ARC8 Outlook Report 2030:
Inclusive and Diverse Higher Education in Asia and Europe

ASIA-EUROPE
FOUNDATION

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Preface

Inclusion & Diversity have been core values of the Asia-Europe Foundation (ASEF) since its inception.

ASEF is an intergovernmental not-for-profit organisation which connects the peoples of Asia and Europe through intellectual, cultural and people to people exchanges. We encourage collaboration to find innovative and sustainable solutions for common global challenges. ASEF is the sole permanent institution of the Asia-Europe Meeting (ASEM), a political dialogue process between 51 countries, the European Union and the ASEAN Secretariat.

Education is one of ASEF's key thematic areas. In this field, we connect youth, students, educators and higher education leaders with policymakers across both regions. ASEF has been creating bi-regional networks and promoting inclusion & diversity in higher education in several ways:

- Providing opportunities and platforms for young people, experts and policymakers to exchange ideas;
- Organising workshops and capacity building trainings;
- Cooperating with organisations and networks that advocate for and enhance inclusion & diversity.

Through these activities, we contribute to the vision of the ASEM Education Process (AEP): "promote inclusive and equitable quality education and training through equal and mutually beneficial Asia-Europe partnerships, leveraged by people-to-people connectivity". Our flagship project series in education, the ASEF Regional Conference on Higher Education (ARC), is the Official Dialogue Partner of the ASEM Education Ministers' Meeting (ASEMME), a biennial platform for policy dialogue.

The 8th edition of ARC puts inclusion in higher education at the centre of the dialogue. Since December 2020, we have been working with 25 experts from across Asia and Europe on the 'ARC8 Outlook Report 2030: Inclusive and Diverse Higher Education in Asia and Europe'. Each expert has brought different insights and perspectives to the table, which were all integrated in the development of this unique publication.

The experts reviewed the status quo of inclusion & diversity in four areas in higher education, also within the context of the COVID-19 pandemic, relying on previous research and data available as well as highlighting their own experiences and expertise in the field. The experts
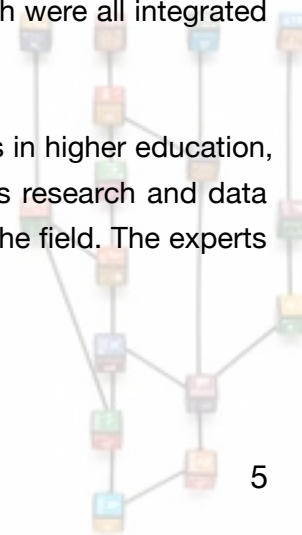
also identified potential risks that could jeopardise inclusion in coming years, and opportunities that should be leveraged to enhance inclusion in the next decade. This stocktaking enabled them to propose recommendations addressed to ASEM policymakers and ASEM university leaders to advance inclusion in higher education on our common path – towards the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development.

My sincere gratitude goes to the accomplished higher education and student organisation representatives, our ARC8 experts, whose knowledge and wisdom is captured in this report. I would like to thank my colleagues in ASEF's Education Department for their strong commitment to inclusion & diversity and for realising this project.

I hope that the ARC8 Outlook Report 2030 will be an inspiration and serve as a good basis for policy discussions and exchanges at the regional, national, and institutional level.

Ambassador Toru MORIKAWA
ASEF Executive Director

Acknowledgements

This Report was made possible thanks to the support and advice of many individuals and organisations. ASEF would like to thank everyone who contributed to this endeavour.

First and foremost, ASEF is immensely grateful to the dedication and commitment of our 25 ARC8 experts - higher education and student representatives - coming from 21 countries. They collectively shaped & developed the content of this Report over a period of nine months despite various professional and personal challenges during the COVID-19 pandemic. We would like to sincerely thank every single member of the expert group for their time and efforts in making this unique online collaboration happen. They overcame different time zones, technical limitations and the lack of face-to-face interactions, and set a fantastic example of bi-regional collaboration and open exchange of knowledge and ideas.

Our experts are, in alphabetical order:

- Dr Dina AFRIANTY, President of Australia-Indonesia Disability Research and Advocacy Network (AIDRAN), La Trobe University, Australia
- Dr Graeme ATHERTON, Head of the Levelling Up Center, University of West London; Director of the National Education Opportunity Network (NEON), United Kingdom
- Dr Mislav BALKOVIĆ, Dean, Algebra University College, Croatia
- Prof Dr Melinda BANDALARIA, Chancellor and Professor, University of the Philippines Open University, The Philippines
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- Mr Walter CHONG, Deputy Director (Academic) Lifelong Learning Centre (L3C), Brunei Darussalam
- Ms Ginisha DEWANI, Partnerships Liaison Coordinator, International Association of Political Science Students (IAPSS)
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- Ms Irina FERENCZ, Director, Academic Cooperation Association (ACA)
- Dr Sheikh Lukman S A HAMID, Director, Lifelong Learning Centre (L3C), Brunei Darussalam
- Mr Martin HAMMERBAUER, Board Member of the European Students' Union (ESU)
- Dr Wayne HOLMES, UCL Knowledge Lab, University College London; UNESCO Consultant on AI and Education, United Kingdom
- Dr Keiko IKEDA, Division of International Affairs, Institute for Innovative Global Education, Kansai University, Japan

List of Acronyms

ACTS	ASEAN Credit Transfer System
AECTS	ASEAN-European Union Credit Transfer System
AEP	ASEM Education Process
AES	ASEM Education Secretariat
AI	Artificial Intelligence
AIMS	Asian International Mobility for Students Programme
ALE	Adult Learning and Education
APT	ASEAN Plus Three
APTEMM	ASEAN Plus Three Education Ministers Meeting
ARC8	8th ASEF Regional Conference on Higher Education
ASEF	Asia-Europe Foundation
ASEM	Asia-Europe Meeting
ASEMME	Asia-Europe Meeting Ministers' of Education
AUA	Asian University Alliance
AUN	ASEAN University Network
AUN	ASEAN University Network
AUN-TEPL	ASEAN University Network for Technology-Enhanced Personalised Learning
AYO	ASEAN Youth Organisation
CAMPUS Asia	Collective Action for Mobility Program of University Students in Asia
COIL	Collaborative Online International Learning
COVID-19	SARS-CoV-2 virus
DAAD	German Academic Exchange Service
DELT	Digitally Enhanced Learning and Teaching
EAIE	European Association for International Education
ECTS	European Credit Transfer System
EHEA	European Higher Education Area
ENQA	European Association for Quality Assurance in Higher Education
ESD	Education for Sustainable Development
ESN	Erasmus Student Network
ESU	European Student's Union
EUA	European University Association
HE	Higher Education
HEIs	Higher Education Institutions
IaH	Internationalisation at Home

ICT	Infocommunication Technology
IMA	Inclusive Mobility Alliance
LLL	Lifelong Learning
ML	Machine Learning
MOOC	Massive Open Online Course
OECD	Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development
PISA	Programme for International Student Assessment
QA	Quality Assurance
RPL	Recognition of Prior Learning
RVA	Recognition, Validation & Accreditation
SDG	Sustainable Development Goals
SEDGs	Socio-Economically Disadvantaged Groups
SEAMEO	Southeast Asian Ministers of Education Organisation
SEAMEO RIHED	Southeast Asian Ministers of Education Organisation, Regional Centre for Higher Education and Development
SHARE	EU Support to Higher Education in the ASEAN Region Programme
SIEM	Social Inclusion and Engagement in Mobility Research
SIHO	Support Centre Inclusive Higher Education
UMAP	University Mobility for Asia and the Pacific
UNESCO	United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization
UNGCRQH	UNESCO's Global Convention on the Recognition of Qualifications concerning Higher Education
VE	Virtual Exchange
VLE	Virtual Learning Environments
VNIL	Validation of Non-Formal and Informal Learning
WAHED	World Access to Higher Education Day
WEF	World Economic Forum

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Introduction

The ARC8 Outlook Report 2030 on 'Inclusive and Diverse Higher Education in Asia and Europe' was initiated with the objective of better understanding the current state, policies and practices of inclusion in higher education and identifying actions that could accelerate greater inclusion in a post-pandemic era.

The outbreak of the COVID-19 pandemic highlighted how fragile the achievements of the SDGs are. According to the Sustainable Development Goals Report 2020[1], COVID-19 is reversing decades of progress on poverty, healthcare and education. A green and equitable economic recovery is not possible without the support of innovative higher education systems and a renewed commitment to inclusion in higher education, if we are to deliver on our promise on leaving no one behind.

In July 2020 UNESCO invited Higher Education Institutions (HEIs) to put the values of inclusion and equity on their recovery roadmap, develop new partnerships, inclusive online learning solutions, and improve policies together with national officials and international organisations in the next decade.[2]

The ASEM Education Ministers also highlighted at their last Ministerial Meeting in 2019 that the ASEM Education Process should aim at ensuring inclusion and equality in education by building comprehensive education systems that are accessible to all.[3]

It was in accordance with these calls, that ASEF decided to set inclusion as the focus of the 8th ASEF Regional Conference on Higher Education (ARC8). We invited a selected and balanced group of higher education and student leaders from Asia and Europe to explore risks and opportunities for inclusion in the next decade, and to make recommendations to government officials and university leaders on how to foster inclusion and diversity in the final decade for the Agenda 2030.

