



SEAMEO RETRAC

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IN THIS ISSUE

Advancing Internationalization in Higher Education: Leadership, Governance, and Regional Perspectives from International Conference 2025..... *page 3*

Advancing Skills in Writing and Publishing International Research..... *page 5*

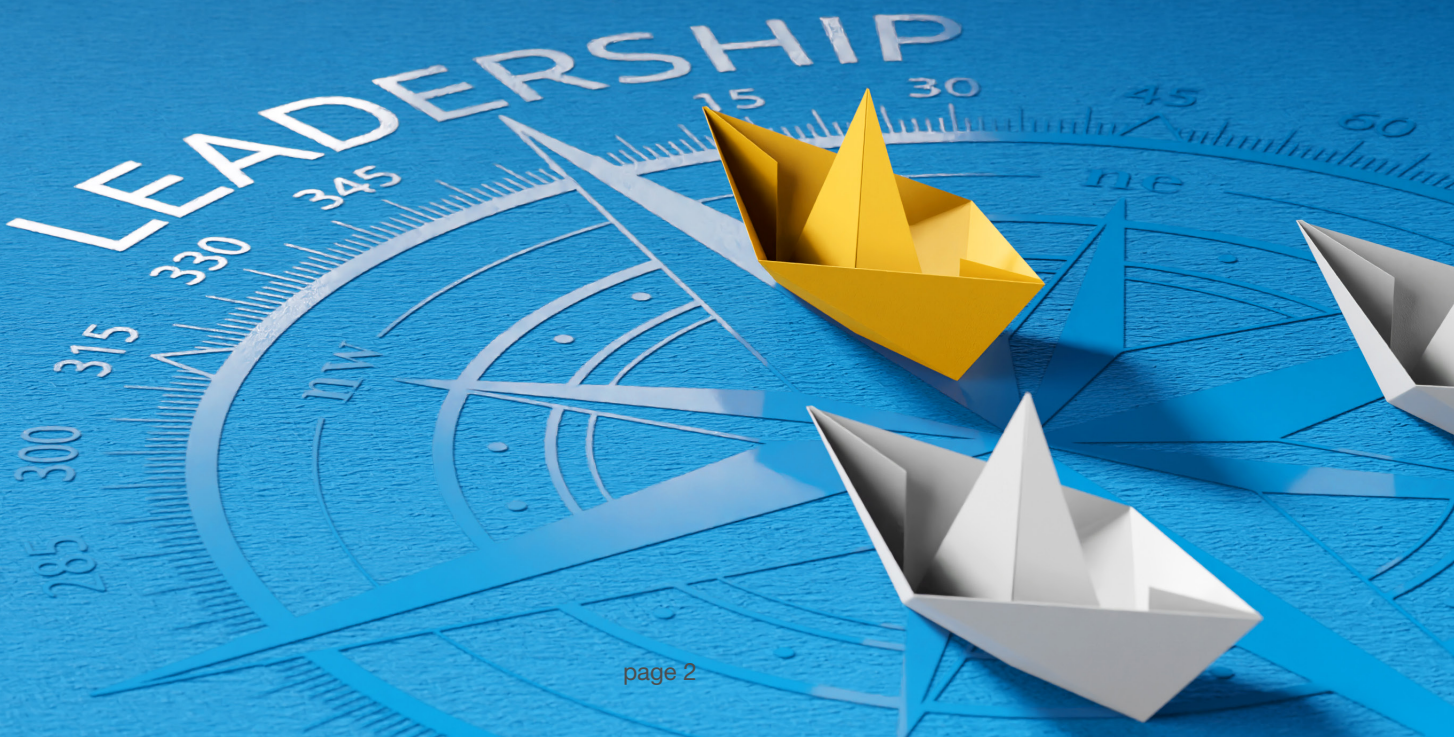
SEAMEO RETRAC Honors Teachers and Teaching Assistants on Vietnamese Teachers' Day 2025..... *page 5*

48th SEAMEO High Officials Meeting..... *page 6*

SEAMEO RETRAC and Thailand's Teachers' Council Explore Strategic Collaboration to Enhance English Proficiency and Teacher Development..... *page 7*

Enhancing Capacity in Course Syllabus Development..... *page 8*

Training course on "Artificial Intelligence (AI) Applications in Designing Creative Teaching"..... *page 8*



Advancing Internationalization in Higher Education: Leadership, Governance, and Regional Perspectives from International Conference 2025

SEAMEO RETRAC, in collaboration with the Alberta Bureau for International Education (ABIE), the British Columbia Council for International Education (BCCIE), and the Canadian Bureau for International Education (CBIE), organized the International Conference 2025 on “*Internationalization in Higher Education Leadership and Management: Perspectives, Innovations and Best Practices*” on October 8–9, 2025.

