level to observe for trends or patterns. On the other hand, responses from open-ended questions were summarized into themes or clusters.

Results and Discussion

This section provides a detailed reporting of the results of the study. In order to describe the state of the ASEAN awareness of respondents, the following areas were examined: (1) level of familiarity, (2) knowledge of member-states, (3) knowledge of flag, and (4) knowledge of founding date. They were also asked to indicate their sources of information on ASEAN which can be an important factor in their state of awareness. Finally, suggestions were solicited from the respondents as to how ASEAN can be further promoted in the Philippines.

Familiarity with ASEAN

The first item in the questionnaire seeks to determine the students' level of familiarity with ASEAN. Four options were specified ranging from very familiar to not at all familiar. Table 1 shows the results. Majority of Grade 7 and 8 students rated themselves a little familiar with the organization, while around a quarter answered that they are not at all familiar. On the other hand, responses from Grade 9 and 10 stu-

Table 1
Summary of Students' Level of Familiarity with ASEAN

	Very Familiar	Somewhat Familiar	A Little Familiar	Not at All Familiar	No Response
Grade 7	0	15%	56%	26%	3%
Grade 8	0	3%	69%	28%	0
Grade 9	3%	47%	47%	3%	0
Grade 10	3%	52%	42%	3%	0
Over-all	3%	27%	54%	15%	1%

dents fell closely between somewhat familiar and a little familiar. A very small percentage answered that they are very familiar and not at all familiar with the organization. Based on the data, Grade 9 and 10 students are more confident in claiming that they are familiar with ASEAN compared to their counterparts in the lower levels. Looking at the over-all response of high school students, majority of them expressed little familiarity with the organization.

Listing of ASEAN Member-States

Respondents were asked to list the ten member-states of ASEAN. If they do not have any idea, they were instructed to give their best guess. The results are presented in Table 2. The mean score of Grade 7 and 8 students is 4, which is considered a failing score in a ten-item test. On the other hand, the mean score of Grade 9 and 10 students is 6, which is barely passing. The overall mean gives us 5, which is the passing score. On individual analysis, there are Grade 7 and 10 students who obtained a perfect score while there are students from Grades 7 and 8 who got zero.

Table 2

Summary of Scores in the Listing of ASEAN Member-States

	Mean Score	Highest Score	Lowest Score
Grade 7	4.12	10	0
Grade 8	4.21	8	0
Grade 9	6.05	9	3
Grade 10	6.34	10	3

Figure 1 shows the percentage of students who passed the listing test. Respondents who were able to identify more than four member-states are deemed passed. Majority of Grade 7 students failed the test while majority of Grades 8 to 10 obtained passing rates. There is also an increasing pattern in the percentages from Grades 7 to 9 and a slight decrease in Grade 10.

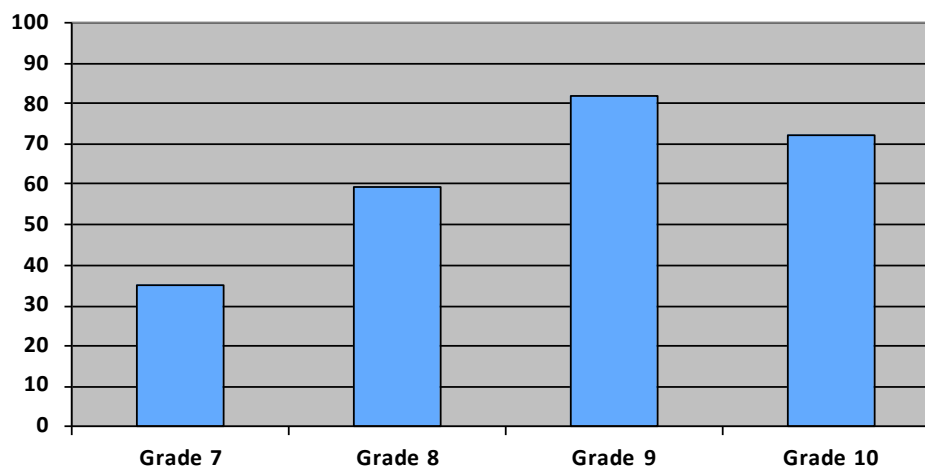


Figure 1. Percentage of students who passed the listing test, arranged by grade level.