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[1] Sustainable Development Goals Report 2020. Published by UN in July 2020, New York.
[2] Speech of Ms Stefania Giannini, Assistant Director-General for Education, UNESCO at the Higher Education Sustainability Initiative Special Event, 8 July 2020.
[3] Conclusions by the Chair. 7th ASEM Education Ministers' Meeting (ASEM ME7), 15-16 May 2019, Bucharest, Romania titled 'Connecting education: inclusion, mobility and excellence in support of the Sustainable Development Goals.'

The ARC8 Outlook Report outlines emerging issues that could grow into major challenges and/ or opportunities in the coming 10 years related to inclusion in higher education. Inputs for the report came from an in-depth consultation process and from previous research done by Asian and European stakeholders. The Report consists of 4 chapters which analyse the future of inclusion from different perspectives:

1 | Inclusive Learning and Teaching in a Digital World
2 | Inclusive and Flexible Lifelong Learning Pathways
3 | Inclusive International Mobility of People and Knowledge
4 | Equitable Access and Success in Higher Education

Each chapter defines possible risks and opportunities prevailing in these fields in the next decade, and concludes with two sets of recommendations for:

• **ASEM policymakers**, to serve as a basis for policy dialogues and as an input to their discussions on the ASEM Education Strategy and Action Plan 2030.

• **ASEM university leaders**, to propose capacity building directions for institutions and inspire joint action to make universities more inclusive in the next decade.

The insights presented in this Report are by no means a complete or exhaustive analysis of inclusion in higher education. For some chapter sections, reliable and comparative data was not available or the appropriate methodologies to measure inclusion in certain scenarios were not yet put in place to provide evidence-based findings. In order to complement the content, short case studies have therefore been included to illustrate good practices on a regional and/ or national level.

Inclusion is an ongoing process. This ARC8 Outlook Report 2030 offers valuable examples from Asia and Europe and recommendations by experts that will enrich this process, with the hope to contribute to concrete actions in this current decade.

Chapter 1.
Equitable Access and Success in Higher Education

Written by: Atherton, G., Riaz, N., Tupan-Wenno, M., Wan, C.D., Afrianty, D., Hammerbauer, M.

1. Introduction

Access to higher education refers to participation by students from all backgrounds. **Equitable access** refers to the participation by students who are either in the minority in a particular country or come from a 'disadvantaged majority' who on average earn less or experience greater social or economic challenges than a minority population. The nature of the specific minorities or disadvantaged majority is defined by the social, economic and political context of a particular country (Atherton, Whitty & Dumangane 2018). These groups are usually (although not exclusively) drawn from one or more of the following categories: a low income/socio-economic group, students belonging to ethnic and religious minority backgrounds, female students, students with disabilities, students belonging to sexual or gender minorities, older students or those from rural backgrounds.

Equitable access only becomes a desirable policy goal if it is associated with productive outcomes and 'success' for those who attend higher education from minority or disadvantaged majority populations: What constitutes such 'success' needs to be seen in the broadest terms though: While employment related outcomes such as higher earnings, occupational progress and employment in graduate occupations are extremely important it is not the only metric of a successful higher education experience. Developing the capabilities of students to be productive citizens and their 'humanistic' identities is also very important. Evidence shows that increased

higher education participation can lead to greater civic engagement or improved health outcomes, etc. (see OECD Education GPS). There are also subject areas where students may not derive significantly higher earnings than non-graduates but who contribute in very significant ways to society and also derive great personal satisfaction from their work, for example the arts and creative specialisms, public service related courses etc.

While it is essential that productive and successful outcomes for individual graduates and for society are defined in the broadest way, the achievement of these outcomes is also crucial. Hence, this chapter concentrates on **equitable access and success**. Achieving both goals is challenging. Generic policies that do not focus on the particular needs of specific groups will not necessarily be sufficient. Equitable access and success in higher education requires policies and practices that are intentional focused and linked to clear targets and (performance) indicators (Engbersen, G. en P. Scholten, 2018).

2. Higher Education in Asia & Europe: The Context

There are nearly 30 million tertiary students in Europe. As Figure 1 shows these students are distributed very unevenly across different countries. The largest European higher education system of the ASEM constituency is Germany, with over 3 million students. Luxembourg has less than 7,000 students. Most of the ASEM countries have less than 500,000 students, but there are several other large systems including Spain, France and the United Kingdom (Eurostat, 2018).

Photo taken at ARC7, May 2019, Bucharest

Figure 1 ● Number of Tertiary Education Students in Europe 2018t

	Tertiary total			Short-cycle tertiary			Bachelor's or equivalent			Master's or equivalent			Doctoral or equivalent		
	Total	Male	Female	Total	Male	Female	Total	Male	Female	Total	Male	Female	Total	Male	Female
EU-27	17 502.0	8 098.5	9 403.5	1 198.8	617.3	581.5	10 487.6	4 913.9	5 573.7	5 155.4	2 224.2	2 931.2	660.3	343.2	317.1
Belgium	515.5	229.1	286.5	22.7	8.9	13.9	372.7	164.0	208.7	102.3	46.9	55.9	17.3	9.3	8.1
Bulgaria	236.3	109.5	126.9	–	–	–	155.1	74.6	80.5	74.7	31.7	43.0	6.6	3.1	3.4
Czechia	329.0	141.2	187.8	1.0	0.4	0.6	193.6	83.4	110.2	112.3	45.0	67.0	22.5	12.4	10.0
Denmark	310.9	135.2	175.7	35.6	19.1	16.5	195.8	80.7	115.2	70.3	30.8	39.2	9.4	4.6	4.9
Germany (*)	3 127.9	1 600.5	1 527.5	0.3	0.1	0.2	1 872.7	997.5	875.2	1 054.5	491.5	563.0	200.4	111.4	89.0
Estonia	45.8	18.9	26.9	–	–	–	28.7	12.3	16.4	14.5	5.5	9.1	2.5	1.1	1.4
Ireland	231.2	111.0	120.2	19.9	9.8	10.1	168.9	81.9	87.0	33.9	15.3	18.6	8.5	4.0	4.5
Greece	766.9	393.1	373.8	–	–	–	659.5	346.8	312.7	78.1	31.3	46.8	29.2	14.9	14.3
Spain	2 051.8	952.6	1 099.2	414.4	216.5	197.9	1 212.0	552.2	659.9	339.3	141.2	198.8	85.5	42.8	42.6
France	2 618.7	1 192.0	1 426.7	505.1	263.5	241.6	1 058.5	433.4	625.1	989.1	460.1	528.9	66.1	35.0	31.1
Croatia	164.8	70.8	94.0	0.1	0.0	0.0	97.6	45.3	52.3	63.5	23.9	39.7	3.6	1.6	1.9
Italy	1 896.0	844.3	1 051.7	13.4	9.7	3.7	1 140.6	527.8	612.9	713.5	292.7	420.9	28.3	14.2	14.2
Cyprus	47.2	22.1	25.0	4.6	3.1	1.5	22.6	12.1	10.5	18.4	6.3	12.1	1.5	0.6	0.9
Latvia	81.6	34.2	47.4	14.9	6.0	8.9	46.2	20.6	25.5	18.3	6.7	11.7	2.2	0.9	1.3
Lithuania	118.3	51.5	66.7	–	–	–	88.5	40.5	47.9	27.1	9.8	17.2	2.7	1.2	1.6
Luxembourg	7.0	3.4	3.7	0.8	0.3	0.4	3.1	1.4	1.6	2.5	1.2	1.3	0.7	0.4	0.3
Hungary	283.4	130.7	152.6	12.2	4.7	7.5	183.5	87.4	96.1	79.3	34.6	45.3	7.7	4.0	3.6
Malta	15.2	6.7	8.5	2.1	0.7	1.4	8.6	4.0	4.6	4.5	2.0	2.5	0.1	0.1	0.1
Netherlands	889.5	426.3	463.2	25.0	11.4	13.7	668.8	324.9	343.9	180.3	82.1	97.9	15.7	8.0	7.7
Austria	430.2	202.4	227.8	75.2	35.0	40.2	199.2	93.9	105.3	135.3	62.4	73.0	20.4	11.1	9.3
Poland	1 492.9	608.1	884.8	0.2	0.0	0.2	986.7	429.6	557.2	464.5	159.9	304.7	41.3	18.6	22.7
Portugal	356.4	165.8	190.6	12.8	8.0	4.8	205.2	93.1	112.0	118.2	55.0	63.2	20.2	9.7	10.6
Romania	538.9	247.0	291.8	–	–	–	350.3	168.7	181.6	168.9	68.3	100.6	19.8	10.1	9.7
Slovenia	76.5	32.5	44.0	10.4	6.2	4.1	41.8	17.2	24.6	21.5	7.8	13.8	2.8	1.3	1.5
Slovakia	144.4	59.2	85.2	2.6	0.9	1.7	79.0	33.2	45.8	55.8	21.5	34.3	7.0	3.7	3.3
Finland	294.5	138.2	156.3	–	–	–	207.3	100.7	106.6	68.5	28.7	39.9	18.6	8.8	9.8
Sweden	431.1	172.0	259.1	25.6	13.0	12.6	241.0	86.7	154.3	144.8	62.1	82.7	19.7	10.2	9.5
United Kingdom	2 467.1	1 064.7	1 402.4	284.2	115.4	168.8	1 621.0	714.5	906.5	450.5	177.5	273.0	111.3	57.2	54.1
Iceland	17.8	6.5	11.3	0.6	0.3	0.3	12.2	4.6	7.6	4.4	1.4	3.1	0.6	0.3	0.4
Liechtenstein	0.9	0.5	0.3	–	–	–	0.4	0.2	0.2	0.3	0.2	0.1	0.2	0.1	0.0
Norway	288.7	121.1	167.6	8.6	7.1	1.5	199.2	79.1	120.2	72.4	30.9	41.5	8.5	4.0	4.5
Switzerland	306.7	153.9	152.8	4.2	1.6	2.6	207.3	104.8	102.5	70.1	34.0	36.0	25.2	13.5	11.7
Montenegro	23.8	10.6	13.2	–	–	–	22.5	10.1	12.4	1.3	0.5	0.8	0.1	0.0	0.0
North Macedonia	60.1	26.8	33.4	–	–	–	56.9	25.3	31.7	2.8	1.3	1.5	0.4	0.2	0.2
Serbia	256.2	111.3	144.9	–	–	–	197.9	88.6	109.3	46.8	17.8	29.0	11.5	4.9	6.6
Turkey	7 560.4	4 047.3	3 513.1	2 768.8	1 424.4	1 344.4	4 112.6	2 228.8	1 883.8	583.3	339.5	244.4	95.1	54.6	40.5

