

# The 5th ASEAN+3 Rectors' Conference

ASEAN+3 University Education and Graduate Employability:  
Sharpening the Edge



## General Information

<i>Date</i>	14 October 2021
<i>Venue</i>	Zoom
<i>Organizers</i>	Kanazawa University (as a representative of The Consortium of Six National Universities in Japan)
<i>Participants</i>	89 Participants from 36 Universities, 1 Organization, 1 Ministry from 12 Countries
<i>Brief Description</i>	The ASEAN+3 Rectors' Conference is a platform for top administrators (President/Rector/Vice-chancellor) of AUN

	<p>Member Universities and ASEAN+3 UNet member universities to discuss and exchange their views pertaining to the challenges ahead in our region, bringing together over 50 delegates from the ASEAN and the ASEAN+3.</p> <p>With the digital transformation and COVID-19, the international labor market is transforming in ways that we have never seen before. Employers are demanding more than ever from graduates and they are aggressively pursuing talent globally.</p> <p>As one of the most exciting regions, the ASEAN+3 higher education needs to ensure that its graduates have the competitive edge they will need to compete in the international labor market, and identify the challenges and unique characteristics to ensure a sustainable future for the region's graduate employability.</p>
<p><i>File Catalogue</i></p>	<p> File Catalogue - 5th ASEAN+3 Rectors' Conference (ex...</p>

# Lessons and Useful Information for the transition to a post-pandemic world

## Greater emphasis on building soft skills

After the Fourth Industrial Revolution and the COVID-19 pandemic, employers are looking more for graduates with fully developed soft skills. This places more emphasis than ever on universities to focus on integrating soft skill development into their programmes. These are some skills worth looking into:

- [The Future of Jobs Report 2020 - World Economic Forum](#)
  - Top 15 skills for 2025:
    1. Analytical thinking and innovation
    2. Active learning and learning strategies
    3. Complex problem-solving
    4. Critical thinking and analysis
    5. Creativity, originality and initiative
    6. Leadership and social influence
    7. Technology use, monitoring and control
    8. Technology design and programming
    9. Resilience, stress tolerance and flexibility
    10. Reasoning, problem-solving and ideation

11. Emotional Intelligence
  12. Troubleshooting and user experience
  13. Service orientation
  14. Systems analysis and evaluation
  15. Persuasion and negotiation
- Ningen Ryoku (human capability) by Kanazawa University
    - Technology is rapidly reshaping how we think about jobs. As technology replaces human labor, we must now consider what the unique role humans should have in society. To that end, the President of Kanazawa University suggested we think about a concept he calls Ningen Ryoku, meaning human capability.
    - He defines it as: “Comprehensive capability to create a better future as a member of society and to live strongly as an independent person”.
    - Some of the qualities he highlights include:
      - Leadership
      - Patience
      - Global Mind
      - Academic Skill
      - Public Spirit
      - Philosophy
      - Interpersonal Relationship Skills

## Graduate flexibility and adaptability in a rapidly transforming world

- Technological disruptions in the employment sector will only continue to increase going forward. This means that successful graduates must have adaptability and flexibility to thrive in the new post-pandemic, hybrid world. This means that university programmes should begin or continue to incorporate greater international exposure (through international student activities and/or mobility programmes) and interdisciplinarity in their learning programmes. The effort in focusing on lifelong learning, especially in upskilling and reskilling, should also be maintained. This may benefit from closer discussions with industry.
- The post-pandemic workspace will be more digital than ever. To prepare graduates to work online and what being successful in that medium entails, universities should expose students to more digital collaborations. This means incorporating digital communication technologies into their learning and working.

## **Lessons and Useful Information for the post-pandemic world**

Establish relationships with industry

- Closer relations with industry is once again a key priority for universities within the region. As new challenges emerge, closer ties between universities and the employment sector will help shape vital solutions for society. The following are recommendations that have arisen from various collaborations that the AUN and the ASEAN+3 UNet has done dating from as far back as 2014:
- From the AUN Task Force Meeting on the ASEAN Community's Post-2015 Vision (22 July 2014):
  - Formal platforms for university-industry collaboration should be established to promote greater interaction.
  - Tapping into the corporate social responsibility of organizations is a good way to establish relationships with industry.
- Using alumni networking is a good way to establish relationships with industry.
  - For example, AUN/SEED-Net has an extensive alumni network that they maintain to explore new engagements within the field of engineering as most of their alumni work with engineering organizations.
- Industry is a critical source for experiential learning opportunities. Industry can provide space for students to work on real existing challenges. Industry can also provide sponsorship and scholarship for student development.
  - For example, SMU-X works with corporate, nonprofit and government organizations as project sponsors to provide valuable real problem solving experiences for students.

