

A Review on ASEAN-Australia Education Dialogue: So Close Yet So Far

Tinjauan Tentang Hubungan Pendidikan ASEAN - Australia : Dekat Tapi Jauh

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ABSTRACT

The relationship between ASEAN and Australian which began in 1974 as a regional cooperation under the AusAID program to promote cooperation between Australia and Southeast Asia. Since then new initiative by Australian government especially in the educational mobility sector to bridge the relationship with ASEAN with the introduction of the New Colombo plan and the Endeavour Leadership program (2019-2020) - two-way mobility for short and long-term study, research and professional development with Australia's priority partner countries. This effort provides opportunities for established and emerging leaders to undertake a global mobility experience within their study, research or professional field. This program is also developed to strengthen the cultural-economic immersion- which is seen as the driving force, as a leaders-led forum for dialogue and cooperation on broad strategic, political and economic issues of common interest and concern with the aim of promoting peace, stability and economic prosperity and cultural integration in the region. However, despite the effort, Australian- ASEAN mobility relationship is relatively low in comparison to ASEAN-ASEAN and ASEAN-EU mobility traffic. This paper looks at the issue pertaining to the student mobility between ASEAN and Australia and within ASEAN and the effort by Australian government in addressing the issue of the student mobility cooperation between ASEAN and Australia.

Keywords: ASEAN; Australia; mobility; cooperation; cultural integration

ABSTRAK

Hubungan antara ASEAN dan Australia yang bermula pada tahun 1974 sebagai kerjasama serantau di bawah program AusAID bertujuan untuk menggalakkan kerjasama antara Australia dan Asia Tenggara. Sejak dari itu, banyak inisiatif baru telah di ambil oleh kerajaan Australia terutamanya dalam sektor mobiliti pendidikan untuk mempertingkatkan jalinan serta hubungan dengan negara-negara ASEAN. Pengenalan rancangan Colombo Baru dan program Kepimpinan Endeavor (2019-2020) adalah salah satu aktiviti dua hala untuk mobiliti jangka pendek dan panjang, penyelidikan dan pembangunan profesional dengan negara-negara rakan kongsi keutamaan Australia. Program ini juga di perembangkan untuk memperkukuhkan pemahaman budaya-ekonomi, yang di lihat sebagai pendorong, sebagai forum kepimpinan dan dialog kerjasama bagi isu-isu strategik, politik dan ekonomi yang mempunyai kepentingan dan perhatian bersama. Ianya bertujuan untuk mempromosikan keamanan, kestabilan dan kemakmuran ekonomi dan integrasi budaya di rantau ini. Usaha ini memberi peluang kepada para cerdik pandai untuk meningkatkan pengalaman mobiliti global terutama sekali dalam bidang kajian, penyelidikan atau profesional masing-masing. Walau bagaimanapun, hubungan mobiliti Australia-ASEAN di lihat masih agak rendah dibandingkan dengan lalu lintas mobiliti di antara blok ASEAN-ASEAN dan blok ASEAN-EU. Makalah ini melihat kepada isu pergerakan pelajar di antara negara-negara ASEAN dan Australia, di antara negara-negara ASEAN serta usaha oleh kerajaan Australia dalam menangani isu-isu kerjasama mobiliti pelajar ini.

Kata kunci: ASEAN; Australia; mobility; kerjasama; integrasi budaya

INTRODUCTION

In the recent AAED 2019 (ASEAN-Australian Education Dialogue) in Penang, a lot were discussed and highlighted on the educational relationship and cooperation between ASEAN and Australia which connects key education and training stakeholders as well as business planners and thought leaders from both Australia and ASEAN. This dialogue reflects the ASEAN-Australian commitment to

a long-term education partnership as informed by the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals (SDG) 2030. The seven (7) thematic discussions were:

1. Implementing the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals (SDG) 2030 in community and educational ecosystems
2. Strengthening Quality Assurance and Developing Global Standards in the English

- Language Sector in ASEAN and Australia
3. Strategies for Building the Quality of Research in ASEAN Universities and Strengthening Higher Education Research Partnerships with Australia
 4. Building Student Mobility Networks between ASEAN and Australia and within ASEAN
 5. Developing Enterprise Vocational Training in Partnership with Business and Industry
 6. Strengthening Alumni Networks and Enhancing Graduate Employability and
 7. Harnessing Digital Technology for Application in Workplace Training with Employment Outcomes.

The event was looking at the current links between Australia and ASEAN across key education sectors to build a broader ASEAN-Australia regional and global engagement, discussing the issues, challenges and opportunities for the future of regional and global engagement in education. The AAED directive is to encourage and allow for new policy initiatives and partnerships between a range of ASEAN and Australian education organisations. AAED other key intention is also promote dialogue, consultations, and partnership among governments, private sector and other relevant stakeholders in the society to foster and enable new ideas, concepts and methods with a view to enhancing transparent, accountable, participatory and effective governance engagement in education.

