

Sample Position Paper

Enhancing Youth Mobility and Expanding Global Opportunities in the Asia-Pacific.

GROUP	
REPRESENTED ECONOMY	The Philippines
COMMITTEE	Committee A Youth Talent & Education Committee

APEC Youth Simulation

For learning and discussion purposes

Nation's Hope: Youth

'Ang Kabataan ang Pag-asa ng Bayan.' — Dr. Jose Rizal, *Philippine National Hero*
(Youth is the hope of the nation.)

This Filipino principle reflects the determination of millions of young Filipinos. Yet, the world as of present begs the question: *can youth mobility truly create inclusive growth if opportunities for international education remain accessible only to those who can afford them?*

In the Philippines, youth mobility is a core driver of human capital, however, with a globally competitive population, structural inequalities continue to limit access to international education. With this, the paper pushes to maintain that the Philippines recognizes youth mobility as an essential pathway for human capital development; however, mobility must be made more equitable and sustainable by addressing structural inequalities while ensuring that international education contributes to talent circulation rather than an irreversible brain drain.

I. BACKGROUND OF THE ISSUE

The prevailing education crisis in the Philippines is no secret. According to UNICEF, nearly 90% of 10-year-olds cannot read a simple text, while over 1.5 million of 10 to 19-year-olds are out of school (SEA-PLM, 2019; PSA APIS, 2022). These figures reveal more than a learning crisis but expose the structural inequalities that limit educational attainment and consequently, access to opportunities for upward socioeconomic mobility.

For many Filipino students, the pursuit of international education is constrained not by the lack of hope, ambition, or academic potential, but by the series of interconnected institutional barriers (Muñoz-Carrasco, 2024). Beyond tuition and living expenses, students must shoulder hidden costs such as standardized language examinations, passport and visa applications, medical examinations, document authentication, credential evaluations, and proof of financial capacity. This bureaucratic process disproportionately affects students from low-income backgrounds, even when some scholarships cover tuition and living expenses (Center for Public Impact, 2024).

Institutional challenges further restrict participation in international education. Unequal distribution of international partnerships, scholarship information, exchange programs, and inconsistent credit recognition and transfer policies among the higher education institutes create uncertainty that discourages participation in overseas study. Moreover, limited reintegration mechanisms are prevalent and persist socioeconomic disparities that encourage many graduates to settle abroad, contributing to the country's continuing brain drain (Cagoco-Guiam, 2024).

II. ECONOMIC POSITION OF THE PHILIPPINES

The Philippines positions youth mobility and international education as strategic investments in human capital aimed for long-term macroeconomic development. The country leverages its young demographic to boost global competitiveness as it prioritizes facilitating outward student and labor mobility while building structural hubs. It further believes that access to international education should not be determined by socioeconomic status but based on opportunities available to all qualified students.

In line with this vision, the Philippines expects greater regional cooperation in reducing financial and administrative barriers. Through this, support for stronger scholarship networks, mutual recognition of academic credentials, and expanded institutional partnerships that make education more accessible throughout the Asia-Pacific region should be reinforced.

At the same time, the Philippines recognizes that increased mobility should not come at the expense of national development. Rather than contributing to permanent talent loss, the country expects international education as a stepping stone in promoting talent circulation, where students are encouraged to return home or maintain professional linkages that facilitate knowledge transfer, innovation, investment, and capacity-building. By the appropriate balance of outward mobility and effective reintegration mechanisms, the country seeks to maximize the developmental benefits of international education while mitigating the long-term effects of brain drain.

III. EXISTING POLICIES OF THE PHILIPPINES

The Philippines has undertaken several initiatives that targets the expansion of educational access at the same time strengthening international cooperation. Through the Universal Access to Quality Tertiary Education Act (Republic Act. No. 10931), the government increased access by providing free tuition and other education subsidies in state universities and colleges. This effort is also supplemented by the Commission on Higher Education (CHED) provides scholarship programs such as the CHED Merit Scholarship Program (CMSP) and the Bagong Pilipinas Merit Scholarship, which provide financial assistance to students while maximizing the participation through graduates contributing to national development through return-service commitments.

To strengthen workforce readiness, the Education Quality for Inclusive Prosperity (EQUIP) program, launched in July 2026, a partnership between Philippine Department of Education and Australia, modernizing senior high school curricula to better align graduates' skills with global labour market demands (Gregorio, 2026). Regionally, the Philippines supports academic mobility through the ASEAN Work Plan on Education 2026-2030 and bilateral agreements, including the Memorandum of Cooperation with New Zealand, which promote student exchanges and institutional collaboration. Moreover, the Commission on Filipinos Overseas (CFO) also implements reintegration initiatives that encourage returning graduates to apply their gained knowledge and expertise toward national development. Despite all of these, the Philippines recognizes lapses occurred in each policy wherein administrative inefficiencies, delayed scholarship disbursements, fragmented visa processes, and uneven institutional capacity continue to affect the effectiveness of the initiatives. All in all, the broader view to these policies is that this is a demonstration of continued commitment to expanding youth mobility and international education. In the same manner, highlighting the need for stronger implementation, greater institutional coordination, and enhanced diplomatic relations with neighboring regions to ensure that educational opportunities are both accessible and sustainable.

IV. RECOMMENDATIONS

Although prevailing policies have strengthened the Philippines' efforts to expand international education, the country calls upon APEC economies to pursue a coordinated strategy centered on equitable access, institutional cooperation, and talent circulation.

Youth Mobility Scholarship Framework

APEC should establish a new framework that extends financial assistance beyond tuition fees. Thereby, a need-based framework would help ensure that access to international education is determined by merit rather than socioeconomic status. At the same time, financial support must be complemented by stronger institutional cooperation.

Academic Recognition and Institutional Partnership Network

The creation of a new network to improve credit recognition, expand university partnerships, and strengthen academic exchanges across member economies. By supporting collaborative action among both established and regional institutions, APEC can provide more students with meaningful international learning experiences while reducing barriers to upward social mobility.

Talent Circulation and Reintegration Programs

Member economies should encourage graduates to maintain professional and academic connections with their home countries through collaborative research projects, entrepreneurship initiatives, innovation grants, alumni networks, and public-private partnerships. With this, rather than allowing international education to increase brain drain to a certain nation, these programs would foster the circulation of knowledge and skills, facilitate employment, and business development enabling both sending and receiving economies to benefit from youth mobility.

Strengthening Public-Private Partnerships

The Philippines likewise encourages APEC to promote stronger partnerships among governments, universities, private industries, and international organizations to support youth mobility initiatives. Through collaborative funding mechanisms, students can acquire internationally relevant skills while building professional networks that contribute to long-term economic development.

Reiterating Philippines' recognition of youth mobility as not a mere movement of students across borders, but an investment in the shared future of the Asia-Pacific. Addressing the challenges outlined in this paper requires collective action among APEC economies to build mobility systems that are inclusive, accessible, and sustainable.

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