SECTION 5

CONNECTIVITY THROUGH EDUCATION
Abstract

Academic mobility can contribute greatly to Asia-Europe connectivity in various sectors. The friendship and intellectual capacity created by mobile students and scholars are the key factors to strengthen cultural, scientific, economic and diplomatic ties among ASEM countries. In order to yield such benefits of both intra-regional and inter-regional mobility, and to minimise the adverse effects, ASEM needs innovative policy solutions. This paper argues that education policy-making is value-laden in the sense that values pervade policy processes and policy contents, while values are also justifications for a policy and criteria for evaluating its implementation. Democratic equality, social mobility, and social efficiency are seen as the common values that guide education policies. Academic mobility is understood essentially as a process of individuals’ self-formation and self-cultivation, which impacts on productivity, innovation, and social transformation, including reforming and improving education systems. Academic mobility is a way to achieving social mobility that ought to yield benefits, not only for deserving individuals, but also to society as a whole.

The history of Asia-Europe academic exchange, and current ASEM policies, demonstrate that cross-border academic mobility encompasses different political, economic, and cultural/intellectual interests at regional, national, institutional, and individual levels. This necessitates ASEM education policymakers to work across sectors and consider a variety of inter-related factors that influence patterns of academic mobility, including domestic education provision, economics, demographics, labour market requirements, and immigration policies. It is proposed that ASEM education policies should strike a balance between educational, social, and economic values of mobility to enhance Asia-Europe connectivity in the long term.
1. Academic mobility and Asia-Europe connectivity

“What does ASEM mean for people in everyday life?
One of the best examples is the ASEM-DUO Fellowship Programme, which aims at exchanging students, scholars and professors between Asia and Europe. Exchanging of students is a brilliant way to ensure greater understanding between our regions across cultural, social, historic and religious differences.”
(The Danish Prime Minister’s Opening Speech at the 4th ASEM Summit, 2002)

There is a call for reciprocal educational exchange to promote cultural understanding and peace-making in this opening speech. International student mobility has, inter alia, been a means of broadening one’s horizon, enhancing respect for other cultures, reducing prejudice, and correcting stereotypes. In his speech, alongside these humanistic values, the Danish Prime Minister, Anders Fogh Rasmussen, also firmly believed in the economic impact of cross-border education. He highlighted that “human resources development, educational exchange and lifelong learning can be utilised to reap the benefits of globalisation and address its adverse consequences” and, in turn, “economic growth can result in overall progress in the social sphere and thus might help counter some of the root causes of intolerance and extremism”.

The decade after this speech has seen more students travelling beyond their national borders to seek international education, and cross-cultural experience, to enhance their social mobility and life chances. In 2012, there were 4.5 million students (up from 2.1 million in 2000) studying outside their country of citizenship and 53% were from Asia. Governments and universities also view the movement of students as a new opportunity, so they work together to develop various policies to promote international academic mobility. The European Erasmus student exchange scheme is a successful example. Between 1987 and 2013, over three million students, from more than 4,000 European higher education institutions, participated in Erasmus mobility. In these contexts, Asia and Europe have forged a high-level strategic inter-regional educational partnership called the ASEM Education Process and envisaged an ASEM education area to increase knowledge exchange and academic mobility among the current 51 partners. With the inauguration of the biennial Asia-Europe Meeting of the Ministers for Education (ASEM ME) in 2008, academic mobility has been brought into the heart of inter-regional strategies to enhance economic, political, and cultural connectivity.

The European Union (EU) has implemented regional integration, whereas the Asian countries have invested effort in strengthening regional connectivity. The term regional connectivity has become a policy discourse in Asia and it frequently refers to the creation of regional hard and soft infrastructure to facilitate the flow of goods, services, people, and knowledge.

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1. OECD, 2014
2. Rizvi and Lingard, 2010
4. ASEM ME5, 2015
5. Bhattacharya, 2010
The regional institutions, such as the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN), Asia-Pacific Economic Cooperation (APEC), Asia Development Bank (ADB), the United Nations Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific (ESCAP), develop various master plans for regional connectivity, which aim at enhancing physical connectivity (transportation), institutional connectivity (rules and regulations) and people-to-people connectivity (knowledge and culture). Samples are the Master Plan on ASEAN Connectivity and APEC Connectivity Blueprint for 2015-2025.

Unlike the EU, ASEM is not a result of an integration process, rather a conglomerate of connectivity in many sectors. Asia-Europe connectivity, has become a popular headline for many forums and appeared in the ASEM Summit chair’s statements with different meanings evolving over the years.

Connectivity was used for the first time in the 2006 Summit statement to denote the inter-regional, high-speed Internet connectivity for research and education. The 2010 Summit emphasised connectivity via interactions between the people of Europe and Asia, whereas the 2012 Summit highlighted the economic outcomes of intra- and inter-regional connectivity in transport infrastructure. At the 2014 Summit, connectivity became a keyword with various meanings and expanded scope ranging from financial, economic, trade, investment and energy to institutional linkages, information, knowledge, people, think tanks and the academic community. There is also a plan to establish an ASEM working group on connectivity. Although the meaning is rather vague, there seems to be positive connotations in every usage of the word. Overall, connectivity is seen as bringing about competitive advantages for all those connected.

This chapter explores ASEM higher education and research connectivity through academic mobility and its impact on individuals and education systems. The term academic mobility may entail physical mobility, virtual mobility, short-term mobility (credit mobility), degree mobility, or mobility across disciplines, and across sectors (e.g. between academia and industry for research or internship). This chapter focuses only on the cross-border academic mobility between ASEM countries, specifically, the academically motivated geographical movements of students and academics, generally in higher education, from their home institution to another to study or work (teaching and/or research) for a period of time. Reviewing the history of Asia-Europe academic mobility and analysing ASEM policies, this chapter examines why academic mobility has become a priority of ASEM cooperation, what key values of academic mobility should be promoted in the ASEM Education Area, what the major challenges are, and how they may be tackled in order to enhance Asia-Europe connectivity in the long term.

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10 ASEM, 2014
11 Leung, 2013
5. Connectivity through Education

2. Education policy making: a value-laden process

Policy making can be seen as the course of action relating to the selection of goals and the definition of values that determine education practices and their consequences. Values pervade policy making processes and policy contents.\(^\text{12}\) Values are also justifications for a policy and criteria to evaluate its implementation. Three values commonly found in education policies are democratic equality, social mobility and social efficiency, which can be useful in understanding the construction of academic mobility policies.

2.1. Democratic equality

The policies led by the value of democratic equality emphasise the need for education to facilitate the development of citizens who can participate in democratic communities. Therefore, the primary purpose of education is to educate students to realise their full potential and create citizens able to maximise personal development and responsibility for the community. The focus is more social and cultural than economic. From this perspective, academic mobility can be understood as a self-formation process in which mobile students experience changes in their behaviours of self-cultivation and self-improvement.\(^\text{13}\) While all education can be understood as a process of personal growth, international education entails significant transformation. For example, mobility may alter one’s understanding of societies and impact on political, economic and socio-cultural practices, such as changing practices both at home and host institutions, or reforming education systems. Education policies driven by this value often aim at improving pedagogies and curricula and enhancing the learning experience of international students.

