

Veterinary education in Asia, Far East and Oceania

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The OIE list includes 158 Veterinary Educational Establishments (VEEs) in 32 Member Countries in Asia, the Far East and Oceania; 9 countries, namely Brunei, Timor-Leste, Micronesia, New Caledonia, Papua New Guinea, Singapore, Vanuatu and Democratic People's Republic of Korea have no VEE reported to the OIE. Two countries [India (44), China (31)] have more than 30 VEEs, and 5 countries [Iran (23), Japan (16), Philippines (11), Indonesia (10), Republic of Korea (10)] have 10 or more VEEs (VEE numbers in some countries are based on authors' survey, and there may be some discrepancies with OIE list reported from member countries). Duration of the study in VEEs is 4-6 years, which may include pre-vet coursework. 91% of VEEs are public, while 8% are private and the remaining 1% are combination VEEs existing in the region. Size of VEEs based on student numbers varies: 50 or less (67 VEEs, 42.4%), 51-100 (55 VEEs, 34.8%), 101-150 (23 VEEs, 14.6%), 151-200 (6 VEEs, 3.8%), and more than 200 (7 VEEs, 4.4%).

A survey using a harmonised questionnaire on "Awareness of OIE Day 1 competencies" was conducted in VEEs or Councils, and replies were received from 14 Countries: Australia, India, Indonesia, Iran, Japan, Republic of Korea, Nepal, New Zealand, Pakistan, Sri Lanka, Chinese Taipei, Thailand and Vietnam. General findings include: 1) 93% of VEEs know about "OIE Day 1 competencies," 2) 86% modified their curriculum to reflect OIE Day 1 competencies [including answers such as "not directly, but the new curricula generally meets OIE Day 1 competencies"], 3) Challenges experienced in adapting "OIE Day 1 competencies" include "the limited manpower, budget and facilities", and "difficulties in obtaining agreement from faculty members who do not want to change the current states". Although "OIE Day 1 competencies" are well recognised, and many VEEs have modified their curricula to reflect OIE Day 1 competencies, they need a curriculum review to ensure that "OIE Day 1 competencies" are properly mastered. While there are many challenges in adapting to "OIE Day 1 competencies", the outcomes of their new curricula are generally good such as increased job opportunities, and increased contribution of the veterinary profession to society.

Veterinary education in Asian countries differs depending on differences in the development of livestock industry as well as educational systems in this huge continent. While Oceania has its own accreditation standard for ensuring the quality of education, no such regional mechanism has yet been developed. In the Asian region, the following international associations are recognised among the veterinary schools for advancement in education, research and public services in veterinary field: the Asian Association of Veterinary Schools (AAVS) and the South East Asia Veterinary School Association (SEAVSA). In addition, the South Asian Association for Regional Cooperation (SAARC) Agriculture Center reported the diversity of veterinary education in SAARC countries.

In order to enrich the curricula with such limitations, various activities are ongoing. 1) OIE VEE Twinning Projects in Thailand, Bangladesh, Vietnam and Sri Lanka. 2) A similar bilateral cooperation project in Mongolia by the Japan International Cooperation Agency (JICA) with the support of Hokkaido University focusing on strengthening the capacity for human resource development in the field of veterinary and animal husbandry. Under the JICA project, educational facilities as well as English textbooks are provided for veterinary students. Faculty development is also conducted by cooperation of staff from Hokkaido University. The new curriculum at Mongolian VEE started in 2015. It was renovated on the basis of cooperation between the SVM and the Royal Veterinary College (RVC), London, UK in the frame of the Animal Health Project (AHP) of the Swiss Agency for Development and Cooperation. 3) Collaboration on veterinary education between VEEs under "The ASEAN International Mobility for Students" (AIMS) Programme. AIMS Programme is a government supported multilateral educational program to promote a vibrant culture of student mobility in Southeast Asian nations. The Programme extends throughout Asian countries, and Japan became a member in 2012. Student mobility has been recognised as one of the key strategic elements of cooperation leading to the development of a harmonised higher education environment among countries. Under the AIMS programme, student exchanges including credit transfer started in 2014 between VEEs in Thailand and Japan. This is supported by the "Re-Investing Japan Project", and the first collaboration in the field of veterinary education under the AIMS Programme. 4) Internship program between VEEs in East Asia (Tokyo-Seoul-Taiwan etc.) for educational exposure of veterinary students with different cultural backgrounds.

Information communication technology (ICT) plays an important role in sharing educational resources on websites. It can be utilised for effective education through digitalised material, although supporting staff are required for a sustainable system.

The Veterinary Para-Profession (VPP) is being developed in some countries in the region. In Japan, supporting staff for various procedures including restraining animals, client communication, clinic management, etc. in small animal clinics (Veterinary Technician, Veterinary Nurse) are increasing in popularity and recognition. They are working in most small animal clinics in Japan as very important para-professionals. In order to ensure the quality of Veterinary Nurses, "Council for the Certification of Registered Veterinary Nurse" (CCRVN) was established in 2012 after the consolidation of 5 independent certificate agencies, representative of educational colleges, the Japanese Society of Veterinary Science and the Japanese Veterinary Medical Association. Licenses will be given after passing the examination by CCRVN. The applicants for the examination are required to complete the study course based on the core curriculum recommended by CCRVN. Duration of the study period is between 2-4 years either at a vocational college or college. There are more than 150,000 veterinary nurses registered at CCRVN in Japan (as of June 2016).

In conclusion, 1) "OIE Day 1 competencies" are well recognised in the region, and VEEs often start their new curricula modification with a review to ensure that "OIE Day 1 competencies" are necessary. 2) Veterinary education in Asian countries differs considerably, while Oceania has its own accreditation standard for ensuring the quality of education. Various activities are ongoing to enrich the curricula through international cooperation. Efforts for enhancing curricula and for understanding the diversity in the region need to be further promoted especially in the field of transboundary infectious disease control, epidemiology and food safety.