(*) Doctoral or equivalent: rounded to the nearest hundred.
(–) not applicable
Source: Eurostat (online data code: educ_uoe_enrt01)

***Source:** Eurostat, Number of Tertiary Education Students in Europe 2018.*

According to research by uniRank there are 2,725 officially recognised HEIs in Europe of which 1,922 are public (i.e., officially affiliated to or run by the state, national, or local governments) and 777 are private (uniRank, 2021).

There are over 3 times as many higher education students in Asia than Europe, with an estimated 100 million students in 2016 (Calderon, 2018). This number has likely increased over the past five years. However, the larger number of students in Asia compared to Europe is also linked to the different size of population in this region. When participation by population is examined, Europeans are over 3 times as likely to participate in higher education as Asians. Participation in higher education in Asia will grow significantly by 2040. This growth builds on the pattern over the past four decades, when global higher education enrolment increased from 32.6 million in 1970 to 182.2 million students in 2011. 46% of student enrolments were in the East and South

Asia region (UNESCO-UIS, 2013). This growth was fuelled by a convergence of demographic trends, public preferences, policy decisions and external economic circumstances.

It is forecasted that by 2030 the numbers of higher education students may increase by nearly 70 million from its 2016 level in Asia, while in Europe over the same period the increase may be under 5 million.

Looking at individual countries, there are significant differences in enrolment in higher education between countries. As Figure 2 shows, the Gross Enrolment Ratio ranges from nearly 100% in South Korea to less than 10% in Pakistan (The Global Economy, 2017).

Figure 2 ● Gross Enrolment Ratio in Tertiary Education Asia 2017
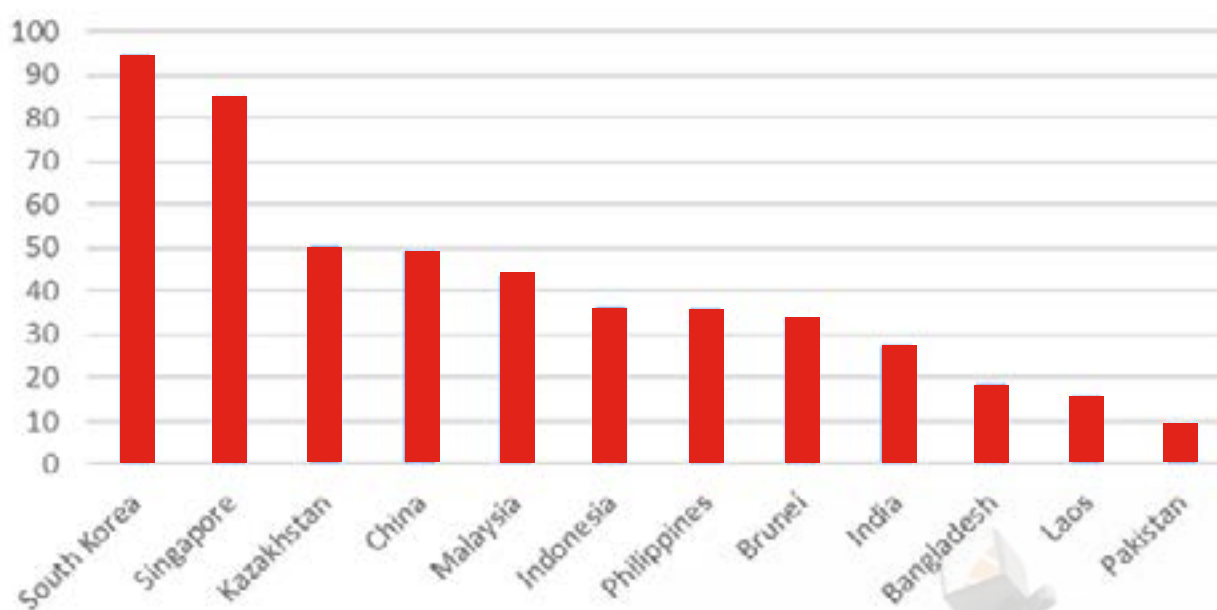
Source: The Global Economy website, 2017

The private sector is an important player in higher education in both Asia and Europe. For example in India, private universities, colleges, and stand-alone institutions account for over 65% of higher education enrolment; in Bangladesh, the private sector share is over 40%; and in Pakistan private HEIs cover 20% of all enrolment. A substantial share of students are also

enrolled in distance education programmes or external degree programmes. The share of these students is approximately a quarter in Bangladesh and Pakistan. In addition, some of the countries also have massive open online course (MOOC) programmes. There is variation in the quality and relevance of these courses, and data on student take-up and completion are limited.

3. Equitable Access and Success in Asia & Europe: What Does the Data Show?

There are significant differences in the amount of data available in Asia and Europe. While in Europe data is collected systematically by agencies supported by the European Commission, there are no equivalent arrangements in Asia. Across both regions, there is also a greater range of data collected with regard to the access in higher education by minority or disadvantaged majority populations as opposed to their success even in terms of graduate employment outcomes.

Data on equitable access is most commonly collected by proxy measures of socio-economic background. As Figure 3 shows there is a very strong correlation across European countries between parental education background and higher education participation. Europe includes countries of vastly different sizes and average levels of GDP. Yet across all of them higher education participation is closely related to the parental background of parents. (European Commission/EACEA/Eurydice, 2018)

Figure 3 ● Proportion of first-cycle new entrants with highly educated parents and the corresponding percentage of people aged 45-64 with high educational attainment (ISCED 5-8) across European countries
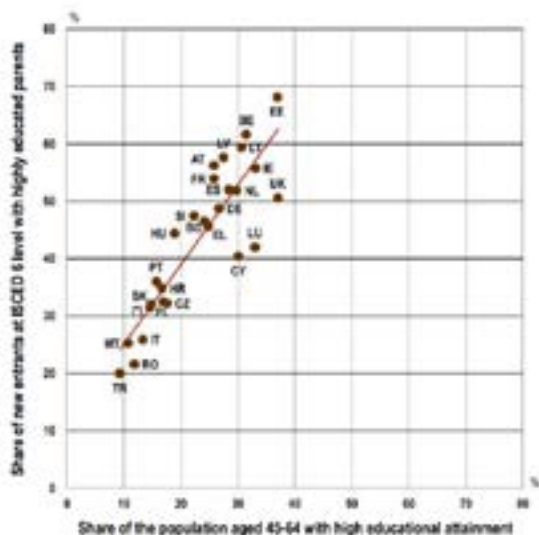
Data on Asia is available in certain countries and shows distinct inequalities by measures of social background. Figure 4 shows differences in higher education attainment across different countries in Asia comparing average attainment levels with those from the least wealthy groups (UN ESCAP, 2018).

