

# **Exploring the Collaboration between Malaysia and South Korea in Human Capital Development under Look East Policy**

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The implementation of the Look East Policy (LEP) in 1982 has increased the significant collaboration between Malaysia and South Korea in term of human capital development. Under this policy, the government has been dispatching students and officers to Korea and Japan to learn about their working cultures and values, along with earning their degrees and qualifications. However, after 40 years of this collaboration, the contributions of LEP alumni from Korea have been overlooked. The number of LEP participants in Korea are smaller compared to Japan, which render to difficulty to trace them for engagement and networking. In fact, this collaboration does not receive much attention, unlike Malaysia-Japan human capital development collaboration in the academic arena. In valuing the important of knowledge and expertise of the LEP participants from South Korea, this study intends to (1) determine the extent to which LEP participants have benefited from South Korea and (2) identify the optimal strategy for Malaysia and South Korea under the second wave of LEP. This study is looking at the perspective of the human capital theory, in which sending Malaysians to South Korea is an investment by the Malaysian government to gain valuable human capital that could boost the economy. The process of cross-cultural adaptation will be further investigated to understand to what extent the emulation of good values occurs among the participants. As for the research methodology, preliminary study focus group interviews were conducted with seven LEP participants who have resided in Korea for more than five years to further examine their experience, cultural emulation, and benefits gained through this program. Thematic analysis was employed to further analyze the interviews. The findings revealed that the learning process in South Korea has brought significant change to their lives. The process of cross-cultural adaptation was challenging, but they have received a fully supported environment that helps them to emulate good values and good work ethics. They exhibit important skills, knowledge, and abilities that could benefit them as well as be a vehicle for economic growth. Overall, it appears that this program is effective in developing skilled human capital, which could help with economic development. The government/policymakers should identify critical areas where more talents can be developed in the future. Future research should further investigate the process of cultural emulation from the perspective of cultural dimensions among LEP participants.

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