Australia became ASEAN's first dialogue partner in 1974, when Australia supported ASEAN's vision of a rules-based, inclusive and economically integrated regional community.

Subsequently when the first East Asia Summit was convened in Kuala Lumpur on December 2005, Australia, India and New Zealand were also included in the grouping thereby initiating the ASEAN plus Six APS) process (Tham S.Y 2008). In 2014, Australia and ASEAN formally became strategic partners, recognising the importance of the relationship in building mutual security and prosperity. ASEAN is one of Australia's top three trading partners,

representing around fifteen (15) per cent of Australia's total trade. Trade between Australia and ASEAN countries amounted to AUD\$93.2 billion in 2016. Since then around 100,000 students from ASEAN countries are studying in Australia, and from 2014 to 2018 over 13,500 Australian undergraduate students are being supported to study and undertake internships in ASEAN countries through the New Colombo Plan.

The growth of the higher education sector in South-East Asia has been rapid in recent decades (Table 1).

As an economic force, ASEAN has become the third growth engine within emerging Asia after China and India. It is playing an increasingly important role in regional trade and investment growth. Apart from this, higher education, and specifically internationalisation of higher education, is perceived as having a major role to play in the formation of a more integrated and aligned ASEAN community. The ASEAN Socio-Cultural Community Blueprint 2025, launched in March 2016, advocated the promotion of 'an innovative ASEAN approach to higher education' which will 'promote greater people-to-people interaction and mobility within and outside ASEAN.

The first Shape of Global Higher Education report found that student mobility was 'the key component of most countries' national strategies. It is undoubtedly the case that student mobility is important in ASEAN. These include streamlined academic programs, research attachment and internship, and international research collaborations. This is reflected in the openness of higher education systems and support for the international mobility of students, researchers, academic programs and university research (Table 2).

Taking from this cue, Australia noted the importance of enhancing cooperation in areas of mutual interest especially in the education sector in the effort to ensure regional stability and encourage Australia and ASEAN increased participation in an educational-based program of dialogue, intellectual and cultural exchange.

TABLE 1. Number of local and international students in Southeast Asian countries

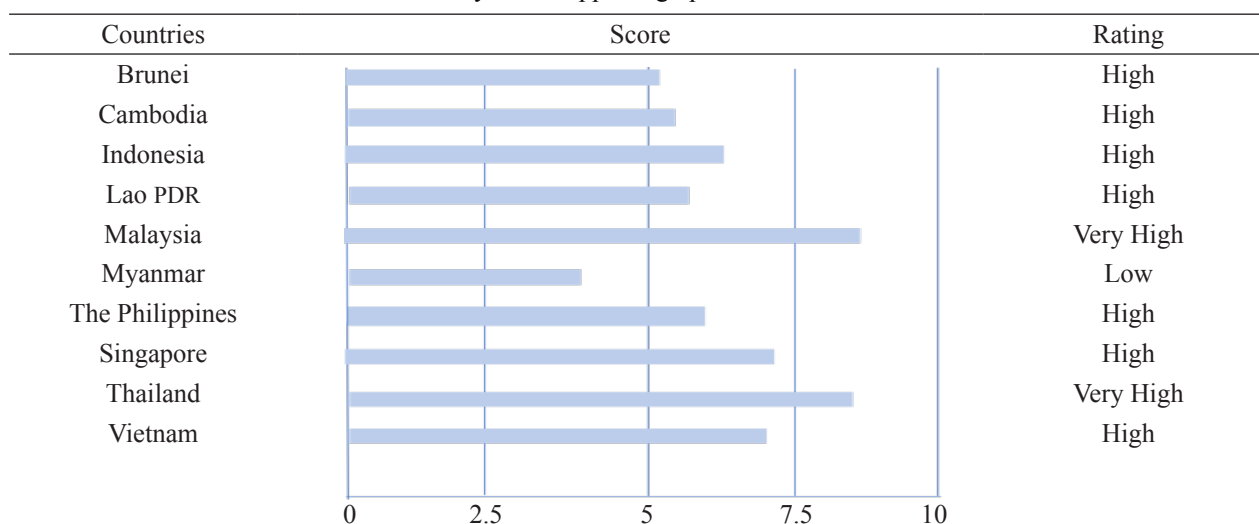
Countries	Numbers of Local Students Abroad		Numbers of International Students		Gross Enrolment Ratio	
	Until 2012	Present	Until 2012	Present	2005	2016
Brunei	-	3,698	372 (2011)	349	15%	32%
Cambodia	-	5,561	-	-	3%	16%
Indonesia	43,000 (2011)	46,232	7,079 (2010)	-	17%	31%
Lao PDR	1,011 (1999)	6,129	827 (2011)	451	8%	17%

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Malaysia	61,000 (2011)	64,655	86,293	124,133	32%	30%
Myanmar	1,600	7,852	65 (2010)	-	11%	14%
The Philippines	8,443 (2008)	16,308	2,665 (2008)	-	28%	28%
Singapore	21,000 (2011)	25,057	84,000	80,000	-	-
Thailand	28,000 (2011)	29,768	10,967 (2007)	12,274	43%	53%
Vietnam	61,000 (2011)	70,328	500 (2011)	5,624	16%	30%

