Asia-Europe Meeting

the ASEM Education Secretariat

Detailed Report on Panel Discussion ASEMME7

'Digitalisation and Sustainable Development as Transversal Themes in the AEP: from idea to practice'

Introduction of theme and panelists

The moderator introduced the Panellists:

- Martin Schifferings (Head of Section Erasmus+ Policy Support, DAAD German Academic Exchange Service)
- Seamus O'Tuama (Director ACE, University College Cork, New host ASEM LLL HUB)
- Prof. Dr. Houngphet Chanthavong (Vice President, National University of Laos)
- Dr. Chantavit Sujatanond (Centre Director, SEAMEO Regional Centre for Higher Education and Development (RIHED)):
- Amir Piric, Chief Programme Coordinator, UNESCO Institute for Lifelong Learning (UIL)

The moderator invited participants for a journey in the future to think about what are universities, who are the learners, what is the mission of universities, what kind of partnerships are necessary, what is the global level of involving students, how to outreach in society in 2030? What would be an ideal scenario in 2030? What would we need to reach this scenario? And where are we now?

The basis of the panel discussion are the transversal themes of 'Digitalisation' and 'Sustainable Development'. The ASEM Education Process has developed a lot of strengths and initiatives, within four priority areas. However, there is room for improvement: linking it to more global policy developments and frameworks. We want to integrate the two transversal themes in the ASEM Education Agenda and find ways to drive the initiatives (both existing as new ones) with a focus or link on these themes. The Seoul Declaration in 2017 (ASEMME6) has set the basis for this focus (digitalisation and sustainable development) and the idea was further developed during the ISOM (Jakarta) and SOM1 (Krems, Austria) in 2018 and in the Stocktaking Report of ASEMME7.

Questions to the Panellists:

Challenges and Chances arising from digitalisation: what are the potentials of virtual partnerships and exchanges?

Martin Schifferings (DAAD)

When we refer to digitalisation and its potential: there is a potential, but it is difficult to grasp it and it is certainly not a solution to every problem. Digitalisation can't serve the goal of balanced mobility in itself. The potential of digitalisation is more related to impact and to the quality of mobility: to increase the impact of mobility more than mobilising more target groups. Some studies have shown that students who engage in MOOCs, are the same students we know in other international activities. We must figure out what the real potential of digitalisation is in

internationalisation. In Germany there is a serious debate about this. Therefore, the German Federal Ministry is supporting this topic with a new funding scheme for universities to use digitalisation to support and prepare physical mobility, to organise cooperation mechanisms (joint programmes) and to carry out policy dialogue on this topic.

Within the AEP, some countries have a lot of experience in virtual mobility. It would be good to learn from each other and to share experiences. That's why Germany proposed to set up an Expert Group on Digitalisation. Everyone is invited to join this working group and to identify experts in the field.

Dr. Chantavit (SEAMEO RIHED): South East Asia and MOOCs
In Southeast Asia (SEA) it is important to bridge the gap and increase accessibility to HE. Open Educational Resources and E-learning could be an answer to this. The Republic of Korea provides assistance on the development of MOOCs in the region. Many member countries of SE A (11) started to develop MOOC courses, and at a structural level the ASEAN MOOCs network was developed to work closely together and to share expertise. The benefits of MOOCs should be maximised to reach out to larger population (inside and outside universities). It is however important to tackle the issues of recognition for these courses and to develop and establish standard quality framework for online courses which is at the same time flexible and relevant for local contexts.

> ❱ **Potential Research in the field of Lifelong Learning, what could be relevant topics in the field of research for LLL to advance SDG4? Where do the 2 transversal themes come in?**

Séamus O'Tuama (University College Cork, Lifelong Learning Hub)
There is one common theme in the SDG: there is a great need of urgency to see the world in a different way which is 'cognitive flexibility'.
The main idea in SDG's is that 'no that no-one should be left behind. Digitalisation creates opportunities to reach people in new and different ways, but we need to think about credentials and recognition of digital and informal learning.

About SDG's, we situate education in SDG4, but education is important in all SDG's: education and learning as most important in all SDG's. Therefore, the Learning City concept is very valuable to take learning to grassroots level and to include everybody in learning (learning

'neighbourhood' as physical space). Within this concept we also need to think seriously about what human beings will be in 2030 as our species will also being transformed in a digital world.

> ❯ **What are most pressing issues and how should universities contribute? How can universities benefit from collaboration?**

Prof. Dr. Houngphet Chanthavong (Vice President, National University of Laos)

Education is the key to reach the targets of the SDG's which is also recognised by the Lao PDR government. Education should be one step ahead of other tasks. Therefore, the government extend comprehensive education in all rural areas including for ethnic minorities. In Lao PDR there are five universities for seven million people. This year there are more than 6000 students who graduated. In terms of collaboration within the region and European universities, we have research collaborations and exchange of students and teaching staff. In terms of contributions to the SDG's, Lao PDR has an additional goal on UXO's (unexploded ordnance, e.g. landmines).
For the future, Lao PDR hopes that universities can get support and be strengthened by the ASEM Education Process to contribute to the SDG's.

> ❯ **How can the ASEM Education Process both at policy as on practice level contribute to Learning Cities?**

Amir Piric, Chief Programme Coordinator, UNESCO Institute for Lifelong Learning (UIL)
First, the concept of a learning city needs to be demystified: every city is a learning city. The advantage of the initiative is to systemise the approaches and to establish good practice models to follow. Digitalisation is not a solution to everything, it is a utility and needs to be put in a proper strategic context. It is still in a development with an unforeseen outcome that it is difficult to follow with legislation.