## Using Big Data for universities regionally with university networks like the ASEAN+3 University Network

- Big Data continues to be an important topic this year. As universities within our network continue to develop their data management, here is what we learned from the 11th AUN Rectors' Meeting (2019) with the theme "How to Manage the University Data/Information in the Digital Age?" that can still be used today:
  - Universiti Malaya has their Integrated Student Information System (iSIS) which helps them identify (the presentation can be found [here](#)):
    - Student intake streams and strategies
    - Student performance, benchmarking, and intervention timings for students in need of help
    - Graduate employability through skill tracking and more
    - Attrition rate and strategies to prevent students dropping out
    - Strategies for cost-efficiency
  - The National University of Singapore outlined the development of their Educational Data Lake. Their presentation can be found [here](#).
    - Highlights include:
      - How NUS ensures data privacy and ethical use of their data
      - How NUS uses that data including research on:
        - Peer Influence on Academic Performance

- Impact of studying abroad on graduate employment outcomes
- And more

## Proactive engagement with partners

- The Head of Division for International Partnerships, Bureau of Partnerships of Institut Teknologi Bandung (ITB) presented a proactive model of engagement with partners that allowed ITB to fully take advantage of the opportunities that were in place that were not fully utilized previously.
  - Employing a holistic assessment method
    - Instead of looking at opportunities on a case-by-case basis, ITB began looking at all engagements across the board to utilize existing agreements or prior engagements that were not being put to use.
  - Switching from relaying information to active dialogue
    - Instead of simply being a passive transmitter of opportunities to the student body, ITB began being actively engaged with participating students and partner universities. This allowed for more opportunities as well as more relevant ones because of the active feedback and conversation between students and universities.

## Event Summary

### Executive Summary

#### Opening Remarks 1 - Dr. Hirofumi Makino, President of Okayama University

Dr. Hirofumi Makino thanked all who participated in the Conference on behalf of the Six University Consortium, mentioning their participation in 2015. The partnership between Japan and ASEAN was emphasized as being incredibly important in higher education as noted in the partnership agreement between the Consortium and the AUN in 2013. The issue of the pandemic and its concern on graduate employability and student exchanges were also mentioned, but there is hope that the current discussions will be able to address them.

#### Opening Remarks 2 - Tomoka Satomi, Deputy Director - General of Higher Education Bureau, Ministry of Education, Culture, Sports, Science and Technology (MEXT) - Japan

Tomoka Satomi mentioned acceleration of collaboration in the ASEAN+3 network and reaffirmed the environments for supporting student mobility for quality assurance, as well as the

implementation of student exchanges with Campus Asia to develop efforts for further mobility. She also discussed the introduction of distance and online education is being used everywhere with the intention to increase the hybrid format, hoping for this trend to continue. She stated that university personnel in this conference should see this conference as a way of activating higher education in the ASEAN region and promoting mobility.

## Introductory Remarks - Dr. Choltis Dhirathiti, Executive Director of the ASEAN University Network

Dr. Choltis Dhirathiti thanked all participants for responding to the survey sent earlier as part of the effort to perform rapid academic mobility exercises. He noted the opportunities and challenges of matching alliances, including the attractiveness of the city and supply and demand for talent in accordance with national plans.

He also mentioned the side-event that would happen in the afternoon as an opportunity to move forward through the knowledge sharing activities. He expresses his gratitude to all speakers for what they have to share, as well as Kanazawa University on behalf of SixERs for hosting the Rectors' Conference.

