CONCEPT NOTE

1. BACKGROUND AND INTRODUCTION

Since the mid-1980s, rapid economic growth and declining fertility rates in the new industrial economies of East and South East Asia have led to a strong demand for additional labour. At the same time, a gradual opening up of borders, an over-supply of labour in some economies and expanded economic integration have facilitated greater population flows between countries as migrants seek enhanced income opportunities abroad. These developments have given rise to increasing cross-country migration1 - permanent and temporary – within the Asia-Pacific region, in terms of both low-skilled and highly skilled workers. As of 2010, the United Nations Population Division (UNPD) estimated that there are 61.3 million international migrants living in Asia and 6 million in the Pacific, representing 1.5% and 16.8% of the population of the two sub-regions respectively.2 Two countries in the region (Singapore and New Zealand) are among the top 10 countries worldwide in terms of the highest share of international migrants in their total populations (40.7% in the case of Singapore and 22.4% in the case of New Zealand).3 International migrants in the region are also increasingly moving to new destination countries, including Brunei Darussalam, Japan, Malaysia and Republic of Korea. Simultaneously, together with the rest of the world, the region has also experienced increasing internal migration: with an estimated five-fold increase in the number of people living in urban areas between 1950 and 2000.4

The phenomenon of migration within the region is not expected to stop anytime soon but rather to accelerate. Moreover, the ASEAN sub-region, for example, expects to come together as an economic community by 2015, implying the free movement of goods, services, investment, skilled labour and freer flow of capital.

The increasing migration has implications for all facets of society in both the countries/jurisdictions of origin as well as countries/jurisdictions of destination of these migrants. The implications for education are complex. Schools and institutions may need to adjust management, curricula and pedagogy to reflect classrooms which are increasingly multicultural and socio-economically diverse. Learners must be prepared for work and life not only in their

1 Migration Policy Institute: International migrants are defined as “persons residing outside of their country of birth or nationality”. This includes migrant workers, family migrants, refugees and asylum seekers (but not short-term visitors).
own locations but also beyond, implying a new international character for education and the need to respond to an increasingly mobile workforce.

Migration presents opportunities for countries in the region striving to improve economic development through increased skilled labour force and improved productivity. Education system performance and skills development move to the heart of economic policy-making. Furthermore, education in the age of migration has critical implications for the global debate around issues of quality, equity and inclusiveness to address learning needs of students from various socio-cultural backgrounds. It touches on the questions of what should be learnt and how and for what purposes. In an age of rapid globalization and mobility, the challenges and opportunities posed by migration will increasingly be those which underlie all education systems, both in the Asia-Pacific region and beyond. Yet the diversity in circumstances across the region imply that these impacts will affect countries in complex and varied ways, placing unique pressures on national policy-making.

Student mobility in the Asia-Pacific region, according to McKenzie et al. (2008), has also grown rapidly in the past decade, inspiring a number of studies on the factors and effects which either facilitate or block student mobility in general. Student mobility is a prospective source of skilled workers contributing to human capital of countries who send students abroad (brain gains) as well as a potential flow of cross-country migration (brain drains) (OECD, 2001). The implications for education policies lie in finding meaningful ways to promote intercultural dialogues, internationalise curriculum and pedagogy, assess and recognize the prior learning of international students, implying new challenges for systems of quality assurance, and recognition of qualifications and accreditation.

2. OBJECTIVES

- To facilitate the sharing of experiences and lessons of national policies on education in the context of cross-border and internal migrations, and student mobility, particularly in regard to multiculturalism/diversity in education, quality assurance and equity
- To identify emerging trends of policy challenges and responses to migration from the perspective of the education sector and to discuss how Member States and development partners can harness the benefits of expanded migration and student mobility
- To identify possible areas for strengthening regional cooperation in pursuit of EFA goals (particularly goal 6: education quality)

3. TITLE

Regional Policy Seminar: Education Policy-Making in the Age of Migration in Asia and the Pacific

4. PROPOSED THEMES/TOPICS

- The age of migration and its implications for education (trends/factors/effects, learning to respect multiculturalism and diversity in schools, presence of migrant communities and their history in curricula, parental/community involvement, language policy, bilingual education, labour market implications, skills and cultural demands of labour market, the shift toward knowledge economies)

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5. PARTICIPANTS

- Experts, policy analysts and researchers from KEDI and UNESCO Bangkok
- Country participants: A total of 25 participants will be invited including from the following countries: Australia, China, Indonesia, India, Japan, Kazakhstan, Mongolia, Myanmar, Nepal, New Zealand, Philippines, Cambodia, Lao PDR, Thailand, Singapore, Uzbekistan and Vietnam. Each country will be represented by at least one participant who is either (i) a senior government official involved in issues of migration/diversity/multiculturalism in education or (ii) a senior researcher from related research institutes and/or universities.
- Guest international experts (e.g. OECD, ADB, UN Population Division, UNICEF, WB, Commonwealth Secretariat, think tanks/institutions working on migration such as the Asia-Pacific Migration Research Network and Asian Research Centre for Migration at Chulalongkorn University, etc.)

6. DATES AND VENUE

- Dates: 10 (Tuesday) – 12 (Thursday) July 2012
- Venue: The Davis Hotel, Bangkok, Thailand

7. WORKING METHODS AND DOCUMENTS

Preparation for the seminar will be undertaken by UNESCO Asia and Pacific Regional Bureau for Education (UNESCO Bangkok, Education Policy and Reform Unit) and Korean Educational Development Institute (KEDI) who are co-organisers of the seminar.

The language of the seminar is English.

The seminar sessions will be organized around the proposed topics whose results will contribute to the achievement of its stated objectives as well as to a possible publication. Discussion and exchange of experiences among the participants will be highly participatory drawing on the country specific experiences of the participants as well as the development agencies’ practices and perspectives. Working documents to facilitate the discussion include:

- Background paper on issues relating to learning, quality and relevance of education in the age of migration (UNESCO)
- Background paper on student mobility, particularly at the higher education level (KEDI)
- Research reports by researchers or institutions
- Country reports and presentations
- Field visit

8. FUNDING AND ORGANIZATIONAL ARRANGEMENTS

The seminar is co-financed by KEDI and UNESCO Bangkok. Participants from selected low-income countries will be financed through these funds. Participants from middle to high income countries and other interested persons (for example, UNESCO experts from the Field Offices, and international experts from development agencies) should seek funding from their own or other
sources. Participants with special request or requiring further clarification should contact the event organizers directly.

9. CONTACT PERSONS

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