The current Learning Cities network has about 220 members which is an important platform for exchange of ideas within all initiatives of UNESCO. All these materials are available on the UIL Website.

Questions and contributions from partners and stakeholders:

ASEM Partners and stakeholders were invited to share good practices, ideas and experiences from their countries. Where are we when it comes to delivery, quality of virtual mobility, ensuring more access through more flexibility, recognition of credits and new learning formats, including practice and internships, informal and non-formal learning, …

Russia:
Digitalisation is recognised as a true challenge for policy and the debate takes place at all levels of education. Language is one of the constraints and challenges in delivering of online courses, digital translation can overcome this challenge. But how will this affect the courses and programmes globally? Furthermore, there is the debate on 'basic courses' and the idea to deliver these courses online to be credited. How does it affect professors and academic staff? Currently there are no answers and the debate is still going on.

> ⬋ **Feedback from the panellists:** What does that mean for universities and role of teachers? We are not sure of the interplay of role of teachers?
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> **Seamus O'Tuama:** concept of 'flipped classroom': all changes have challenges and opportunities. It is like conducting the orchestra: there is still an important role of 'educators'. Face-to-face learning will still be important for many reasons, such as interaction and network building which is extremely important for people with a disadvantaged background.
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> **Martin Schifferings:** when we think about digitalisation, there is no one fits all-solution. Thinking about new ways of teaching and learning includes also considering the competences and skills that students need in the future. A strategic approach and reflection are needed to tackle challenges and make use of the opportunities and to support universities. In Germany the discussion on virtual or physical learning is also ongoing. It is however important to keep the physical space.

Cyprus: The issue is not to provide MOOCs, the issue is to make sure is that knowledge and skills are recognised and accredited. Accreditation bodies in QA are not very helpful, are very sceptical in recognition of these types of learning and even in Lifelong Learning/distance learning. The provision should be developed in collaboration with accreditation bodies.

EQAR: We should look further than what quality standards prescribe but a lot is depending on the national context in which governments and HE institutions have to take the lead. Accreditation and quality assurance bodies must follow. Policy and HE must take the lead in the discussion at national, regional and international level. Accreditation bodies need to be flexible and must follow.

ASEF:
- ASEF focuses on physical mobility 1300 mobilities but 44 000 have applied, we need to reach out better to the grassroots;
- To reach more students, there is always an online component to benefit from the experiences. ASEF wishes to see that online component should be included in all ASEM initiatives;
- ASEM Sustainable Connectivity Portal: people-to-people connectivity, supported by the EEAS and launched at the ASEM Summit last year. However, the section on people-to-people connectivity is very limited, it refers mainly to student mobility; and
- Recommendations from Students Forum: students want to encourage virtual collaboration through an international online platform

European University Assocication (EUA)
- EUA supports EQAR regarding the remarks of QA and accreditation for digital learning. In the EHEA, the basic principle is that QA relies on HE institutions who take responsibility and ownership on this. Therefore, dialogue between internal and external quality assurance bodies and governments is important.
- Comment on digitalisation: we should talk about the potential of tools to transform education, innovative ways to teach and to learn, to collaborate, … Therefore, academic staff should be included, and we need to focus on continuous professional development: peer learning is crucial, not only how to use ICT tools but how to integrate these new tools in learning and teaching and how to rethink pedagogies for that. It might be interesting to explore exchange and learning on this within the ASEM Education Process.

European Commission:
- Reflection on the strategic approach of Digitalisation is currently one of the priorities at EU level.
- EC developed the 'Digital Education Action Plan' (in 2018): includes a series of concrete recommendations with eleven concrete actions around three priorities which are:
  1. Use of technology for teaching and learning;
  2. How to develop digital competences and skills for digital transformation; and
  3. How to improve the education system by better data analysis

  In relation to this Action Plan, 2 platforms have been developed: SELFIE (self assessment tool on readiness for digital transformation for Schools) and a Europe-wide platform for HE

institutions to exchange best practices and to provide online courses; Furthermore, there are concrete actions to increase girls in STEM; Virtual exchange programme with southern European countries: debate on online courses, training for facilitators. Council Recommendation on Key competences for Lifelong Learning including Digital skills.

European Training Foundation (ETF)
Validation and recognition and skills within digital learning is a very urgent issue to link it to qualification frameworks and the wider educational system to recognise this type of learning. This should be speeded up at national levels.

Conclusion by the moderator and the panelists

> ↘ **What elements do the panellists find important to integrate in our Vision 2030 for the ASEM Education Process?**

Wishful thinking: scenario 2030 panellist
- ↘ Prof. Dr. Houngphet Chanthavong: Collaboration and working together;
- ↘ Seamus O'Tuama: To engage in 'cognitive flexibility': to learn to see the world in different ways and to escape from our silos, and not only talking to ourselves;
- ↘ Martin Schifferings: We should think on how education systems should fit for the digital era, which is more than including digital elements in the current system;
- ↘ Dr. Chantavit: We need immediate attention in terms of accreditation and recognition framework for e-learning; and
- ↘ Dr. Piric: exchange of good practice, transparency and consensus building is the driving force behind.