

# Free Flow of Skilled Labour in the ASEAN Economic Community: Opportunities and Challenges for Cambodia

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**Abstract:-** The opportunities and challenges for Cambodia from the free flow of skilled labour in the ASEAN Economic Community (AEC) has been a topic of heated discussion amongst the general public, learners, researchers, skilled workers, people in charge of skilled labor, as Cambodia prepared to enter the ASEAN Economic Community at the end of 2015.

A descriptive statistical analysis in the Statistical Package for the Social Science, version 23.0 shows that there is optimism on the participation of Cambodia in the AEC. Firstly, 81 per cent of respondents supported that free flow of skilled labour as an opportunity for Cambodians to participate in the job market in ASEAN. Secondly, 77 per cent of participants accepted that “Free flow of skilled labour in ASEAN offers opportunities for Cambodians to get well-paid jobs in the region of ASEAN.” Thirdly, 84 per cent of respondents agreed that “free flow of skilled labour in the ASEAN helps inspire local education”. However, there were challenges for Cambodia, indicated by 75 per cent of respondents thinking that the country lacks skilled labour to challenge other ASEAN professionals. 70 per cent of respondents considered the inflow of foreign skilled labour as a threat to local jobs seekers, while 81 per cent of respondents agreed with the statement “the imbalanced agreement implementation on skilled labour in ASEAN is Another barrier in ASEAN’s jobs finding for Cambodian skilled workers.”

Toward the solutions to reduce the challenges and to better the opportunities for Cambodians, suggestions have been observed; firstly, 72 participants recommended that education reform, further vocations and trainings for Cambodians should be better improved. Secondly, 23 participants advised that creating more local jobs should be further done and thirdly, 21 participants commented that Cambodian skilled workers should improve their knowledge of the English language, as it is very important in Cambodia, the ASEAN and the world in pursuing their present and future’s studies and works.

**Keywords:-** Free Flow of Skilled-Labour, Opportunities and Challenges.

## I. INTRODUCTION

The Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN) was established on August 8, 1967. In 1999, the Association reached the size of 10 Member States: Brunei Darussalam, Cambodia, Indonesia, Laos, Malaysia, Myanmar, Philippines, Singapore, Thailand and Vietnam and the AEC is being modeled in 2016 as a symbol of its population of six hundred and twenty-five million, and will become the seventh largest economy in the world. One of the key principles of the ASEAN Economic Community is the free flow of skilled professionals (Johnson, 2015) that all ten members of ASEAN had signed on. The free flow of skilled labour focused on eight selected fields, namely engineering, architecture, accounting, nursing, medical practitioners, dentists, tourism practitioners, and land surveyors. Those professionals could seek jobs within the region of ASEAN. As a member of ASEAN, Cambodian professionals of the above eight are able to find works in any countries in this ASEAN region.

There has recently been a lot of discussion in relation to the opportunities and challenges for Cambodia from the free mobility of skilled labour in the ASEAN. There are different views amongst scholars, researchers and the general Cambodians. This has led to questioning by the Cambodian as “What are the opportunities, challenges and solutions for Cambodian professionals in the free movements of skilled labour in the ASEAN Economic Community?”

Cambodia will probably benefit from the free movement of skilled people in ASEAN (Rithi, 2015). Cambodia would gain wonderful opportunities to benefit from skills movement as there would be better access to the ASEAN labour markets (Euro-Cham Cambodia, 2016). However, there are ideas claiming about the challenges for Cambodia, that “Cambodia is lacking highly educated people, many professionals and the well-trained skilled labourers are observed disqualified.” (Dai, 2015). Having a similar opinion, Chantol (2015) has written that “There are a number of difficulties that Cambodia has been facing; one of them is the shortages of skilled workforces.”

➤ *Research Objectives*

The main objectives of the study are as follow:

- To explore the opportunities for Cambodia from implementing agreement on the free flow of skilled labours in the ASEAN
- To find out the challenges for Cambodia in the free flow of skilled labour in the ASEAN
- To examine the solutions to narrow down the challenges and to better the opportunities for Cambodian skilled workers

➤ *Research Questions*

The study intends to provide answers to the following questions:

- What are the opportunities for Cambodia from the agreement implementation on the free flow of skilled labour in the ASEAN?
- What are the challenges for Cambodia in the free flow of skilled labour in the ASEAN?
- What should be done to narrow down the challenges and to better the opportunities for Cambodian skilled workers?