Source: European Commission/EACEA/Eurydice, 2018, p155

Figure 4 ● Distance of the worst-off group from the average in higher education attainment for individuals 25 to 35 years of age over time, earliest–2010s across selected Asian countries
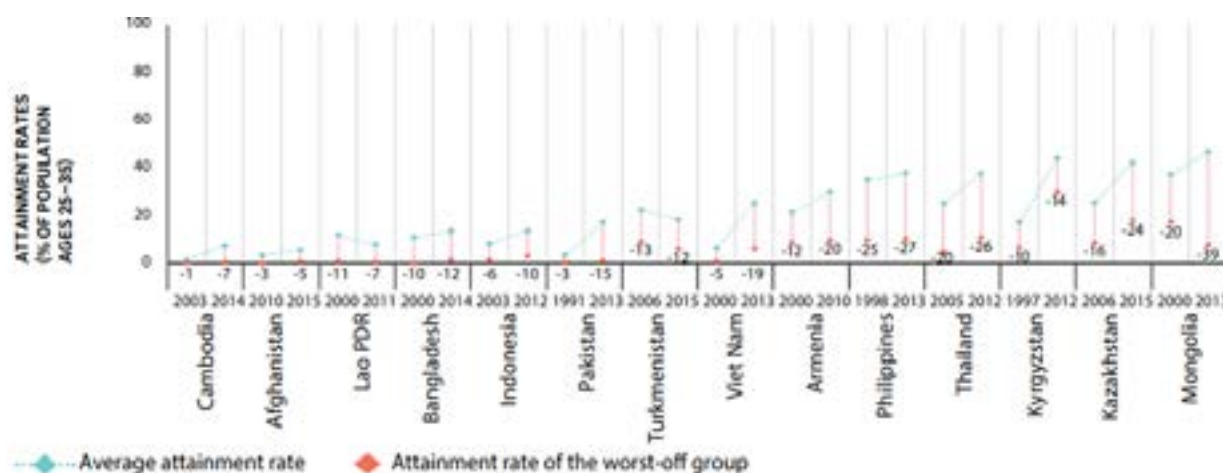
Source: ESCAP calculations based on latest DHS and MICS surveys.
Note: Average means the average rate of secondary attainment in a respective year. With respect to the attainment rate of the worst-off or most disadvantaged group, the size and composition of that group may vary from year to year.

Source: *UN ESCAP, Inequality of Opportunity in Asia and the Pacific. Education, 2018. p17*

Equitable Access and Success in Asia & Europe: The Policy Landscape

In both regions the evidence of strong policy commitment at the national level to address inequalities in access and success in higher education varies. As with data on participation and success, commitments to addressing inequality are more visible. Reflecting a broader trend where the terms used to describe equitable access and success differ across countries and regions the European Commission uses the term 'social dimension' to describe this area of work (Crosier, Haj, 2020). The responsibility for undertaking activities to address the social dimension across Europe is the responsibility of individual countries. However, there is an expert group comprising representatives from several European countries which aims to support the development of policy in this area (Crosier et al., 2020).

Despite the efforts of the European Commission, only 6 out of 39 countries have national targets in place to enhance participation of underrepresented groups in HE, with another 9 countries

having targets in place which are not being followed. One of the initial problems here with regard to establishing and then working toward targets is that data is not being collected systematically on who enters HE by social background on the individual level. As the table in Figure 5 shows only 20% of countries collect data on the socio-economic background of entrants to higher education (European Commission, 2018).

Figure 5 ● Number of education systems in Europe monitoring the composition of the student body, by stage and by students' characteristics, 2016/17
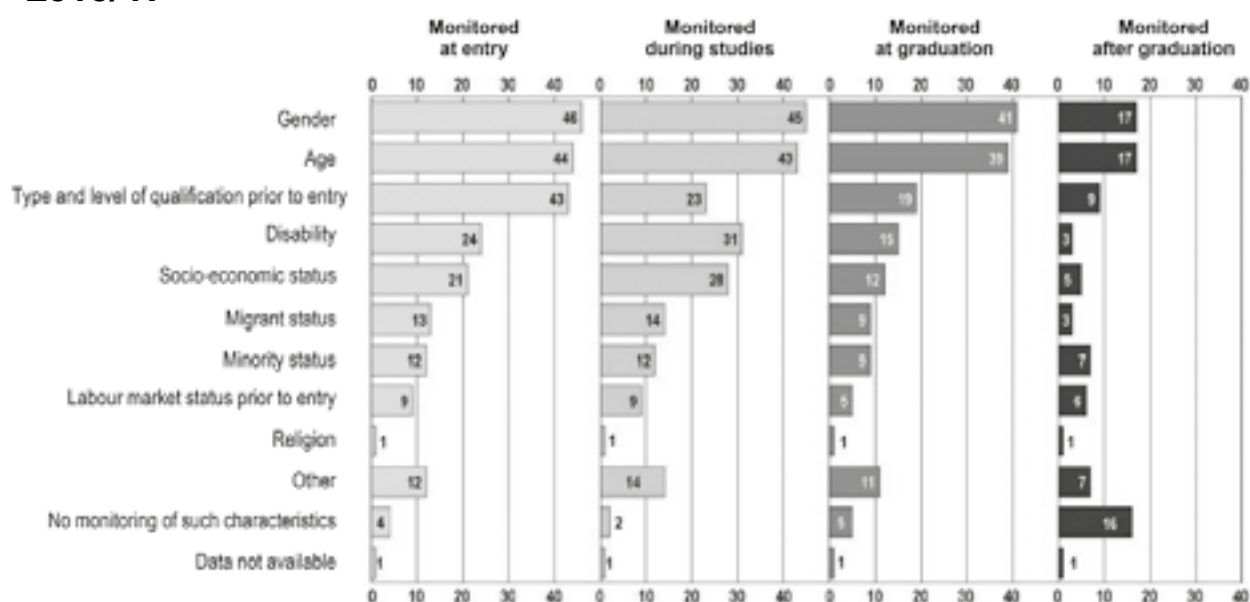
Source: BFUG data collection.

Source: European Commission/EACEA/Eurydice, 2018, p169

This data implies that commitment to access and equity varies across European countries. There are examples of countries with defined national strategies/frameworks in place to increase participation and completion for students from lower income and other under-represented groups. These countries include Austria, Croatia, Ireland and the United Kingdom. For example in Austria, to ensure the implementation of measures in the National Strategy on the Social Dimension of Higher Education, the Federal Minister can retain up to 0.5% of the overall budget allocated to HEIs if they do not meet or show they are working effectively towards the established targets in performance agreements between the government and HEIs. Similar performance agreements can be seen in the United Kingdom.

Across Europe policies regarding how the cost of HE is met significantly vary. Figure 6 shows that the majority of students in European countries pay some form of tuition fee. However, this can vary between a fee that covers 100% of students in a country to less than 10%. In 26 European countries, socio-economic criteria influence how much students pay. Likewise, there is great variation in the level of support provided to students to cover living costs (European Commission, 2018).

Figure 6 ● Percentage of first-cycle students who pay fees, 2016/17 in Europe

NL	CH	IS	AL	PT	NO	IE	SI	RS	SK	GE	FR	HR	PL
100	99	97	92	89	88	85	84	68	68	67	66	62	61

HU	LV	TR	RO	DE	LT	CZ	AT	EE	FI	MT	DK	SE	IT
57	43	40	39	36	35	26	26	21	10	10	5	1	:
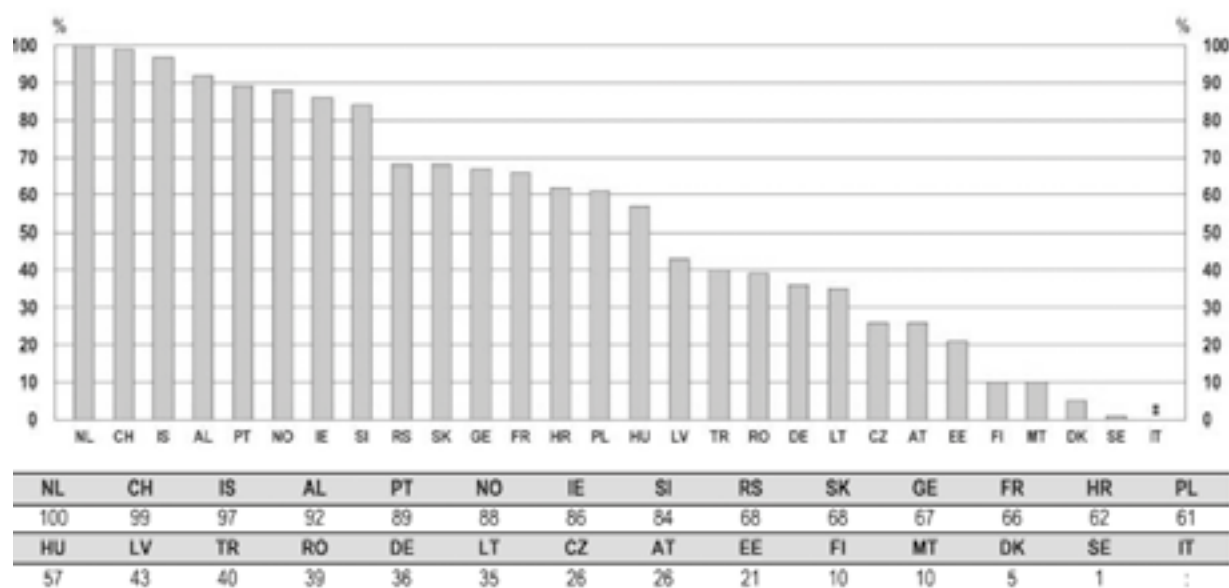
***Source:** Source: European Commission/EACEA/Eurydice, 2018, p181*

As part of the work at the European level to support and monitor the social dimension, European countries have been classified looking at a composite of measures to support access into higher education for learners from low income and other under-represented groups. These measures consist of monitoring the student body at entry; long-term quantitative objectives; support provided through different access routes and financial support.

As Figure 7 shows, less than 10% of the countries assessed are adopting all 4 measures with a third adopting 3 and another third adopting 2.

