



CURRENT TRENDS AND REALITIES OF INTERNATIONAL STUDENTS IN EAST AND SOUTHEAST ASIA: THE CASES OF CHINA, HONG KONG, TAIWAN, AND MALAYSIA

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ABSTRACT

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By reviewing regulative documents and extant literature, this paper explores the realities and trends of international students in East and Southeast Asia (ESA). It also shows motivation and strategies of four new players in the international higher education sector in East and Southeast Asia i.e., China, Hong Kong, Taiwan and Malaysia. Apart from showing that intraregional students have not predominated the overall international student population in the region anymore, the paper highlights that ESA region has become an established hub of international students rather than a new emerging destination as it was in previous years. The overall net flow of international students in this region was still deficit prior to 2010s, but the deficit in 2017 is still less than that of 2010's. This is probably the first study of its kind to examine the trends of international students as well as of higher education policies of countries in the ESA region. The findings of this study shall provide an insight into international higher education trends among the ESA countries for stakeholders, including policymakers, university managers, faculty, students, and parents.

Contribution/Originality: This paper reviews the current trends, statistics, motivation and strategies to recruit international students in East and Southeast Asia, with special emphasis on China, Hong Kong, Taiwan and Malaysia

1. INTRODUCTION

International students (ISs) have been regarded as the core component of higher education internationalization (Teichler, 2017). Across the world, higher education institutions and their governments have been putting efforts to recruit ISs. Given this, ISs flow in all over the world but their trends and realities have not been investigated despite their various contexts (Ma & Zhao, 2018). Traditionally, students from East and Southeast Asia (ESA) would prefer to go to the Western developed world for international education purposes (Cummings, 1984) but

ESA still has been the largest source of ISs compared to other regions (Chan, 2012). Except for the case of Japan, this region was earlier rarely regarded as a destination for ISs.

However, the above pattern has changed slightly since the 2000s: traditional host countries of ISs still lead the market, but some new competitors from ESA have arisen and share an increasing "market pie" (Pham, 2018). Initially Japan, Korea and Singapore were the three early pioneers entering the market (Daquila, 2013), and China (Ma & Zhao, 2018), Hong Kong (Lau & Lin, 2017), Taiwan (Lau & Lin, 2017), and Malaysia (Singh & Jack, 2018) entered the shift subsequently.

Over previous years, there have been a few studies examining the above shifting trend. One of the most prolific works was Chan (2012), which described the landscape of international higher education in Asia as a regionalizing process rather than internationalizing one. This is because most ISs in Asian countries by 2012, still preferred the intra region rather than the extra region (Chan, 2012). A few other authors also investigated this issue, but selected a single country as subject of their study instead of the whole region.

In this study, we have updated (Chan, 2012) work on trends and realities of ISs in the ESA region until the most recent year with available data (2017). Specifically, we emphasized international higher education in China, Hong Kong, Taiwan, and Malaysia, which are under-researched, compared to three other active host countries of ISs within the region (i.e., Japan, South Korea, and Singapore).

1.1. Trends and Statistics

1.1.1. ISs in the Region Have Increased Rapidly Since 2010

In the past, students preferred developed Western countries for academic purposes. In recent years, particularly from 2010 to 2017, this trend has changed and is reflected in the rise in the number of ISs in the rest of the world, including ESA.

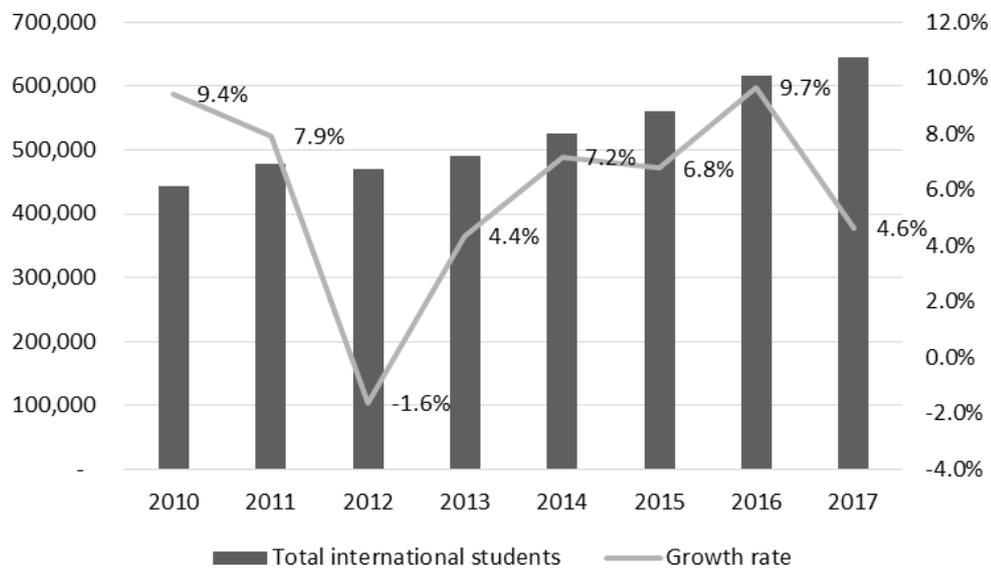


Figure-1. ISs in the ESA between 2010 and 2017.

Source: synthesized from UNESCO (2020).

As shown in Figure 1, between 2010 and 2017, the number of ISs in ESA increased rapidly. Specifically, the number of ISs in this area in 2017 was 644,618 increased by 45.53% compared to 2010, with an average increase of 5.5% per year. A closer look at China, Hong Kong, Taiwan and Malaysia (Table 1) shows that they are also actively involved in the IS market. Particularly, the number of ISs in these four countries increased by an average of 12.06%, 17.42%, 8.33%, and 13.72% per year respectively between 2010 and 2017.