• *Research Variables for the Opportunities for Cambodia*

| Dependent Variable  | Independent Variable   |
|---|--|
| Free flow of skilled Labor in the AEC, opportunities for Cambodia | 1. Larger job markets in ASEAN<br>2. Well-paid jobs in ASEAN<br>3. Local educational inspiration |

Table 1

• *Research Variables for the Challenges for Cambodia*

| Dependent Variable   | Independent Variable   |
|--|--|
| Free Flow of Skilled Labor in the AEC, challenges for Cambodia | 3. Shortages of skilled workers to challenge ASEAN’s professional<br>2. Inflow of foreign skilled labor, a threat to Local job seekers<br>3. Local first, ASEAN second, the barrier in ASEAN’s job seekers |

Table 2

• *Research Variables for solutions for Cambodia skilled labors*

| Dependent Variable  | Independent Variable  |
|---|---|
| Solutions to narrow down the challenges and to better the opportunities for Cambodian skilled workers | 1. Skills and Educational development<br>2. More local job creations<br>3. English language ability improvement |

Table 3

➤ *Significance of the Study*

This study is expected to be the significant source for

- Readers who are interested in information about free flow of skilled labour and people whose their works are much related to migrations and skilled professionals

➤ *Research Assumption*

The present study expects that large majority of research participants will strongly support the existing literature review on the free flow of skilled labour in the ASEAN, as it has been assumed that Cambodian skilled workers will have chance to get job market in the ASEAN, Cambodian professionals will have opportunities to get well-paid works, and free flow of skilled labour in ASEAN is one of the factors that help inspire local education. However, Cambodia is also expected facing challenges such as the shortages of skilled-workers, the inflows of foreign professionals is a threat to local jobs seekers, and the bias agreement on skilled labour in the region is another barrier on Cambodian professionals in AEAN’s job finding.

➤ *Conceptual Framework*

This section discusses about the research’s main variables for the opportunities, challenges and solutions for Cambodia in the free flow of skilled labor in the ASEAN Economic Community Integration.

- Skilled workers and the new graduates, especially for university students who will be mainly majoring in such as accounting, dentistry, nursing, medical doctor, architecture, engineering, land surveying and tourism services related.

- Next researchers who are willing to study the similar or the extended topic about skilled labour.
- The government, as he is playing the important role to solve problems and better the job opportunities for Cambodian skilled workers.
- Cambodia's relation with the ASEAN on skilled labour and the equal treatment on all skilled professionals in the 10 countries.

#### ➤ *Scope and Limitation of the Study*

This research focuses mainly on the opportunities, challenges and the solutions to solve problems and to better the opportunities for Cambodia in the flow of skilled labour as the country integrates into the ASEAN Economic Community (AEC) from the beginning of 2016. To support this research, 327 written references have been used and 396 students at five universities in Phnom Penh have participated. However, there are limitations to research sources. Firstly, it is the obstacle of lacking hard documents such as books, magazines due to the fact that most information related to this study is very new. Secondly, this study is about the selection of skilled professionals as it mainly mentions the skilled labour in the region of ASEAN, but not significantly about such as unskilled or illegal migration.

## II. LITERATURE REVIEW

#### ➤ *Skills Mobility, Opportunities for Cambodia*

##### • *Cambodians to Have Job Markets in ASEAN*

Cambodia is expected to gain the opportunity to get works in the region of ASEAN through the AEC as Chan Sophal, director of the Center for Policy Studies in Cambodia said "A fully integrated ASEAN will provide an opportunity to attract investment that will create jobs for skilled and unskilled workers in Cambodia," (Phnom Penh Post, 2015).

Cambodian professionals and skilled workers can find better employment opportunities, and in addition, the workforce in expanding the service industry and companies will benefit from increased employment (Rithi, 2015) and this will cause the working chances for Cambodian professionals in the larger job markets in countries where skills shortages. The more advanced countries in ASEAN such as Thailand, which is the neighboring country to Cambodia is facing problems of lacking young human resources and this requires Thailand hires more young educated workers to fulfill their producing forces; the young and knowledgeable people are their wanted employees (Bernard, 2015). According to Ruhs (2016), Brunei Darussalam, Malaysia, Singapore and Thailand are the main host countries for workers in the ASEAN that this can be the opportunity for Cambodians to get works in those countries.

