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Willingness to Study Abroad: Case Study of Thai Agricultural Students

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Abstract

Given the increasing level of globalisation, international education has become an important part of higher education sector and student mobility has been on the rise worldwide over the last decades. The process is believed to be advantageous for both student participants and participating countries, it is therefore widely supported by many countries and organisations. However, Thai outbound mobility has remained low over the recent decades; only 1.3 % of students participated some form of international studies in 2016, which is one of the lowest results in the South East Asia region.

This study investigates students' attitudes towards studies abroad, their preferences and their opinions about positive aspects and challenges of international mobility. The data were collected online via Google forms, a total of 461 surveys were completed by agricultural students from four Thai universities: Chiang Mai University, Kasetsart University, Khon Kaen University and Prince of Songkla University covering different regions of Thailand (North, Central, North-East and South region).

The results showed only minimal differences among the selected universities. Overwhelming majority of respondents (74.3 %) was willing to study abroad, preferably for a longer period (65 % for a year or more), in Asia (46.9 %) or an English-speaking country (39.3 %). The greatest challenges, according to the respondents, were lack of finances (93.5 %) and lack of foreign language skills (88.7 %).

The respondents showed strong interest in international mobility. Nonetheless, the outbound ratio remains low due to various issues. In order to boost Thai student mobility, greater focus on language teaching and financial support of outbound students is advised.

Keywords: Higher education, student mobility, Thailand