TABLE 2. Government systems supporting openness of IHE in ASEAN countries



Key: Average scores for all categories are graded on a scale of 0 to 10. Maximum score of 10 indicates criteria are fully met and a minimum score of 0 indicates criteria are not met

ASEAN-AUSTRALIAN COOPERATION IN HIGHER EDUCATION

Looking at the bigger picture of the various mobility and youth cooperation between Australia and ASEAN, it is obvious that education is the primary point of connection. The ASEAN-Australia Development Cooperation was established in 1974 through the ASEAN-Australia Economic Cooperation Programme (AAECP) to be followed by the AADCP (2002-2008). A Memorandum of Understanding between the Governments of the Member Countries of the Association of Southeast Asia Nations and the Government of Australia on the ASEAN-Australia Economic Cooperation Programme (AAECP) Phase III in Bangkok, Thailand, 27 July 1999. The AADCP II was then extended to 2015 and further extended to December 2019.

In this cooperation, Australia have pledge to support two main areas: economic and social cooperation. Under both areas, education played a key role in the ASEAN-Australia partnership. In 2014, ASEAN and Australia signed a bilateral strategic partnership and adopted a 4 year 'Plan of Action' (2015-2019). The plan includes several

action points related to youth and education such as expansion of internship programmes, regional collaboration on technical and vocational training, and qualification recognition. This plan aims to boost cooperation in the areas of business, science, education and art and culture.

In the 2015-2019 POA (Point of Action) to implement in the ASEAN-Australia strategic partnership summit, the goals and objectives of the ASEAN-Australia Summits and the Joint ASEAN-Australia Leaders' Statement on the 40th Anniversary of ASEAN-Australia Dialogue Relations Towards a Strategic Partnership for Mutual Benefit addresses emerging regional and global challenges over the next five years. Under the ASEAN and Australia POA 3.2 Education, youth and people to people exchange seven POA out of thirteen focuses on education and mobility and hereby attempt to:

1. Strengthen engagement between Australian and ASEAN higher education institutions, staff and students and promote ASEAN and Australian awareness and studies, including through two-way mobility of students and staff, as well as through the New Colombo Plan and other scholarships programs;

2. Explore enhancements to qualification recognition arrangements for students and academics between ASEAN and Australia, including encouraging possible participation in the UNESCO Asia-Pacific Recognition Convention and establishment of national information centres for qualifications recognition;
3. Enhance the quality of basic education through sharing of best practices in regard to education curricula and syllabuses, teaching pedagogies, and resource development;
4. Enhance shared understanding of qualifications and qualifications frameworks, including through the ASEAN-Australia-New Zealand Free Trade Agreement (AANZFTA)-supported ASEAN Qualifications Reference Framework;
5. Share expertise and knowledge gained from Australian Government grants and projects in areas of excellence in university learning and teaching, including professional development and recognition of staff;
6. Encourage expansion of ASEAN-Australia youth exchange and internship programmes;
7. Promote training and exchanges involving media, cultural experts, sports authorities and athletes.

Since then, implementations of POA mechanisms like funding made available through the Australian and ASEAN governments, and review of the POA is done through the ASEAN-Australia Joint Cooperation Committee (JCC) and the ASEAN-Australia Forum, with the assistance of the ASEAN Secretariat help achieved the strategic goal.

The most recent POA the ASEAN-Australia Strategic Partnership (2020-2024), more emphasis has been put to enhance the previous ASEAN-Australia Strategic Partnership, the POA promotes cooperation in support of the ASEAN community building and integration process, including the ASEAN Community Vision 2025, as well as to address emerging regional and global challenges over the next five years. The new strategy has now added a key point which was missing previously:

1. Encourage the exchange and mobility of scientists and researchers and encourage conducting joint research projects in ASEAN and Australia.
2. Promote the greater participation of the youth in development through volunteering and other community building activities in ASEAN

member countries or in Australia (under the sports, art and culture sub-section)

Apart from the apparent economic value, there are several reasons for ASEAN and Australia relationship on educational mobility, which is seen as a medium of public diplomacy. The first important point is the number of ASEAN population is 649.1 million in 2019 of which 33.9% is youth population (substantial youth demography) in comparison to Australia's 25.2 million population of which 12.2% are youth (age group of 15-24 years- the age group for youth as defined by the United Nations). Because of these numbers, there is immense scope for mutual cooperation and growth due to the interest of Australian youth in Southeast Asia and their connections to the region and vice-versa. Recently, the Australian government ramped up their effort by announcing additional fifty (50) 'Australia Awards ASEAN' Scholarships. The government's flagship New Colombo Plan initiative (which encourages Australian students to undertake exchanges and mobility programmes in the Indo-Pacific) has also introduced a new ASEAN Fellowship in 2018.