##### • *The Chances to Get Well-Paid Jobs in ASEAN*

The income gap amongst work destination countries and the skilled workers sending countries remained exist

(Gois, 2015); the large income and salary differential among international locations is considered one of the elements behind the rise of intra-ASEAN migration (World Bank, 2014). There is still a big gap in the vicinity on common earning as low in Cambodia and as high in Singapore (ILO, 2014); the wages in Thailand are 3 times better than in Cambodia, while the wages in Malaysia are approximately 3 and a half times higher than in Indonesia (Tuccio, 2017). Because of the high payment, skilled workers from the whole region of ASEAN flow to hunt jobs in Singapore, Malaysia, Thailand and Brunei Darussalam (Martin & abella, 2013; Ruhs, 2016). According to Weili (2013-2016), the economists studied and predicted in advance that jobs seekers from less economic developing countries to the more developed nations for the main purposes of higher salary; similarly, Phnom Penh Post (2015) also revealed Kevin Britten, managing director of Top Recruitment, a local human resources firm, claimed that "labourers who are from the rural areas normally improve their knowledge for getting better wages,". Via Paryono (2011); Cambodia's highly skilled domestic workers are still able to migrate outside of the country as opportunities for higher wages are available (CVEA, 2017). To get higher salary for the future job, an accounting student at CamEd Business School said that after graduating, she would think of looking for job at oversea (Chandara, 2015).

##### • *Free Flow of Skilled Labour Inspires Local Education*

ASEAN's highly skilled mobility may be positively associated with increased investment in education in the home country (Asian Development Bank Institute, 2014) and the rising amount of labour mobility in the region has inspired education, especially in technical and vocational education and training (Paryono, 2011); further, skills mobility has been seen enhancing the skilled professionals, expanding mobility that includes workers of all skill levels, improving skills in order to transfer back to education and skills development as students and workers want more skills and then this could improve the overall skill level of the workforce, and there are encouraging signs that it has started because some low-income ASEAN members have shown efforts to improve the curriculum for education, training and strengthening processes (ASEAN Economic Monitor, 2013; Hudtohan, 2014). Further, Wei (2016) has written that "Mobility of workers in eight skilled professions can lead to significantly empower skilled professionals and more people to return to education and upgrade their skills; students and workers may wish to acquire more skills; this can lead to increases in the general skill level of the workforce and result in a better outcome,". The exchange programs for educational sectors, universities' students and staffs among countries in ASEAN in the frame of MRA will probably help develop Cambodia's education for improving the quality of Cambodian learners and skilled workers. ASEAN programs, such as the ASEAN Integration Initiative (IIC), are promoting skills acquisition in Cambodia (Drennan, 2012).

➤ *Skills Challenges for Cambodia*

• *Skills Shortages to Challenge the ASEAN's*

A Philippine national who has worked in a number of different tourism markets claims that Cambodia lacks the skills that define the industry's professionalism (Runcie, 2016). Even though notable growths in secondary and tertiary education enrollment, the country still faces challenges in meeting the labor market's skills requirements (ArdichviliFollow & RanaFollow, 2014). According to Todd (2015), business's owners remain worrying about the small skilled labour pools in Cambodia. "Cambodia lacks skills in face of the ASEAN Integration," Yasuyuki Inoue, Vice President of Minebea Company Limited in Cambodia claimed that companies are coming to Cambodia; however, they struggle to look for skillful workers; Cambodia's biggest barrier to the country development is a shortage of skilled professionals (Styllis, 2014). The World Bank's report came the same day as a new quarterly Cambodian business confidence survey by Australian and New Zealand (ANZ) Royal Bank showed that large businesses might have difficulty finding skilled professionals in the future (Wilwohl, 2014). The survey asked a total of forty (40) CEOs and financial officers from the country's service, Grant Knuckey, CEO of ANZ Royal Bank, said it is as concern on the shortages of skilled workers required to fulfill future works, and Kevin Britten, managing director of New Recruitment, a local HR firm, agrees (Wilwohl, 2014). "There always has been a shortage of workforces, we have seen that happening for years," said Sandra Amico, managing director of human resource broker incorporated (HRINC) (Phnom Penh Post, 2015); Cambodia has limited skilled professionals and his economies broadly faces technical education shortages (Gnanasagaran, 2018). "Success in ASEAN means having enough skilled labourers, along with knowledge in hard skills, like engineering, accounting, medicine, land surveying, and fluency in English," "That is what we lack," said Chheang Vannarith (Khemara, 2015; Vannarith, 2017). Hor Namhong, Foreign Minister of Cambodia said the problem that Cambodia faces is human resources, and the lack of skilled labour (Philstar, 2014).