Figure 7 ● Scorecard of measures to support the access of under-represented groups to higher education, 2016/17
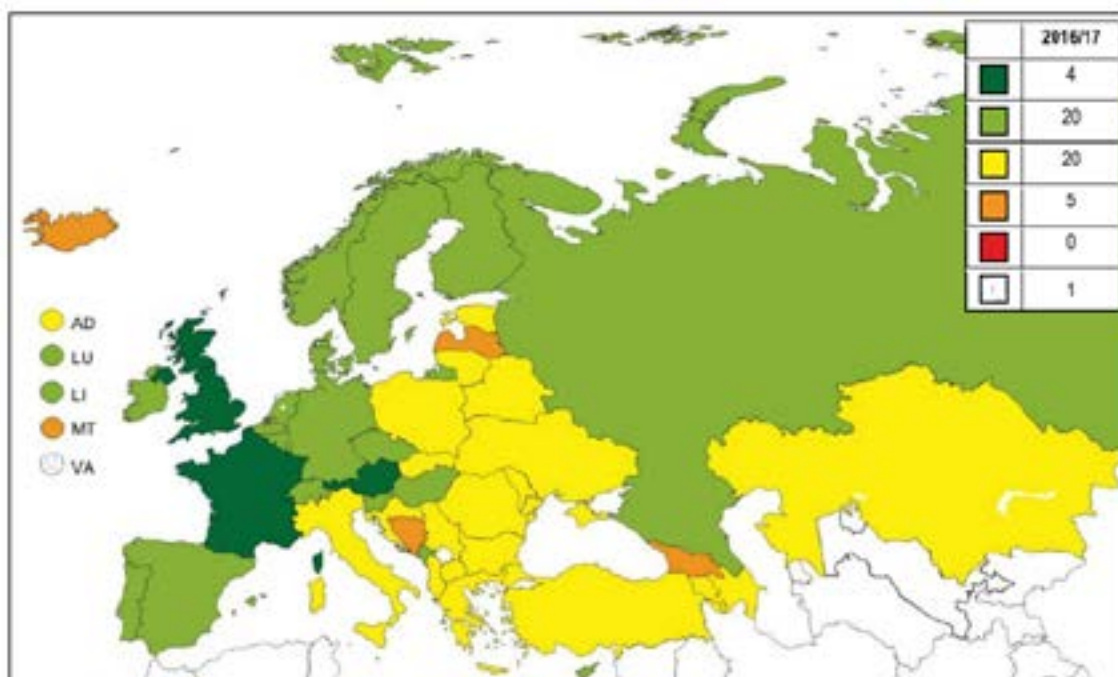
Source: BFUG data collection.

Scorecard categories

■ (dark green)	The following measures are undertaken to support the access to or increase the participation of under-represented groups in higher education:
	
	1. The composition of the student body is monitored based on gender and at least one other under-represented category at entry.
	
	2. There are longer-term quantitative policy objectives for the access/participation of students from under-represented groups.
	
	3. Under-represented student groups' access to higher education is supported in at least two of the following three ways:
	  • Preferential treatment of specific groups of students during the standard admission process;
	  • Learners are supported in getting the standard higher education entry qualifications;
	  • Learners can access higher education without the standard higher education entry qualifications.
	
	4. There is financial support targeted at under-represented groups of students **OR** mainstream support is provided to more than 50 % of students.

■ (green)	Three out of the four types of measures are undertaken.	■ (yellow)	Two out of the four types of measures are undertaken.
■ (orange)	One out of the four types of measures is undertaken.	■ (red)	None of the four types of measures are undertaken.
□	Data not available		

Source: European Commission/EACEA/Eurydice, 2018, p192

Similar data for Asia as illustrated in the Figures above is less available at present. In 2018, the report 'All around the world – Higher education equity policies across the globe', was launched at the first World Access to Higher Education Day (WAHED). The report looked at equitable access to higher education policies in over 70 countries, including 21 Asian countries (Salmi, 2019). The report found that the majority of countries did have targets in higher education policy documents related to progression for specific equity target groups, with low-income groups being the most commonly mentioned. However, as is shown in Figure 8, less than 20% of the countries had any targets related to higher education access for these groups.

Figure 8 ● Equity Targets across countries

Region / Targets	Frequency of Countries with Equity Targets	Proportion of Countries with Equity Targets
East Asia (11)	2	22.2%
Eastern Europe & Central Asia (5)	0	0.0%
Latin America and Caribbean (19)	10	52.6%
Middle East & North Africa (4)	1	25%
North America (2)	0	0.0%
Pacific (2)	1	50.0%
South Asia (5)	0	0.0%
Sub-Saharan Africa (13)	3	23.0%
Western Europe (10)	6	60.0%
Total (71)	23	32.4%

Source: Salmi. J (2019) All around the world – Higher education equity policies across the globe

As part of the 8th ASEF Regional Conference on Higher Education (ARC8) in September 2021, the 'ASEM National Equity Policies in Higher Education' report will be launched. This Report will add considerably to the knowledge base regarding the policies in place in Asia and Europe. The forthcoming Report gathered data from Ministries of Education in over 47 countries and their work on equitable access and success. Early analysis of this data suggests that the picture across the two continents varies greatly. The majority of countries are at the early stages in developing policy frameworks to support equitable access/success in higher education.

Summary – Mature and Maturing Systems

Within the ASEM constituency, there is one higher education system that is very mature and one that is rapidly maturing:

In Europe, a strong policy framework is in place to support equitable access and success in higher education based upon the work of the European Commission. However, it does not appear to be translating into the kind of actions and progress that it could do.

In Asia, there are not yet the cross regional systems of policy formation in place as in Europe. This is an area where in forthcoming years large growth and development of higher education systems is likely. Evidence of the region's rapid development can be clearly seen in the 2020 Times Higher Education Asia University Rankings. In general, university rankings should not be given a disproportionate level of importance when measuring the success of a university to an overall system. Nevertheless, they do act as a relevant indicator of progress. HEIs from the six major regional economic powers make up all the top 24 spots of the rankings. Japan has the most ranked institutions with 110, followed by China with 81. As the higher education system in Asia develops and expands, there are huge opportunities for universities to commit to equitable access and success supported by tangible policies and practices.

4. Key Issues and Recommendations: Improving Equitable Access and Success

Following the overview of equitable access and success policies and practices in higher education, with a focus on minority or disadvantaged majority populations in Asian and European countries,

the authors identified various risks and opportunities for equitable access and success in the next decade and summarised them in 4 'spotlight areas'. Policy makers and higher education leaders are encouraged to turn their attention to these 'spotlight areas' that conclude with recommendations for policymaking and institutional planning.

Spotlight 1: Focusing on Students and Inclusivity

Across both regions completion rates and achievement levels at elementary and secondary education levels are increasing on average – including for those from minority and disadvantaged majority groups. This will present challenges for higher education systems and institutions as more qualified people from different social groups emerge. They will bring with them different approaches to education & learning, cultural practices and often face greater issues in terms of affordability and out of university support for their learning.

This will require the creation of an inclusive and accessible learning environment in HE to enhance belonging, reduce the risk of students leaving their course before completion and support them to progress to successful post-higher education outcomes. This needs to be underpinned by a holistic approach that is based on the continuous improvement of the student journey through higher education from pre-entry to post graduation destinations and experiences.

System-level Opportunities & Risks for Policymakers to consider

A more qualified population, in particular young people at secondary level, provides the opportunity for more equitable access as it implies that students from minority and disadvantaged majority groups will meet the matriculation thresholds for entry.

In turn, a potentially more diverse student body creates the opportunity to further develop an inclusive environment based on the students' requirements. This happens by direct communication with them and mapping their needs. Higher education policy making can be strengthened by recognising the role of student representatives and encourage their participation in discussions about national and local inclusion-related measures, giving space to their natural drive to seek new solutions. Good practice examples are the Students-4-Students model, co-ordinated by the Center for Diversity Policy (ECHO) in the Netherlands and supported by the Dutch Ministry of Education; or the Multinclude & #IBelong projects funded by the European Union.

Supporting equitable access without addressing issues of capacity and quality puts students from minority and disadvantaged majority backgrounds at the risk of having unfulfilling student experiences and poorer post-higher education outcomes. Issues of capacity and quality are particularly pronounced in Asia. In China only about 16% of faculty members in HEIs hold doctoral degrees, with another 35% holding only a Master's degree MOE China (2011). In Viet Nam, 14% of the university instructors hold a doctorate, with another 46% holding a Master's degree. Quality assurance has to be better linked to equitable access and success (MOET Viet Nam, 2013).

A focus on employment related outcomes such as higher earnings, occupational progress and employment in graduate occupations in defining success in what higher education delivers also presents a risk to policymakers. Such outcomes, as well as overlooking the broader benefits of higher education to individuals and society, are harder to achieve to the same extent when higher education systems expand. By focusing on employment metrics alone and setting them at unrealistic levels, policymakers set themselves and their systems up to risk and potentially be seen as failing when they start to expand and admit more diverse groups of students.

Equitable Access and Success in Higher Education

Recommendations for Policymakers - 1

• Embed perspectives from students from minority and disadvantaged majority backgrounds in the development of policies related to equitable access and success.