2.2. Social mobility

Social mobility refers to the movement of members of a society up the social ladder of income, status and lifestyle\(^\text{14}\) according to meritocratic principles. The compelling argument is that the selection of individuals for jobs on the basis of merit is a more efficient use of the available talent pool because jobs will be undertaken by individuals possessing the most suitable attributes. Therefore, education, including international education, is widely recognised as an effective mechanism for achieving social mobility\(^\text{15}\) and for building a just, efficient, and stable society because of the transformation in the distribution of resources, opportunities or social status of individuals, families or groups.\(^\text{16}\) By implication, increasing social mobility should yield benefits, not only for deserving individuals, but for society as a whole.\(^\text{17}\)

Social mobility, often measured by the positive occupational transition of individuals, can be inter-generational mobility. For instance, children have international education experience and better career prospects than their parents, therefore the degree of (dis)advantaged inheritance from parents to their children can change. Social mobility can also be intra-generational mobility over a period of time, for example, academics use their international mobility as a springboard for career advancement.

\(^{12}\) Rizvi and Lingard, 2010
\(^{13}\) Marginson, 2014; Tran 2015
\(^{14}\) Hasley, 2013
\(^{15}\) Breen et al., 2014
\(^{16}\) Kaufmann et al., 2004
\(^{17}\) Sturgis and Buscha, 2015
However, social mobility has its own inherent dilemma as it presupposes the existence of social stratification. International academic mobility, on the one hand, facilitates social mobility and on the other, reproduces differences between people and classes because mobile individuals are equipped with social and cultural capital that can be deployed over their lifetime for social and economic enhancement.\textsuperscript{18} Nowadays, the politics of social mobility is increasingly premised on the neoliberal theory that views markets, rather than the meritocratic principle, as the way to an efficient, fair, and competitive society.\textsuperscript{19} Hence, academic mobility is often conceptualised as a capital which exists in different forms, such as economic, social, and cultural capital, which are convertible into one another.\textsuperscript{20} Academic mobility constitutes a set of useable resources, such as economic capital (scholarships, research grants or self-investment) and/or cultural capital (competences, language skills, academic qualifications, intellectual capacity), social capital (relations, networks, membership of high-level committees), and symbolic capital (reputation, prestige, publications in high-impact journals). The acquisition of these resources gives individuals access to power or social position, and ultimately to material wealth.\textsuperscript{21}

The education policies that view academic mobility as capital often aim to strengthen instruments, e.g. comparability tools, qualifications frameworks for recognition, credit transfer systems, and other regulations which facilitate academic mobility, but leave the process of social formation to the market. Such policies favour competition and the ability of the market to reconcile the value of equality.\textsuperscript{22}

\subsection*{2.3. Social efficiency}

While social mobility value focuses exclusively on individuals, the social efficiency approach requires education to contribute to organisational efficiency, economic productivity, and outcomes. Education is considered as both a public and private good, serving the social and economic development of a community, and at the same time, individual interests within a competitive labour market. Academic mobility, in this view, is often linked to policies to attract highly skilled workers for the knowledge economy of the more advanced nations.\textsuperscript{23} Most ASEM countries devise policies that treat the impact of academic mobility not only as a personal matter, but also as an institutional, national, even supra-regional matter. Many governments and universities are involved in stimulating the global circulation of students and academics, expecting that they will have a positive effect on their universities’ position in the global knowledge network.

To sum up, policies on academic mobility are value-laden, but they cannot simply be inferred from a particular value position, as these values are continuously constructed and re-constructed over time. There is always a certain level of conflict between values and in policy deliberations, while the priority of one value over others is constantly negotiated. Policymakers seek to resolve this conflict in various ways, either by trade-offs between values, by side-lining a particular value, or redefining or re-articulating its meaning in different contexts.

\begin{thebibliography}{99}
\bibitem{18} Brooks and Waters, 2010; Findlay et al., 2011
\bibitem{19} Brown et al., 2013
\bibitem{20} Bourdieu, 1986
\bibitem{21} Brooks and Waters, 2010
\bibitem{22} Leung, 2013
\bibitem{23} Rizvi and Lingard, 2010
\bibitem{24} Ibid.
\end{thebibliography}
5. Connectivity through Education

3. Changing rationales of Asia-Europe academic mobility

Academic mobility within, and between, Asia and Europe is not a new phenomenon, but the logic underlying international mobility has greatly varied over time. An understanding of such changing rationales would be beneficial for policy evaluation and policy development.

In Asia, around the 6th and 7th centuries, Japan and Korea sent students and scholars, including many monks, to China to study and translate Buddhist texts. During the Tang Dynasty, between the 7th and 10th centuries, the Chinese imperial civil service examinations, which were open to all on a meritocratic selection principle, attracted Korean scholars and students to China to study and prepare for the examinations. Western scholars travelled long distances to Indian universities, not only to study arts, architecture and religion, but also the sciences and mathematics. In parallel, medieval European universities, such as Bologna, attracted students from Asia and the Middle East. The rationale for international mobility has primarily been to search for new knowledge not available within the home nation.

During the colonial period from the 18th century, student mobility between Asia and Europe was mainly linked to the civilising mission, designed to develop a local elite that was loyal to the economic and political interests of the colonial powers and was able to manage local populations. The host university’s role was to promote the Western ideas of modernity in meeting the political needs of the empires. The Asian graduates possessed a modernist disposition and knowledge from European universities which enabled them to maintain their position of power. Universities in the French and British colonies were established from the mid-19th century onwards, and their academic staff members were recruited mainly from the motherlands and from returned graduates. In this way, academic mobility serves as a social technology designed to (re)produce power, social classes, and inequality.

In the post-colonial period, around the mid-20th century, academic mobility assumed a new rationale, driven by the discourses of developmentalism and nationalism. First World countries provided scholarships, as part of their overseas aid programmes, for students from the newly independent countries in Asia, in order to help them in their nation-building projects. The Colombo Plan, initiated in the early 1950s within the British Commonwealth, was an example of such an overseas aid policy, with the aim of transferring knowledge and building the local capacity needed to develop the social, administrative, and economic infrastructure of South Asia.

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25 Ibid.
26 Hung and Wakabayashi, 2005
27 Kim, 2009
28 Rizvi, 2011
29 Ibid., 28
30 Kim, 2009
31 Ibid., 28
32 Rizvi and Lingard, 2010
This kind of aid programme was also crafted as a strategy in public diplomacy of the First World countries during the Cold War. In response to the former USSR’s strategy to educate a large number of international students, the Colombo Plan, and other national scholarship schemes, e.g. the German Academic Exchange Service from 1950 and the Alexander von Humboldt Foundation from 1953, provided financial aid to students from Third World countries to study at First World universities. In this geopolitical context, academic mobility was a way to promote Western democracy and capitalism, thus exerting soft power, conceived as a means of attracting and implanting power.

In the past two decades of the globalisation era, the dominant discourse of the knowledge economy has viewed academic mobility more as global trade and a source of income for some countries to compensate for state disinvestment. Education is increasingly considered as an export industry, driven by the demand for academic mobility, most notably in the rapidly developing economies of Asia. This demand has also enabled countries such as the USA, the UK, Canada and Australia to set themselves up as major suppliers. Countries like Singapore, Malaysia, China, Korea and Japan are now seeking to develop a range of policies to enter this market.