• *Inflows of Foreign Professionals, a Threat to Local Jobs Seekers*

Migration is being combatted in a number of countries; the flowing in of labour continues while migrant workers go on their movement, and the receiving countries workers are unable to afford themselves to get the jobs (Rubrico, 2015). It is unlikely that Cambodian professionals would be able to challenge with those skilled workers in the region as Cambodia has one of the lowest literacy rates in the world (73.9 per cent in 2012) (Puthika, 2014). Cambodia has opened its doors to official legal migrant employees and has signed Memorandums of Understanding (MOUs) with Kingdom of Thailand, Malaysia (UNWomen, 2013).

Cambodia, with low- and medium-skilled workers, could see an influx of well-educated workers, while the ASEAN Economic Community will not push for more jobs in the region. D'Amico, managing director of human resource broker said "It will certainly increase competition for jobs, and Cambodians may not benefit from these opportunities," (Chandara, 2015; Phnom Penh Post, 2015). Executive assistant manager of the Intercontinental Hotel in Phnom Penh also claimed that it has had to significant foreign talents to fill its top positions (Runcie, 2016). It is observed that the majority of young Cambodian graduates do not have enough skills to enter the national job markets (HRINC 2010; UNDP 2011; World Bank 2012; Vicheth, 2013); the free flow of skillful labour can open the door for higher qualified professionals from different countries within the region to require up jobs in Cambodia (Vicheth, 2013). "Cambodia is one of the countries in the ASEAN that employs the foreign workforce. Maybe twenty (20) years ago when we had peace, we lacked human resources so we allowed foreign professionals to come and work in Cambodia," said Dr. Hang Chuon Naron, Minister of Education Youth and Sport of Cambodia (ACE magazine, 2014).

• *Imbalanced Agreement of ASEAN Skilled Labour*

ASEAN Member States (AMS) are still hesitating to permit the free flow of skilled professional in commitment, many local different regulations and practices that lead to some difficulties in skills free mobility, such as the condition that jobs are firstly reserved for their own citizens; the inequalities of recognition of foreign skilled education, training and experience; and Language proficiency needs (Chia, 2013; Capannelli, 2014; Siphana, 2015); migrants sending countries prepared to be further proactive, while labour receiving states tend to be further cautious concerning professionals mobility (World Bank, 2017). The recognition of MRA is still a complicated and lengthy time-consuming among ASEAN countries and implementation of it faces problems (Chia, 2013; Siphana, 2015; SMU, 2016). The free flow of skilled labours in the ASEAN was not in powerful action, and ASEAN does not have certain strategies to sustain this flow of professionals yet (Vannarith, 2017); expressing similar statement, Rastam Mohd Isa, president and CEO of the Malaysian Institute for Strategic and International Studies, said "Mutual recognition agreements that have been signed by countries to facilitate cross-border movement of professionals have been weakly implemented," (SMU, 2015) and the preparations for skilled workers mobility in the region will need to continue for another ten years before the AEC can be completely realized," Jayant Menon, lead economist at the Asian Development Bank said in an interview (Parikh, 2015). As actions and implementation on free flow of skilled labour in the region of ASEAN are in the lengthy and complicated processes, this unsmooth implementation of ASEAN's MRA will probably affect skills mobility of Cambodia to the region for there are still burdens on migrants who plan to find jobs in the ASEAN.



### III. RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

This chapter describes the research's methodology that is employed in the study. Research design and instruments, data analysis method, data collection procedure, selection of research participants and sample size calculation, research sampling techniques and research pilot will be discussed.

