

A Pedagogy of Short-Term Student Mobility: Singapore-Vietnam Collaboration in the ASEAN Region

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Abstract

Short-term student mobility is emerging as a crucial dimension of higher education innovation for complementing broader internationalisation goals in Southeast Asia. Regional initiatives explicitly emphasise cross-border mobility of students, faculty, and credit systems as key to regional integration and capacity-building. Yet, intra-ASEAN mobility remains relatively low, with most students still pursuing study opportunities outside the region. This pattern reflects both aspirational motivations for perceived higher-quality education, international prestige, and career advantages abroad, as well as structural constraints such as limited quality assurance alignment, uneven credential recognition, and restricted funding mechanisms. These challenges suggest significant untapped potential to strengthen regional collaboration. Enhancing intra-ASEAN student mobility can contribute to fostering a shared regional identity, developing a skilled workforce, and reinforcing academic networks through exchange-based knowledge circulation. In this context, short-term exchange programs are valued not only as a pedagogical vehicle for students to develop cross-cultural competencies and personhoods, but also gaining traction as a flexible and accessible policy strategy that would augment longer-term mobility flows within the region.

This paper examines these developments by analysing both the pedagogical foundations and collaborative frameworks shaping short-term student mobility in the ASEAN context. We first explore the concept of a *pedagogy of student mobility*, defined as “a framework for designing and facilitating activities to enhance humanistic learning among all students” (Geibel, 2020: 70), on how curricula and teaching practices can prepare students for transformative global learning experiences. We then review the development of student mobility in the ASEAN region, tracing policy milestones and programs and analysing current mobility patterns and barriers. Furthermore, we consider the potential for intra-ASEAN collaboration on short-term exchanges, discussing strategic partnerships, credit transfer systems, and virtual/hybrid modalities. Finally, we focus on examples drawn from an undergraduate college at the National University of Singapore’s and its engagements with Vietnamese institutions and partners to a pedagogy of student mobility requires synergy across policy alignment, programme design, field reconnaissance, and scaffolded teaching to enhance student learning within the context of short-term student mobility.

The paper concludes with a discussion of implications for educators and policymakers on how to sustain such partnerships, adapt pedagogical teaching strategies for mobility, and extend these insights to the broader ASEAN higher education community. Overall, this analytical perspective bridges policy and pedagogy, informing educators and administrators on leveraging mobility as a transformative educational innovation.

Keywords: Short-term student mobility; pedagogical innovation; ASEAN higher education; internationalisation of learning; Singapore; Vietnam