The cross-border educational ties between ASEAN and Australia help to build critical understanding and sustain relationships, in both the near and long term. In the disruptive, mobile, digitally connected environment of today, people-to-people connectivity has become critical for countries and regions to see each other as cordial partners. The broader goals of this agenda, however, are not limited to improving and standardising the academic experience, but typically now extend to fostering cultural and political ties and complementing processes of cultural integration, development, and peacebuilding. In this sense, ASEAN-Australia higher education relationship is increasingly viewed as an arena in which ideas about reconciliation of cultures and peoples are incubated and implemented.

Studies of the experiences on mobility programmes in Australia and different ASEAN countries have shown to develop better interpersonal skills, cultural understanding, and more confidence (Bretag and van der Veen 2017).

SO CLOSE, YET SO FAR

Cooperation, international exchange, and integration among institutions of higher education have become the new norm in the global experience

of learning and academic training. In the light of its role in various international relations, educational cooperation has moved beyond the national and bilateral levels and is increasingly becoming a platform for regional and international agenda setting (World Bank 2000). Given the common challenges across ASEAN Member States including but not limited to increasing student enrolments, economic restructuring, financial constraints, access, equity, quality and relevance issues (Lee and Healy, 2006; Umemiya, 2008), a consensus emerged regarding the benefits and necessity for higher education cooperation (Chao 2016). The ASEAN states have made considerable progress toward these integration goals. Reflecting this ideal, the ASEAN states established an ambitious plan in 2009 to drive towards greater integration of the regions 6,500 higher education institutions and 12 million post-secondary students. The plan is aimed at creating a so-called “Common Space of Higher Education” and is based around four main priorities: student mobility, credit transfers, quality assurance; and research clusters (ICEF Monitor 2014).

A lot of work and effort have been put to ensure international exchange happen between ASEAN and Australia. Currently, there is good mobility traffic coming from ASEAN to Australia, however this is not the same with Australia to ASEAN outbound mobility. The longstanding disparities of Australia-ASEAN student flows were painfully apparent. For example, in 2011, almost 18,000 Indonesian students were enrolled in Australia, mostly in higher education. The reverse flow was barely a fraction of that total, estimated at no more than 200, most of whom were undertaking short language courses, rather than degree programmes (Welch 2016).

Australia has supported ASEAN through 1,715 Australia Awards and Endeavour Scholarships offered to citizens of ASEAN Member States, the New Colombo Plan scholarship as well as its mobility programme. At the ASEAN-Australia Special Summit in March 2018, Australia announced new education initiatives, including the Australia Awards ASEAN scholarships and a New Colombo Plan ASEAN Fellow. This is to encourage active mobility from Australia to ASEAN. However, the New Colombo Plan, announced in 2012, was a tangible recognition of the global ‘Shift to the East’. While a welcome initiative, predicated on a more two-way approach to mobility, it was acknowledged as limited - only supporting perhaps 300 students to study in the region (Liberal Party 2013). Of these, only a minority would study within ASEAN universities.

Ankush Wagle (2019) in her article on ASEAN Australia young (AAYLF) leader’s forum titled Learning beyond borders: Educational exchanges in ASEAN-Australia relations pointed that the mobility between ASEAN and Australia is ‘Essentially functioning as a soft power initiative, the programme seeks to promote Australia within a nominated ‘country or region of strategic significance’. This mobility exchanges includes to encourage cooperation and collaboration on many scientific fronts and arts, heritage, and culture to foster understanding, appreciation, and appropriate preservation of culture, history and literature in Australia and ASEAN Member State. Even though the importance of a good mobility traffic between ASEAN and Australia is apparent, the number of exchanges and activities is relatively low in comparison to ASEAN-ASEAN and ASEAN-EU mobility movement. This is especially dominant with Australia outbound mobility to ASEAN. When looking at the issue and challenges with the lack of rigorous mobility activities from Australia to ASEAN, three main problem has been identified in this paper and they are:

1. Lack of single cooperative platform/ network
2. Demography of Australian students
3. Transnational Australian campuses in Southeast Asia

Firstly, in Southeast Asia, with a vision for a ‘Dynamic ASEAN’, the ASEAN Socio-Cultural Community Blueprint 2025, (launched in March 2016), it further advocated the promotion of “an innovative ASEAN approach to higher education” which will “promote greater people-to-people interaction and mobility within and outside ASEAN” leading to “the free flow of ideas, knowledge, expertise and skills to inject dynamism within the region” ASEAN mobility and mutual recognition initiatives can be seen within the ASEAN University Network (AUN), the South East Asian Ministers of Education Organisation – Regional Centre for Higher Education and Development (SEAMEO-RIHED), and ASEAN itself. These are complemented by various higher education initiatives undertaken by the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organisation (UNESCO), particularly through its Asia and Pacific Regional Bureau for Education, the Asian Development Bank (ADB), and the European Commission (EC) and its partners.

