

Breaking Barriers: Providing Education Independence And Opportunities For Migrant Workers Communities In Southeast Asia

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ABSTRACT The influx of migrant workers in the current era of Globalization has resulted in increased competition in various fields of expertise based on different levels of education such as Southeast Asian countries. The ability of a country to develop economically is highly dependent on the level and quality of education so this is an opportunity for international migrant workers to obtain and benefit from the best education in developed countries through educational independence. This article aims to understand educational independence for international migrant workers through support from various parties such as non-governmental organizations or local governments. This research uses a qualitative method with a reflective case study approach to Indonesian migrant workers working in Indonesia through focus discussion groups. In this very heterogeneous and complex context of international migrant workers, this article contributes to analyzing the importance of educational independence for international migrant workers in various countries. Various theoretical perspectives and studies that have been developed are expected to reduce the level of barriers for migrant workers to increase their skills and knowledge, so that they are able to face innovation, productivity, and high competitiveness globally.

Keywords: Education Independence, Migrant Workers, Southeast Asia

1. INTRODUCTION

Southeast Asia has a large and diverse migrant worker population, which contributes significantly to the region's economic growth. Migration has existed for centuries and is primarily driven by economic and social-political factors, natural disasters, conflicts, urbanization, and population issues (Setijaningrum et al., 2023) Migration is a complex issue in any country, encompassing various challenges and concerns (Urbański, 2022). One major concern is the lack of accessibility to education for migrant workers in the region. This issue is particularly prevalent among Southeast Asian migrant workers, including those in Vietnam and others. The neglect of migrant workers' rights in their new environments often extends to their access to education, hindering their opportunities for personal and professional development (Fong, 2023). This is further

compounded by institutional barriers that prevent migrant workers from accessing educational services, leaving them at a disadvantage compared to non-migrant individuals (Risberg & Romani, 2022). Additionally, the challenges faced by displaced students in pursuing higher education include difficulties in eligibility for high school, recognition of foreign transcripts, financial constraints, and lack of readiness for higher education studies, both academically and socio-culturally. Furthermore, other barriers such as lack of information on available academic programs, limited resources like internet access, and a lack of training for teachers and lecturers to support migrant workers' linguistic and cultural needs further contribute to the limited accessibility of education for Southeast Asian migrant workers (Tipayalai, 2020).

The lack of family reunification policies and the prevalence of the guest worker system in many Southeast Asian states also contribute to the limited access to secure legal status and rights for migrant workers, further exacerbating their challenges in accessing educational opportunities. The weakness accessibility to education not development perpetuates inequality within society (Piper, 2005). As a result, many migrant workers, particularly those with low-skilled backgrounds, struggle to secure permanent residency and face obstacles in acquiring the necessary education and skills to access well-paid jobs, leading to economic marginalization and blocked mobility. On the other side, limited access to education such as migrant children often lack access to formal education due to language barriers, irregular documentation, and limited government support. This lack of education hinders their chances of social mobility and economic independence. Vulnerability and Exploitation for migrant workers can be susceptible to exploitation, unfair labor practices, and human trafficking (Gurowitz, 2000). They may face challenges in accessing healthcare, legal assistance, and social protection. Limited opportunities for integration into host communities can be difficult due to cultural differences, language barriers, and social stigma. This lack of integration can lead to isolation and hinder the ability to participate fully in society.

The issue of accessibility to education for Southeast Asian migrant workers is a multifaceted problem that involves both institutional and socio-cultural factors. It requires comprehensive efforts to address these challenges and ensure equal educational opportunities for all individuals, regardless of their migrant background. It hinders their opportunities for personal and professional development, perpetuates inequality within society, and contributes to economic marginalization and blocked mobility. Furthermore, the limited access to reproductive health information and services for migrant workers in Asia, as in Vietnam, adds to their vulnerability and increases the risk of illness and adverse health outcomes. Overall, there are significant challenges faced by Southeast Asian migrant workers in accessing education, which include difficulties in eligibility for high school, recognition of foreign academic readiness, language, and cultural barriers, limited

resources, discriminatory attitudes, and lack of family and social support networks (Bove & Elia, 2017). Additionally, the physical accessibility and quality of schools in remote areas, as well as the lack of linguistically and culturally appropriate education, further compound the barriers. Migrant children frequently lack access to formal education due to language barriers, irregular documentation, and limited government support. This lack of education restricts their opportunities for social mobility and economic independence. Migrant workers are vulnerable to exploitation, unfair labor practices, and human trafficking. They may face difficulties in obtaining healthcare, legal aid, and social protection. Integration opportunities are limited: Due to cultural differences, language barriers, and social stigma, integration into host communities can be difficult. This lack of integration can lead to isolation and make it difficult to fully participate in society.

