

Vision and Current Trends of student mobility:

by

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ABSTRACT

During the past two decades, the landscape of international student mobility has been expanding rapidly. Globally, the number of foreign students have more than triple—from 1.3 million in 1990 to 4.3 million in 2011. More than half of foreign students population worldwide come from Asia. Among them around 34% are from Northeast Asian and 8% from Southeast Asian countries. In Southeast Asia, although most outbound students go to study in an OECD member country, the tide for foreign students studying within the region is rising in recent years.

These trends are driven by a wide range of forces. Key among them are the needs to meet the challenges of globalization and regionalization, which has led to efforts to internationalize. East Asia—Northeast and Southeast—has witnessed proactive national policies and institutional initiatives to promote student mobility, which is a prime policy instrument among the many schemes to internationalize higher education. Individuals too desire to mobilize across national borders for higher education to enrich knowledge, skills, and experiences.

Amidst this tide of change, governments and higher educational institutions in the region reach out to one another to forge broader and deeper collaborations—bilaterally and multilaterally. International organizations also contribute to create and coordinate collective actions.

The Southeast Asian Ministers of Education Organization-Regional Centre for Higher Education and Development (SEAMEO RIHED) plays such a role in initiating and coordinating the multilateral student exchange program AIMS (ASEAN International Mobility for Students). From its launch with 3 participating countries in 2010, the Program has now expanded to include 7 countries—Malaysia, Indonesia, Thailand, Vietnam, the Phillipines, Brunei Darusalam, and Japan—extending opportunities to students in both Southeast and Northeast Asia.

To advance regional harmonization, as well as build enabling mechanisms for student mobility, SEAMEO RIHED also conducts and takes part in initiatives related to quality assurance and credit transfer system. A recent effort, supported by the Asian Development Bank, is a policy action research to study and develop common credit transfer system which has resulted in the Academic Credit Transfer Framework for Asia (ACTFA) to be used to support student mobility.

Asia, as well as the world, demand more human resources with tran-system competency. It is the role of higher education to cultivate globalized human resources to meet future challenges. To better promote student mobility, more extensive collective actions are called for. These include 1) establishing and enriching multilateral platforms for student exchange, 2) developing more programs in more diverse formats—covering learning in class, learning from peers, and learning in the workplace and community—to meet future needs, 3) harmonizing higher education to allow better compatibility and comparability, as well as maintaining diversity, 4) Strengthening quality of higher education to cover existing as well as emerging forms of institutions and programs.