To this end, in 2010 the Southeast Asian Ministers of Education Organization’s Regional Centre for Higher Education and Development launched the

Malaysia-Indonesia-Thailand pilot project and that has evolved into the ASEAN International Mobility for Students or AIMS programme. The AIMS programme offers students a single semester exchange across a choice of sixty eight (68) institutions in six ASEAN member states (Brunei Darussalam, Indonesia, Malaysia, the Philippines, Thailand, Vietnam) and two of the ASEAN Plus Three dialogue partners: Japan and South Korea. Based upon a multilateral platform, participating governments have hand-picked suitable higher education institutions under chosen fields of study. Then the number of inbound and outbound exchange students is mutually agreed to determine a balance. This ensures reciprocity and control between national systems and universities.

Whilst among ASEAN's closest dialogue partners is the European Union. The establishment of a regional community, such as the European Union and ASEAN, is brought about by the process of regionalisation, which leads to regional integration (Hettne and Soderbaum 2000; Knight 2012). In 2017, the EU and ASEAN celebrated the 40th anniversary of the establishment of formal cooperation at the 10th Ministerial Meeting in 1977. Since that time, there have been extensive inter-regional policy dialogues on higher education cooperation and internationalisation. The cooperation between Asia and Europe is already picking up through programmes such as AUNP, ACCESS, Asia-Link, and the Erasmus Mundus programme. The most current iteration of this engagement is the EU-funded Support to Higher Education in the ASEAN Region or SHARE programme, launched in 2015. The aims of the programme are to strengthen regional cooperation and enhance the quality, competitiveness and internationalisation of ASEAN higher education institutions and students.

The SHARE result areas that EU and ASEAN partners are collaborating on are: ASEAN Qualifications Reference Framework and ASEAN Quality Assurance; development of an ASEAN Credit Transfer System and ASEAN-EU Credit Transfer Systems; and Intra-ASEAN and ASEAN-EU mobility scholarships. This is the architecture that will facilitate, support and expand both intra-ASEAN and ASEAN-EU mobility. Hence Erasmus is considered the gold standard of mobility programmes in as much as mobility is the lifeblood of regional cooperation and connectivity.

Unfortunately, there is no such platform in the educational mobility between ASEAN and Australia. The lack of such platform can be seen as the major stumbling point with the relationship

between Australia and ASEAN educational activity. With SEAMEO RIHED, AUN and EU SHARE, a lot of the key issues in ensuring seamless mobility activities- from funding matter, credit transfer system, program matching, research collaboration and many others can be discussed and find solution to. These platforms also enable, key operators from universities, government and ministerial office to take the responsibility in ensuring key action points are monitored and executed. This ensures the region's competitiveness and the establishment of a regional knowledge-based economy. Similar to the European Erasmus programme, ASEAN-Australia must envision a programme of its own to facilitate the mobility of university students within the region; taking advantage of its great diversity, which represents both potentials and challenges related to historical differences, cultural backgrounds, ideological gaps, development, languages, and etc. As a start, Australia can be a part of existing network like AUN (ASEAN University Network) to learn and contribute towards a cohesive mobility relationship between member countries. The way forward is for Australia and ASEAN to create a common platform with the like of AUN or EU-SHARE. This will quickly enable Australia to increase awareness about the diversity and intricacies of ASEAN member states among Australians education institutions. In engaging ASEAN via these platforms, it is vital to not miss the intricacy of the ASEAN community. While ASEAN is certainly more than the sum of its member states, those states themselves can vary vastly in indicators such as economic size, levels of development, education, and even aspirations. ASEAN University Network (AUN) Secretariat in Bangkok, which for some years has been working on credit transfer mechanisms to boost student mobility and, it was a long drawn-out process, not least because of the huge disparity between countries in the region, and within countries between universities themselves (Sharma 2018). According to Cholstis, the AUN Secretariat in the University World News in 2018, "Quality and standards are very obvious in the eye of the beholder – you can see clearly that this student has a higher quality [education] while that student doesn't, and this hinders our universities' exchange programmes through credit transfer mechanisms in a multilateral framework, meaning among universities in a big group like ASEAN,". Most universities in ASEAN still favour bilateral exchanges and prefer to negotiate with their counterparts one-to-one and set up customised exchange programmes, maybe without credit transfer or with transit transfer, or sometimes with only credit and with no letter grades.

Secondly, to understand the low mobility traffic from Australian to ASEAN (in comparison to ASEAN-ASEAN and ASEAN-EU), it is crucial to look at the demography of the Australian youth and students. Higher education is an important export economy for Australia, with international students paying significantly higher fees for their tertiary studies than domestic students in the country.

Education is a flagship area of ASEAN-Australia cooperation with over 150,000 international students enrolled in Australian schools in 2016. Whilst higher education institution is recording 358,800 (46%) of international students in 2018 (Figure 1). The number of Asian students studying in Australia is large which includes nearly one million Australians claim Southeast Asian ancestry (Figure 2).