Table-1. The number of ISs in China, Hong Kong, Taiwan and Malaysia between 2010 and 2017.

Year	2010	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015	2016	2017
China	71,673	79,638	88,979	96,409	108,217	123,127	137,527	157,108
Hong Kong	10,325	17,959	21,100	26,731	30,013	31,955	32,004	34,349
Taiwan	45,413	57,920	66,961	79,730	93,645	111,340	116,875	121,461
Malaysia	64,749	63,625	56,203	n.a.	99,648	111,443	124,133	100,765

Note: (n.a.: data is not available).

Sources: synthesized from UNESCO (2020) and MOE Taiwan (2019a).

1.2. Intraregional Mobility Tends to Decrease While Extra-regional Mobility Tends to Increase

Traditionally, ESA countries, except Japan, attracted mainly students in the region (Kuroda, Sugimura, Kitamura, & Asada, 2018). Due to this reason, Chan (2012) emphasized that the Asian higher education is more limited to regionalization rather than internationalization. However, as observed in the period of 2010-2017, the percentage of the intraregional student mobility in the region tended to decrease. Figure 2 indicates that this ratio has decreased gradually over the years: from 55.92% (2010) to 44.59% (2017), which implies an average annual reduction rate is about 2.78%.

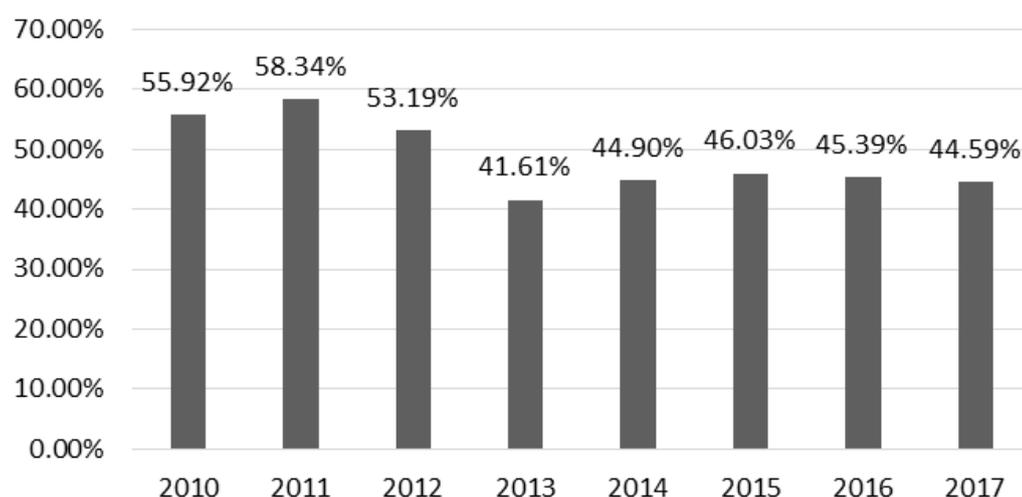


Figure-2. The percentage of ESA's intraregional student mobility 2010-2017.

Source: synthesized from UNESCO (2020).

Such decrease of intraregional mobility is also observed in Hong Kong and Malaysia as reflected in Table 2. Specifically, from 2010 to 2017, this rate in Hong Kong and Malaysia decreased on average by 0.62% and 4.14% per year. Taiwan's ratio, on the other hand, was stable and always at over 80%. Such a figure might be due to the New Southbound Policy of Taiwan intending to attract students in 18 countries in Southeast Asian, South Asian, and Australian regions (Focus Taiwan, 2019).

Table-2. Intraregional ratio of China, Hong Kong, Malaysia, and Taiwan in the period of 2010-2018.

Year	2010	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018
China	n.a.	60%							
Hong Kong	95.25%	91.04%	89.56%	90.70%	91.51%	91.52%	91.24%	90.64%	n.a.
Taiwan	n.a.	n.a.	n.a.	n.a.	81.9%	84.2%	83.6%	82.9%	n.a.
Malaysia	32.13%	29.27%	29.08%	n.a.	21.41%	21.04%	20.97%	22.90%	n.a.

Note: (n.a.: data is not available).

Sources: Synthesized from UNESCO (2020); ICEF Monitor (2019) and MOE Taiwan (2019b).

*** Note:**

- The figure of China is calculated from the whole Asian countries.
- The figure of Hong Kong is calculated from 17 countries, including: Brunei Darussalam, Cambodia, China, Macao, Democratic People's Republic of Korea, Indonesia, Japan, Laos, Malaysia, Mongolia, Myanmar, Philippines, Republic Korea, Singapore, Thailand, Timor and Vietnam.

- The figure of Taiwan is calculated from 15 countries, including: Vietnam, Indonesia, Thailand, Malaysia, Singapore, Philippines, Myanmar, Laos, Cambodia, Brunei, Korea, Japan, Macao, Hong Kong and China.
- The figure of Malaysia is calculated from 17 countries, including Brunei Darussalam, Cambodia, China, Macao, Democratic People's Republic of Korea, Indonesia, Japan, Laos, Hong Kong, Mongolia, Myanmar, Philippines, Republic Korea, Singapore, Thailand, Timor and Vietnam.