## Keynote Session: “Taking on the Challenge of Nurturing the Next Global Leaders - Kanazawa University” - Dr. Koetsu Yamazaki, President of Kanazawa University

Dr. Yamazaki posed the question of aligning the high potential of students becoming global leaders in the SDGs to ways it could be possible without interaction with peers and the society. This is pertinent to a world where information gathering has become easier and the need for certain capabilities are now changing. He brings the concept of Nin Gen Ryoku, a Japanese term combining “human” and “capability” and defined as a comprehensive capability to create a better future as a member of society and live strongly as an independent person. Strengthening this quality would require meeting different people and the role of university in facilitating it.

Dr. Yamazaki then discussed the role of Kanazawa University in facilitating diverse student interactions. The university encourages students to have interdisciplinary knowledge and look at who they want to be and the bridges to achieve them. The university also encourages connecting with diverse groups of people through various activities connecting with local communities and nature, as well as encouraging studying abroad to strengthen human capabilities. Kanazawa especially promotes connecting with the ASEAN+3, such as Mahidol University.

Dr. Yamazaki concludes by pondering on global leaders in the next 20 years, looking towards their cooperation and encouraging other institutions to collaborate with Kanazawa University.

## Knowledge Sharing Session: “Impact of the Pandemic and Roadmap for the ASEAN Future of Graduate Employability” - Prof. Dato’ Ir. Dr. Mohd Hamdi Abdul Shukor, Vice-Chancellor of Universiti Malaya

Professor Hamdi presented an overview of the pandemic in ASEAN. While transmissions in the ASEAN region are low, the economic situation has been poor due to various factors from overly informal economy to ineffective stimulus packages. He cites McKinsey and Company that the future of work will be forever disrupted due to Covid, including remote working, e-commerce, and increasing use of automation and AI. While he hopes for improvement in the employment market, there has been an overall decline in the new normal, with digital and tech jobs increasing and administrative jobs decreasing due to replacement by digitalization.

He moves on to focus on the future of jobs in Malaysia which reflects the new normal employment trend. He posits how universities could impart certain skills to their students to prepare for the changing labor market. This could include democratizing learning, double degrees, certifications, and stackable credentials. Such an initiative could give students an advantage in the coming years.

### ***Question and Answer Session***

Dr. Kono inquires on the negative aspects of economic growth like environmental issues. He encourages seriously thinking about new technology by focusing more on other aspects like legal, religious, and cultural angles. Professor Hamdi expresses his agreement with the sentiment and discusses how the University of Malaya is incorporating SDGs, interdisciplinarity, nuclear technology, learning about humanities, etc. He remarks the importance of maintaining the human angle without becoming pure technologists.

One question inquired about the University of Malaya’s initiative in working with AUN-DPPnet and inclusive policies for disabled people. Professor Hamdi shared how his university strived to make the campus more disability-friendly and build a center to promote inclusion. He encourages the staff to get on board to ensure care is required and that assistance rendered to people with disability should facilitate their research and study.

Br. Bernard from De La Salle University inquired about convincing faculty members on having a paradigm shift in their pedagogy and how to do it. Prof. Hamdi acknowledges the challenging aspect of doing so, especially those who have taught for years. He empathizes with the difficulty of faculty members in adapting to change but encourages more appraisal forms and evaluation to help them gain marks and systemize the process. In spite of difficulty, Prof. Hamdi pushes for the need to change when it is necessary.

## “Study in Japan Global Network Project in ASEAN” - commissioned by MEXT

Dr. Hirofumi Makino of Okayama University opened by mentioning the cooperation between the ASEAN region and Japan, with many from the former earning their degrees in the latter. He was followed by Yusuke Nii, the Study in Japan Coordinator. He shared about Okayama University and how they were appointed by MEXT to implement the project about Study in Japan with ASEAN countries with primary involvement of the Six University Consortium, aiming at increasing ASEAN student enrollment in Japanese HEIs.

To contribute to this, Okayama offers to organize customized webinars for certain universities, focusing on academic interests, career seminars, and student interexchange sessions. This aims at bridging the ASEAN and Japan research collaborations. Potential collaboration efforts were also mentioned like OUxUNAIR (Okayama University and Universitas Airlangga), the English Presentation Contest with RUPP (Royal University of Phnom Penh), and the Study in Japan Regional Office in ASEAN located in Mandalay and Bangkok, with aims to expand to Laos and Cambodia.