#### ➤ *Research Design and Instruments*

This study employs mixed methods. For the quantitative, it is used to get universities students' perceptions on the opportunities and challenges for Cambodia from the free flow of skilled labour in the ASEAN economic community. The quantitative is found best matched with this study for it measures various views and opinions of a large number of the chosen research's participants, and researcher relies on questionnaires that contain a six-page multiple choice-free response questions and are divided into four main parts, including part1, focuses on participants' demographic data, part 2 covers participants' understanding about Cambodia-ASEAN relations, part 3 covers participants' perception on the opportunities and challenges for Cambodia from the free flow of skilled mobility in the ASEAN, and part 4 refers to the free perception of respondents that is related to skilled labour. For qualitative method, it is conducted with literature review as it involves collecting and analyzing texts, published articles and various types of written documents in order to get meanings, concepts, opinions, definitions and descriptions related to research topic (Lawrence & Howard, 2012; Earl, 2014; Bhandari, 2020; Wikipedia, 2020). Bhat (2019) also confirmed that one of the qualitative research methods is the approach that makes use of the reliable documents and similar sources of information as researcher normally goes to libraries to get documents and other reference materials.

#### ➤ *Data Analysis Methods*

As this study employed mixed methods, researcher uses two significant ways to analyze both data information. First, for qualitative data analysis and interpretation, researcher uses his ways to handle and analyze the data that he has searched for relevant information to his research topic then interprets and analyzes the data by quoting, paraphrasing the articles, translating the documents and putting the sources in categories in order to support literature reviews. Conclusions of this qualitative is resulted from that collected texts analysis. Second, for quantitative approach, the study is conducted with a set of questionnaires that are delivered directly to 396 students who are pursuing their studies from associate degree to doctoral degree at five different universities in Phnom Penh as the live-evidences. The survey asked universities students the potential benefits, concerns and recommendations on the free flow of skilled labour migration of Cambodia into the ASEAN and the data collected are analyzed by frequency descriptive analysis in the Statistical Package for the Social Science (SPSS),

version 23.0 (Bryman & Cramer, 1987; Fielding & Gilbert, 2000).

#### ➤ *Data Collection Procedures*

The researcher has worked continuously to collect both secondary and primary data at varied searching centers. Firstly and significantly, he searches at various libraries, mainly, the National Library, the University of Cambodia's library, the Royal University of Phnom Penh's library and the American Embassy's for secondary data that are mostly quoted, paraphrased and extracted from working papers, academic written documents, online articles related to skilled workers in Cambodia, the ASEAN and the EU, and also from documents written by officers who work at the Council for the Development of Cambodia (CDC), Cambodia Development Resource Institute (CDRI), the Asian Development Bank (ADB), the World Bank, the International Labour Organization (ILO), the ASEAN Secretariats. Secondly and necessarily, researcher works to collect primary data that is playing the significant role in conducting this research. Within this activity, he targeted universities students as they are calculated (via Taro Yamane sample size calculation) 396 participants at five universities in Phnom Penh, Cambodia.

#### ➤ *Research Sample Universities*

The University of Cambodia (UC), Royal University of Law and Economics (RULE), Asia Euro University (AEU), National Technical Training Institute (NTTI) and University of Health Science (UHS) are targeted for this research because they are offering courses and majors matched with all eight professionals that are mentioned under the ASEAN's skilled labour agreement that this research focuses. Moreover, these universities have large population that is convenient to choose the sample size, which best represents universities in Phnom Penh; further, these universities are available for this research and they are also interested in this research topic while some universities told researcher that they are busy with the school's final examination at the time being.

#### ➤ *Selection of Research Participants*

The scope and limitation of this study is on the sample size of 396 participants at five Cambodian universities in Phnom Penh where it is the core educational institutions of Cambodia. Participants in this study were entirely voluntary and anonymous and all of them were well informed in advance about the purposes of the study before they decided to participate in the survey. Students at universities are aimed for this study for several reasons; first, mostly, after graduating, universities' students become skilled workers and they are intellectuals who are considered as the potential participants and much related with future skilled labour. Second, the study is also focusing on young potential skilled workers, while others like the present's skilled workers are a mixture of ages; further, students are also found as the main migrants in the region as it is written that "ASEAN's growing student population is a potential source of highly skilled labor that could increase future competition," (Testaverde, Moroz,

Hollweg, & Schmillen, 2018), and students are important high-skilled migration and their increasing numbers are key drivers of highly skilled migration (Asian Development Bank Institute, 2014).