The neglect of migrant workers' rights in their new environments often extends to their access to education, hindering their opportunities for personal and professional development. This is further compounded by institutional barriers that prevent migrant workers from accessing educational services, leaving them at a disadvantage compared to non-migrant individuals (Özbilgin, 2023). Additionally, the challenges faced by displaced students in pursuing higher education include difficulties in eligibility for high school, recognition of foreign transcripts, financial constraints, and lack of readiness for higher education studies, both academically and socio-culturally. Furthermore, other barriers such as lack of information on available academic programs, limited resources like internet access, and a lack of training for teachers and lecturers to support migrant workers' linguistic and cultural needs further contribute to the limited accessibility of education for Southeast Asian migrant workers.

2. METHOD

This research methodology uses a descriptive qualitative method with a reflective case study to solve the problem of migrant workers' obstacles in obtaining education for them while in the country where they work / developed countries. Therefore, researchers try to use a holistic approach, namely understanding the problem of educational independence for migrant workers as a complex problem, so it requires a holistic approach. This approach involves various stakeholders, including the government, educational institutions, non-governmental organizations, and businesses for joint discourse in resolving the issue of education for migrant workers. In this case, researchers have accommodated some input and also the willingness of migrant workers who have been conveyed in a joint discussion forum in one of the International Community Service activities attended by several lecturers from universities in Indonesia, this activity was held at the Embassy of the Republic of Indonesia in Malaysia on November 11, 2023. The results of this discussion provide

an overview of the significant obstacles to the weakness of education that they should get to improve the quality, especially Indonesian migrant workers while in Malaysia. In addition, the evidence-based approach as an implemented strategy should be based on empirical evidence relevant to the context and needs of migrant workers. This can be done through in-depth research and studies on the problems and challenges faced by migrant workers. This approach as an implemented strategy must be inclusive and accessible to all migrant workers, regardless of regional origin, legal status, or socio-economic background. It is hoped that this activity will open opportunities for migrant workers to collaborate with NGOs or local governments to provide easy access to education independence for them, Various activities should be carried out to support the level of skills and abilities of migrant workers, especially those in developed countries.



Figure 1. Venue International Community Empowerment



Figure 2. Author



Figure 3. Migrants Workers

3. RESULT AND DISCUSSION

All migrant workers are expected to have access to quality education, regardless of issues such as their legal status or documentation. This aims to remove all barriers to education for migrant workers, such as tuition fees and residency requirements. In developing policies and programs that support the recognition of migrant workers' prior learning, it is necessary to develop mechanisms for the assessment and validation of migrant workers' educational qualifications and skills upgrading. In addition, educational independence will encourage cross-border transfer of educational credits and qualifications, making it easier for migrant workers to continue their education or find employment in the destination country (Zhou & Wen, 2022). Financial support to migrant workers to help them cover education costs can be provided through scholarships and loans. This will raise awareness of the challenges faced by migrant workers in accessing and resolving barriers to education. Education independence is essential for migrant workers to reach their full potential and contribute to the development of their host countries. By promoting education independence for migrant workers, we can create a more just and equitable world (Hornung, 2019).

3.1. Innovation and Productivity for Migrant workers

Innovation and productivity in improving migrant education is an important aspect of ensuring that migrant workers have access to quality education and can thrive in their new communities. Migrant workers have key strategies to foster innovation and productivity in migrant education including developing culturally responsive and inclusive pedagogies and creating teaching approaches that recognize and value the diversity of cultures, backgrounds, and experiences for migrant workers, especially Dallas migrant children using culturally relevant materials and adapting teaching methods to suit different learning styles (Urbański, 2022). In utilizing technology and information to enhance learning, several educational technology tools and

platforms are needed to provide individualized instruction, facilitate access to resources, and encourage collaboration among migrant workers and the educators who support them. This can be done through the use of adaptive learning software, providing online tutoring, and creating virtual learning communities (Hack-Polay et al., 2022). In addition, migrant workers have opportunities for professional development, with several trainings and ongoing support offered to mentors to develop their skills in working with migrant workers and migrant children, such as training on cultural competence, effective teaching strategies for multilingual migrant workers, and best practices for meeting the unique needs of migrant children. Some community partnership coaching opportunities involve collaborating with community organizations, businesses, and other stakeholders to provide additional support services for migrant workers and their families. This can include language learning classes, tutoring programs, and cultural enrichment activities.