## Knowledge Sharing Session: "Managing Outbound Semester Exchange: Improvements and Challenges" - Dr. Andika Putra Pratama, Head of Division for International Partnerships from Bureau of Partnerships Institut Teknologi Bandung (ITB)

Dr. Andika Putra Pratama presented details about Institut Teknologi Bandung and their recent focus on outbound mobility to develop global competence and networking for students.

In this, ITB aims to improve their exchange programmes by shifting from reactive to a proactive approach. This included activating their MOUs, integrating list of networks, listing universities, finding regularity, resolving funding issues, promoting optimally and ensuring health. Certain challenges were still acknowledged like partnerships, awareness, growing number of students, integrating multiple systems into a manageable internal system. ITB hopes that the ASEAN+3 universities will be open to cooperate with ITB for student mobility.

### ***Question and Answer Session***

Dr. Kono mentioned how this may be easier for undergraduate students but not those doing postgraduate degrees, asking how matching could be done for research. Dr. Pratama mentioned that certain faculty members graduated from Japan and many students are interested in studying abroad. ITB is aiming to institutionalize this process.

Another question asked about whether ITB has engaged with online or hybrid student mobility yet, as well as inbound rather than outbound exchanges.. Dr. Pratama replied that ITB has initiated them as they are currently easier to do than in-person exchanges. ITB also has

international virtual courses each year for inbound students, as well as summer school initiatives funded by universities, feeling optimistic about welcoming students from abroad.

## Knowledge Sharing Session: "Co-Promoting Cutting-Edge Research and Co-Fostering the Next-Generation of Intellectuals: Collaboration among ASEAN+3 Universities" - Prof. Yasuyuki Kono, Vice-president for International Strategy of Kyoto University

Dr. Kono introduced Kyoto University, mentioning their strong research which include 11 Nobel Laureates and 2 Field Medalists. He acknowledges that Kyoto's global engagement had decreased significantly during the pandemic, but has continued to cooperate with the ASEAN region. This includes the Kyoto University ASEAN Center established in Bangkok in 2014 to support research and educational activities. Kyoto has also expanded cooperation with ASEAN universities, with partnerships extending as far back as the 1960s.

Dr. Kono then discussed the changes in graduate employability in Japan. Following the decline of economic and population growth in Japan, the employment rate of doctoral students has been consistently lower than undergraduates and postgraduates. Kyoto University has encouraged various educational policies and programs, fostering self-reliant learning for undergraduates while developing human capital in research and industry for Masters' students. Graduate School Education support and a Global Education Office is available, alongside scholarships for those enrolled in doctoral programs.

Kyoto University has continued to strengthen their collaboration with the AUN and the ASEAN region, expanding towards a multilateral approach to promote research and off-site to on-site cooperation. These collaborations include AUN-KU academic partnerships beginning since the MOU in 2009, resulting in the AUN-KU Student Mobility Program towards Human Security Development and establishment of Double Degree at Master's level in six universities in Southeast Asia. Research collaboration has become more complex and on-site laboratories in the ASEAN region were established, as well as joint fostering of Science, Tech, and Innovation.

### ***Question and Answer Session***

The representative from Chiang Mai University asked how Kyoto University's ASEAN Center and Southeast Asian Studies Center could promote employability for Japanese and ASEAN students in the pandemic, especially Thailand. Dr. Kono replied that the ASEAN Center exists in Bangkok, which provides Thai universities with an advantage and several exchange programs. Kyoto students have been coming to Chiang Mai University but Kyoto University open for inbound students as well.

Another question inquired on the difficulty of incentivizing research careers over regular employment. Dr. Kono acknowledges this is difficult, with Kyoto providing scholarships for doctoral students to promote research careers. The Ministry of Education has started many

programs but Dr. Kono also believes that the private sector must also be involved by employing doctoral students.

The President of Tokyo Institute of Technology briefly inquired on the number of students that received double-degrees every year for student mobility. Dr. Kono admits he has no number on hand, but usually 2-3 students from each university. He mentioned that for ASEAN universities, inbound students are fully booked, while there are fewer outbound students in ASEAN countries.