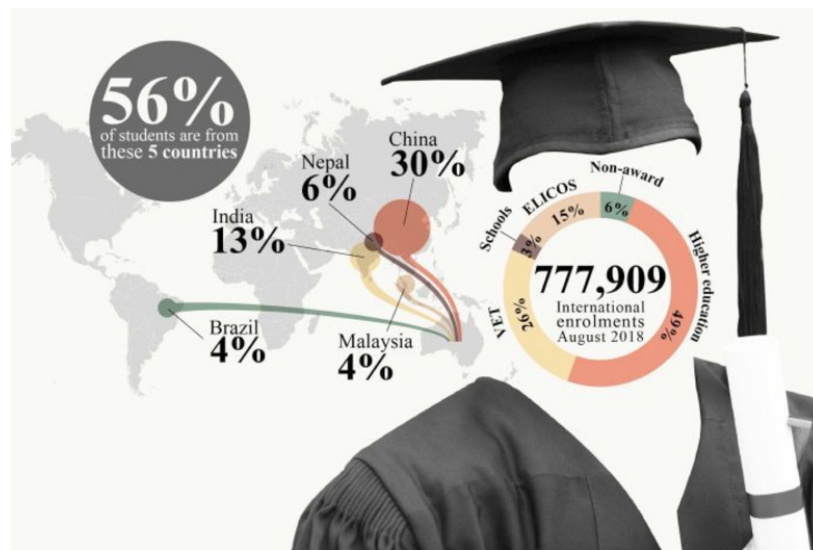


FIGURE 1.

Source: Federal Department of Education and Training (Aug 2018) ABC News: Illustration- Jarrod Frankhauser

Reading the statistic from the international student enrolment numbers in Australia (see Table 3 and Table 4) it is evidence that the makeup of the international students is hugely from Asia and Southeast Asian. This might be the causal reason which affect the mobility movement from Australia

to ASEAN. Student from ASEAN and Asia, given the opportunity to study abroad on a mobility program, will take the opportunity to study in Europe, North America and Eurocentric countries and rather than heading back to their home or ancestral country.

Top 10 Nationalities		Number of Students 2016	Proportion
	China	196,315	27.5%
	India	78,424	11.0%
	Republic of Korea	30,595	4.3%
	Thailand	30,451	4.3%
	Vietnam	29,766	4.2%
	Brazil	29,440	4.1%
	Malaysia	28,504	4.0%
	Nepal	22,812	3.2%
	Indonesia	19,731	2.8%
	Hong Kong	17,586	2.5%
	Other Nationalities	229,260	32.2%
Total		712,884	

* International student numbers relate only to international students in Australia on a student visa and are derived from AEI enrolments data. Source: Australian Government Department of Education Research – “End of Year Summary of International Student Enrolment Data1 – Austral 12 December 2016; Australian Government Department of Education and Training - International Student Enrolment Data 2016, Extracted: Jan.

FIGURE 2. International Student Enrolment 2016

Nationality	NSW	Vic.	QLD	SA	WA	Tas.	NT	ACT	Total	% of all OS
China	58,510	50,878	17,686	8,701	5,328	2,762	188	8,538	152,591	38.3
India	20,512	33,696	8,705	3,287	3,949	601	282	825	71,857	18.0
Nepal	19,306	4,720	2,141	776	703	121	378	88	28,233	7.1
Vietnam	5,462	6,617	1,452	880	792	232	75	208	15,718	3.9
Malaysia	2,243	6,041	1,794	1,237	1,781	576	19	297	13,988	3.5
Pakistan	4,709	4,351	769	320	921	105	55	167	11,397	2.9
Indonesia	3,153	4,692	754	216	671	30	35	324	9,875	2.5
Sri Lanka	981	6,599	691	249	413	95	37	144	9,209	2.3
Hong Kong	2,721	2,142	1,872	1,095	712	128	14	247	8,931	2.2
Singapore	1,368	2,454	1,291	537	1,215	265	1	197	7,328	1.8
Other	24,620	18,617	13,848	3,424	5,651	954	456	1,866	69,436	17.4
All OS	143,585	140,807	51,003	20,722	22,136	5,869	1,540	12,901	398,563	100.0

FIGURE 3. Higher Education Enrolments, Overseas (Os) Students, State and Territory, Top Ten Nationalities, 2018

The table also clearly indicated, apart from ASEAN countries sitting at the top the international student number chart, other Asian countries like China, Korea and Hong Kong are also the usual suspect.

The huge number of Asian students in Australia could be the reason why mobility traffic to ASEAN is lower due to the frequent contact with the Asians and ASEAN in Australia. With 700,000 Australian speaks ASEAN language and fifteen percent (15%) visitors to Australia from ASEAN would warrant

many Australian students to skip ASEAN as the destination of choice due to preconceive idea of ASEAN and what it can offer. The lack of interest for the Australian student from these backgrounds to come to ASEAN can also be contributed to the type of mobility programme offered. A short term niched based programme to ASEAN is more likely to gain response in comparison to a full semester exchange program.