Alongside the recruitment of international fee-paying students, many governments continue to offer scholarships, and have launched new immigration policies to attract and retain highly skilled workers. National scholarship schemes, such as: Australia Awards; Chevening (UK); the Japan Society for the Promotion of Science Fellowships; Singapore’s ASEAN scholarships; Dutch Orange Tulip Scholarship Programmes; DAAD Scholarships and Grants (Germany); the Eiffel Excellence Scholarship Programme (France); and regional scholarships schemes, such as Erasmus Mundus and Marie Skłodowska-Curie, are not confined to the developing world, but target specific countries or regions in the developed world to attract the best and brightest brains, thus establishing stronger global knowledge networks. The EU introduced the Scientific Visa in 2005 and the Blue Card in 2009 to expedite the entry of knowledge workers, many of whom are international graduates already residing in Europe. These recruitment policies reflect strategic calculations made by the state, institutions, and individuals that consider the value of academic mobility mainly in economic terms, namely returns on educational investment and better employment prospects.

By and large, the rationales and outcomes of academic mobility policies have shifted over time, but have always been linked to political agendas, and increasingly to the instrumental purposes of human capital development and economic maximisation.

35 Stein and de Andreotti, 2015
36 Nye, 2004
37 Ibid., 35
38 Ibid., 28
39 Countries are listed in the order of who first took on the market approach to education.
40 Geddie, 2015; Gribble and Blackmore, 2012; Mosneaga and Winther, 2013
41 National scholarship schemes are presented in the chronological order.
42 Cerna and Chou, 2014
43 Rizvi, 2011
4. ASEM Education Process and academic mobility

4.1. Institutional structure, policy actors and agenda

The first ASEM Summit of Heads of State and Government in 1996 set out:

“to foster exchange of students and scholars with a view to developing a better understanding of the cultures, histories and business practices of both regions.”44

The text was crafted shortly after the end of the Cold War by the officials of foreign affairs ministries with a tone of diplomacy and rediscovery of each other. The aim of academic mobility was to create generations of students and scholars who could enhance knowledge about each other’s cultures and position one region into the other.

The ASEM Education Ministers met in 2008 to forge a strategic educational partnership and start the ASEM Education Process. The institutional structure, at the time of writing, is captured in Figure 1 which depicts the governance model with a four-point agenda, key actors, projects, multi-layered interactions, and connections.

Figure 1: ASEM education agenda and actors

Source: The author’s compilation, 2016

44 ASEM 1996, §19
This multi-layered structure facilitates multilateral government-to-government and bilateral partnerships, as well as networks of non-governmental stakeholders which strengthen the connections within, and between, the two regions. Figure 1 also depicts the authority patterns and the allocated tasks and responsibilities among state and non-state actors. The senior officials, and their conception of an ASEM Education Area, are at the heart of the process where the actual decision-making activities occur in practice. The senior officials not only devise the agenda for the ministers’ meetings, but also prepare the chair’s conclusions, the most visible and important policy document of the process, similar to the Bologna Process Communiqués. The chair’s conclusions show the ministers’ political viewpoints, the common goals, achievements, new initiatives, and activities. This document is discussed extensively at the Senior Officials’ Meeting (SOM), translated into national languages, where required, and enacted under the leadership of the senior officials in their national contexts.

In the past seven years of developing ASEM high-level educational partnership, academic mobility has always been one of the strategic goals of ASEM education ministers, and a way to ensure the success of people.

“[T]he Ministers emphasised the need for an area where mobility of students, teachers, researchers, ideas and knowledge would be the core common goal. The Ministers were convinced that it would be possible to ensure that people would be equipped to operate successfully in an international and global environment by reinforcing the collaboration and mobility.”45

This chair’s statement was written in the context of Europe celebrating the achievement of the decade-long Bologna Process, resulting in an unprecedented European Higher Education Area (EHEA) for increased student mobility. As it was crafted by officials from education ministries, and backed up by the success in Europe, this policy text has an optimistic tone: “...the ministers were convinced that it would be possible to ensure... [that] people operate successfully”. What is new in this ASEM text is the “the need for an area”, a new, larger, higher education space conjoining the two regions to accelerate student mobility, and subsequently the flows of skilled labour. In this imagined common space, student mobility between Asia and Europe can be enhanced:

“... by intensifying promotional activities in both regions, appointing competent students and staff with a mobility experience as “ambassadors for mobility” in each ASEM country and organising ASEM education fairs in Asia and Europe (e.g. with EU support)”.46

The text entails technical details of specific policy tools which champion academic mobility and introduce a business model of an ASEM education fair, which appears to resemble, and expand, the concept of the European Higher Education Fairs47, a regional branding initiative. Although the ASEM education fair has yet to take place, the desired massive scale of academic mobility in 51 ASEM member countries would indicate the significance of an ASEM Education Area.

45 ASEM ME5, 2015, italics by the author
46 ASEM ME3, 2011
Furthermore, ASEM education ministers go on to elaborate the goal explicitly:

“Inter-regional exchange of students and staff leads to an increase in internationally trained and experienced labour force and lays the ground for new partnerships in Asia and Europe.”

This policy goal is driven by the social efficiency value that measures the outcome of academic mobility as an “internationally trained and experienced labour force”, and indicates that such human capital can be converted into other forms of capital, i.e. the new partnerships which mobilities afford. In this way, mobility is not a simple sojourn, but rather a process of sowing seeds for longer-term partnerships and connectivity.

ASEM policy on mobility also manifests a negotiation between different values: increase labour force and develop active citizens. For example, in the same conclusions of ASEM ME4 in 2013, the Malaysian chair emphasised the development of citizens and social cohesion as an important goal of ASEM education partnership, which is to:

“contribute to the development of highly qualified and active citizens who have a strong sense of social responsibility, are open-minded and respect cultural diversity.”

“reiterate the importance of education and training for balanced, sustainable and inclusive growth in Asia and Europe, as well as for democracy, cultural diversity and social cohesion in both regions.”

The policy challenge is to strike a balance between these humanistic values and the economic view of academic mobility.

4.2. Imbalanced mobility

Another reason for the mobility topic to be high on the ASEM agenda is that it depicts asymmetrical relationships between ASEM education systems. As shown in Figure 1, the adjective balanced gives specific meaning to mobility in the ASEM context. In the past, in the mind of European and Asian leaders, balanced was about attracting more Asian students to Europe – therefore balancing the number of Asian students studying in the USA with that in Europe. In a modern ASEM context, balanced means attracting more European students to Asian universities. The two following tables illustrate the statistics of Asian mobile students in Europe and North America between 2008 and 2013.
Table 1: Inbound internationally mobile students from Asia at tertiary education level in 30 European ASEM countries, 2008-2013

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Indicator</th>
<th>Inbound internationally mobile students from Asia, both sexes (number)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Time</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Country (30 European ASEM partners)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Austria</td>
<td>7,081</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Belgium</td>
<td>53</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bulgaria</td>
<td>3,715</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Croatia</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cyprus</td>
<td>5,395</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Czech Republic</td>
<td>2,713</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Denmark</td>
<td>1,370</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Estonia</td>
<td>78</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Finland</td>
<td>3,721</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>France</td>
<td>51,021</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Germany</td>
<td>62,439</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Greece</td>
<td>n/a</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hungary</td>
<td>2,657</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ireland</td>
<td>3,516</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Italy</td>
<td>9,040</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Latvia</td>
<td>293</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lithuania</td>
<td>430</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Luxembourg</td>
<td>55</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Malta</td>
<td>132</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Netherlands</td>
<td>3,112</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Norway</td>
<td>2,716</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Poland</td>
<td>2,858</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Portugal</td>
<td>224</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Romania</td>
<td>2,251</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Slovakia</td>
<td>810</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Slovenia</td>
<td>19</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Table 2: Inbound internationally mobile students from Asia at tertiary education level in Canada and the United States, 2008-2013

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Indicator</th>
<th>Inbound internationally mobile students from Asia, both sexes (number)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Time</td>
<td>2008</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Country</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Canada</td>
<td>44,128</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>United States of America</td>
<td>419,580</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>463,708</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Although the absolute figures of Asian students in Europe and North America are still imbalanced, this is not the topic of discussion at ASEM meetings. The phrase balanced mobility expresses the ministers’ other concern, which has become a recurrent theme at all of their meetings.