Finally, Chulalongkorn University proposed a collaboration with Kyoto University for the CU Innovation Hub, especially for Science, Tech and Innovation. Dr. Kono acknowledges this proposal.

### ‘Mapping UK-East Asia Research and Innovation Partnerships: Initial findings’ by Coventry University - Professor Ka Ho Mok, Vice President of Lingnan University Hong Kong

Professor Ka Ho Mok introduced the ‘Mapping UK-East Asia Research and Innovation Partnerships: Initial findings’ on behalf of Coventry University. The presentation was part of the **UK-Southeast Partnerships and Exchanges Baseline Research (PEER)** led by Coventry University, with the involvement of Lingnan University (Hong Kong), Nanyang Technological University (Singapore), Fukuyama City University (Japan), Chulalongkorn University (Thailand), SEAMEO VOTTECH (Brunei), ASEAN University Network (Thailand), and the Asia-Europe Foundation (Singapore). The project had investigated factors that foster or weaken partnerships in Higher Education, Vocational Education and Training, and Research and Innovation between the UK and the ten ASEAN members and the five Asian countries and territories (Japan, South Korea, and China, including Hong Kong SAR and Taiwan).

PEER investigates the scope, priorities, sustainability, and inclusivity of exchange projects, transnational education programmes, and research and innovation collaborations at governmental and institutional levels within the last decade. The project critically examines the multidimensional concept of internationalisation and develops a deeper understanding of its changing meanings in different contexts. The project aims to provide synthesised analyses and reliable data to benefit policy makers, funders, university leaders and researchers whilst developing future partnerships, contributing to sustainable and inclusive engagements between the UK and Asian countries in a post-Covid and post-Brexit era.

Professor Ka Ho Mok presented some initial findings. There were 264,000 UK+ East Asia co-authored research publications on Scopus between 2010 and 2020. Research productivity is further enhanced when researchers working trilaterally across institutions in three countries, typically the UK, Malaysia, Thailand, Japan and China. PEER findings also show the UK+ East Asia research collaborations focus on hard sciences disciplines like Medicine, Physics and Astronomy, Engineering rather than in humanities and social sciences. The top three SDGs that UK + East Asia research partnerships contribute to are SDG3- Good Health and Well-being;

SDG 9- Industry, Innovation and Infrastructure; SDG 11- Sustainable Cities and Communities. Meanwhile, SDG 13- Climate Action and SDG 16- Peace, Justice, and Strong Institutions had the fewest interactions. Some useful implications being drawn from the study are to enhance inclusivity by involving more ODA countries and more female researchers in bilateral and multilateral partnerships between the UK and East Asia.

## Closing Remarks - Dr. Tatsuo USHIKI, President of Niigata University

Dr. Tatsuo Ushiki thanked all participants for making the conference truly informative. He emphasized that the main purpose of the Conference is to enhance the possibilities of university education, with aims at expanding our knowledge of the opportunities and employment of good practices of bilateral and multilateral cooperation in ASEAN+3 region, especially in a pandemic setting. While many aspects and challenges were caused by the pandemic, it should not be forgotten that there are always lessons of the past and we should work together to improve student employability.

Additionally, the potential of cooperation is not only with ASEAN+3 countries but also with Europeans as clarified by Dr. Ka Ho Mok and the UK-EA partnerships. All the presentations demonstrated that our region is fully committed to living up to the expectations of multiple stakeholders, not only of students but also governmental organizations, regional leaders, and local communities for clear research, employability, and quality education. He laments the inability for the participants to meet each other in person, but nonetheless firmly believe in true cooperation.

## MEXT/UNESCO Side-Event: The Ideas of ‘University’ (Future of Higher Education in the post pandemic) and Sustainable Development Goals - Sharing efforts by multi-stakeholders in Asia-Pacific

### Introductory Remarks - Shigeru Aoyagi, Director, UNESCO Asia-Pacific Regional Bureau for Education, Thailand

Mr. Shigeru Aoyagi opened the event by discussing the impact of COVID-19 on building a sustainable future, especially on the education systems of the world. In this, he mentions the Tokyo Convention and how it will help countries minimize further disruption to all students and graduates through fair and transparent recognition of online and the planned learning. While most countries in East Asia have ratified the Convention, an ASEAN member state is yet to have joined the committee. In this, he calls for action to cooperate and to facilitate education recognition in the Asia-Pacific and beyond, achieving the SDGs.

