

Developing Context-Responsive Local Curriculum for Regional Economic Transformation: Evidence from the Greater Mekong Subregion (GMS) with a Focus on Thailand

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Overview

This study examines how local curricula in Thailand should be redesigned to meet the demands of Greater Mekong Subregion (GMS) economic integration, as guided by the GMS-2030 strategy. Using a Sequential Explanatory Mixed Methods approach, the research identifies critical competency gaps and proposes practical guidelines for context-responsive curriculum development aligned with regional and ASEAN standards.

Objectives of the Study

This study pursued two objectives: (1) to examine how local curricula are currently managed in relation to regional economic transformation in the GMS context; and (2) to develop practical guidelines for local curriculum development, using Thailand as the primary case study.

Research Methodology

A Sequential Explanatory Mixed Methods design was employed. The theoretical framework integrated Gay's (2010) culturally responsive teaching framework and the Regional Human Capital Development concept promoted by the Asian Development Bank (ADB). Data were collected through policy document analysis, a structured questionnaire survey, and in-depth interviews with curriculum development, economics, and regional policy experts and stakeholders in Thailand, Lao PDR, and Myanmar.

Results and Discussion

Three GMS member countries — Thailand, Cambodia, and Vietnam — share the same 6+3+3 school structure. Thailand continues to rely on the 2008 Basic Education Core Curriculum, and its transition toward Competency-Based Education (CBE) has not been communicated clearly to schools and teachers. A significant competency gap was identified: special economic zones require vocational workers — particularly in robotics — that the current system cannot supply in sufficient numbers or at the required quality level. Sector-specific demands in smart agriculture (Northeast Economic Corridor), the creative economy (Northern Economic Corridor), and aviation logistics (Eastern Economic Corridor) remain similarly unmet. GMS

border areas face additional structural barriers, including inadequate digital infrastructure, and many teachers in remote areas report low confidence in delivering STEM content or integrating AI-based tools into classroom instruction.

Based on these findings, a comprehensive set of guidelines for local curriculum development in the GMS was formulated and subsequently validated by subject-matter experts and community stakeholders. The guidelines address four dimensions: principles, structure, processes, and success indicators. Core principles advocate for student-centered, active learning approaches that are responsive to local cultural contexts. Structurally, the Eastern Economic Corridor (EEC) model is proposed as a foundational reference, given its established framework for facilitating Public–Private Partnerships (PPP) that enable active industry participation in curriculum design through Work-integrated Learning (WiL) and Dual Vocational Training (DVT). At the regional level, alignment with the National Qualifications Framework (NQF) and ASEAN standards is advocated to enhance cross-border labor mobility. Program effectiveness is evaluated across three dimensions: graduate employment rates in target sectors, students’ digital and STEM competency levels, and employer satisfaction.

Keywords: local curriculum development, Greater Mekong Subregion, competency-based education, regional economic integration, culturally responsive teaching