“[… ] student mobility between both regions is notably imbalanced. Many more Asian students study in Europe than Europeans in Asia. It was felt in previous Ministerial Meetings that measures should be taken to better balance mobility flows, especially by motivating more European students to spend at least part of their studies in Asia. To this end, mobility-friendly frameworks concerning information, funding and study conditions must be further developed.”

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51 ASEM ME4, 2013
This passage indicates the asymmetric education relation between Asia and Europe in a very subtle language. Phrases like “it was felt that” and “to better balance”, suggest that the balance might be improved, but never become an absolute balance. The phrase “more European students [...] to spend at least part of their studies in Asia” indicates a modest wish for an apparent balance, and explicitly accepts the perception (also reality) that many universities in Asia are not of comparable quality to those in Europe. Also, as a senior official of Thailand’s Higher Education Commission pointed out: “It would never be possible to balance flows, as Asia has a huge young population compared to Europe.”

Furthermore, both Europe and Asia are implementing strategies to promote intra-regional mobility, as cross-regional mobility is seen as a more complex and costly project. In Europe, the strategy paper *Mobility for Better Learning*, adopted by the EHEA ministerial conference in 2012, encourages member countries to strive for more, and better balanced, mobility inside, and outside of, the EHEA. In Asia, there is also an emerging view that encourages more Asian students to study closer to home. Regional schemes, such as ASEAN International Mobility for Students (AIMS) and the ASEAN University Network (AUN), are mainly to boost intra-regional mobility. Moreover, many countries that have traditionally sent students are now diversifying their domestic provision of higher education, and enhancing its quality, through partnerships with Western universities and, increasingly, with universities from neighbouring countries. The new educational hubs in Asia attract students from afar, and from within the region.

### Table 3: Total international student enrolment in selected Asian countries

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>China</td>
<td>328,330</td>
<td>356,499</td>
<td>377,054</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Australia</td>
<td>245,531</td>
<td>247,093</td>
<td>269,752</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Japan</td>
<td>137,756</td>
<td>135,519</td>
<td>139,185</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Malaysia</td>
<td>86,923 (2010)</td>
<td>n/a</td>
<td>n/a</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>New Zealand</td>
<td>48,104</td>
<td>41,609</td>
<td>46,659</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Author’s compilation from http://www.iie.org/Research-and-Publications/Project-Atlas

China has recruited increasing numbers of international students in recent years with roughly around 42% on full degree mobility and 58% on non-degree mobility. China has a target to reach 500,000 in 2020. The majority of international students are from Asia, the USA and France as shown in Figure 2 below.

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52 Thailand’s presentation delivered at the 3rd ASEM Rectors’ Conference at the University of Groningen, the Netherlands, September 2012. The author’s direct observation at the event.

Similarly, Japan has also increased its recruitment and set a goal of hosting 300,000 international students by 2020. More than 90% of them are currently from Asia, with the main sources China, Korea, Viet Nam, Nepal, the Taiwan Province of China, Indonesia, Thailand, Malaysia, and Myanmar).

In summary, Asia and Europe pursue their objectives of increasing intra-regional mobility, and in parallel promote extra-regional mobility to strengthen Asia-Europe connectivity. Balanced mobility in the ASEM context has shifted its focus to encourage more European students and scholars to Asian universities to enhance reciprocal exchange.

Source: Author’s compilation from http://www.iie.org/Services/Project-Atlas/China/International-Students-In-China

4.3. Obstacles to academic mobility

Academic mobility faces a series of obstacles at different levels. These include personal motivation, funding, access, academic standards, language skills, recognition of study periods and foreign qualifications, immigration regulations and tenure contracts of staff. All impact greatly on the expansion or restriction of academic mobility. To tackle some of these obstacles, ASEM senior officials have launched different pilot projects, such as the Beijing Bridging Declaration on Recognition of Qualifications, ASEMUNDUS, which links European and Asian universities and ASEM joint degree programmes in tourism and hospitality, with a view to enhancing the curriculum and the mobility of students and teachers.

Aware of shrinking funding, a fundamental obstacle to mobility, ASEM Ministers:

“... [Re]affirmed that equal access to interregional learning experiences should be ensured through sufficient public student support and the development of mobility opportunities.” 55

At ASEM ME5 in April 2015, ASEM partners confirmed their financial commitment to support academic mobility. The European Commission offers Erasmus+ and Marie Skłodowska-Curie scholarships. The EU-funded SHARE project56 provides technical and financial resources for enhancing ASEAN regional quality assurance, credit transfer systems, qualification frameworks and scholarships for mobility. ASEM-DUO scheme continues to offer student and professorial exchanges on a reciprocal basis. China’s One Belt, One Road57 Plan offers tens of thousands of Chinese government scholarships to students from the countries along the Belt and Road. Numerous other national scholarship schemes, and bilateral partnerships of ASEM countries, also contribute to inter-regional mobility. Furthermore, the European Research Area has launched the initiative EURAXESS – Researchers in Motion58 to enhance research collaboration between Europe and the world. The scheme is particularly active in Asia.

55 ASEM ME4, 2013
Social and cultural barriers impact greatly on mobile students and scholars. In daily life, they look to acquire personal sensibilities, engage in the local environment, build social networks and lasting friendship, and obtain new values in their country of education. However, these potential benefits of mobility should not be romanticised. In practice, mobile students and scholars encounter many contradictions and uncertainties. As outsiders, mobile students have ambiguous meanings for the host country. On one hand, they are valued and welcomed because they are seen as a source of revenue, research labour, future human capital, and international ambassadors. On the other hand, they trigger border anxiety and bureaucratic categorisation. As citizens of two national jurisdictions and with two political relationships, mobile students often cannot exercise the full rights and entitlements of citizens in either home or host country.\(^{59}\) In day-to-day life, many have to cope with negative and discriminatory experiences. Even when they are welcomed in the host countries, they may quickly become categorised as a threat if their presence and their benefits endanger the entitlements and opportunities of the local people.

Other challenges have emerged in the countries which send most students abroad. According to market rules, the material and symbolic value of foreign academic qualifications also depend on scarcity\(^{60}\) and the increased volume of mobility may diminish this exclusiveness and reduce the value of international credentials. Additionally, mobile students and young academics may face the situation where fast changes are happening at home while they are studying abroad, and they may be left isolated if they are not established in the local networks. Mobile students and academics do not always harvest the best of both worlds. The different national and institutional contexts in home and foreign countries may restrain their ability to engage in knowledge production and dissemination and to translate and transfer various elements of academic fields across boundaries.