FIGURE 4. Australian Demographic Data

Finally, when looking at the issue and challenges with the lack of rigorous mobility activities from Australia to ASEAN higher education institution, is the positioning of transnational Australian branch campuses in Asia-Pacific. Outbound mobility plays a vital role in achieving this goal as it furnishes students with the intercultural competence and distinctive skills and knowledge acquired by

immersing in another society. It allows students to become global citizens, as it provides them with the opportunity to experience varied and unexplored situations, different approaches to problem solving and ways of relating to others.

However, with the number of Australian institutions opening their branch campuses in Asia-Pacific, resulting in “intra-national outbound

mobility”. This dampened the spirit and purpose of an international outbound mobility. In Malaysia, there are four (4) Australian branch campuses (Curtin, Monash, Swinburne, Wollongong-KDU is the latest branch campus via acquisition), RMIT in Vietnam, in 2018, five (5) in Singapore and in 2018, Indonesia welcomes Australia to operate their branch campuses there, which is believed to affect the validity of student exchange data to ASEAN. Figure 4. is the data from Education Malaysia Global services 2019 data on semester exchange to Malaysia from Australia. Although the data is not the complete representative of the different type of mobility (short term, summer program and

special program), this data proves the ‘intra-national mobility’ activities between home institutions and the branch campuses.

This data help argue the danger of unclear policy between home and branch institutions in relation to the definition of mobility activities and traffic especially in this case. This will adversely affect the spirit of exchanges in ASEAN-Australia relations which highlighted by Ankush Wagle (2019) as ‘essentially functioning as a soft power initiative, the programme seeks to promote Australia within a nominated ‘country or region of strategic significance’.

No.	Name of branch campus	Year established	Location in Malaysia	Country of origin
1.	Monash University Malaysia	1998	Selangor	Australia
2.	Curtin University, Sarawak Malaysia	1999	Sarawak	Australia
3.	The University of Nottingham Malaysia Campus	2000	Kuala Lumpur/ Selangor	the UK
4.	Swinburne University of Technology, Sarawak Campus	2004	Sarawak	Australia
5.	Newcastle University Medicine Malaysia	2007	Johor	the UK
6.	University of Southampton, Malaysia Campus	2011	Johor	the UK
7.	Heriot-Watt University Malaysia	2012	Putrajaya	the UK
8.	University of Reading Malaysia	2013	Johor	the UK
9.	Xiamen University Malaysia Campus	2015	Selangor, Sepang	China
10.	Royal College of Surgeons In Ireland And University College Dublin Malaysia Campus	2018	Penang	Ireland

FIGURE 5. Transnational University in Malaysia

TOTAL OF INTERNATIONAL STUDENT (MOBILITY) BASED ON INSTITUTIONS AS AT 30 SEPTEMBER 2019 - AUSTRALIA			
No	Institutions	Level of Study	Total
		Degree	
1	MONASH UNIVERSITY MALAYSIA	62	68
2	SUNWAY UNIVERSITY	1	
3	UNIVERSITI HELP	1	
4	UNIVERSITI KEBANGSAAN MALAYSIA (UKM)	1	
5	UNIVERSITI SAINS MALAYSIA (USM - MAIN CAMPUS)	2	
6	UNIVERSITI TAYLOR'S (TAYLOR'S UNIVERSITY)	1	

FIGURE 6. Australian to Malaysia 2019 Mobility Data
Source: from EMGS (Education Malaysia Global services)

CONCLUSION: THE WAY FORWARD

The majority of countries globally have some form of programme in place to enable international academic mobility. International student mobility is the arena that has attracted the highest media and

popular attention, both nationally and internationally. In the international integration of higher education systems in Southeast Asia, international student mobility has appeared as one of the important and widely discussed topics. The rise in intra-region mobility which translates to the increasing incidence

of international students leaving their home country to study in a neighbouring country within their home region – is one of the most important trends in international student mobility today. Within the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN), the ASEAN University Network (AUN) was established in 1995 to create a Credit Transfer System to enhance mobility among universities in the region. These are being fuelled by enhanced capacity and quality in regional education hubs, and by student preference for the greater proximity to home and affordability of regional study destinations. Other initiatives connected with the region include University Mobility in Asia and the Pacific (UMAP 1993), ASEAN-EU University Network Program (AUNP 2001), and relations between ASEAN and the Arab Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC 2009), (Ky Le, Korn Sornlertlumvanich & Wanger, S. 2017).

ASEAN-Australia has always been working hard to increase and ensure steady increase in business, science, education, arts and cultural cooperation and interaction. This has been marked by four and a half decades of ties. No less so in higher education, which has been the most dynamic sub-sector within ASEAN-Australia relations in education, accounting for both the bulk of educational mobility, as well as most educational cooperation (Fraser et al. 1994). Overall, while progress has indeed been made on ASEAN Australia relations over the period, notably in higher education, there are still apparent problem with the two-way mobility traffic between Australia and ASEAN. As mentioned above, much effort is already underway to bolster existing youth relations. However, more certainly can and should be done, particularly on the quality and learning from exchanges and interactions. It is important to take the cue from the issues highlighted in this paper for ASEAN Australia partnership to take the next step of the relationship evolution.

