

SCHOOLING IN THE ASEAN REGION

INDONESIA, MALAYSIA, THE PHILIPPINES,
SINGAPORE, THAILAND

Edited by

T. NEVILLE POSTLETHWAITE
and
R. MURRAY THOMAS

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PRIMARY AND SECONDARY EDUCATION IN INDONESIA,
MALAYSIA, THE PHILIPPINES, SINGAPORE, AND THAILAND

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Preface

THE FOCUS of this volume is on the current condition and background of primary and secondary education in the countries that form the Association for Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN) — Indonesia, Malaysia, the Philippines, Singapore, and Thailand. Our chief concern is to provide a description of present-day schooling in each nation separately. However, we are interested as well in cooperative efforts of the five ASEAN governments to pursue goals they hold in common.

The first of the seven chapters offers an overview of the main themes found in the next five chapters that treat each ASEAN country independently. The final chapter summarizes key points from the preceding five and offers estimates about what conditions may be expected in the years ahead for elementary and secondary schooling in the ASEAN region.

This book is actually a reaction to a complaint. The complaint has been that there is no concise yet relatively comprehensive and systematic description of education in the ASEAN countries.

By *relatively comprehensive* we mean a description not only of the formal elementary and secondary schools but also of nonformal education efforts and such support systems as the administrative and teacher-education structures. The term *comprehensive* encompasses as well the historical antecedents of present-day schools and the political-economic setting in which the education system operates. Other books about education in the region, such as Wong's *Teacher Education in ASEAN*, are useful but not comprehensive in the above sense.

By *systematic* we mean that the educational efforts of one country are described according to the same scheme as that applied to the others. Journal articles and books about education in Asian nations have suffered

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from the lack of a common system. In the same issue of a journal, an author writing about one country has focused on different aspects of education than those featured by authors writing about other countries. (*Asian Profile*, 1977.) As a result, it has been impossible to compare the various nations across the same dimensions. So to meet this complaint about unsystematic descriptions, the authors of the present volume have all based their descriptions on the same scheme. Thus, the effects on education of a nation's geography, religions, and ethnic patterns are described for each of the five societies. Likewise, information on the administrative organization, numbers of schools, rates of literacy, the holding power of schools, current innovative programs, and the like are provided for each country.

In sum *Schooling in the ASEAN Region* has been structured as the sort of compressed overview that appears to be sought by university students of international and comparative education and by personnel in foreign-aid agencies that deal with ASEAN nations.

The descriptive framework on which the five country chapters have been constructed reflects a series of convictions held by the editors about ASEAN countries. Although an examination of the country chapters will reveal the nature of these convictions, it may be useful for readers to be apprised of three of them beforehand.

First is the obvious observation that the high population growth rate in the four largest ASEAN nations (Singapore excepted) poses some of the countries' most serious educational problems. While educators have their hands more than full in trying to furnish enough facilities to educate today's population, the nations' high birth rates coupled with lowering death rates bring each year ever-increasing numbers of children to the school door. Educational planners are thus forced into the frustrating role of pursuing a retreating horizon. Consider, for instance, Indonesia, with an estimated population in 1980 of 145 million and likely to reach 200 million by 1992. The goal of Indonesia's educational planners has been to provide enough facilities to accommodate 85 percent of the school-age population by 1980. Reaching this goal can be difficult indeed. But how much greater the task will be to accommodate 100 percent — or even 75 percent — of school-age children by the year 2000. In effect, population growth is a crucial factor in ASEAN nations' educational progress.

A second conviction is that even successful attempts to furnish large

quantities of schooling — education for everyone — may do nothing to improve the relevance or quality of education. A nation's socioeconomic development plan is hardly helped by a work force of graduates schooled in things irrelevant to the development program's requirements. And even if the curriculum is geared to the needs of socioeconomic development, national progress is unlikely to result if teaching methods in the schools and nonformal programs are so ineffective that students fail to learn what they are expected to master. In the 1950s and 1960s the major emphasis in ASEAN countries was on increasing the quantity of education — getting more students into schools or nonformal programs. However, in the 1970s more attention was centered on improving the quality of education. Examples of projects emphasizing quality are included in the five country chapters, Chapters 2 through 6.

A third conviction is that political events in Southeast Asia will continue to exert a strong influence on educational affairs. Over the past decade-and-a-half the five ASEAN members have nervously monitored the social turmoil and war in the neighboring countries of Vietnam, Laos, and Cambodia. Thailand, in particular, has been affected by the Indochina conflicts, since there have been periodic penetrations into Thai northern territories from across the borders that surround the nation's northern sector. Not only has the conduct of schools been influenced by armed intrusions, but the matter of maintaining national unity and the fidelity of the northern provinces to the central Thai government has posed problems for teaching political doctrine in the schools. In Indonesia, the attempted coup in late 1965 precipitated internal battles that resulted in the replacement of the Sukarno government, the outlawing of the Indonesian Communist Party, and the disruption of education for nearly a year. In Malaysia, the racial riots of 1969 strongly affected the direction and pace of development of the school system. And we are convinced that education in ASEAN countries in the future will be no less affected by political events in the region.