5. **Academic mobility and brain circulation**

Academic mobility also poses challenges for governments in the sending countries. These are often developing countries, and can be anxious about losing their talent, in whom they have invested through, at least, their initial education, to more developed countries. This phenomenon is widely known as "brain drain". The term was coined by the British Royal Society to describe the outflow of British and European scientists to North America in the 1950s. In the 1970s, the brain drain issue came to be associated with the emigration of highly skilled individuals from developing to advanced countries.\(^{61}\) Today, this pattern of a one-way flow of qualified workforce has changed to a multi-directional movement, and so requires a new understanding.
The brain drain concept is based on a zero-sum thinking in which one nation’s loss is another’s gain. This, in turn, derives from the belief that relationships between nation-states are inevitably competitive. The brains involved are not only a resource for the nation-state but belong to it and can therefore be lost to it, or gained by it. This assumption also sees knowledge as embodied and territorial. Knowledge is contained within the brain, therefore when the body and brain leave a particular territory the knowledge leaves too. In this view, the brains tend to be conceived in individualistic, instrumental, almost nationalistic ways, in the sense that there is a conflation of the body with the nation.62 These assumptions are implausible, but they persist.

In today’s global knowledge economy, highly skilled professionals seek better standards of living, higher salaries, better access to advanced technology, and more stable political conditions in different places worldwide.63 This phenomenon causes dilemmas and challenges for policy makers, in both developing and developed countries. The developed countries seek to attract qualified workers for their knowledge economy, but insist on preventing the movement of low-skilled workers and refugees. Many developing countries have become reliant on the remittances sent home by emigrants, but this is not a long-term solution to their social and economic development.64 In the globalisation era, the issue is no longer where people are physically located, but what contribution they are able to make to the social, cultural and economic development of the (multiple) countries with which they identify.65 This new conceptual understanding of mobility is known as brain circulation, which helps broaden views on the mobility of knowledge workers for Asia-Europe connectivity.

In practice, ASEM countries introduce policies linking academic mobility and migration. For example, to minimise the reverse brain drain, some receiving countries, which offer free higher education and/or scholarships, retain a certain share of qualified foreign graduates, who may be obliged to work in the host countries for a period of time upon their graduation. This retention can be seen as compensation for the investment which has been made in international students.66 At the same time, many sending countries have introduced policies to reduce the emigration of qualified workers by improving domestic study options with joint programmes and foreign campuses, by promoting the return of graduates, and by engaging with diaspora networks.67

In summary, brain circulation is the material, social, and intellectual outcome of academic mobility. The idea of circulatory movement accounts for transient flows of graduates, academics, etc. and increases the connectivity between them, their home country, and other countries with which they identify. Brain circulation offers a conceptual alternative to the blurred boundary between mobility and migration.68

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62 Fahey and Kenway, 2010
63 Rizvi, 2005
64 Rizvi and Lingard, 2010
65 Rizvi, 2011; Welch, 2015
66 Suter and Jandl, 2008
67 Ziguras and Gribble, 2015
68 Jöns, 2009
6. Concluding thoughts

The history of Asia-Europe academic mobility over the centuries has contributed to people-to-people connectivity. The current ASEM education process aims at increasing mobility and making a more profound impact on Asia-Europe connectivity across various sectors. This is premised on the belief that the friendships, social connections and intellectual capacity created by mobile students and scholars can bind them together, thus rejuvenating scientific, cultural, economic, and diplomatic connectivity among ASEM countries. In order to reap such benefits, efforts should be made to devise effective policies and implementation plans for maximising mobility opportunities and minimising adverse effects.

Based on the analysis in previous sections, there seem to be two policy streams in the ASEM education process. The European ASEM countries continue to promote intra-regional mobility, but increasingly encourage their students to study outside Europe, especially in Asia. The introduction of Erasmus+, Marie Skłodowska-Curie scholarships, and portable financial support (grants or loans) and the emergence of the ASEM Education Area, with an extended list of Asian countries to choose from, are seen as regional policy instruments to increase extra-regional mobility. The Asian ASEM countries, whose students continue to be attracted by Europe, are making an effort to promote intra-regional mobility within Asia. In this context, cross-regional mobility will require innovative policy solutions. Governments can play an important role in at least the following areas:

- Making regulations and/or providing incentives for universities to create joint curriculum programmes with short-term mobility. This will increase access and affordability for students.

- Giving extra support and encouragement to students in certain subject areas. From the perspective of democratic equality, teacher education students should be encouraged to study abroad given their future role and long-term contribution to the internationalisation of education. Also, mobility opportunity should be created for the students in those specialised fields that require a critical mass of students, high level of technology, and massive investment in research facilities in order to develop quality educational provision and centres of excellence. From the perspective of social efficiency, the mobility of doctoral candidates is especially relevant, as their research, even when conducted abroad, can meet the needs of their country of origin.

- More mobility opportunities should be offered to students, teachers and trainers in the Technical and Vocational Education and Training (TVET) sector in ASEM countries.

- At ASEM ME5, the ministers of education discussed the collaborative options of integrating technology into educational delivery methods, e.g. Massive Open Online Courses (MOOCs), to change the conventional physical mobility mode of study, and to widen access for unconventional students, such as those in employment, older students, those with family commitments, or those from a lower socio-economic background.

There is no shortage of policy ideas, but the challenge is how they can be turned into policies and actions. Perhaps a special ASEM expert working group on mobility could be set up. With
experience and expertise from both Asia and Europe, such a group could critically review the current initiatives in all the ASEM ME chair’s conclusions, utilise research on mobility, and propose priorities to concentrate resources on a few viable projects in a coordinated manner.

Finally, it is evident, through the ASEM policy review process, that academic mobility manifests a complex negotiation between different political, economic, and intellectual/cultural agendas. This necessitates education policymakers to work across sectors, and consider a variety of inter-related factors that influence patterns of academic mobility. These include domestic capacity, economics, demographics, labour market requirements, and immigration policies. Given the diversity and disparity among ASEM countries and their education systems, the ASEM higher education process should prioritise collaboration and innovation for intellectual advancement and equity, rather than paving the way for gaining bigger market shares of international students.
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Abstract

Open Education is an important trend to improve education on all levels. Re-using, sharing and the collaborative development of Open Educational Resources and Practices can lead to new fruitful collaborations. The key question is how to utilise Open Education for promoting educational collaborations between Europe and Asia. While some countries have successfully adopted national strategies and policies to improve their educational systems, the potential for collaboration has not been exploited.

The main goals of this paper are to: (i) introduce Open Education; and (ii) to develop recommendations to improve educational collaboration between Asian and European countries. The main idea is to establish an Asian-European Open Education Area (OEA). For this purpose, we propose recommendations on three levels; policy; organisational; and individual. We study how Open Education and Open Educational Resources can contribute to more intense collaborations. We conclude with recommendations for policy makers and researchers. We provide key recommendations on a policy, as well as operational level, to achieve the goal of better educational collaborations between Asia and Europe.
5. Connectivity through Education

Introduction: explaining open education

Open Education comprises all activities with the goal of creating better access and quality of education by using openly available resources and practices in education on all levels.\(^1\) Open Education and in particular Open Educational Resources (OER) are a promising approach to reduce cost and increase access to education on a global scale.\(^2\)

As a starting point, it is necessary to clarify the concept of OER. According to our understanding, an OER is any digital object which can be freely accessed, modified and (re)used for educational purposes, using an open license. This broad definition includes a variety of different products: learning objects such as simulations or animations; software tools like wikis or authoring systems; electronic textbooks and lesson plans or experiences shared. Using open licenses such as Creative Commons or GNU Public License is essential for re-use. The main aspect is that the OER is usable to improve education.