## Introductory Remarks - Choltis Dhirathiti, Ph.D. Executive Director, ASEAN University Network Secretariat

Dr. Choltis Dhirathiti mentioned the importance of revisiting the idea of “university”, especially in this current situation. He notes adaptability as one of the most important characteristics of each institution. He notes the evolution of universities through history, from the medieval era until the current model of universities, and that institutions today should evolve likewise.

## Presentation: Libing Wang, Ph.D. Chief, Section for Educational Innovation and Skill Development (EISD), UNESCO Asia-Pacific Regional Bureau for Education, Thailand

Libing Wang opens discussing the SDGs, emphasizing education as being the heart of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, given its impact on various factors like health, employment and gender equality, as well as its value in making informed choices and creating a sustainable future.

Four domains of holistic approaches were introduced, including Sustainable Environment, Sustainable Economy, Sustainable Society based on justice democracy, and Sustainable Culture, all of which should be balanced in pursuit of a better quality of life. Education for Sustainable Development should be integrated into the global network.

Universities will have multiple roles in achieving sustainable development. First, they must serve as role models for students through their initiatives. Second, they must prepare future citizens with the competencies, values, and attitudes for sustainable development and to achieve the SDGs. Third, they must serve as think tanks to drive social innovation, research for policy making, and maintain a diversity of thought to provide sustainable solutions for social innovation. Fourth, they must provide technical support like having research innovations turned into patent registrations and be supported by financial mechanisms. Finally, they must play a role in raising awareness and capacity building by promoting community engagement activities.

Currently, Dr. Libing Wang believes that there are three main points in which higher education must restructure to fulfill their future roles. First, they must restructure their teaching by realigning their learning programmes not only with national priorities, but also with the SDGs given that they already provide a framework for reflection. SDG relevance can be an indicator to measure the relevance of the study programmes, thus it is essential to raise awareness of it to the teaching staff. Second, research itself must be restructured in favor of Sustainable Development. The four dimensions could serve as a comprehensive framework to prioritize research, with think tanks catalyzing social innovations and labs creating sustainable solutions. Finally, institutions must restructure their community engagement to promote sustainable development by including them into their mainstream study programmes. By moving towards more community-based learning, workplace-based learning, and experiential learning, the community can become a source of quality assurance for a study programme.

### ***Question and Answer Session***

One question inquired if these activities are new and what new activities should help institutions stay on track of the SDGs. Dr. Libing Wang responded that community engagement is not new as it is one of the traditional functions of university. The pandemic has made community engagement more important for universities to work with, and they both nurture each other in the promotion of the SDGs. He hopes that there will be new commitments from universities to this engagement.

### **Presentation: Takashi Wada, M.D.,Ph.D., Vice president for Research and Social Co-creation, Kanazawa University, Japan**

Professor Takashi Wada began by introducing Kanazawa University itself, with many institutes related to medical sciences and sustainability. Additionally, it is also a city with history and culture, making it a center for tourism and science. However, with higher education being affected by the pandemic, various education activities are now restricted to online only.

Kanazawa University has been using various ways of coping with the disaster. The Learning Management System (LMS) has been a decade-long mechanism for developing hybrid classes, allowing for more creativity and interaction. As such, the institution has been well-adjusted to online and face-to-face communication for both domestic and international exchange, with the next challenge being ways to combine and expand them to develop more activities outside of the classroom.

Kanazawa University has worked to engage with their local community, which is also part of Japan's national policy of regional revitalization. This includes collaborating with local companies and human resources, as well as engagement with international organizations like UNESCO. These involved activities related to the UNESCO Biosphere programmes, and Japan-ASEAN Training Courses towards SDGs. Additionally, Kanazawa University are also involved with the Southeast Asian region, including the Noto Satoyama Satoumi Meister Training Programme since 2007 and the the Meister Trainer Program in Ifugao, Philippines, partly helped by their relationships with the University of the Philippines Open University and Ifugao State University.