#### ➤ *Sample Size Calculation*

When searching for a popular formula to determine the research sample size, the great statistician, Taro Yamane's formula would be the best choice (Rafael, 2014 & Yamane, 2016); therefore, Taro Yamane sample size calculation method is employed for determining the sample size of this study.

$$n = \frac{N}{1 + N \times e^2}$$
 (n: sample size, N: population size, and e is acceptable error (e: 0.05)  
 $e^2: 0.0025$  (Yamane, 2016)

Total numbers of students studying at 5 universities in academic year 2019 is 42103

Sample size calculation for the study is 396 participants

To get Sample Size, the researcher divided total population by 1 plus a total population and time with the square of acceptable error.

$$n = \frac{N=42103}{1 + 42103 \times (e: 0.05)^2}$$

$$n = \frac{42103}{1 + 105.2575} = \frac{42103}{106.2575} = 396.23 = 396$$

#### ➤ *Research Sampling Techniques*

##### • *Simple Random Sampling Technique*

For this study, Simple random sampling technique is used; simple random sampling is the most widely-used. Since it is generally impossible to study the entire population of the five university students, it is important that the sample selected groups be representative of the population and not systematically biased. Simple random sampling is the basic technique by which a researcher selects a sample for a large (population) study. Each individual was selected at random and each member of the population had an equal opportunity to be included in the sample (Stat Trek, 2017). In this study, 396 students at 5 universities in Phnom Penh have been chosen randomly without bias as the participants.

##### • *Disproportionate Sampling Technique*

Disproportionate Sampling Technique is also employed in this study. Disproportionate sampling is a sampling technique that the sampling fraction of each group varies, unequal sizes (Explorable). The numbers of students at each university were selected unequally but the selected numbers of students are depending on the availability of students and learning classes' sizes. The University of Cambodia (UC) = 86, Royal University of Law and Economics (RULE) = 85, Asia Euro University (AEU) = 88, National Technical Training Institute (NTTI) = 62 and University of Health Science (UHS) = 75.

#### ➤ *Statistical analysis*

The research questionnaires contain a six-page multiple choice-free response questions and are divided into four main parts, including part1 focuses on participants' demographic data, part 2 mentioned the participants' understanding on Cambodia-ASEAN relations, part 3 describe about participants' perception on the opportunities and challenges for Cambodia from the free flow of skilled mobility in the ASEAN and part 4 discusses about the perception of respondents over Cambodia's skilled labour. To improve the study's reliability, research questionnaires have been checked by advisors, experienced researchers and professors and after receiving feedback, questionnaires have been piloted on a group of students at the University of Cambodia to check whether they could be easily understood to avoid possible misinterpretations. After they have been re-edited and finalized, 396 questionnaires were given to university students who were pursuing undergraduate and graduate studies at five universities in Phnom Penh. 395 questionnaires have been returned, a good 99.75% response rate. To analyze the data, descriptive statistics software in SPSS version 23.0 was used to operate calculations. A Cronbach's alpha has been tested and it was 0.856, while the overall mean value was 3.90 and standard deviation equaled to 0.80.

## IV. RESEARCH FINDINGS

This chapter will show the findings replied by respondents via interpretation of the data analysis

#### ➤ *Opportunities for Cambodia*

According to research's survey conducted with 396 universities students, 25 per cent and 56 per cent strongly agreed and agreed, respectively that free flow of skilled labour in the ASEAN is the opportunity for Cambodian skilled workers to get larger jobs markets in the region of ASEAN. Moreover, 29 per cent and 48 per cent of participants strongly agreed and agreed, respectively with the statement that claimed "Free flow of skilled labour in the AEC offers the opportunities for Cambodian skilled professionals to get well-paid jobs in the region of ASEAN,"; regarding the opinions "free flow of skilled labour in the ASEAN inspires local education", 16 per cent and 68 per cent strongly agreed and agreed respectively.