Thus, during the period of 2010-2017, it seems Taiwan selected Southeast Asia as the strategic target, hence it is reasonable that the rate of intraregional students in Taiwan is stable and relatively high. China, which set an ambitious goal of luring 500,000 ISs by 2020, has also achieved positive results (ICEF Monitor, 2019). One consequence of this increase in number is taking the leadership position in expanding the IS market (Luo, 2017). However, China's efforts have been limited to attracting ISs in Asia: 60% of ISs in China are from neighboring countries (ICEF Monitor, 2019).

1.3. The share of ISs of ESA has Tended to Increase

The increase in the number of ISs in ESA has contributed to a rise in the share of ISs in the region over the period 2010-2017.

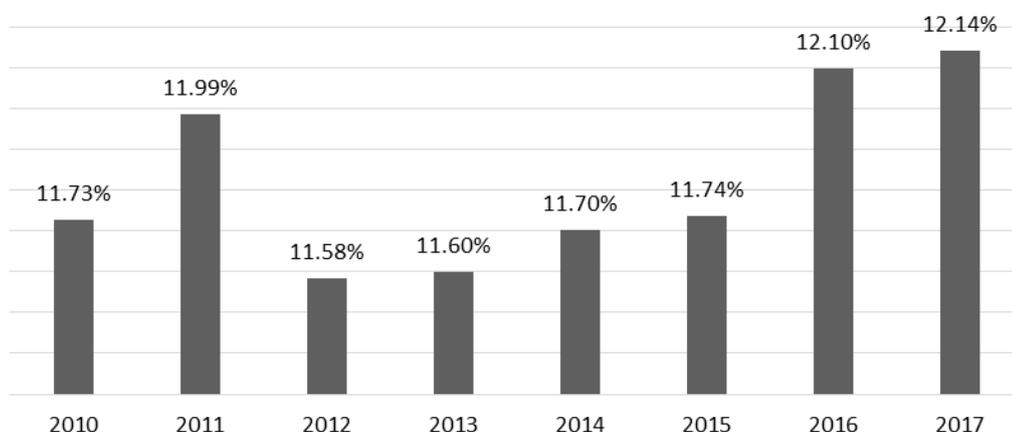


Figure-3. The share of ISs of ESA between 2010 and 2017.

Source: synthesized from UNESCO (2020).

Overall, the share of ISs of ESA has shown slight increase throughout 2010-2017, with an average increase of 0.43% per year. Such increase, obviously, stems from internationalization endeavors of the four sampled countries in this study (Table 3):

Table-3. The share of ISs of China, Hong Kong, Taiwan and Malaysia between 2010 and 2017.

Year	2010	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015	2016	2017
China	1.90%	2.00%	2.19%	2.28%	2.41%	2.57%	2.70%	2.96%
Hong Kong	0.27%	0.45%	0.52%	0.63%	0.67%	0.67%	0.63%	0.65%
Taiwan	1.20%	1.45%	1.65%	1.88%	2.08%	2.33%	2.30%	2.29%
Malaysia	1.71%	1.60%	1.38%	n.a.	2.22%	2.33%	2.44%	1.90%

Note: (n.a.: data is not available).

Sources: synthesized from UNESCO (2020) and MOE Taiwan (2019a).

Table 3 illustrates the slight increase in the share of ISs in these countries. In particular, Hong Kong had the most significant international population share growth rate, with an average growth rate of 11.61% per year. China, Taiwan and Malaysia saw an average IS population share growth rate of 8.41%, 5.7%, and 1.33% per year respectively.

1.4. The Net Flow of Internationally Mobile Students into ESA Decrease Sharply Over the Years

The net flow of ISs is the arithmetic difference between number of inbound students and the number of outbound students, according to UNESCO. We can calculate the value of ISs' net flow for either a region or a specific country. The value might serve as a proxy to label a country (or a region) as a sending source or receiving destination of ISs. A country (or a region) might have a high (absolute) number of inbound students; but it would be still considered as sender of ISs if its net flow is negative.

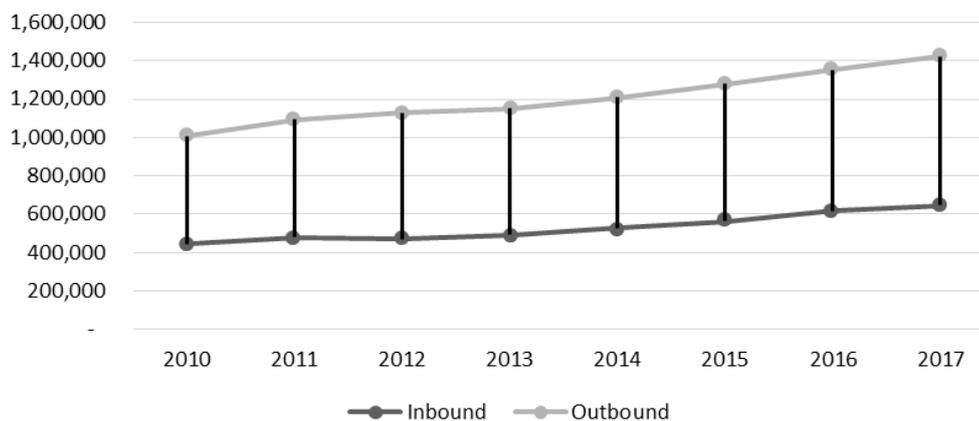


Figure-4. The net flow of ESA between 2010 and 2017.

Source: synthesized from UNESCO (2020).

As indicated in Figure 4 and Table 4, from 2010 to 2017, the net flow into ESA region as a whole was always negative, which means that outbound students always outnumber inbound students. Moreover, in 2017, it decreases as compared to 2010, equivalent to a 37.88% decrease. This does mean that ESA is still a sender rather than a receiver of ISs. Nevertheless, a closer look at the four sampled countries shows different prospects:

Table-4. The net flow of internationally mobile students in China, Hong Kong, Taiwan and Malaysia between 2010 and 2017.