As the definition includes a variety of possible artefacts, it is necessary to understand which of these can contribute towards Open Education. The following classification shows the broad range of artefacts as well as parallels to other initiatives\(^3\):

- **Resources**: Currently, the main research field is how to make learning objects (specific digital objects created for learning purposes) available and reusable. This includes multimedia documents, simulations but also simple HTML web resources.

- **Articles, textbooks and digital equivalents**: This class of resources contains typical items provided by libraries, such as articles, papers, books or journals. When freely available, this class of objects relates to the concept of open access.\(^4,5\)

- **Software tools** are used for different purposes, such as producing/authoring learning resources, but also for communication and collaboration. Objects of this class are usually referenced as open source or free software.\(^6\)

- **Instructional/didactical designs and experiences**: Educators are highly dependent on planning and designing their learning experiences successfully. This class of resources includes access to instructional designs, didactical planning such as lesson plans, case studies or curricula. It also includes one of the most valuable resources: sharing experiences about materials and lessons between colleagues. This class of objects is also called Open Educational Practices.\(^7\)

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\(^1\) Cf. Mulder & Janssen (2013)

\(^2\) UNESCO, “Forum on the impact of open courseware for higher education in developing countries: Final report,” 1-3 July 2002


• Open Educational Ideas (OEI) denote concepts, ideas and innovations which are in an initial stage. OEI are thus early-stage artefacts such as prototypes, sketches, brainstorming or generally unfinished OER.

The range of artefacts allows different forms of collaborations which might be fruitful, amongst them:

• Sharing and re-using learning materials, curricula and practices would be beneficial to save development costs for high quality materials, but also for better alignment and comparability of curricula;
• Collaborative courses to increase students’ international exposure and experiences;
• Better transition between educational systems in different countries to increase mobility as well as enhance transnational education;
• Better understanding of learning and teaching practices amongst teachers.

There are many possible benefits; OER might increase the quality of, and access to, education on both continents. However, sharing of resources and collaboration has not been fully explored by Asia-Europe Meeting (ASEM) countries. It will therefore be necessary to work actively towards better connectivity and provide the framework to share OER and help educate the next generation of Asian-European students.

Learning object repositories and initiatives

The most intuitive way to find resources seems to be to access them through a search engine like Google. However searching this way might be a painful process, as most results are not specific for educational settings. Most initiatives provide their materials in Learning Object Repositories (LOR) which provide access to educational resources. Most of them have stored a variety of information about the materials -metadata. Users can search for specific materials by categories such as subject, age group or context. This more specific search might lead to more specific results.

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8 Henri Pirkkalainen and Jan M. Pawlowski, “Collaborating on ideas: Tackling barriers to open education,” in World Conference on educational media, hypermedia and telecommunications, 23 June 2014, Tampere, Finland.
Several communities provide OER for different purposes, subjects and regions. The Massachusetts Institute of Technology OpenCourseWare (MIT OCW) project in the USA, and several US universities make their content freely available. In Europe a variety of universities have formed communities to share and distribute content. One major initiative is the Open Content initiative OpenLearn by the Open University UK. The Global Learning Objects Brokering Exchange (GLOBE) initiative also provides access to a variety of resources in globally distributed repositories. Other initiatives, which mainly provide learning object repositories (LORs) to share OER, are Multimedia Educational Resource for Learning and Online Teaching (MERLOT) II, OER Commons as well as Advance Learning Interactive Systems Online (ALISON).

There are specific communities based on the region, educational level or topic:

- Open Education Europa is a community and resource collection for all kind of OER including Massive Open Online Courses (MOOCs), papers and learning objects. It is currently the main access point for Open Education in Europe;
- The main repository for schools in Europe is currently the Learning Resource Exchange (LRE) by European Schoolnet. This initiative supported by European ministries of education provides access to a variety of materials in different forms;
- Idea sharing and collaborative development is supported through an Idea Space which aims to bringing educators together towards common course and OER development;
- OER Asia is one of the main repositories for the Asian context where research studies, knowledge resources and good practices about Open Education Resources in the Asian Region are shared and discussed.

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15 OER Commons, http://www.oercommons.org/.
The following table gives a short description of the contents available in those selected repositories.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Repository</th>
<th>Description</th>
<th>Website</th>
<th>Countries/regions involved*</th>
<th>Nature of sharing</th>
<th>Courses offered</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Open Education Europa</td>
<td>The main goal of the Open Education Europa portal is to offer access to all existing European Open Education Resources in different languages in order to be able to present them to learners, teachers and researchers. Open Education Europa is a dynamic platform, built with the latest cutting-edge open-source technology, offering tools for communicating, sharing and discussing. The portal is structured in three main sections: The Find, Share and In-depth Section.</td>
<td><a href="http://www.openeducationeuropa.eu/">http://www.openeducationeuropa.eu/</a></td>
<td>EU countries: Austria, Belgium, Bulgaria, Croatia, Cyprus, Czech Republic, Denmark, Estonia, Finland, France, Germany, Greece, Hungary, Ireland, Italy, Latvia, Lithuania, Luxembourg, Netherlands, Poland, Portugal, Romania, Slovakia, Slovenia, Spain, Sweden, United Kingdom Non-EU: Belarus, former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia Iceland, Norway, Russian Federation, Serbia, Switzerland, Turkey</td>
<td>Copyright notice as stated in the website: Reproduction is authorised, provided the source is acknowledged, save where otherwise stated. Where prior permission must be obtained for the reproduction or use of textual and multimedia information (sound, images, software, etc.), such permission shall cancel the above-mentioned general permission and shall clearly indicate any restrictions on use.</td>
<td>There are approximately 800 courses offered, ranging from the field of science and technology, social sciences and humanities to applied sciences, business, mathematics and statistics, natural sciences and arts.</td>
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</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Learning Resource Exchange</td>
<td>The Learning Resource Exchange (LRE) from European Schoolnet (EUN) is a service that enables schools to find educational content from many different countries and providers. It was developed in order to provide Ministries of Education with access to a network of learning content repositories and associated tools that allow them to more easily exchange high quality learning resources that ‘travel well’ and can be used by teachers in different countries.</td>
<td><a href="http://lrefschools.eun.org/">http://lrefschools.eun.org/</a></td>
<td>Austria, Belgium, Czech Republic, Estonia, Finland, France, Germany, Hungary, Ireland, Israel, Italy, Lithuania, Netherlands, Poland, Portugal, Slovenia, Spain, Sweden, United Kingdom, USA</td>
<td>Copyright Notice as stated in the website: The vast majority of LRE content is provided under a Creative Commons license, an internationally recognised scheme that helps define the spectrum of possibilities between full copyright (all rights reserved) and the public domain (where no rights at all are reserved).</td>
<td>There are no courses offered in the website. The website is a repository of learning materials – usually with educational contents for teaching.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
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<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Repository</th>
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<th>Countries/regions involved*</th>
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<th>Courses offered</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Idea Space</td>
<td>This platform is a place to find others to connect to, and work together, on open education, from the very beginning when bouncing around ideas, to the final outcome – whether this is an open course, open textbook or anything else that helps to open up education.</td>
<td><a href="http://idea-space.eu">http://idea-space.eu</a></td>
<td>Finland, Germany, Greece, Lithuania</td>
<td>Each OER has an indicated license agreement</td>
<td>There are no courses offered in the website. Rather, users are encouraged to share their ideas related to Open Education. Files shared in the website are mostly OER</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>OER Asia</td>
<td>OER Asia is an Asian forum to share information, opinions, research studies and knowledge resources. In addition it shares guidelines and toolkits on good practices on and about Open Education Resources in the Asian region.</td>
<td><a href="https://oerasia.org">https://oerasia.org</a></td>
<td>Bangladesh, China, Taiwan Province of China, India, Korea, Malaysia, Thailand</td>
<td>There is a copyright and licensing toolkit uploaded in the website</td>
<td>There are no courses offered in the website. It is a repository of Open Educational Resources that are categorised based on the institution offer, or for a specific purpose (e.g. Every Stock Photo – a search engine for free photos)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