In the recent past, Australia's attitude towards ASEAN has waxed and waned over, in part a reflection of tensions between its geography and history, it highlighted the question of the extent to which Australia saw itself as an Asian country (an uncertainty shared by number of its ASEAN neighbours) (Welch 2016). A genuine, deeply rooted trans-regional network of higher education and research relations between Australia and ASEAN, while important, is still at a more embryonic stage, and tend to be outweighed by their rhetoric (Welch 2010b, 2011, 2012c, 2012d). To move forward, firstly, an explicit and comprehensive internationalisation policy is important. It must consider both the

sending and receiving policy on a practical level between ASEAN and Australia. These includes, credits obtained in the hosting HEI are recognised by the sending institution, the visa procedures are not restrictive, health insurance agreements are available, student housing is facilitated by a central agency, information about conditions of living is reliable. Other measures concerning the HEI itself may include the harmonisation of academic calendars and improving online application systems. It is crucial for Australia and ASEAN to look at the existing template of Asian University Network (AUN), SEAMEO RIHED (AIMs) and EU Share collaboration template and employ similar policy and networking system. This will enable basic issues, challenges and opportunities to be discussed and ironed out relatively systematically and quickly.

The success of ASEAN-ASEAN mobility has been credited to such network which act as a platform to forge better understanding of the needs and wants of both sides. This will also help Australia to understand their involvement set against the rich and multi-faceted intra-ASEAN diversity, including religious, cultural and linguistic diversity, both within and between ASEAN member states, and levels of development, from wealthy, technologically highly-developed nations such as Singapore, to very poor developing nations such as Laos and Myanmar (Anthony Welch 2016).

The new ASEAN Australian network can have three features to form the basis and spur further growth in academic relations and mobility between ASEAN and Australia. First is the construction of a common goal framework by both ASEAN member states and Australia, within a wider context of subscribing to the discourse of knowledge-based economy as the means towards development. Secondly, is important to have a comprehensive mapping of higher education institutions (HEIs) system between Australia and ASEAN to identify common opportunities and challenges, which includes credit transfer system, assessment criteria and management and program matching. Third is the engagement of ASEAN migrant communities in Australia, among which many individuals are well educated and interested to form and strengthen knowledge bridges with their countries of origin. The combination of these three, offer considerable potential to expand two-way flows of both students and academics between Australia and ASEAN.

Secondly, sustaining an incredible expansion of programs' mobility, the fast internationalisation of

higher education institutions is widely documented, emphasising not only economic advantages, but also beneficial opportunities in teaching and research, as well as increased international profile (Feast & Bretag 2005; Knight 2006; Altbach & Knight 2007). To help strengthen educational relationship and increase mobility traffic between ASEAN and Australia, there is a need to look at mobility program on offer and the level of participants (as young as from the primary and secondary school level). The key is the flavour of the mobility offering. Apart from pushing for an increase for semester exchange for HEI, ASEAN and Australia can investigate the expansion of non-mainstream academic program. Niche based and volunteerism program can create more interests for university students and youth from high schools. According to Jo Johnson (2017), Minister for universities, research and innovation, "We know that students who have experience of studying, working and volunteering abroad have better educational and employment outcomes". Volunteering abroad as mobility program option for example will connect student to a group of like-minded students from all over the world, increase their intercultural competency and give them the opportunity to become actively involved with global events and programs.

Diverse short-term programs as option to semester exchange mobility will also allow for student to pick and choose area of interest and encourage full participations to the programs. The participation in this 'nonmainstream' yet structured mobility experience can promote critical professional self-awareness regarding cultural diversity; built trust and intercultural understanding through intensive interaction with the ASEAN peers. The diverse options in the different type of mobility program to suit different student type and palette can be the bridge to the longer semester exchange programs offered at the university level.

Finally, there is a need to regulate transnational campus branches globally and especially in ASEAN countries to ensure clear division between 'intra-national' mobility exchanges (study abroad in branch campuses and international mobility exchange). This will ensure that the 'real' mobility exchanges happen, and the desired experiential outcome is achieved. ASEAN countries with Australian campus branches must work with the respective ministries to ensure quota for intra and inter mobility to happen within the context of the desired outcome. There is then a need for continuous dialogues between ministries of higher education of ASEAN and

Australia, to help identify benefits and pit falls when it comes to the rights (and wrong) of the institutional jurisdiction in lieu of the mobility exchanges effort. The organisational culture of the campus branch and home campus should also be identified, where international branch campuses have the potential to encourage exploration with their local partner institution, thus fostering awareness, enrichment, and understanding with a deeper investigation of the local cultural dimensions. This can be achieved by identifying the strengths and weaknesses of the inter campus exchange program. In order to facilitate this, Australia and ASEAN's diverse higher education systems, need to harmonised standards and mechanisms for permeable and transparent quality assurance and credit transfer among the transnational institutions/ campuses.

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Received: 12 January 2019

Accepted: 13 June 2020