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Future of Chess in Schools in the ASEAN Economic Community

A Report by IWICA Chess School

Research Summary

The ASEAN Economic Community, consisting of Brunei, Cambodia, Indonesia, Laos, Malaysia, Philippines, Singapore, Thailand and Vietnam will come into establishment in 2015. The goal of the Economic Community is to achieve regional economic integration. AEC envisages the following key characteristics: (a) a single market and production base, (b) a highly competitive economic region, (c) a region of equitable economic development, and (d) a region fully integrated into the global economy. The ASEAN also educational initiatives such strengthening the ASEAN identity through education and to provide the youth a quality education for their future. Large amounts of capital, labour and land has been allocated for this initiative. Some of the goals apart from the obvious ones for this initiative, are to improve critical thinking, reasoning, numeracy and promoting lifelong learning for the youth of ASEAN.

IWICA Chess Academy is the first Chess School Thailand the first Chess School to be accredited by the Ministry of Education in Asia. Since 2008, IWICA has taught more than 2500 students Chess and arguably started a chess revolution in Thailand. Since their establishment, chess tournaments have risen from around 4 per year to around 20 per year, chess players have increased from around 150 to around 4000 and schools promoting Chess in their curriculum has increased from virtual zero to around forty. This is the effort of IWICA and it's competitors collectively, however it can said with certainty that IWICA Chess Academy played a major role.

IWICA Chess Academy has developed their own chess curriculum where instead of just focusing on Chess, as a game, they also stress upon the benefits of Chess to their students. For example, when they are doing puzzles with their students they point out the fact that, the students are using their pattern recognition skills and critical thinking skills and developing these skills will be advantageous for them. It's been proven numerous times through many research papers, that stressing about what you are learning helps the student improve even quicker and to develop new ways of thinking. IWICA says, they teach Chess as a Way of Living. By pointing out how Chess skills could be beneficial to the students in their life, the students come to appreciate Chess even more as not only a game but also a developmental tool that transcends gender, race, social status or religion, a very important issue in ASEAN. IWICA's research on their students has shown that Chess helps students improve their grades

in school, their outlook towards their capabilities, their emotional wellbeing and also their soft skills such as focus, visualisation, planning, weighing options, making decisions and understanding basic budgeting. These skills are essential for students from ASEAN where most families are poor and have trouble making ends meet.

IWICA envisions that through the ASEAN Economic Community, IWICA will use its developmental Chess curriculum to teach students at private and public schools, at private locations and to students who can't afford to pay for free. IWICA will coordinate with local governments to increase funding for Chess and to organise local tournaments where any player can participate in. Chess could be used as a tool to bring together people, families and communities to create a bond of friendship.

IWICA's location in Bangkok, a key city in the ASEAN Economic Community, its favourable relationships with ASEAN governments and federations put it in the optimal position to help spread Chess as a learning tool across the ASEAN by offering it through local schools and also through private locations. With the support from FIDE, IWICA could help Chess grow rapidly.