“The conference comes at an important time, as Vietnam is carrying out major reforms in higher education to meet the needs of our country’s growth and development.” H.E. Assoc. Prof. Dr. Nguyen Van Phuc, Deputy Minister of Education and Training of Vietnam remarked at the Opening Ceremony. He stated that internationalization efforts have brought Vietnam positive results while facing important challenges. To address these opportunities and challenges, the Ministry is focusing on several main directions, including:



- Promoting greater university autonomy as the foundation for reform,
- Restructuring the higher education system to improve efficiency and reduce fragmentation,
- Modernizing education through digital transformation and new technologies, and
- Building governance models suited to Vietnam’s development and international integration.

The Conference highlighted how internationalization can support core functions of higher education institutions—teaching, research, governance, and societal engagement—within an increasingly interconnected and digital global context. Discussions focused on key areas including policy and leadership, quality assurance, emerging technologies, curriculum internationalization, teaching practices, and evolving research trends in higher education.

Approximately 80 senior leaders, policymakers, scholars, researchers, and practitioners from higher education institutions in Southeast Asia and beyond participated. Notably, the participation of the SEAMEO Secretariat and seven SEAMEO Regional Centres brought forward Southeast Asia’s practical experiences and perspectives in advancing internationalization, aligning priorities, and collaboratively addressing regional challenges in higher education.



Scholarly Perspective and Regional Insights

In his keynote speech, Mr. John Arnold Siena, Deputy Director for Programme and Development at the SEAMEO Secretariat, emphasized that internationalization should be aligned with institutional missions, regional priorities, and long-term capacity building to respond more effectively to local and regional development needs while addressing challenges such as policy gaps, funding limitations, and equitable access. He highlighted that SEAMEO initiatives—such as the SEA Teacher Program, and the Asian International Mobility for Students (AIMS)—play a key role in supporting these efforts by fostering institutional partnerships, faculty development, and regional integration.



He outlined three key strategies for Southeast Asian higher education institutions: (1) use internationalization as a tool to enhance institutional capacity rather than as an end goal; (2) leverage regional partnerships and consortia to promote knowledge exchange and collaborative problem-solving; and (3) develop globally competent graduates and future leaders prepared for a digitally connected and regionally integrated Southeast Asia.



Other keynote speakers from North America offered complementary perspectives on teaching innovation and workforce relevance in higher education. Dr. Tim Loreman, President & Vice-Chancellor of Concordia University of Edmonton, examined how growing student diversity, rapid technological change, and evolving expectations are reshaping post-secondary teaching, drawing on institutional experience in adapting pedagogy to better meet learner needs. From a governance and curriculum perspective, Dr. Nathalia Holtzman, Interim Provost at the College of Staten Island, CUNY, highlighted the integration of career readiness and AI tools into the student journey, illustrating how data-informed planning, embedded career pathways, and AI-supported advising can

align academic learning with labor market demands and prepare graduates for a dynamic global workforce.

Advancing Skills in Writing and Publishing International Research

SEAMEO RETRAC organized a series of training courses on *“Capacity in Writing and Publishing International Research”* for academic staff and lecturers from universities and colleges in Ho Chi Minh City and neighboring provinces.

The first course, held on October 30–31, 2025, focused on equipping participants with essential skills to produce high-quality research papers suitable for international publication. Participants learned how to structure research effectively, strengthen academic arguments, meet global journal standards, and navigate the publication process. The course combined theory and practical exercises, allowing participants to directly apply the techniques to their own research.

Building on this success, SEAMEO RETRAC, in collaboration with Hong Bang International University, conducted two additional two-day courses on November 27–28 and December 23–24, 2025, welcoming over 80 academic staff and professionals. Participants explored strategies for academic writing and international publishing, and practiced applying them to their own work. This training series highlights SEAMEO RETRAC’s commitment to strengthening the research and publishing capacity of academic staff in Vietnam, fostering greater participation in the regional and global research community.



SEAMEO RETRAC Honors Teachers and Teaching Assistants on Vietnamese Teachers’ Day 2025

On the occasion of Vietnamese Teachers’ Day (20 November 2025), SEAMEO RETRAC hosted a Teacher and Teaching Assistant Appreciation Gathering to express sincere gratitude for the dedication and contributions of its teaching team. The event brought together over 120 teachers, teaching assistants, and staff members, creating a warm and collegial atmosphere.

