

Strategic Investment in Global Learning: An Economic Evaluation of Credit-Based Outbound Mobility in Vietnamese Higher Education Toward Sustainable Internationalization in Emerging Economies

Dang Thai Bao Vy, Low Tang Jung

Head of International Collaboration Department, FPT University, Vietnam

Abstract

In the evolving landscape of international higher education, short-term outbound academic programs are increasingly seen as strategic pathways for building global competence and institutional capacity. This study explores the economic and educational outcomes of credit-based outbound mobility programs in Vietnamese universities, focusing on large-scale implementation from 2022 to 2024 with nearly 1,000 student participants.

Unlike traditional study tours, these programs incorporate formal coursework and credit recognition mechanisms, enabling students to earn academic credits abroad within a 3–4-week learning period. Using a mixed-methods approach—including cost-benefit analysis, student surveys, and institutional data review—the research evaluates both measurable outcomes and perceived value. Results show high levels of academic and intercultural gains among students, strong alignment with employability skills, and significant contributions to institutional branding and internationalization strategies. Students reported high levels of satisfaction, recognizing the program as a meaningful academic and personal investment with strong perceived ROI value.

While the programs demonstrate strong academic and institutional value, challenges remain in areas such as credit transfer validation, curricular alignment, and equitable access. These limitations call for more coherent program design, inclusive support mechanisms, and closer alignment between institutional policies and national strategies. By positioning outbound mobility as a long-term investment in both student development and institutional capacity, the study contributes actionable insights for universities in emerging contexts pursuing meaningful and sustainable internationalization.

Keywords: Outbound Mobility; Higher Education; Credit Transfer; Internationalization Strategy; Economic Evaluation; Vietnam Higher Education; Sustainable Programs