* Countries in grey are non-ASEM partners.

Although there are many global initiatives, there are no connected activities between Asia and Europe on a national or regional level. There are some specific institutional collaborations, but no systematic initiatives aim at promoting and realising Asian-European collaboration regarding Open Education.

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Barriers and interventions to open education and collaboration

The amount and variety of educational materials is huge. However, many barriers still exist, especially when re-using and sharing across borders. Several studies discuss these barriers, such as:

- Lack of policies on a national level;
- Lack of organisational support;
- Lack of resources for sustaining services, content and infrastructures;
- Lack of time for production and localisation of OER;
- Lack of business models;
- Lack of knowledge and awareness of learning object repositories;
- Open content does not fit the scope of the course, or matching the resources to own curricula is problematic;
- Availability in other languages than English; and
- Cultural fit.

Dhanarajan and Abeywardena focus on technical and attitudinal barriers in the Asian context:

- needing technical support to search and find digital resources;
- locating and clearing copyright;
- setting up technical infrastructure (computers, connections);
- installing appropriate software; evaluating the quality of resources;
- integrating resources into learning management systems;
- using learning management systems.
- apprehension about the quality of the digital resources, the context of their creation and the appropriateness of the resources to buttress the curriculum; and
- lack of confidence in learners’ skills to use digital resources and anxieties over issues relating to plagiarism.

Dhanarajan and Abeywardena also added that low awareness amongst teachers and policy makers about OER is another impediment that hinders the maximisation of its potential. Both play a critical role in the acceptance and integration of resources in teaching.

These barriers need to be tackled on different levels, from policy level by governments to the operational level by developers, teachers, users and other stakeholders.

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27 Pirkkalainen et al., Overcoming Cultural Distance.


29 Henri Pirkkalainen and Jan M. Pawlowski, Collaborating on ideas.

The Asian-European open education area: policy and operational recommendations

There have been many OER developments, including Europe and Asia but no long-term collaborations have been established to increase collaborations and connectivity between these continents. Based on our current studies, we will show successful collaboration strategies and approaches towards harnessing the full potentials of Open Education. We show a pathway towards a common Open Education Area (OEA) between Asia and Europe as a tool to connect educational systems, institutions and individuals.

As a basis, we use the recommendations of the UNESCO Paris Declaration (2012) which, until now, is the only global consensus document promoting Open Education and the recommendations by Pawlowski and Hoel (2012). The UNESCO Paris Declaration as a global effort has shown the potential of OER for global education. The declaration has given policy recommendations which have – until now – only been implemented in a few countries, such as the Philippines and Lithuania.

Recommendations in 2012 Paris Open Educational Resources (OER) Declaration

1. Foster awareness and use of OER
2. Facilitate enabling environments for use of Information and Communication Technologies (ICT)
3. Reinforce the development of strategies and policies on OER
4. Promote the understanding and use of open licensing frameworks
5. Support capacity building for the sustainable development of quality learning materials
6. Foster strategic alliances for OER
7. Encourage the development and adaptation of OER in a variety of languages and cultural context
8. Encourage research in OER
9. Facilitate finding, retrieving and sharing of OER
10. Encourage the open licensing of educational materials produced with public funds

Based on these, we will give recommendations for policy, and operational development at an organisational and individual level, with a focus on recommendations for the ASEM process. Policy recommendations are directed towards governments, whereas organisational and individual recommendations are more operational and should be considered by institutions and people engaged in collaboration and OER.

31 Jan M. Pawlowski et al. (2014) Overcoming Cultural Distance.
I. Policy recommendations

What are the necessary steps governments need to follow? This is discussed in the following recommendations.

Governmental support for an Open Education Area between Asia and Europe

There is no doubt that international, in particular Asian-European collaboration, will lead to improvements in the quality of education and positive long-term business effects.

We assume that in principle governments support the idea of collaboration improvement and this should be explicitly stated in a common memorandum or other form of partnership agreement or declaration. In the following, we describe the necessary steps to work towards an Open Education Area.

Reinforce the development of strategies and policies on OER

Until now, only a few governments, such as the Philippines, have adopted the concept of Open Education for their national educational policies. However, institutions and administrations need governmental support to implement this change. It is highly necessary to extend existing educational policies regarding OER. It should be assessed how OER can be incorporated when policies are revised. There should be either a dedicated OER policy or inclusion in existing ones.

For the OEA context, this could mean that a high-level agreement proposes the development of strategies as well as a commitment to resources and incentives to enable more collaborations based on national policies. Those could be synchronised and endorsed through the ASEM meeting with high-level recommendations.

For governments, this means that strategies need to be developed for including OER as an alternative to traditional and commercial learning materials for formal and non-formal education. It is also a mechanism to provide better access and wider reach, especially to areas that are geographically hard to reach.

Furthermore, access to OER should be widened throughout society, in particular for special needs education as well as marginalised and vulnerable groups, so working towards social inclusion. It could include courses related to disaster risk reduction and management, and climate change adaptation strategies.

To achieve an OEA, governments need to launch country-focused actions, but also campaigns harnessing the possible benefits of Open Education and Asian-European collaboration. A common fund should be started to enable and incubate long-term collaborations.
Foster strategic alliances for OER

Strategic partnerships across continents are a necessity for successful OER adoption. This is valid for partnerships within a country, e.g. between schools, publishers, content providers and technology providers and between countries, e.g. teaching collaborations, as well as for development work (North-South collaborations). Furthermore, self-sustainable communities should be created which work on resource improvement, quality assurance and experience sharing.

For the OEA this means to exploit current bilateral and multilateral relations between, and among, countries, regions and institutions. Existing relations need to be extended towards collaboration regarding funding programmes and policies on the governmental level, as well as concrete actions such as the common development of OER and common courses between institutions in Asia and Europe. Concrete actions and good practices should be shared and promoted.

Encourage the open licensing of educational materials produced with public funds

Governmental/public funding is still the main model for educational institutions. However, many publicly funded results remain restricted and are not open to the public. Thus, a part of the policy change should ensure that publicly funded educational projects, e.g. developing educational materials or practices, must be available using an open license. These open licenses, such as Creative Commons, are a prerequisite for a wide uptake of OER. However awareness and knowledge is rather low, even though there are simple schemes such as Creative Commons. It is necessary to increase awareness and knowledge on licensing options. Policies on licensing schemes for public projects and procurement should also be crafted.