Professor Takashi Wada encourages universities to work with local communities so that they may co-create a future with them, especially for the SDGs. These activities are not only limited to environmental protection but also health and welfare for locals, as well as promoting equality. Building a relationship with local communities is important and should be replicated in other countries.

### ***Question and Answer Session***

One question asks what sort of approach is needed to allow for sustainable regional cooperation. Professor Takashi Wada answered that for Kanazawa, the university and local government have a common goal to improve the lives of citizens and solve national problems

like declining birth rate and regional economy. To do so would require regional cooperation to improve partnership not only between the universities and government but also the public and private sectors and the community citizens.

## Presentation: Br. Bernard S. Oca FSC, President of De La Salle University, Philippines

Br. Bernard S. Oca discussed the challenges that pandemic recovery can have on the SDGs, as well as interrogating the economic angle of development and put focus on stewardship over the environment and long-term consequences, as well as social engagement.

At De La Salle University, Br. Bernard introduced the Lasallian Reflection Frameworks that was adopted in 2011 and predates the UN SDGs. This includes “See-Experience”, “Analysis-Reflection”, and “Commitment-Action”, depicted as a cycle. Aside from developing the students’ mindset, it also ensures that regardless of their field of study, every student will be provided with opportunities to directly encounter social problems, and use their training to address them.

De La Salle University has started various initiatives to achieve the SDGs at a local level. Two centers were set up, including the LSEED Center (Lasallian Social Enterprise for Economic Development) to develop local enterprises and the Lasallian Center for Inclusion, Diversity, and Wellbeing, launched in support of the National Mental Health Act of the Philippines and in line with the Lasallian core values. The SDG City Lab also serves as a medium to long-term SDG localization project in the Philippines. Co-creation of tool technology and programmes are also important to ensure the relationship with communities is that of a partnership rather than a traditional benefactor.

The overall goal for DLSU is to prioritize four SDGs in particular, including SDG 1 (No Poverty), SDG 2 (Zero Hunger), SDG 8 (Decent Work and Economic Growth), SDG 11 (Sustainable Cities and Communities). The state strategy is to deploy resources in research to help local governments and communities carry out specific tasks. Examples of such projects include the Sea Scouts Auxiliary program and the DLSU Institute of Biomedical Engineering & Health Technologies (IBEHT). Within the university town, DLSU is also collaborating with various stakeholders to create a tech startup business district to converge talent, ideas, and capital.

DLSU is also involved in various challenge-based programs. This involves 3-4 year degree programmes, but these courses involve dealing with large and unresolved social problems or challenges. Interdisciplinary expertise is required and while this type of learning does not guarantee a solution, students are still trained the necessary skill for solving that issue. By the end of the programme, students will have acquired the skills and human capital to navigate this environment and interact with development partners. Institutionally, it would serve as an incubator for SDG solutions technologies, and systems that might be first deployed within a campus, before gradually scaling up as far as national implementation.

### ***Question and Answer Session***

Br. Bernard was asked how his initiative was measured, where he replied that the UN-SDGs served as a matrix, as well as having the AUN-QA as an external body for evaluation.

Closing remarks - Tomoka Satomi, Deputy Director, General, Higher Education Bureau, Ministry of Education, Culture, Sports, Science, and Technology (MEXT), Japan

Ms. Tomoka Satomi remarked on behalf of the organizers to reaffirm the event's objective of sharing diverse experiences. She thanks UNESCO, AUN, Kanazawa University and other parties for organizing the meeting.

Given the hardships brought by the COVID-19 pandemic, it is vital for stakeholders from governments and universities to the private sector and NGOs to share ideas for achieving the SDGs. MEXT is actively contributing to the government-wide initiatives for science, technology and innovation, alongside the universities in Japan that are carrying out those initiatives.

She reaffirms that universities centralising SDGs in the effort to promote university reforms and strengthening research capability will become a major driving force of the SDGs themselves, especially those with the scientific knowledge. Universities will also be able to produce highly capable human resources who will become leaders for achieving the SDGs.

Additionally, the Tokyo Convention aims at ensuring the quality of higher education through the mutual recognition of qualifications in higher education among the member countries. AUN aims at the sharing of knowledge among universities for promoting the high quality human resource within the region.