• Commit to a holistic view of the higher education experience and what successful post higher education outcomes means by recognising the value of the broader contribution that graduates make to society and the benefits to health, civic engagement etc. of higher education study.

• Manage the contribution of the private sector to equitable access and success in Asia and monitor closely the quality of higher education offered to students in such institutions.

• Support high-level policy commitments to equitable access and success with more concrete commitments including:

  • Improving data collection
  • Introducing performance agreements between HEIs and the government with targets for equitable access/success
  • Funding national co-ordinated programmes of engagement between HEIs and learners from low income and other under-represented groups
  • Preferential admission arrangements for minority and disadvantaged majority learners
  • Providing adequate financial support for minority and disadvantaged majority learners

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Opportunities & Risks for Leaders of Higher Education Institutions to Consider

The available evidence suggests that students from minority and disadvantaged majority backgrounds are on average in Europe more likely to feel they do not belong in higher education (Eurostudent VII, 2020). However, the evidence also shows that this lack of belonging and connection with their university is not confined to students from minority and disadvantaged majority backgrounds. It can affect all students and is related to the inevitable differences in age and experience between the majority of the student body and those who lead HEIs.

An opportunity exists to address the risk of disaffection and under-achievement amongst **all** students by seeing equitable access and success as an opportunity to focus on improving the overall education experience. This includes the overall campus climate, an inclusive curriculum in specific subjects, staff understanding of diversity in the student body and, equally important, the diversity of the higher education institution staff.

As at system level, there is an opportunity to hear more clearly the voices of students as the ultimate beneficiaries of the higher education experience via proper student participation in local affairs through elected (not cherry-picked) representatives and acknowledging them as the essential partners they are.

Developing a more diverse student body will provide an opportunity to train and enable academic staff in more inclusive learning and teaching practices to meet the needs of a changing student population and benefit students from all backgrounds.

Without greater, additional support during their studies one risk is that students from minority and disadvantaged majority backgrounds will fail to achieve successful post higher education outcomes – both employment and non-employment related. Equitable access must lead to successful outcomes for students from minority and disadvantaged majority backgrounds. It is therefore crucial to keep track of student satisfaction rates which act as important indicators of potential lack of achievement of student potential.

If HEIs do not advocate for broader measures of post-graduation success, there is also a risk that they will put themselves and their students under undue pressure to reach unachievable employment related outcomes. Relying on narrow employment related outcomes only will undermine their uniqueness of purpose as institutions of higher learning and their function in society.

Recommendations for HEI Leaders - 1

• Recognise that students from minority and disadvantaged majority backgrounds are a distinct category made up of specific differing groups who need additional support to enter and succeed in higher education.

• Examine existing good practices and put in place measures for teaching, professional and administrative staff to exchange practice internally and with other HEIs to ensure the development of inclusive environments.

• Provide opportunities for students to shape the institutional approach to equitable access and success.

Spotlight 2: Generational Differences In Opinions and Attitudes

Increased global connectivity will be a major feature and force of economic and social activity up to 2030 and beyond. Likewise, it will also accelerate the communication and exchange of different ideas and perspectives.

Creating an inclusive learning environment in higher education to enhance belonging, greater access, retention, and success requires a student-centered focus. It asks for a sense of awareness on a system, institutional and academic staff level, to better connect and engage with an increasingly diverse student population in an often polarised societal context. An inclusive mindset and implicit and explicit perceptions of 'others' within society and in HE specifically are conditions to take into account, also in view of different generational opinions and attitudes.

Other developments in addition to changing demographics of students and staff and a growing international student population are changes in the perception on gender and sexuality, increased global engagement and exposure to other cultures and experiences, physically and virtually. This is seen, for example, in the growth of social movements which have at their centre diversity and inclusion, such as MeToo, Black Lives Matter, Asian Live Matter, Marches for Science. These social movements have evoked expressions of solidarity and called on HEIs to be more accountable with regard to their histories and institutional approaches to diversity and inclusion.

If opening admission to higher education is to lead to successful outcomes for students from minority and disadvantaged majority backgrounds, it is important that policymakers and higher education leaders are able to put in place the necessary policies/practices that aim to understand the specific 'generational mindset' as expressed via social movements such as those described above.

System-level Opportunities & Risks for Policymakers to consider

Investing resources in equitable access and success can act as evidence of policymakers' commitment to supporting those aged 18-30 to progress in their lives economically and non-economically, and connect with the needs and aspirations of this generation. As the report by the European University Association (EUA) highlights, more diversity in HE will come with a diversity of thought, skills, and perspectives: "Diverse research environments are demonstrably more creative and produce better results." (Claeys-Kulik, 2019)

Enhanced equitable access and success in higher education also provides the opportunity for policymakers to better understand the kind of more inclusive 'mindsets' that underpin the opinions and attitudes of many in emerging generations.

A failure to provide the routes into and through higher education for those from minority and disadvantaged majority backgrounds risks adding to greater polarisation in society. Groups might be pushed into more adversarial positions with older generations as they feel excluded from the economic and social opportunities others have.

Equitable Access and
Success in Higher Education
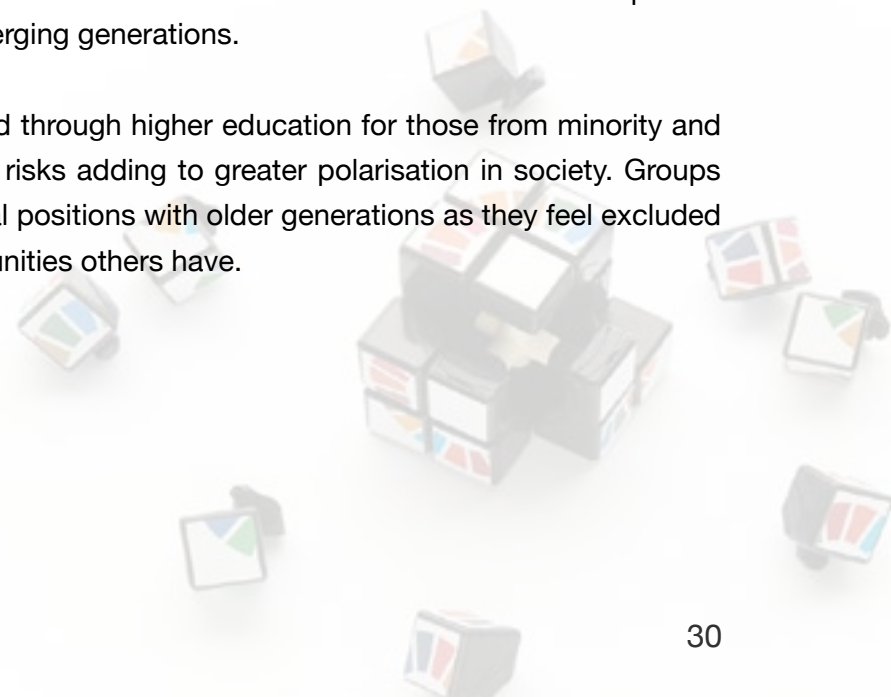
Recommendations for Policymakers - 2
• Work with HEIs to develop collaborative platforms where students and leaders from across different generations can develop dynamic equitable access and success policies that connect with broader changes in economy and society.

Opportunities & Risks for Leaders of Higher Education Institutions to Consider

A more diverse student body will aid HEIs in understanding generational differences. This will benefit all students and staff as it contributes to their ability to deal with issues related to race, disability, age, socio-economic background and discrimination.

Developing a greater understanding of generational differences by prioritising equitable access and success will support the development of a more effective research environment which evidence suggests is related to diversity in organisational environments (EUA, 2019).

HEIs make the development of organisational practices that recognise differences in opinions and attitudes across generations more difficult and risk laden if they do not combine this work with equitable access and success. As illustrated above, much of the generational differences in mindset are related to issues of equity and diversity. Attempting to understand this mindset without practical commitments to equity and diversity risks being seen as lacking authenticity by young people.

There is also the risk that the inclusive and holistic approaches described under Spotlight 1 will be hard to achieve without a commitment to working to understand generational differences in perspective and attitudes.

Recommendations for HEI Leaders - 2

• Prioritise work to develop an inclusive, intergenerational mindset within the institution that recognises and celebrates perspectives and views of different generations.

• Develop flexible programmes of study as well as a variety of delivery modes which allow those from minority and disadvantaged majority backgrounds at all stages of life to move through higher education in a manner that suits their needs.

• Capture the wider benefits to learning, teaching and research of prioritising equitable access and success by taking a holistic institution wide approach to planning and practice.

• Ensure that the curriculum remains inclusive and relevant in a time of rapid economic and social change so that everyone can benefit from higher education.

Spotlight 3: Equitable Access and Success In Times of Disruption

As the present pandemic has shown, higher education is as exposed to disruptive forces as any other sector, if not more. These include wars and natural disasters, major technological changes as well as significant shifts in policy and funding which can change the direction of higher education at the national and regional level. The COVID-19 pandemic also highlighted that it is students from minority and disadvantaged majority backgrounds whose progression into and through higher education is threatened the most by major disruptions at the level of the system/Higher Education Institution. However, simultaneously such disruptions can present opportunities to move forward the equitable access and success agenda. Achieving greater access and success for learners from minority and disadvantaged majority backgrounds requires a level of disruption and innovation as existing practices need to be changed anyway. If the appropriate structures are in place and equity is placed as a policy/Higher Education Institution priority, external disruptive factors can provide a window for the necessary changes to begin.