3.2. Education and Skill Levels

In Southeast Asia, the education and skill levels of migrant workers vary depending on their country of origin and other factors. According to the search results, there are limited sources that specifically discuss the education and skill levels of migrant workers in Southeast Asia. However, it is noted that the vast majority of migrant workers entering Thailand had attained only a basic level of education. The OECD Skills Strategy project in Southeast Asia emphasizes the importance of understanding migrant workers' education and skill levels, how they differ from those of the natives, and their use in the labor market and everyday life (Koh, 2020). It is suggested that more circular migration in the region could be beneficial for all, as it allows individuals with high skills to emigrate and return to their origin countries, sharing their knowledge and experience. Overall, while there is limited information on the education and skill levels of migrant workers in Southeast Asia, it is clear that there is a need to better understand and utilize their skills to contribute to the economic prosperity of the region. Attracting highly educated and high-skilled migrant workers has been a major policy issue for many East and Southeast Asian economies. Migrant workers in Southeast Asia often have low levels of skills and are employed in low-skilled sectors, such as agriculture, construction, and domestic services. Some key insights and recommendations for Southeast Asia related to migrant workers' education and skill levels include:

- a. Migrant workers increase the supply of skills and can contribute to economic growth in their host country if their skills are well used. More circular migration in the region could be beneficial for all, as it allows individuals with high skills to emigrate and return to their origin countries, sharing their knowledge and experience.

- b. Migrant workers in Southeast Asia often face challenges in finding work that matches their skills, which can lead to overeducation for their positions. Migrant workers' literacy, numeracy, and digital skills may play a role in their occupational outcomes. To make the most of migration, it is essential to have a detailed knowledge of migrant workers' education and skill levels, how they differ from those of the natives, and their use in the labor market and everyday life. This information can help policymakers develop strategies to help migrant workers find jobs that match their skills and contribute to the economic prosperity of their host countries (Risberg & Romani, 2022).

3.3. Diversity and Complementarity

In the context of migration, diversity and complementarity are key issues to consider. According to research, diversity can boost overall productivity when abilities complement each other. Also, the diversity of immigration, which includes elements like talent diversity and cultural proximity, can have a substantial impact on economic growth. However, it should be remembered that excessive diversity may be harmful, and the best level of diversity appears to be somewhere in the middle. As a result, while evaluating immigration policy, it is critical to consider not just the scale of immigration but also the diversity of talents and cultural aspects to assure beneficial outcomes. The variety of cultural backgrounds, experiences, opinions, and talents that migrant workers bring to their new homes is referred to as diversity. This diversity benefits societies in a variety of ways, including Cultural Exchange: Migrant workers offer new languages, traditions, arts, and cuisines to local communities, broadening their horizons and promoting understanding and appreciation of diverse cultures. Cultural diversity brings many benefits, such as Languages: Multilingualism can enhance communication, trade, and cultural exchange. Traditions: Diverse cultural practices add vibrancy to communities and offer new perspectives. Arts and Cuisine: Immigrant workers introduce new forms of artistic expression and culinary delights. The impact of immigrant diversity on economic performance and productivity is a complex and evolving area of study. Research suggests that immigrant diversity can have both positive and negative effects, depending on various factors such as transaction costs, skill complementarity, and team cohesion. Some studies indicate that immigrant diversity can lead to increased job creation and entrepreneurship due to skill complementarity, especially in the context of urban economic performance (Gutiérrez-Romero, 2023).

However, other research highlights the potential challenges that immigration diversity may pose to organizational settings and the sustainability of accumulation regimes. It's important to note that the effects of immigrant diversity are contingent upon various factors, and a nuanced understanding of its impact is essential for informed policy and decision-making. Economic diversity leads to

positive economic outcomes, such as Entrepreneurship: Migrant workers often have strong entrepreneurial spirits, starting businesses and creating jobs. Skills and Knowledge: Skilled immigrant workers fill labor gaps and contribute to technological advancement. Trade and Investment: Immigrant networks facilitate international trade and investment, boosting the economy.

The draft Declaration recognizes that "diversity enriches every society and contributes to social cohesion" – something that is all too often taken for granted. The cultural diversity that accompanies migration enables new perspectives and experiences to be exchanged through intercultural encounters; it allows for creative and hybrid cultural practices to emerge; and it creates a general societal openness to difference and change. Societies with large migrant populations are in many ways trans-local and transnational themselves, already connected to many parts of the world through migrant and diaspora practices and networks. We can see these positive impacts of migration and cultural diversity very vividly at a local level, not least in global cities such as London, São Paulo, Berlin, and New York (to name just a few), but also in smaller cities with culturally plural populations.