The gathering served as a meaningful opportunity for SEAMEO RETRAC to acknowledge the enduring commitment of its teachers and teaching assistants, whose contributions extend beyond classroom instruction to nurturing learners’ capacities and shaping future generations. In addition, the event provided a valuable space for teachers, teaching assistants, and staff to connect, exchange professional experiences, and reflect on their shared journey of collaboration and growth with SEAMEO RETRAC.



48th SEAMEO High Officials Meeting

As SEAMEO’s premier annual platform for regional policy dialogue, the 48th High Officials Meeting hosted by the SEAMEO Secretariat facilitated dialogue and joint planning among SEAMEO member countries and centres, advancing initiatives in education, science, and cultural development across the region. The meeting convened the 11 High Officials from all SEAMEO Member Countries, representatives from Associate and Affiliate Members, SEAMEO Centre Directors, development partners, and experts from across the region and beyond.

Marking a significant milestone as SEAMEO celebrates its 60th anniversary, the theme *“Leading Through Learning: Empowering Schools and Communities in Southeast Asia,”* highlights six decades of SEAMEO’s leadership in education, science, and culture across the region.

As a SEAMEO regional centre, SEAMEO RETRAC, participated in Plenary Sessions to receive updates on the strategies, initiatives, and policies to advance sustainable educational development programs across Southeast Asia from the SEAMEO Secretariat, SEAMEO Centres, participating countries and organizations. RETRAC also showcased its initiatives on leadership development and capacity building for education managers in Southeast Asia during these sessions and attended the following accompanying events:

- Two Special Sessions focused on *Establishing the Southeast Asia School Leadership Hub and Aligning AI Initiatives in SEAMEO.*
- Launch of the Empowering Teachers Initiative (ETI) Regional Report on Teacher Professional Development (TPD)

The year 2026 marks the 30th anniversary of RETRAC’s establishment and its operations under the SEAMEO umbrella. Over three decades, RETRAC has been instrumental in advancing educational leadership, strengthening teacher capacity, and enhancing education quality across Southeast Asia and beyond. In response to the context of internationalization, RETRAC has developed its sixth 5-year development plan, fully aligned with SEAMEO priorities, the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), and national strategies. This plan has been thoroughly reviewed and endorsed by SEAMEO High Officials at this meeting.



SEAMEO RETRAC and Thailand’s Teachers’ Council Explore Strategic Collaboration to Enhance English Proficiency and Teacher Development

On November 20, 2025, SEAMEO RETRAC conducted a working visit to the Teachers’ Council of Thailand (TCT) – the Ministry of Education of Thailand, to explore potential collaboration in teacher professional development, with a particular emphasis on strengthening English proficiency among primary school Thai teachers. During the meeting, TCT reaffirmed that enhancing teacher quality is central to Thailand’s education reform agenda. English proficiency was highlighted as a critical component of national teacher standards, especially in the domain of using Thai and English for communication alongside digital technology, in response to persistent disparities in English learning opportunities between urban and rural or disadvantaged communities.



SEAMEO RETRAC shared its extensive experience in teacher training and professional development in Vietnam, including English proficiency enhancement, pedagogy, ICT and AI integration. The Centre proposed a structured collaboration model involving placement testing, needs-based course design, and a phased pathway to ensure teachers attain minimum English proficiency prior to EMI-focused training. Both sides agreed to prioritize English proficiency while integrating relevant ICT components, and discussed key implementation considerations.



Enhancing Capacity in Course Syllabus Development

On December 11–12, 2025, SEAMEO RETRAC organized a training course entitled “**Course Outline Design**” to strengthen participants’ capacity to develop effective, course syllabi aligned with program objectives. The course content focused on key academic inputs, including an overview of major learning theories and curriculum models, as well as a systematic examination of processes and core components required for developing detailed course outlines. Participants explored principles for formulating learning outcomes, structuring teaching and learning activities, and designing assessment methods in alignment with program-level objectives. Participants engaged in guided practice to develop and evaluate course outlines directly in class. By the end of the training, participants were able to produce coherent, course syllabi and demonstrate improved capacity to critically review course design in terms of alignment, clarity, and instructional effectiveness.



Training course on “**Artificial Intelligence (AI) Applications in Designing Creative Teaching**”

On December 18–19, 2025, SEAMEO RETRAC conducted a training course on “**Artificial Intelligence (AI) Applications in Designing Creative Teaching**” to enhance teaching creativity and instructional effectiveness through the pedagogical integration of AI tools. The course focused on emerging trends, principles, and best practices in AI-driven education. Participants were introduced to a range of practical AI applications, including FantomAI, Chalkie, and other relevant tools, which support lesson design, content creation, assessment development, and learner engagement. By the end of the course, participants demonstrated an improved capacity to design creative, technology-enhanced teaching practices that effectively leverage AI to support student learning and innovation in the classroom.





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