For the OEA it means that different countries need to coordinate their efforts regarding policies but also awareness regarding licensing. The discussion on, for example, licensing should involve publishers and educators across borders, wherein they could identify potential OER programmes and projects that could benefit both continents.
Encourage the development and adaptation of OER in a variety of languages and cultural contexts

OER should be considered as a strong instrument when designed in a smart way in multilingual and multicultural versions. For this it is necessary to involve different communities of educators to take ownership, and thus maintenance and improvement of specific OER. Both Europe and Asia share the diversity regarding ethnic cultures and languages and small initiatives have been promoting this concept, such as the project LangOER. It aims to promote diversity by offering face to face and online training in seven languages to create awareness and promote the creation and use of multilingual and interactive OER.

It cannot be the aim to communicate and teach in one language but to promote and enable regarding languages and cultures.

Encourage research on OER

There has been a lot of research on OER around the globe, in particular in Europe. It is necessary to disseminate those results more effectively. Based on this, research gaps need to be identified. These should be addressed in global and national research programmes. More collaborative research is necessary, validating the impact of Open Education and developing implementation and adoption strategies. This should be based, and supported, on existing networks such as the ASEM Education and Research Hub for Lifelong Learning (ASEM LLL Hub).

II. Organisational recommendations

Organisations might have restrictions which do not allow their faculty members to utilise Open Education. Therefore, organisations need to be involved and committed.

Foster awareness and use of OER

Open Education is not yet mainstream in educational institutions, and there are still many fears and insecurities surrounding how to utilise OER. This means that awareness actions need to be implemented for schools as well as for universities.

Educational institutions should develop strategies on how to increase awareness on the use of OERs and Open Education in general. This also means developing various materials and guidelines on how Open Education and OERs could provide more access to more learners.

Develop Organisational Open Education Strategies

Organisations will not change their practices to engage and invest in Open Education if this is not strongly embedded in the institutions’ strategies. It is necessary that Open Education is backed by an appropriate strategy. A good example is Canada’s Athabasca University, which clearly promotes and encourages the use of open licenses.36 In building a strategy, institutions need to use a participatory engagement process to create awareness and encouragement from the very early stages. The University of the Philippines Open University (UPOU), for example, conducted a series of discussions to create its OER policies and strategies.

In a paper presented during UPOU Open Education Resources Policy Forum (5 June 2012, Laguna, Philippines), UPOU outlined the strategies and policies for its OER:

• Promote the use of OER in in support of quality teaching and learning
• Support the creation of OER
• Establish an open licensing framework
• Contribute to the sharing of OER globally
• Integrate OER values and processes in institutional policies and systems/practices

Recognition of OER development in assessment for tenure and promotional procedures

Recognition of utilising and developing OER is not yet a common practice. Current tenure procedures, as well as incentive systems, do not count OER as a valuable part of employees’ performance. This needs to be clearly addressed by educational institutions; OER use must be explicitly allowed and OER development and sharing must be explicitly promoted. Development of OERs should also be included in assessment and tenure procedures. In the case of the University of the Philippines Open University, the development of course materials is recognised as a credit load and included in the assessment for tenure and promotion of its faculty members.

Support capacity building for the sustainable development of quality learning materials

It is very necessary to develop training programmes for OER usage and adaptation for different levels. It would be useful to partner with organisations such as UNESCO or Commonwealth of Learning to coordinate training materials which can be easily localised. Additionally, quality mechanisms need to be developed for easy and dynamic quality assurance. For this purpose educators also need to be aware of, and competent in the use of, quality and training materials.

For the OEA, this action is crucial. The diversity of countries, with very different economies, leads to diverse requirements and needs. The capacity building approach should incorporate contexts and lead to mutual benefits to avoid a one-way export strategy and new barriers.

A consortium of various institutions that are engaged in OERs and Open Education can develop and implement training programmes on OER development, including customisation and contextualisation. They can be in the form of face to face, and online, capacity building programmes that could cater to academics, governments, NGOs and other individuals involved in OERs.

**Build organisational partnerships and use existing partnerships for Open Educational collaborations**

Many organisations have already been involved in educational and academic exchanges. Organisations need to build upon those partnerships where personal connections have already been established. Current programmes and individual collaborations should be extended towards Open Education collaboration. Also existing networks and strategic partnerships should discuss how collaborative courses and OER development would be feasible and fruitful.

ASEM is one of the platforms that could be utilised to share information on OERs and Open Education, to collaborate on OER development and customisation and develop awareness and capacity building programmes.

**III. Individual recommendations**

Last but not least, Open Education is realised by people – researchers, educators, students. On this very concrete level, collaborations need to be initiated in different forms.

**Promote collaborative course and material development**

An Open Education Area should be realised through different forms of collaboration. This could be sharing of experiences on the use of OERs through participation in various conferences and training programmes. Colleagues in Asia and Europe should aim to develop and run collaborative courses as these can be beneficial for both educators and students. For educators, common courses and the collaborative development of OER lead to cost and time savings, but moreover to a broader view on the subject. In particular, educators and students get to learn about each other’s regional or national needs and specifics. As a result, students will learn in the very early stages about issues, problems and challenges in different cultural environments.
Facilitate finding, retrieving and sharing of OER

A lot of R&D efforts have been carried out in recent years to support search, retrieval, re-use and re-publishing of OER, e.g. through federated repositories. Research in this direction should be encouraged. Furthermore, interoperability is a must to create access to OER. Standards must be used and, when not available, developed.

For OEA this means that OER initiatives should be networked between Europe and Asia, starting from continent-wide repositories and initiatives, to smaller national and institutional projects. It will be a research and development challenge to deal with language and cultural, as well as curricula issues. New ideas and innovative approaches should be supported in, at least, bi-lateral settings.

Provide collaboration tools instead of repositories

In the OER domain many repositories have been developed, some of them used globally. However community building has been neglected. Two aspects are crucial. Beyond the availability of high-quality contents, it is essential to engage people with similar requirements and needs in collaboration. Educators should form small, but trusted, networks in which collaborative course development is performed. Secondly, tools for adapting OER to a certain context are necessary; as an example there should be support to transfer a course in German or English to Korean or Thai, and vice versa.

Develop a pool of OER experts

It is important for networks like ASEM to develop a pool of OER experts to provide capacity building to organisations and individuals. Their role is primarily to promote the use of OERs, as well as to address the technical and attitudinal issues regarding OERs.

Conclusion

In this article, we have aimed to set a starting point to establish an Open Education Area between Asia and Europe. We believe that Open Education, as it becomes more inclusive, is a promising approach to improve national, organisational and institutional collaborations. We also believe that such an action will lead to positive long-term effects for educational systems as well as businesses.

We have given recommendations for three levels: governments and policy, organisational strategies and support for individuals. As a next step governments should start to discuss how to implement those recommendations, facilitated through Asian-European networks such as ASEM. In parallel it is necessary to build capacities and create awareness and engagement on an organisational and individual level.

We believe that the creation of an Open Education Area will have significant impact on Asian-European collaboration. The process will - similar to the Bologna process – not finish within months, but should be achieved in less than five years.
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