Year	2010	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015	2016	2017
China	-496,311	-573,536	-609,503	-622,948	-662,448	-696,568	-730,586	-770,982
Hong Kong	-22,443	-13,329	-9,650	-5,343	-3,869	-4,317	-5,182	-2,093
Taiwan	11,532	25,574	38,259	48,538	59,020	73,174	77,022	81,452
Malaysia	5,299	3,921	-3,237	n.a.	37,143	46,718	59,046	37,512
ESA	-563,697	-615,107	-658,591	-659,719	-682,548	-716,041	-735,156	-777,205

Note: (n.a: data is not available).

Sources: synthesized from UNESCO (2020) and MOE Taiwan (2019a)

Thanks to the aggressive internationalization strategy over the previous decade. China has achieved promising results regarding inbound ISs. However, at the same time, China even sent a larger number of outbound ones. The pattern of inbound-outbound student mobility in China is, indeed, in line with the ESA. Thus, China is still a sender of ISs.

As shown in Table 4, although Hong Kong was still a sending country of ISs until 2017, its net flow has increased considerably since 2010. The strategy to become a hub of ISs initiated by Hong Kong's government since 2008 (Clark, 2015) seemed to bear fruits. However, the protests in the final months of 2019 might, to a larger extent, have resulted in slowing down the inflow of ISs into Hong Kong (Quinn, 2019). Malaysia and Taiwan, on the other hand, are the two countries with positive net flow during 2010-2017. Thus, Malaysia and Taiwan have become the two next receivers of ISs in Asia after Japan.

1.5. Motivation

Several factors motivate governments and universities from ESA countries to involve in the IS market. While some motivators are aligned to what is observed in traditional host countries of ISs; a few others are indeed, dissimilar and pertain to their situations. In this section, we discuss these motivating factors (Figure 5 and Table 5).

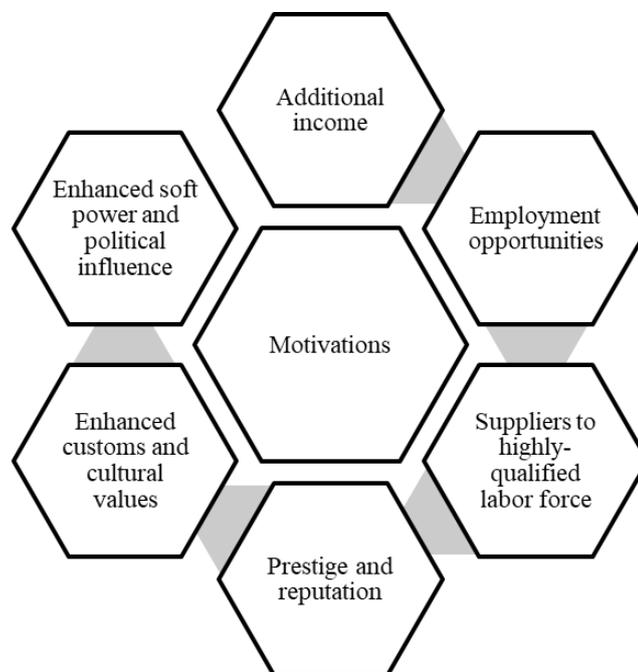


Figure-5. Main factors motivating governments to involve in the IS market.
Sources: synthesized and developed from Altbach and Knight (2007); Chan (2012) and Bodycott (2016).

Table-5. Main motivations boost China, Hong Kong, Taiwan and Malaysia to attract more ISs.

Motivation	China	Hong Kong	Taiwan	Malaysia
Additional income	√	x	√	√
More employment opportunities	x	x	x	x
Suppliers to the highly qualified labor force	x	√	√	x
More prestige and reputation	√	x	x	√
Enhanced customs and cultural values	√	√	x	√
Enhanced soft power and political influence	√	x	x	x

Note: √ indicates that the given country is boosted by the given motivation; x indicates that the given country is not boosted by the given motivation.

1.6. Additional Income

It's observed in the extant literature that ISs bring additional income (Reinold, 2018) not only through tuition fees but also through food and clothing, transportation, and other living expenses (Hughes, 2019). For instance, Australia earned A\$ 28 billion from ISs in the year 2016-2017, increased by 16.1% compared to 24.1 billion Australian dollars in 2015-2016 (Australian Government Department of Education Skills and Employment, 2017). Parallely, it has been accounted that, in 2016, ISs contributed US\$ 57.3 billion and US\$ 25.5 billion to the US and the UK, respectively (Rusu, 2019).

This phenomenon has also been observed in all host countries in ESA. For example, it is estimated that the enrolments of ISs in the higher education sector brought approximately RM4.5 billion annually for Malaysia and such respective figure is expected to reach RM10 billion by 2020, if the target of 200,000 overseas students set by the Malaysian government is achieved (Higher Education Advisor, 2016).

Earning more income has become extremely crucial, given the fact that universities are receiving less funding from governments due to their financial deficits (Mac, 2017). Besides, the privatization of universities and the

extent of cost-sharing schemes have also been the impulse to attract ISs to generate more revenue (Cantwell, 2015). Additional income generating from ISs is, indeed, going to contribute to the sustainability of higher education systems of certain Asian countries in future. This is because that the Asian population is aging and might result in a shortage of prospective students in the upcoming years. For instance, the Taiwanese government anticipated that they would close or merge up to 52 universities and colleges due to inadequate domestic enrolment (ICEF Monitor, 2015).