#### ➤ *Challenges for Cambodia*

Replying to the concerning opinion that claimed "Cambodia lacks skilled workers to challenge the ASEAN's professionals", 33 per cent and 42 per cent of 395 universities' students strongly agreed and agreed, respectively. Responding to the worrying idea "Inflow of foreign skilled professionals is a threat to local Job seekers", 29 per cent and 41 per cent of universities students strongly agreed and agreed, respectively. Further, 14 per cent and 67 per cent of participants strongly agreed and agreed respectively with the statement "Local first, ASEAN second, the barrier in ASEAN's job finding for Cambodians",

### ➤ *Participants' Recommendation*

Toward the solutions to reduce the challenges and to better the opportunities for Cambodians, significant suggestions have been observed; firstly, 72 participants suggested that education reform, further vocations and trainings for Cambodians should be better improved. Secondly, 23 participants advised that creating more local jobs should be further done and thirdly, 21 participants commented that Cambodian skilled workers should improve their knowledge of the English language, as it is very important in Cambodia, the ASEAN and the world in pursuing their present and future's studies and works.

## V. CONCLUSION

### A. *Research Conclusion*

At the end of 2015, the ASEAN Economic Community built up a single marketplace and production base inside the region. With an ASEAN overall workforce of more than three hundred million people, the ASEAN will have good implications in terms of labour migration and the AEC will demand for skilled labour throughout all countries inside the region.

Before and while the free flow of skilled professionals in the AEC is being taken into the real practices, the opportunities and challenges for Cambodia have been raised and debated among general Cambodians, employees, jobs hunters and students. Further, this issue is often heard and seen argued in the seminars, radios, newspapers, written documents and it is observed that there are different ideas towards the benefits and challenges for Cambodia.

Based on the findings resulted from literature review, optimisms have been found among Cambodians, especially from the officers and the persons in charge of skilled labours who mostly stated that Cambodian will probably earn the opportunities from the free flow of skilled labour in the AEC such as the chance to have larger job markets, the opportunities to get well-paid works in the region of ASEAN and free flow of skilled labour in the ASEAN is also seen as one of the factors to inspire local education as well. However, challenges for Cambodian are observed as it is seen that the country lacks qualified skilled workers to compete with other ASEAN's skilled professionals and the inflows of foreign skilled labours is seen as a threat to local jobs seekers. Besides, the imbalanced agreement implementation of skilled labour that is still seen in some countries under the condition "prepares jobs firstly for local and secondly for the ASEAN" is worriedly observed as another barrier in jobs findings in the region for Cambodian skilled workers as well; and all of these opinions are really found supported by high per cents of universities students' perceptions.

### B. *Implications of Research Study*

According to the key findings of the study, it should be recommended that higher educational centers, study curriculum developers, classroom teachers, regardless of the courses they teach, introduce their students to the

understandings on Cambodia's skilled labour, free flow of skilled labour in the ASEAN, the benefits, challenges and solutions for Cambodia to raise their awareness of the subject and enhance their knowledge of what are the strength and weaknesses of Cambodian professionals in order to improve their capacities to work successfully with their neighbors and the whole region of ASEAN. Class discussions or debates on Cambodia's skilled labour issue should be allowed, even if not encouraged, so that Cambodian university students can prepare themselves for jobs competition with more confidence. Educational centers should consider including the knowledge on free flow of skilled labour in the ASEAN via such as seminar or conference so that the students would gain a better insight into the issue and become more competent graduates and they would become more hard learners and be ready to challenge and work productively in their countries, the region and elsewhere in the world.

### ➤ *About the author*

Sao Chantola is presently a Ph.D. Candidate of International Relations at the University of Cambodia; he is also a lecturer of English language at the University of Cambodia; he graduated Master degree of Arts in Teaching English to Speaker of Other Languages (TESOL) from the Institute of Foreign Languages (IFL), the Royal University of Phnom Penh in 2008. Also, he was rewarded a bachelor degree from the Institute of Foreign Languages (IFL) in 2004, majoring in Education in English (Bed). Besides, he was rewarded a bachelor degree of Arts in History from the Royal University of Phnom Penh (RUPP) in 1996. Plus, he was conferred other degrees in Japanese language by the Institute of Foreign Languages, the Royal University of Phnom Penh, and Tourism certificates by the Ministry of Tourism.

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