Opportunities & Risks for Policymakers to Consider

Existing practices focused on equitable access and success can be brought to the fore at times of disruption to benefit students from minority and disadvantaged majority backgrounds and the whole student body. An illustrative example is the use of assistive technology to support students with disabilities which provides an insight into innovative delivery and technology focused learning solutions at the system wide level.

Disruptive times (including the present pandemic) present policymakers with the opportunity to challenge their own practices, and those of HEIs with regard to equitable access and success which may be harder to achieve in 'non-disruptive' times.

Unless the funding for higher education is secure and at an adequate level, the risk remains that systems will be unable to develop and lack the resilience to manage external disruptive forces. This will have the most significant impact on those from minority and disadvantaged majority backgrounds.

The different nature and context of HEIs must be reflected in policymaking towards the sector. If approaches from other contexts are borrowed, again such institutions will not be able to cope with disruptive forces and access and success of students from minority and disadvantaged majority backgrounds will be constrained.

Equitable Access and Success in Higher Education

Recommendations for Policymakers - 3
• Integrate equitable access and success objectives into post COVID-19 planning to ensure that the impact of the pandemic is not felt disproportionately by students from low income and other under-represented groups in Higher Education.

Photo taken at ARC7, May 2019, Bucharest

Opportunities & Risks for Leaders of Higher Education Institutions to Consider

As at the policy level – disruption related to greater online learning provides an opportunity to invest and develop assistive learning technologies which can enhance equitable access and success for all learners from minority and disadvantaged backgrounds including students with disabilities.

If HEIs do not place equitable access and success in their strategic planning, which includes considering disruptive forces, they risk jeopardising and putting at risk any gains they have made in this area. COVID-19 was hard to plan for, but the default response, the rapid shift to online learning, negatively affected those who did not have access and resources for virtual and distance learning. This highlights the importance of detailed future planning which safeguards equitable access and success

Recommendations for HEI Leaders - 3

• Consider potential disruptions, as seen during the COVID-19 pandemic, during institutional planning, and attach relevant funding to ensure that progress made towards more equitable access and success is not hampered

Spotlight 4: Collection of Data

The earlier sections of this chapter illustrated major gaps in understanding where equitable access and success were concerned in Asia and Europe, also because of insufficient data on participation and outcomes by background characteristics. Insufficient data is due to a number of factors:

• The political will to gather data on equitable access and success may be absent as it can reveal inequalities which policymakers rather would not highlight.
• Political will may also be lacking as equitable access and success are not seen as policy priorities.
• Data on equity may be highly sensitive in many countries and therefore protected for legal (privacy) reasons.
• Investment in effective data collection systems is costly.

Improving the collection, analysis and dissemination of data is crucial however if advancements in equitable access and success in higher education up to 2030 and beyond are to be achieved.

Opportunities & Risks for Policymakers to Consider

By producing and disseminating accurate and comprehensive data policymakers are able to identify more clearly relative differences between different groups related to access and success in higher education and form policy responses accordingly.

Investing in the collection of data on equitable access and success in higher education also enables a fuller picture of inequality at the societal level. This provides the opportunity to identify where other policies, for example at the secondary school level, can be used to achieve goals related to access and success.

Opportunities may exist to integrate the collection of data on higher education participation and outcomes by background characteristics into existing data collection exercises, for example national censuses, thus achieving resource efficiencies.

Insufficient data makes comparative analysis of progress at the national or institutional level difficult and gauging the return to investment in equitable access and success policies challenging.

Equitable Access and Success in Higher Education

Recommendations for Policymakers – 4
• Examine the potential for advancements in information technology, integration with national social surveys and incentivise HEIs to improve data collection.

Opportunities & Risks for Leaders of Higher Education Institutions to Consider

Collection of data on who enters institutions and the progress of students, if framed correctly and preferably done collectively across institutions, can provide the foundation to make the case to policymakers for resources to address equitable access and success issues.

Developing data collection mechanisms related to student entry and success is essential if activities developed to address equitable access and success are to be evidence-based and thus more likely to be effective.

Without the adequate quality of data, collected in a way that is informed by the generational mindset described in Spotlight 3, developing an inclusive approach to learning, teaching and institutional practice will be difficult as inequalities and injustice will remain hidden from view.

Lack of an evidence base, related for example to a broad set of higher education outcomes as argued for in Spotlight 1, will make it hard to secure resources both within HEIs and from policymakers for equitable access and success work.

<div style="color:red">**Equitable Access and Success in Higher Education**</div>

Recommendations for HEI Leaders - 4

- Establish systems of data collection, that are culturally and legally permissible for the specific country, which collects information on the background of students and their progression through the institution.

Photo taken at ARC7, May 2019, Bucharest

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Chapter 2.
Inclusive Learning and Teaching in a Digital World

Written by: Balkovic, M., Chavez, O.M., Dhirathiti, N., Holmes, W., Ikeda, K., Negrescu, V., Patrick, J.

1. Introduction

Introducing learning and teaching platforms based on digital technology has been an on-going process for more than a decade now all across Asia and Europe. Within the two regions, the initiative in introducing digital technology to teaching and learning has been discussed at the supra-national level in the case of Europe, while governments and HEIs in Asia seem to individually plan and implement the policy respectively at its own pace. With diverse contexts and backgrounds of countries in Asia, policies at the national and institutional level can be examined primarily based on the specific contexts of each country's educational systems and orientations. However, the COVID-19 pandemic has abruptly changed the scenario and pace of implementing digital technology in teaching and learning in these regions. These changes were exponential. It was inevitable for every country and its respective education institutions to consider the way in which teaching and learning can be delivered and provided through digital and on-line technology. As mentioned by the OECD, "One change likely to remain after the pandemic ends is the intensified use of digital technologies in the delivery and management of higher education" (Weko & Morley, 2020).

2. Inclusion in Digital Teaching and Learning: Dimensions to Consider

Inclusion is seen as one of the policy outcomes when discussing integration of digital technology into teaching and learning in higher education. While there is literature examining factors leading to digital exclusion in using technology as a delivering mode of education (Clarida et al., 2015), factors to consider leading to the successful use of digital technology in teaching and learning, especially during the COVID-19 era, are just as important. This section suggests that there are a few pillars that both national governments and HEIs may need to consider when introducing digital technology into traditional teaching and learning processes and methods, and into other HEI functions.

The first dimension to consider is the **diversity of education providers**, for example who are the key players providing knowledge? As will be discussed later in the chapter, education providers in today's digital world vary greatly. In some parts of the world, especially in East Asian countries, the national and local governments have played a significant part in developing courses; while in some other geographical locations, the private sector has played an integral part in delivering digital content. Again, in some countries, shared resources at the regional level or even at the global level is the main approach used by both national governments and HEIs. These shared resources are being developed and used not only to cut the cost of production, but also to ensure quality and efficacy. Furthermore, such content and approaches are being evaluated by numerous users and learners. This also raises the issue of inclusiveness, with new key players other than just the traditional HEIs acting today as content providers, and primarily offering online courses for upgrading skills rather than for diplomas or degree certificates. Although such on-line content is not part of higher education per se, it should not be neglected, due to an increase in the recognition of prior learning (RPL) used by HEIs. These approaches can transform non-formal content and approaches into formal diplomas and certificates issued by HEIs. Lack of inclusiveness here could originate not only from technology but also from language barriers for some learners. Concretely, some of the established commercial digital content platforms are playing an increasingly dominant role, creating difficulties for small countries (and their learners) which are not capable of producing content in their own language or adapted to their educational curricula. Also, the ability and knowledge of teachers for teaching using digital platforms and approaches are of vital importance for knowledge provision: first, in order to provide high quality teaching in these circumstances to all their students, and second, to try to enhance the inclusion of marginalised learners as much as possible.
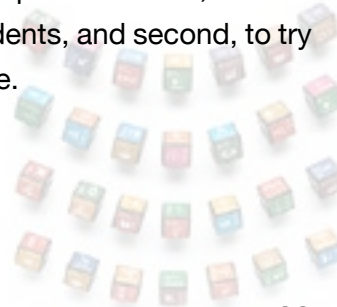
The second dimension of examining digital technology as a conduit to increase inclusiveness in teaching and learning is a focus on the **diversity of the knowledge recipients**. One of the key pillars of integrating digital technology into the traditional teaching and learning is to ensure accessibility, sustainable growth and inclusive society (Draffan & Rainger, 2013; Tan, 2021). When national governments or HEIs are planning to transition teachin and learning into a blended or a full online method, factors such as learner demographics – including gender, age or cultural background, geographical location, and personal or life experiences – are vital to the digital teaching and learning design. While integrating technology into teaching and learning can have positive implications, both national governments and HEIs have to ensure that the digital teaching and learning system used will not undermine inclusion further.

The third dimension is the consideration **of platforms, infrastructure and appropriate devices** to offer digital teaching and learning. The choice of technology should ensure the inclusion of learners from different backgrounds, locations and experiences (including level of basic IT skills) as previously discussed. HEIs, in both continents, are the key implementers, deciding how to design or redesign the teaching and learning environment to suit all learners and to enhance digital engagement. In other words, digital technology should be seen as an enhancer and not as an impediment to teaching and learning for the majority of learners in a given setting.