Table 3 presents the number of times ASEAN member-states and non-member-states appeared on the respondents' list. Philippines is the most frequently-listed state, with all Grade 9 and 10 students signifying awareness that their country is part of ASEAN. Among the other top listed countries are Malaysia, Indonesia, and Singapore which are neighbouring states in maritime Southeast Asia. On the other hand, ASEAN member-states that occupied the bottom spots are Myanmar, Laos, and Brunei.

Table 3
Frequency of ASEAN Member-States and Non-Member-States that Appeared in the Listing Test

ASEAN Member-State	Frequency	ASEAN Non-Member-State	Frequency
Philippines	119	Japan	63
Malaysia	104	China	58
Indonesia	90	Taiwan	52
Singapore	88	South Korea	45
Thailand	81	India	25
Vietnam	69	Hong Kong	23
Cambodia	38	Timor-Leste	12
Myanmar	35	Others	
Laos	30	(e.g. North Korea, United States, France, Iraq)	38
Brunei	22		

Noting the most frequently listed non-ASEAN member-states is important because it reveals students' conception of the region. Occupying the top spot is Japan, which is listed by almost half of the respondents. It is followed by China, Taiwan, and South Korea, all of which are part of Northeast Asia. Other countries, some of them not even part of the Asian continent, appeared on the students' list. Some of these are Mongolia, Saudi Arabia, Sri Lanka, Iraq, France, Canada, Mexico, Australia, and the United States. Results show that while students are aware of their countries' membership in ASEAN, they are not familiar with the different countries that comprise the organization.

Identification of ASEAN Flag and Founding Date

Respondents were asked to identify the ASEAN flag and founding date. If they do not have any idea, they were instructed to give their best guess. The first bars in each grade level in Figure 2 shows the percentage of students who correctly pinpointed the flag, while the second bar represents those who successfully identified the founding date. Responses from the two questions exhibited contrasting results. In terms of the flag, Grade 9 and 10 students are more aware compared to Grades 7 and 8. But when it comes to the founding date, Grade 7 and 8 students are more knowledgeable though with a very small margin. One possible explanation, as shared by the Social Studies teacher handling Grade 8, is that the curriculum does not focus on minute details like dates. Thus in this part, respondents could have resorted to guessing their answers.

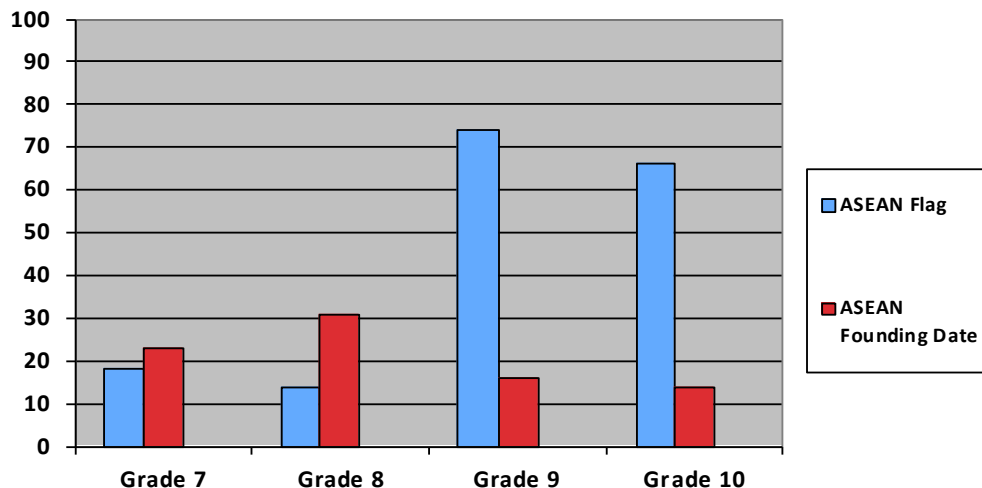


Figure 2. Percentage of students who correctly identified the ASEAN flag and founding date, arranged by grade level.

Top Sources of Information

Respondents were asked to identify all their sources of information about ASEAN. Table 4 shows the summary of respondents' answers. For Grade 7 and 8 students, television ranked first, and they pinpointed news programs, e.g. TV Patrol and 24 Oras, and channels, e.g. GMA News TV, PTV, and History Channel, as their key sources. Included also in the top sources of information of these two grade levels are the Internet, newspaper, and school. On the other hand, many Grade 9 and 10 students signified that school is their top source, citing that ASEAN was tackled in their grade 8 Social Studies. Along with the school, tele-