Many of these localities work towards sensitizing basic services such as health centres, schools, and public offices to the needs of diverse multi-lingual populations, as well as supporting cultural expression in public spaces. A commitment to developing such policies of inclusion is precisely what is needed to promote equal opportunities, foster social cohesion, and support the basic conditions that will enable the positive aspects of cultural diversity to flourish. Despite the sharp increase in migration and the rich and vibrant research on ethnic diversity, little is known about the long-term impact of immigrants and the associated increase in population diversity on entrepreneurship (Kemeny, 2017). People born in different countries have had different education systems and may have different skills and entrepreneurial values than groups raised and educated in the same country (Alesina et al., 2016).

Social diversity strengthens communities in various ways, such as:

- A. **Community Building:** Immigrant workers form strong communities that provide support and social networks.
- B. **Innovation and Creativity:** Diversity of thought and experience fuels innovation and creative thinking.
- C. **Civic Engagement:** Immigrant workers actively participate in civic life, strengthening democracy and social cohesion.
- D. **Complementarity:**

The diverse skills, experiences, and perspectives that immigrant workers bring can complement existing resources, leading to various benefits:

- A. **Market Expansion:** Immigrant networks can open new markets and opportunities for trade and investment.
- B. **Skill Gaps:** Immigrant workers can fill labor gaps in specific sectors, boosting economic productivity.
- C. **Problem-Solving:** Diverse teams can approach challenges from different angles, leading to more creative solutions.
- D. **Social Innovation:** Immigrant workers can introduce new ideas and practices that address social challenges.

However, realizing the full potential of diversity and complementarity requires addressing certain challenges such as language barrier for communication too difficulties can impede integration and limit access to opportunities. Prejudice and Discrimination as Racism, xenophobia, and other forms of discrimination can create social barriers and hinder progress. Lack of Recognition of Foreign Credentials in Skilled immigrant workers may struggle to get their qualifications recognized, limiting their career opportunities.

Policy Recommendations to maximize the benefits of diversity and complementarity, governments and organizations can implement several policies, such as:

- 1. **Language Support:** Invest in language programs to help immigrant workers learn the local language and facilitate integration.
- 2. **Anti-Discrimination Laws:** Implement and enforce strong anti-discrimination laws to ensure equal opportunities for all.
- 3. **Recognition of Foreign Credentials:** Streamline the process of recognizing foreign qualifications to allow skilled immigrant workers to contribute fully.
- 4. **Intercultural Understanding Programs:** Promote intercultural understanding and appreciation of diversity through education and community initiatives.

4. CONCLUSION

Empowering migrant communities through education independence, and opportunities is not only a moral imperative for Southeast Asia countries, but also an economic necessity. We can create a more inclusive and equitable society for all by addressing the challenges that these communities face and implementing effective strategies. Migrant workers workers have a big impact on how innovative, productive, and competitive a nation is in the world economy. Their varied experiences, backgrounds, and abilities support the creation of new commercial ventures,

technological advancements, and the general economic expansion of their destination nations. To fully realize their potential and optimize the advantages of migration for all parties involved, it is imperative to guarantee efficient integration and assistance for migrant workers.

Strategies for Empowerment such as :

1. **Promoting Inclusive Education:** Governments and educational institutions should implement policies that ensure access to quality education for all migrant children, regardless of their legal status. This includes providing language support, cultural sensitivity training for educators, and flexible learning options.
2. **Strengthening Labor Rights and Protections:** Governments and relevant stakeholders should work to enforce existing labor laws and regulations, ensuring fair wages, decent working conditions, and access to basic rights for all migrant workers. Additionally, programs should be implemented to educate migrant workers about their rights and provide them with access to legal aid and support services.
3. **Facilitating Integration:** Initiatives should be developed to promote cultural exchange, language learning, and intercultural dialogue between migrant communities and host communities. This can foster understanding and reduce social stigma, paving the way for successful integration.
4. **Empowering Through Skills Development:** Providing access to vocational training and skills development programs can equip migrant workers with the necessary skills to secure better jobs and achieve greater economic self-reliance.
5. **Promoting Community-based Solutions:** Supporting and empowering migrant-led organizations and initiatives can play a crucial role in addressing the specific needs and challenges faced by these communities.

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