1.7. More Employment Opportunities

The arrival of overseas students might also bring more employment opportunities in various industries for the hosting nations to provide products and services for them, such as postal, banking, and accommodation renting (Hughes, 2019).

This phenomenon has been observed in Western countries. For instance, Kennedy (2018) revealed that the presence of ISs in the Netherlands could create 10,000 additional jobs for residents. Moreover, it is also predicted that approximately 124,087 new rooms could be needed for the growing demand for overseas students. Similarly, ISs in Canada created more than 81,000 jobs for local workers (CBIE, 2016). Likewise, Ortiz, Chang, and Fang (2015) confirmed that in the US, every three jobs for local workers were created or supported when seven ISs enrolled in the US educational institutions. Consequently, a total of approximately 458,290 US jobs were created or supported in the year of 2018-2019 (NAFSA, 2019).

In ESA, we have not found any specific number of new jobs created through the presence of ISs or official strategies of any country that place employment creation as an incentive to attract ISs. The plausible explanation for this phenomenon is that the region is only in early stages of attracting ISs, so new job opportunities created by ISs in the region have not been specifically estimated. However, this figure in the US, Canada, or the Netherlands mentioned above can also be considered as a basis to motivate countries in ESA to attract more ISs.

1.8. Suppliers to the Highly Qualified Labor Force

In the long term, ISs who are retained in the host country after finishing their study could contribute to expanding the domestic pool of highly-skilled workers (Reinold, 2018). The demographic change and negative population developments are expected to result in a shortage of highly-qualified labor force (Reinold, 2018), which is a chronicle problem for developed countries (Pham, 2018). Given this circumstance, some governments expect that ISs would be retained in their countries after graduation and join their highly-qualified labor forces (Jung & Kim, 2018; Ninomiya, Knight, & Watanabe, 2009; Waring, 2014) as it is assumed that they have the advantages of host country language ability and are familiar with host country's economic, cultural, social and political context (Reinold, 2018).

For these reasons, some countries have implemented policies to ensure that they can benefit the most from this resource (Hawthorne, 2014). For example, in New Zealand, ISs could stay and seek for a job up to three years after graduating (Kalafatelis, Bonnaire, & Alliston, 2018). Besides, Crace (2018a) pointed out that Singapore attracted 7,251 overseas students to apply for permanent residency (PR) between 2008-2017 for employment purposes; of which 82% succeeded.

Similarly, Hong Kong has planned significant public expenditures for positioning the Hong Kong higher education sector in both regional and global higher education markets to retain talented graduates for creating their competitiveness in the world (Oleksiyenko, Cheng, & Yip, 2013). Also, the Taiwanese government has lowered restrictions for ISs to stay and join the Taiwanese labor market (Crace, 2018b). The purpose of this action is to attract more international talents to cover the labor shortage in fields like engineering, IT and manufacturing.

1.9. More Prestige and Reputation

ISs might bring prestige and reputation for universities since many renowned ranking agencies (e.g., QS, THE) are using ISs as one of the important indicators (Ma & Zhao, 2018). Moreover, a large number of students, especially ISs, enrolled in a university indicates its reputation and attractiveness (Teichler, 2017).

Being aware of such critical roles of ISs, some countries have adopted active strategies to recruit more ISs (Reinold, 2018) to become an attractive academic destination. For example, the Chinese government planned to have approximately 42 higher education institutions demonstrated in the world-class rankings by 2050. To do that, Chinese universities hope that their successful attractions of international academic talents through their scholarship policy for ISs will harvest sufficient academic excellence and reputation (Atack, 2017; Crace, 2018b). In the same vein, Malaysia also aims to expand enrolment and reach 250,000 ISs by 2025 to strengthen its higher education value proposition, capacity, and capabilities and get renowned for its academic and research expertise (Ministry of Education Malaysia, 2015).

1.10. Enhanced Customs and Cultural Values

Foreign students are considered as a vital source of diversity in terms of culture and custom (Luo & Jamieson-Drake, 2013). The exchanged cultural aspects may bring the cross-cultural teaching and learning methods in the classroom environment of the host country (Higher Education Advisor, 2016). In other words, ISs might influence local students in terms of intrinsic and extrinsic motivation of study, how to cooperate, compete, and learn individually. For that reason, many countries around the world have recruited ISs for the obvious purpose of enhancing international and multi-cultural perspectives of domestic students as well as the curricula quality (Altbach & Knight, 2007) such as Canada (QS WowNews, 2019) and Australia (Council of Australian Governments, 2010).

In the opposite direction, ESA governments also hope that the arrival of ISs in their nations would also bring potential opportunities to introduce their customs and cultural values and take advantage of them to disseminate these own identities worldwide (Bangkok Office & Asia and Pacific Regional Bureau for Education, 2013). The Chinese government introduced the new *Belt and Road Initiative* to emphasize international education and IS mobility (ISM) as the essential tools to deliver the Chinese culture and wisdom to other nations (OECD, 2018). Hong Kong also considered attracting ISs as a way to diversify the higher education sector and enhance cultural values for local students (Bodycott, 2016). Similarly, the Malaysian government realized that ISs in Malaysia have arrived from over 80 nations of Asia, Africa, and Europe, and therefore, brought in the host country a variety of languages, cultures, traditions, and customs. This helped Malaysia gain a positive impact on its tourism industry (Higher Education Advisor, 2016).