Table 4
Summary of Students' Sources of Information about ASEAN

	Grade 7	Grade 8	Grade 9	Grade 10
Top Sources of Information	Television (50%) Internet (47%) Newspaper (26%)	TV & Internet (45%) School & Newspaper (38%) Advertisements (17%)	School (74%) Television (55%) Internet (39%)	School (79%) Television (72%) Internet (59%)
Least Sources of Information	Friends (0) Movies (0)	Friends (0) Movies (0)	Movies (8%)	Advertisements (0) Movies (0)
Other Sources of Information	This Survey Map Overheard	Southeast Asian Asian Center	None	None

vision shows and the Internet are also among their primary sources of knowledge. The least utilized sources of information, which is consistent to all grade levels, are movies and friends. Also, students from Grade 7 and 8 were the only respondents to put other sources of information. Among these are Southeast Asian Games, UP Asian Center, and the researcher's survey.

Suggestions for Greater Promotion

The last part of the questionnaire asked respondents for suggestions on how to further improve the ASEAN awareness of the Filipino youth. Their responses were clustered into four categories:

1. Strengthen and deepen the teaching of ASEAN in schools. Majority of the respondents encountered ASEAN in their schooling. But they feel that the knowledge they gained is not adequate to truly understand the nature and objectives of ASEAN. As such, some of them suggested that it should be highlighted in the curriculum, with greater emphasis on how the organization benefits the Filipino youth. One respondent even suggested that a special subject be created that will only tackle ASEAN Affairs.
2. Utilize traditional mass media to enhance its image. Another major sources of ASEAN information for the respondents are traditional media such as television and newspaper. Many of them believe that ASEAN needs to step up and have more exposure through these channels of information. Aside from the said media, posters, brochures, talk shows, books, documentaries, movies, and unforgettable advertisements were also suggested to improve ASEAN's visibility in the modern world.
3. Conduct more activities such as seminars and programs. A number of respondents believe that the best way to promote ASEAN

awareness is through people-to-people interactions. As such, it is important for ASEAN to conduct forums, seminars, campaigns, debates, and even fun runs in schools to cater to the youth. One respondent also suggested holding meetings in other countries sponsored by the ASEAN where Filipino youths get to represent their country.

4. Make it more attractive to the youth by using media that appeal to them. One respondent suggested that ASEAN should conduct a survey about various media that today's youth frequently utilize, then use the results to further promote ASEAN awareness. Indeed it is imperative for ASEAN to know first their audience in order to get their attention. Suggestions that fall under this category are animated shows, social networking sites, and online games.

Findings from this study show that the respondents possess an alarmingly low ASEAN awareness. More than half of the students affirmed that they have little familiarity with ASEAN. Moreover, students who expressed that they are not at all familiar with the association are greater in percentage than those who confidently stated that they are very familiar with it. Such low level of familiarity is also reflected in the respondents' knowledge of ASEAN. General weighted mean of the respondents in the listing of member-states revealed a barely passing rate. While almost everyone is aware that the Philippines is a member-state of ASEAN, many of them are not familiar with the other countries that comprise the region. Another set of dismal results is their knowledge of ASEAN's flag and founding date, where only less than half of the respondents provided correct answers. These figures indicate that in general, students possess a low level of ASEAN awareness, a fact that is also mirrored in the results of the regional studies conducted by Thompson and Thianthai (2007) and Hirata et al. (as cited in Morishita, 2015). Their findings revealed that compared to their counterparts in Southeast Asia, Filipino students are among the least cognizant of

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ASEAN as a regional grouping. In both of these studies, Filipino students usually ranked at the bottom half especially in terms of their knowledge of ASEAN.

When asked about their sources of information, the respondents indicated the school, television, internet, and newspaper as their top sources. Analyzing their list, it can be seen that the study supports Inglehart's (1970) theory, i.e. formal education and mass communication are the two most important channels that can amass greater citizen awareness and support towards regional integration. Between these two, formal education plays a more significant role, as evidenced in the knowledge gap between Grades 7-8 and 9-10 students. Under the Revitalized Basic Education Curriculum, ASEAN and other regional organizations in Asia is discussed in the very last lesson of Social Studies 8. Findings from this study stress the significance of this lesson in high school students' ASEAN awareness. Respondents from Grades 9 and 10 were more confident in stating that they are familiar with the organization compared to their Grade 7 and 8 counterparts whose knowledge of ASEAN bordered on very little to nothing at all. Results of the listing of ASEAN member-states and identification of ASEAN flag proved that Grades 9 and 10 are more knowledgeable about the basics of ASEAN than Grades 7 and 8. Also, all students from the former group were able to identify Philippines as a member-state of the organization, showing awareness of their country's involvement in ASEAN. While the Philippines is also the most frequently listed country in the latter, a small percentage of the students are not aware at all that their country is a member of ASEAN. Moreover, it can be noticed that Grade 9 students exhibited greater awareness compared to Grade 10 respondents. This may be due to the fact that ASEAN-related lessons in Social Studies 8 are still fresh on their minds. Perhaps the only noticeable inconsistency is the result of the identification of the founding year. But then, given the general findings, it can be surmised that the particular lesson on Asian regional organizations in Social Studies 8 is a significant source of ASEAN

