

## **'STUDENT MOBILITY IN MALAYSIA'**

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### **1. Introduction**

Mobility has become an inevitable part of globalisation. It affects higher education today as internationalization becomes a very important consideration in our quest for improvement. Mobility can take many forms. It involves movement, regardless in short or long-courses, student exchanges and internship programmes conducted between countries.

Student mobility has become an important global agenda in providing wider exposure to the students on international culture and in giving them a better cross-cultural understanding while living in different environments. Students who have gone through some form of structured mobility programmes are able to nurture themselves to become more flexible, and able to respect and understand other cultures as well as the different lifestyles. Mobility has also proven to create students who possess greater self-confidence.

It does not only impact on the students but also bring positive impact to the universities involved; particularly the host university.

Why do we promote student mobility?

While the reasons may be fairly obvious, we hope

- to inculcate multi-cultural awareness;
- to widen networking among Malaysian universities with ASEAN/foreign HEIs and industries – in line with our National Higher Education Strategic Plan's objective to intensify internationalization;
- for the betterment of future generations, and
- to provide opportunities for foreign students to gain first-hand experience of Malaysia.

Student Mobility in Malaysia : Outgoing Programmes

There are three broad categories of outgoing student mobility programmes :

- Sponsored students studying abroad under Government Sponsorship.
- Student Exchange Program  
Most public universities in Malaysia offer student exchange programmes. The main objective of such programmes, conducted with foreign universities partners, is to expose students who have never had the chance to experience life abroad to various will be able to have a better global perception on various global issues related to lifestyle and tradition, care for the environment, and equality, to list a few.
- Internship programmes abroad with universities or companies

Students selected for internship programmes will pick up new knowledge and gain some experience on the best practices implemented and executed in relevant businesses or companies. Equally important is the objective to expose these students to the effective and positive work ethics that characterised particular communities.

In 2008/09, 274 Malaysian students participated in mobility programmes abroad. Medicine and Health Science students ranked as the largest group of students who ventured on these short-courses outgoing mobility programmes.

### Student Mobility in Malaysia : Incoming Programmes

What we wish our students to gain through outgoing programmes, are also what we try to offer incoming international students for short-courses mobility programmes.

In the last year, 180 international students came to Malaysia to take part in various mobility programmes conducted in a number of public universities. The number is expected to increase after the launch of "*Because You're Unique*" programme.

### **Present development, experiences and updates**

#### Present development

- Malaysia's own student mobility programme  
The Ministry of Higher Education recently launched its student mobility program, "*Because You're Unique*" on 24<sup>th</sup> July 2009.
  
- Financial aid  
The government has allocated over RM35 million for the development of Student Mobility Programmes this year. Although small in comparison, in term of return of investment, these programmes will generate among the highest dividends. It will impact favourably in our combined targets of internationalisation, the production of top-notch intellectual and employable graduates and raise the overall human capacity development of our graduates.

- The programme will directly benefit 5,000 students between now and the end of next year. The second phase of the programme may involve private universities and with more courses.

### Experiences

- Most of our public HEIs already have mobility program.
- The Split PhD Program was introduced by the Ministry of Higher Education in 2005. It started with the Malaysia-Imperial Doctoral Program (MIDP), followed by Malaysia-Nottingham Doctoral Program (MNDP) and Melbourne University.
- Setting up of foreign branch campuses in Malaysia
  - Curtin University of Technology, Sarawak
  - Swinburne University of Technology, Sarawak
  - Monash University Malaysia, Selangor
  - University of Nottingham, Selangor
  - Newcastle University of Medicine, Johor which is targeted to begin operation in 2011

### **Future roadmap for enhancing student flow and mobility in Malaysia**

- 80,000 international students in 2010
- 5,000 students participating in mobility programmes in 2010
- Credit transfer system - to integrate the system among all public HEIs
- Introducing student mobility for private HEIs

### **Regional perspectives on how Malaysia would take part in promoting mobility in Southeast Asia**

Initiatives by the government and universities to promote mobility in SEA

- boosting the education-tourism programmes among ASEAN country;

- increasing the allocation of budget for student mobility;
- expanding the mobility group to include teachers/lecturers/staff.

## **Aspiration**

We do not need to look very far, geographically, to reap the benefits that mobility programmes could offer. The ASEAN region is in itself a hub of diversity where different languages are spoken, with a spectrum of interesting cultures and varied preserved traditions. Understanding, accepting and appreciating these differences are qualities that we would want to imbue into our students who may one day become leaders in their own right. On a more general scale, with a view towards global human capital development, academia-industry collaboration within the student mobility programme can prepare future professionals with a global outlook.

In our ASEAN context, there are still a lot more efforts that need to be done. Taking advantage of our geographical proximity, student mobility among ASEAN members are more cost-effective. With greater networking and a more mutually understanding community, we can play our part towards making South East Asia more stable socially, economically and politically. We can use the Bologna process as a model to ensure the realisation of this mobility programme. Perhaps one day in the future, South East Asia could be the main destination for students from all over the world because of its quality and its fascinating values.