1.11. Enhanced Soft Power and Political Influence

The appearance of international education and ISs may create *soft power* for the ESA countries by exploring opportunities to influence various stakeholders locally and internationally (Wen, 2018). Undeniably, China continues to express its soft power to ISs through intangible resources such as national cohesion (e.g., the China Town symbol in some Western countries); culture (e.g., the introduction of the Confucius Institutes to the world); ideology (e.g., *The Chinese Dream* of the Chinese government); and international influence (e.g., the recent *Trade War* between China and America) (Wen, 2018).

The international education and ISM might not only strengthen the political influence of the ESA by bringing opportunities to conduct the political competitions and solutions of their nations but also be used for diplomatic rationales (Wen, 2018). Indeed, since the Cold War, the Chinese government has received the exchange students from the Soviet Union, Eastern European and some Asian countries to study in China to undertake the internationalist obligations as a huge Communist nation for supporting and influencing the International

Revolution of Peoples’ Liberation of the communist countries in the world (Wen, 2018). In contrast, ISs in China could be considered as the essential mean for political solutions, as they help to stabilize the Chinese internal politics and protect the national revolution in China. Alternatively, the international education programs for ISs in China require them not only to study compulsory Chinese history and political subjects but also attend meetings and seminars to practice and disseminate communist and socialist ideology nationally and internationally (Wen, 2018).

1.12. Strategies

All in all, there are various strategies adopted by ESA countries to attract more ISs. The following section of this paper will classify the strategies of countries into six main groups, as shown in Table 6 and Figure 6 below.

Table-6. Main instruments/policies to attract ISs of some ESA governments.

Country	Name of the instruments/policies	The target of ISs	Source
China	China's National Plan for medium and long-term education reform and development 2010-2020	500,000 by 2020	China Central Government (2010)
Hong Kong	China's 11th Five-Year Plan and the Development of Hong Kong	n.a.	The Government of Hong Kong (2007)
Malaysia	The Malaysia Education Blueprint 2015-2025 (Higher Education)	250,000 by 2025	Ministry of Education Malaysia (2015)
Taiwan	Study in Taiwan enhancement program	150,000 by 2020	MOE China (2011)

Note: n.a.: not available data.

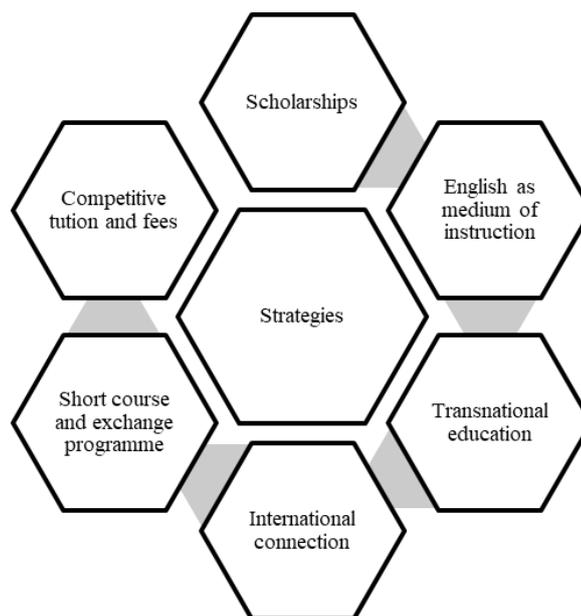


Figure-6. Main strategies to attract IS.

Source: synthesized and developed from Sugimura (2008); Chan (2012) and Kell and Vogl (2012).

Table-7. Main strategies implemented by China, Hong Kong, Taiwan and Malaysia to attract ISs.

Motivations	China	Hong Kong	Taiwan	Malaysia
Scholarships	√	√	√	x
English as a medium of instruction	√	√	√	√
Transnational education	√	√	x	√
International connection	x	x	√	√
Short course and exchange program	x	√	√	√
Competitive tuition and fees	x	x	√	√

Note: √ indicates that the given strategy has been implemented; x indicates that the given strategy has not implemented

1.13. Scholarships

The availability of scholarships was the second most important factor that students considered during their decision of university selection (QS, 2019).

The Chinese government has recently used scholarships as a pull-factor to attract ISs. The number of Chinese regular scholarships and scholarships under agreements with various countries has increased dramatically (Yang & Wit, 2019). In 2017, the Chinese government awarded scholarships for 58,600 ISs from 180 nations in various fields (Jiani, 2017). Notably, in 2016, only about 8,840 students had received the Confucius Institute Scholarship, which was a new form of educational cooperation between China and other countries (Yang & Wit, 2019). Moreover, some Chinese provinces had set up local government scholarships such as the Beijing Government Scholarship and the Jasmine Jiangsu Government Scholarship for ISs.

Prior to 2007, majority of non-local students in Hong Kong came from Mainland (Mok, 2016). However, when Donald Tsang took over as the new Chief Executive of Hong Kong, he affirmed providing more scholarships for ISs to achieve the goal of expanding the number of foreign students in Hong Kong (Mok, 2016). For example, the \$1 billion HKSAR Government Scholarship Fund, which was established in 2008, was awarded to outstanding students. Moreover, in 2012, a scholarship program was established for first-year, non-local and full-time students from ASEAN countries, India and South Korea.

In Taiwan, the rise in the population of ISs stems from the availability of scholarships offered by MOE Taiwan (Ko, 2008). Chou, Roberts, and Ching (2012) also assert that the main attraction of Taiwan to ISs are its promising scholarship opportunities. Indeed, the establishment of the Taiwan Scholarship Program resulted in an increase in the number of ISs pursuing degrees in Taiwan (Suprpto, Saragih, & Al Ardha, 2019). Furthermore, Taiwan has also developed the Elite study, which is in line with Taiwan's ambitious target to focus on India and ASEAN markets (ICEF Monitor, 2016).