As a final prefatory note, we identify the affiliations of the authors of *Schooling in the ASEAN Region*. In keeping with the book's international character, the authors represent international diversity. The first and last chapters have been written by the two editors. T. Neville Postlethwaite, an Englishman with a Swedish doctorate, is professor of education at the University of Hamburg and chairman of the Department

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of Comparative Education. He is also chairman of the International Association for the Evaluation of Educational Achievement. R. Murray Thomas is a University of California professor of education with three decades of educational experience in the Pacific Islands and Southeast Asia. He directs the program in International Education at the University of California's Santa Barbara campus.

The two editors met five years ago in Indonesia while serving as consultants to the Indonesian Ministry of Education. The fact that they found themselves so frequently asked to furnish information about the Indonesian educational system to foreigners from multilateral and bilateral aid agencies was a further impetus to their motivation for organizing such a book as this.

The senior author of Chapter 2 on Indonesia is Soedijarto, chief of the curriculum-development division of the Center for Research and Development of the Indonesian Ministry of Education and Culture. In addition to his Indonesian academic degrees, he holds an M.A. in International Education from the University of California, Santa Barbara. His coauthors are all specialists in the Center for Research and Development. Lexy Moleong is head of the section on curriculum development for teacher education and higher education, and he holds an M.A. from Stanford University in the U.S.A. A. Suryadi is on the research staff of the Educational Innovation and Technology division of the Center, specializing in community education. Darlis Machmud, whose Indonesian degrees are in the field of philosophy, is on the curriculum-development staff, with principal responsibility in the areas of social studies and philosophy. F. Pangemanan is an experienced teacher serving as a senior staff member in curriculum development for elementary schools. A. F. Tangyong heads the section on curriculum research for elementary schools, special education, and preschool education. In addition to Indonesian degrees, he holds an M.A. from Teachers College, Columbia University, in educational administration and another from Stanford University in curriculum development and its economic implications. Noehi Nasoetion directs the division of educational research, as well as the national evaluation team for the Development-School Project described in Chapter 2. He holds an M.A. from Stanford.

The senior author of Chapter 3 on Malaysia is Dr Arfah A. Aziz, assistant director and head of the evaluation and research unit of the Malaysian

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Ministry of Education's Curriculum Development Centre. In addition to Malaysian degrees, she has a M.Ed. from Canada (Toronto) and a doctorate from the University of California at Berkeley. Her coauthor, Chew Tow Yow of the Ministry of Education staff, is currently completing doctoral studies at the University of Malaya in Kuala Lumpur. He was formerly deputy director of the Curriculum Development Centre and now is principal officer in the teacher-training division of the Ministry.

Dr Josefina R. Cortes, who prepared Chapter 4 on the Philippines, is a professor of educational administration at the University of the Philippines in Quezon City. She earned a doctorate at Stanford University and now teaches courses in educational planning, administration, research methods, and the relationship of education to national development. She has had extensive experience as a planner and evaluator of research and development projects in the fields of education and of manpower production.

The coauthors of Chapter 4 include two officials of the Singapore education system. Goh Kim Leong heads the Planning and Review Division, while R. W. Mosbergen is the deputy director in charge of academic affairs in the Institute of Education. Mr Goh also served as secretary of the Educational Study Team which, under the direction of Deputy Prime Minister Goh Keng Swee, in 1979 issued the influential *Goh Report*, assessing conditions and proposing reforms in the Singapore education system.

The senior author for Chapter 6 on Thailand is Dr Chalio Buripakdi, director of the doctoral program in development education at Srinakharinwirot University, Bangkok. His doctorate is from Stanford. Dr Buripakdi's fellow author is Dr Pratern Mahakhan, a member of the Education Association of Thailand and of the faculty of education at Srinakharinwirot University.

These, then, are the writers who have collaborated to present the view of elementary and secondary education found in the following pages.

As a final note, we wish to express our appreciation to four individuals who aided in this work. Goh Keng Swee, Minister of Education in Singapore, was particularly helpful in providing recent information about educational developments under his Ministry's authority. Dr J. F. H. Villiers, Director of the Far East and Pacific Department of the British Council, offered useful suggestions about several of the chapters when they were in manuscript form. John Coles of the British Council office in Thailand supplied

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information about the preservice training of Thai teachers. And Ingrid Ruopp at the University of Hamburg typed several of the chapters.

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R. MURRAY THOMAS



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