information for Filipino students.

Aside from schooling, mass media remains an important vehicle for the promotion of ASEAN awareness to the general public. Yet, it seems to be ineffective in taking ASEAN to broader and deeper levels of discussion. Many of the Grade 7 and 8 respondents cited television and the internet as their leading information source. Unfortunately, the knowledge they gained from these sources is insufficient to reach the level of knowledge gained from schools. For example, they may have heard or read snippets of ASEAN in the news, such as the conduct of ASEAN Summits with the presence of the Philippine president, but it has failed to present how ASEAN can benefit the public and how it is relevant to their future.

Findings from the study revealed that Grades 9 and 10 are more aware of ASEAN compared to Grades 7 and 8, and such gap could have been caused by the knowledge gained through formal education. Still, looking at the average ASEAN awareness of all high school students, their familiarity and knowledge border on the low levels in terms of the given variables. Thus, aside from broader discussions in schools and greater exposure in media, what ASEAN needs is a platform where it can be discussed deeply and comprehensively, a platform that is palatable to the youth. Respondents enumerated a number of good suggestions to further promote ASEAN awareness, yet many of these were already existing projects. People-to-people interactions such as the ASEAN Youth Dialogue, ASEAN Quiz, and Poster-Making and Essay-Writing Contests are being initiated nationwide (Department of Foreign Affairs, 2015; Foreign Service Institute, 2014). Online games such as the ASEAN Quest have already been developed. Youth exchanges such as High School Exchange Program and ASEAN Youth Camp have been taking place for the past years. ASEAN has been more active in mass and social media, and educational systems are continually tapped for increased information drive. Thus all the suggested promotional strategies are already in place. Unfortunately these efforts seem to be insufficient in increasing students' ASEAN

awareness. A number of reasons can be attributed to this phenomenon. First, there is a dearth of scholarly studies on such topic in the country as compared to the other founding members. Such fact may suggest local scholars' lack of interest with the organization or the national government's ineffectiveness to come up with research-based promotional strategies. Second, ASEAN faces a serious lack of coverage both in formal education and in mass media, the primary channels that can amass public awareness according to Inglehart (1970). Lastly, Filipinos tend to be occupied with the 'national' psyche as opposed to a 'regional' Southeast Asian consciousness. The absence or lack of an ASEAN state-of-mind, according to Morales (2007), hampers the Filipinos' affinity with our regional neighbors. Given such problems, the end result is citizens who are aware of ASEAN's existence yet lacking in basic understanding and substantial knowledge about the organization, as exemplified by the high school respondents in this study.

Conclusion and Recommendation

The primary aim of the study is to analyze the state of Filipino high school students' ASEAN awareness and their sources of information on ASEAN. Three research questions served as guide in fulfilling the primary aim: (1) What is the state of the respondents' awareness of ASEAN in terms of familiarity and knowledge of member-states, flag, and founding date?; (2) What are the respondents' sources of information about ASEAN?; and (3) What strategies do respondents suggest to further promote ASEAN awareness in the Philippines? To address these questions, a descriptive survey research design was employed to selected high school students of a laboratory school in Quezon City. Findings from the study revealed that (1) in general, high school students possess an alarmingly low level of ASEAN awareness as evidenced in their familiarity and knowledge of the association's basic information; (2) in almost all variables, Grade 9 and 10 students are more familiar and more knowledgeable compared to their Grade 7 and 8 counterparts; and (3) school, television, internet, and newspapers are

students' top sources of information about ASEAN. Students' suggestions on how to further promote ASEAN awareness were also clustered into four main themes: (1) strengthen and deepen the teaching of ASEAN in schools; (2) utilize traditional mass media to enhance its image; (3) conduct more activities such as seminars and programs; and (4) make it more attractive to the youth by using media that appeal to them.