1.14. English as a Medium of Instruction

English as a medium of instruction (EMI) has been identified as one of the most popular strategies employed by non-English speaking countries to internationalize their higher education system (Coleman, 2006). This strategy has been observed in all four sampled countries of this study. Specifically, the number of English-taught Chinese universities has increased from 34 in 2010 to more than 100 in 2018 (Chinese Scholarship Council, 2018). Undeniably, Hong Kong rose to an attractive international destination partly due to its high-quality English-medium teaching (Ng & Tang, 2016). Indeed, all public universities in Hong Kong use EMI for lectures and tutorials (QS Top Universities, 2020). Additionally, the number of EMI courses is increasing dramatically across content areas in Taiwan (Mayer, Chen Wang, Egginton, & Flint, 2014) where 121 programs taught in English have been accredited (Chang, 2017). Malaysia has also always affirmed English's role in attracting ISs as well as turning the country into an international hub (Cheng, Mahmood, & Yeap, 2013). Among more than 31 universities (including public and private universities), two public universities and almost all private universities use EMI (Sidek, 2017).

1.15. Transnational Education

Transnational education (TNE), which is generally considered as the most advanced stage of the internationalization of universities (Healey, 2017), has been regarded as a preferable mode of international education conducted by Asian countries. Under a TNE course, a foreign university, frequently from the Western world, would coordinate with an Asian university or open its offshore campus to offer an "at-home" international degree program. TNE is appropriate for domestic students who like to get a foreign degree without leaving their home countries. For ESA countries in particular, apart from the endeavor to strengthen domestic programs, TNE has been revealed as a strategy to attract ISs. Thus, TNE is prevalent in the ESA region in the recent decade

(Knight, 2012). Table 8 represents the number of and names of selected branch campuses in China, Hong Kong, Taiwan and Malaysia, as accounted in 2017.

Table-8. Number and location of some selected Branch Campuses in China, Hong Kong, Taiwan and Malaysia (updated January 20, 2017).

Host country	Number of branch campuses	Universities/ Institutions having Branch Campuses
China	32	Sydney Institute of Language & Commerce, Shanghai-Vancouver Film School; SWJTU-Leeds Joint School; LNU-MSU College of International Business
Hong Kong	5	Ivey Asia; Manchester Business School – East Asia International Centre; University of Upper Iowa Hong Kong
Taiwan	1	Baruch College; City University of New York
Malaysia	12	Monash University; The University of Nottingham, Malaysia Campus; ESMOD Malaysia

Source: C-Bert (2017).

China, which currently hosts 32 international branch campuses, is the largest host country (C-Bert, 2017), and followed by the United Arab Emirates, Malaysia, and Singapore (JISC, 2018). There is a total of 1,979 TNE programs in China, with 577 out of 2500 Chinese universities enrolled in TNE through dual or joint programs (JISC, 2018). Therefore, it is not surprising that China now has up to 550,000 students taking TNE courses offered by other countries.

Hong Kong has also used transnational education as a strategy to attract ISs by focusing on providing regular joint programs, or through distance learning. For instance, the number of associate degree programs in 2013-2014 was 142, which accounted for 25% of the total number of the full-time self-financing local programs that were offered by Hong Kong (Mok, 2016). Moreover, Hong Kong is an attractive destination for overseas institutions to set up their academic programs because of its geographical proximity to Mainland China. In 2017, Hong Kong hosted 5 branch campuses and ranked 7th in the top 10 host countries (JISC, 2018).

Malaysia ranked 3rd in the top 10 host countries with 12 branch campuses, with nearly half of those being campuses of UK institutions, and followed by Australian ones (JISC, 2018). Malaysia has also seen an increase in the number of local students with foreign degrees earned both at home and partly overseas as twin programs. The Malaysian government had also collaborated with foreign countries, especially with the UK and Australia, allowing local private institutions to award double degrees through this collaboration. Additionally, the Malaysian Qualifications Framework (MQF) also recently started to strictly regulate transnational operations to ensure that this kind of institution evolved within an effective quality framework (Healey, 2017).

1.16. International Connection

Connecting to international networks and alliances is another means to attract ISs. This strategy supports the mobility of ISs by creating a set of quality standards for all education institutions or programs in a specific region and ensuring the transferability of credits among partners (Bhandari, Robles, & Farrugia, 2018). In terms of regional coverage, some high profile student mobility programs in Asia include: Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN) and Asia Pacific Economic Cooperation (APEC) (Bhandari et al., 2018); the Great Mekong Subregion (Pham, 2012); Asia-Pacific Quality Network, the International Network for Quality Assurance Agencies in Higher Education, and the Association of Southeast Asian Institutions of Higher Learning (ASAIHL) (Chan, 2012). These programs focus on recognizing the academic quality of regional universities. Therefore, regional students can efficiently study in any country in the region with transferability of their academic results.

At the national scale, a memorandum of understandings (MOUs) was signed to enhance the identity of partner universities. For example, Taiwan agreed to actively cooperate with other countries to boost their international connections. In 2018, an MOU between the Department of International and Cross-strait Education of the MOE

Taiwan and the New Mexico Higher Education Department of the State of New Mexico in the United States of America was signed to contribute to their strengthening of education (MOE Taiwan, 2018). In the same year, Taiwan and Vietnam signed an MOU, which focused on promoting educational exchange between Vietnamese universities and six Taiwanese universities (DeAeth, 2018).

Besides, in 2018, the Malaysian government and the West Java provincial government signed an MOU to promote student exchange and knowledge transfer between the two countries (Rep-Humas, 2018). Such cooperation also aimed to increase the quality and mode of training between the two countries. Moreover, MOUs in the field of education between Malaysia and Australia were signed twice to tie these higher education sectors stronger and closer (Australian Government Department of Education Skills and Employment, 2012).

1.17. Short Course and Exchange Program

Since Asian universities are not so popular as their competitors from the Western world, it would be difficult for Asian universities to attract extra regional students to study in their degree programs. Thus, non-degree courses and programs might be the measures to attract "truly" ISs from other continents (Chan, 2012). Hong Kong, however, has well-established international as well as regional networks for exchange programmes (Yuen, Cheung, & Yuen, 2016). They have motivated many North American and European students to study in Hong Kong (Yu & Wright, 2017).

Similarly, short courses and students exchange programs have recently become a significant component of international higher education in Taiwan. According to Ching, Lien, and Chao (2014), most internationally mobile students enroll in short-term programs in Taiwan. The Taiwanese government has introduced various programs supporting students to take such study exchange programs in other countries (Chang, 2010). Moreover, students enrolling in such programs could be presented with awards and even financial incentives (Chang, 2010).

Additionally, Malaysia is also one of the countries considering short courses and exchange programs as an effective way to lure more ISs. Local universities are encouraged to offer short-term programs of one week to three month duration to attract students from developed countries, and increase the diversity of Malaysia's IS community (Yeoh, 2017).

1.18. Competitive Tuition Fee and expenses

In recent years, affordability has become a growing concern among ISs when they choose a country to study. Prospective students are likely to consider tuition fees and expenses as essential entry requirements much more than current students motivated by other factors (Educations for Institution, 2019).

Due to such changes in the factors affecting ISs' decisions, some countries have set up strategies attracting more ISs by keeping competitive tuition fee. For instance, Taiwan offers higher education with reasonable and affordable tuition fee. It accounts for only approximately 15% of GDP per capita in Taiwan, significantly lower than many other countries (MOE Taiwan, 2019a). The country seems to be successful with this strategy when its affordable tuition fees are considered as the third-most important reason by ISs when choosing Taiwan as the educational destination (FICHET, 2017). Malaysia is also considered to be an attractive destination for ISs because of its competitive tuition fees and living cost (Ahmad & Buchanan, 2015). Particularly, a student desiring to earn a UK engineering degree has to pay approximately three-time higher than students studying in Malaysia to acquire the same degree.

2. DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSION

In his review work, namely "Shifting patterns of student mobility in Asia", Chan (2012) described ESA region (except Japan) as a new and salient importer of ISs. Specifically, from being characterized by only sending students to Western world prior to 2000s, ESA countries have shifted to become a new destination of ISs during the decade

of 2000s. Chan also figured out two essential attributes pertaining to the population of international higher education in the region; namely (i) most ISs were intra-regional; and (ii) outflow of ISs from the region outnumbered the inflow to the region.

In this review work, we updated the shift discussed in Chan (2012) until the latest available data (2017). This study has revealed that at present, ESA region has become an established hub of ISs unlike previously when it was a new emerging destination. In 2017, as presented at the outset of this study (Figure 3), for every 100 mobile students across the world, 12 students selected ESA as their destination for university degree. Among these, 8 arrived in China, Hong Kong, Taiwan or Malaysia. Such a changing scenario is partly due to the internationalization efforts of the ESA countries, including the four sampled countries in this study during the last one decade.

Two attributes of ISM in the region as identified by Chan (2012) have changed accordingly. First, intraregional students have not predominated the overall IS population in the region anymore. As represented in Figure 2, the year 2013 was marked the first time ever when intraregional students contributed less than 50% of IS population in the region. Especially, for certain specific cases like Malaysia, intraregional students share a smaller pie of the overall ISs as compared to those of extra-regional. Second, though the overall net flow of ISs in the region (i.e., inflow minus outflow) was still deficit as observed prior to 2010s, such value of deficit in 2017 is smaller than 2010's.

The above evolvement toward an established hub of ISs in the region, without doubt, is a consequence of proactive vision, strategies and endeavors conducted by ESA countries. This survey has identified 5 key motivations (Additional income; Suppliers to the highly qualified labor force; More prestige and reputation; Enhanced customs and cultural values and Enhanced soft power and political influence) and 6 major strategies (Scholarship; English as medium of instruction; Transnational education; International connection; Short course and exchange program and Competitive tuition fee and living costs) adopted by ESA countries, especially in the case of China, Hong Kong, Taiwan and Malaysia.

In future, we encourage IS scholars to pay more attention to examine more profoundly these strategies and motivating factors. This would contribute to widen the understanding about the under-researched theme of North-South and South-South ISM (Wit, 2018).

In this study, we have focused the IS scenario in four countries: China, Hong Kong, Taiwan and Malaysia. These four countries, along with other three early players of IS market in the region (i.e., Japan, Korea and Singapore) have formed, what we called, the seven major Asian destination countries (MADCs) of ISs. In this study, other countries in the region, where the number of ISs is modest compared to the seven MADCs, were not included. However, it is not difficult to find out about preliminary plans and policies which other countries in ESA adopt to attract ISs (ICEF Monitor, 2018; Kennedy, 2018; Pham, 2013).

It is concluded in this study that the pioneering effort and endeavors undertaken by the seven MADCs would result in a positive "Halo effect" on other countries in the region. Further studies might sample other countries within the region as object of examination regarding ISs. Besides, governments and universities in other countries within the region could also take advantage of such shift to increase their own number of ISs.

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