The promotion of ASEAN awareness is an on-going challenge for the regional organization, especially in the Philippines. The lack of local research, the dominance of the Filipino over Southeast Asian consciousness, and the limited prominence in the school curriculum and mass media are obstacles in the development of Filipino students' ASEAN awareness. If they do not know the basics of ASEAN, it will be difficult for them to fully understand its objectives and relevance, as well as to take part in and benefit from the ASEAN Community-Building. Perhaps what the Philippines need at present is an ASEAN-committed national government that will bridge the gap between the regional organization and the general populace, most especially the youth who holds the future of ASEAN.

Inglehart (1970) highlighted the significance of formal schooling in raising citizens' awareness of and support for regional organizations. Such fact was mirrored in the findings of the study. Grade 9 and 10 students fared better than Grade 7 and 8 pupils, and they cited the school as their top source of information, particularly their Social Studies classes. Unfortunately, ASEAN is not included in the elementary curriculum. Moreover, the topic is not tackled in other subjects such as English, Science, or Math. As such, students who have not yet taken Social Studies 8, ie. Asian History and Civilizations, are in the dark about the nature, objectives, and achievements of the organization. They have to rely on other sources of information such as television, newspaper, and internet to obtain knowledge of the ASEAN. If the Philippines is indeed serious in the promotion of awareness among the youth, it needs to revamp the national curriculum, not only of Social Studies but also of

other subjects. Perhaps creating a separate ASEAN subject is a little overboard. What educational institutions can do best is to put greater emphasis on the relevance of ASEAN today, especially for the youth, and to integrate the topic with other fields of study.

Integrating the findings of the study with the suggestions generated from the respondents, the following recommendations might be helpful in addressing the challenge of promoting ASEAN awareness to the Filipino youth:

1. Conduct more scholarly studies on Filipinos' ASEAN awareness. These studies may focus on increasing the level of ASEAN awareness by looking at the factors that affect such awareness. Moreover, a larger number of respondents with different backgrounds should be included to capture the level of the general public, similar to the research conducted in Indonesia, Malaysia, and Singapore.
2. Increase ASEAN-related content in the national curriculum. Because schools are the top source of information in the Philippines, ASEAN should be integrated in all subjects, as prescribed in the ASEAN Curriculum Sourcebook (2012). Furthermore, educators should emphasize how ASEAN will affect students' future and should instill commitment to ASEAN on the students.
3. Boost ASEAN's visibility through mass and social media. Television, radio, newspapers, and Internet are instrumental in the promotion of ASEAN to the general public, especially to those who fail to enter formal education. As such, ASEAN should be made more visible and discussed more deeply through these information channels. Furthermore, ASEAN should take advantage of the youth's access to social media for wider dissemination and deeper discussion of their programs and activities.
4. Organize more inclusive people-to-people interactions among the citizens of ASEAN. While a number of such activities are being conducted at present, it is imperative that ASEAN engage a greater number of its people and not only a select few. This can be successfully achieved with the partnership of ASEAN Secretariat, Philippine Directorate on ASEAN Affairs, civil society organizations, and other willing stakeholders.

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Appendix

Survey Questionnaire

Good day! I am conducting a study on high school students' awareness of the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN). **Please answer ALL the questions. If you are not sure about an answer, please give your best guess.** Rest assured that the results will be confidential. Thank you for your participation.

Name (optional): _____
 Age: _____ Grade Level: _____ Sex: _____

Encircle the letter of your answer / write on the space provided.





In general, how familiar are you with the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN)?

- A. Very familiar
- B. Somewhat familiar
- C. A little familiar
- D. Not at all familiar

List the ten member-states of the ASEAN. (If you are not sure, give your best guess.)

- A. _____
- B. _____
- C. _____
- D. _____
- E. _____
- F. _____
- G. _____
- H. _____
- I. _____
- J. _____

Which of the following is the flag of ASEAN?

- A. 
- B. 
- C. 
- D. 

What year was ASEAN founded?

- A. 1957
- B. 1967
- C. 1977
- D. 1987
- E. 1997

What are your sources of knowledge about the ASEAN? Check as many sources and identify specific examples which contributed to your awareness of ASEAN.

- () Advertisements: _____
- () Books: _____
- () Family: _____
- () Friends: _____
- () Internet: _____
- () Movies: _____

- () Newspaper: _____
- () Radio: _____
- () Schooling: _____
- () Television: _____
- () Others: _____

What are your suggestions to further improve the awareness of Filipino youth about the ASEAN?

Thank you very much.

About the Author

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