The sub-sections below introduce practices in Asia and Europe to reflect the status quo of inclusive digital teaching and learning, including the examinations of four different levels: the European supra-national policy level, national level, institutional level and individual adjustments of various governments and HEIs in both continents.

3. Regional Policy Overview

In this section the authors examine the Europe-wide policies only, as there are no overarching policies in Asia currently that could be reviewed similarly.

Digital dimension of higher education has become one of the key strategic priorities at the EU level with Green and Digital Transitions being one of the six priorities of the Commission Communication on Achieving the European Education Area by 2025 (European Commission, 2020A), and operationalised further in the Digital Education Action Plan (European Commission, 2020B), resetting education and training for the digital age, both adopted in September 2020. Moreover, in the Council Conclusions on Digital Education in Europe's Knowledge Societies

(Council of the European Union, 2020A) the Ministers for Education of the EU Members States recognised that digital education technologies open up new possibilities as well as challenges for learning and teaching, and are an important factor in ensuring high-quality and inclusive education and training. These policy directions were further reinforced through European Parliament's Resolution on 'The Future of European Education in the Context of COVID-19' dated 22 October 2020 (European Parliament, 2020), and in 2021 through the European Parliament's Report on shaping digital education policy (European Parliament, 2020).

The digital dimension of higher education in the policy documents at the EU level comprises several components, such as: pedagogical use of digital technology to support and enhance teaching, learning and assessment, development of digital resources and tools, enhancing innovative pedagogies and digital skills of teachers and learners, as well as assuring equal access to digitally supported high-quality and inclusive higher education opportunities and availability of necessary digital devices, both for students and staff. Moreover, higher education is expected to respond to the changing labour market, growing influence of artificial intelligence, new job profiles and the demand for widespread digital competences. The COVID-19 pandemic gave additional impetus to a wider European digital agenda as the EU Ministers for Education summarised in their first reaction to the COVID-19 crisis, in the Council Conclusions on Countering the COVID-19 Crisis in Education and Training, adopted during the Croatian Presidency of the EU Council in 2020 (Council of the European Union, 2020B). The High-Level Event titled 'To Engage, to Care, to Foster – Digital Education Shaping Today's and Tomorrow's Societies' which took place on 24 May 2021 in Lisbon under the Portuguese Presidency of the Council of the European Union also promoted best practices in digital education (Council of the European Union, 2021).

The same digital agenda goes beyond the EU, encompassing 49 European countries of the European Higher Education Area (Bologna Process), including the United Kingdom (post-Brexit). As stated in the 2020 Rome Ministerial Communiqué, adopted in November 2020, the European Ministers for Higher eEducation committed to "reinforcing social inclusion and enhancing quality education, using fully the new opportunities provided by digitalisation". Moreover, the Ministers committed, among other things, "to supporting higher education institutions in using digital technologies for learning, teaching and assessment, as well as for academic communication and research, and to investing in the development of digital skills and competences for all" (EHEA, 2020A). In the Annex III to the 2020 Rome Ministerial Communique, the Ministers agreed to

support HEIs in creating "tailor education provision to the needs of different types of learners and to build a culture for equity and inclusion" by, among other things, "exploring opportunities offered by digital technologies" (EHEA, 2020B).

4. National Policy and Implementation Overview in Asia & Europe

The Asian Context

Asia has experienced diverse policy transitions from traditional to digital teaching and learning across the region. However, it is undeniable that national governments have played a key role, together with different other players, in gravitating countries towards the integration of digital technology in higher education. Countries in East Asia especially China and Japan, have established a general policy on enhancing teaching and learning experience before the COVID-19 outbreak. China, for example, has launched open platforms for teaching and learning with Chinese MOOCs, some of which have been developed by leading Chinese universities including XuetangX, CNMOOC and iCourse International (Dong et al., 2017). The national government has been a strong supporter of providing national-quality, provincial-quality and institutional-quality courses covering a vast array of subjects for students (Tlili et al., 2019). The national policy announced by the Chinese government known as 'disrupted classrooms, uninterrupted learning has been echoed throughout the country (Liu, 2020).

In Singapore and Hong Kong, not only are national governments developing support for digital teaching and learning, but there is also a serious involvement of the private sector and non-profit organisations in using digital technology to harness for learning and classroom teachings. In this sense, digital learning is enhancing necessary skills, be it the so-called 21st century skills or other innovative learning experiences. Many digital platforms are known as 'leapfrog pathways', as they highlight how innovation and digital technology can help education develop from traditional one-way teaching and learning to an approach in which students are able to develop the skills needed for the future (Winthrop & Ziegler, 2019).

While the government has been playing a vital role in introducing and supporting digital learning platforms in China, the COVID-19 pandemic has played as an external force ('gaiatsu') for a
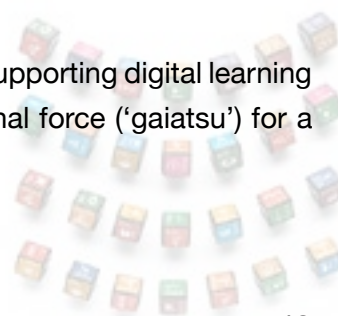
country like Japan to establish initiatives towards online and digital teaching and learning. Although Japan's market for online learning is expected to grow by 50% by 2023, the government suggests that the COVID-19 outbreak has been the key factor accelerating the growth (Nikkei Asia, 9 March 2020). However, compared to China, Japan is still only slowly taking up digital technology in education which requires many supporting systems such as mobile payments and an extensive network of open platforms. Similar to Japan, in Southeast Asia it is evident that the COVID-19 pandemic has played a major role in expediting national policies for initiating and reviving the countries' digital learning and teaching platforms. In Malaysia, the Ministry of Education announced a platform in 2020 called 'DELIMa' or the 'Digital Education Learning Initiative Malaysia' which offers applications and services required for educators and students to collaborate online. The platform promotes the core tenets of the country's approach to education transition: inclusiveness, lifelong learning and the commitment of the future digital needs (Sharon, 2021).

The collaboration between government units is also vital to the success of digital teaching and learning, especially post-COVID-19. Indonesia is a good example of a cross-ministerial collaboration, including the Ministry of Education and the Ministry of Religious Affairs, that is addressing the shift to online learning and geographic or socio-economic diversity across the country. The collaboration has provided students and education institutions free access to online learning, teaching and learning materials as well as other financial reliefs.

The European Context

The digital dimension of teaching and learning in higher education has been embedded in wider national policies on quality teaching and learning that are most often part of overall national strategies for higher education. According to the Report on National Initiatives in Learning and Teaching in Europe (Bunescu & Gaebel, 2018), prepared by the European University Association (EUA) in the framework of the EFFECT Project "having a dedicated national strategy or framework for learning and teaching is the least widespread approach". The digital dimension of higher education has often been seen as an important component of widening quality education opportunities for disadvantaged groups of students. Digitalisation has been seen as contributing to, at least, components of higher education policies that are quality and inclusion (social dimension in higher education).

The COVID-19 pandemic has affected and put unprecedented pressure on higher education systems and it has brought major challenges to learning, teaching and assessment. From the outbreak of the pandemic, the EU Member States made efforts to ensure the continuation of learning and teaching, by shifting to distance teaching and learning and by using digital solutions. A key issue was assuring the safety of teachers and students. However, according to the available reports, there were different starting positions between the EU Member States as well as between HEIs across the EU in terms of digital maturity of the systems and institutions: the availability of digital learning and teaching tools and the level of development of digital skills of students and teachers, including their digital pedagogical competences.

As stated in the Council Conclusion on Digital Education in Europe's Knowledge Societies, "experience of digital education technologies across the Union differs and depends to a great extent on policy and governance frameworks, infrastructure and technical facilities as well as financial and human resources. These include in particular well-prepared teachers, trainers, educators and other pedagogical and administrative staff, including institution leaders in education and training" (Council of the European Union 2020A). And the digital gaps across the Union, already existing between the institutions and among the staff and students, have increased further with the COVID-19 pandemic.

With the pandemic, various platforms for exchange of information and good practices between the Ministries of Education were established. The EU Member States frequently reported that they found that the biggest challenges for higher education were:

• Enhancing digital pedagogies, to avoid replicating traditional face-to-face forms of teaching and learning;
• Assuring good quality teaching and learning experience and skills development through practical training and work-based learning, since these parts of curricula cannot be easily transferred into a digital environment;
• Assuring that the achieved learning outcomes correspond to intended learning outcomes, and that assessment methods are reliable, so that students may demonstrate that they have achieved the intended learning outcomes;
• Creating alternatives to European and international learning mobility opportunities, by using virtual mobility.
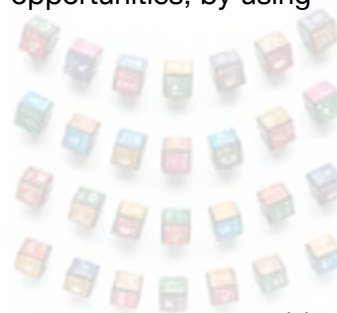
Another set of challenges, highlighted by the COVID-19 pandemic, involves ensuring inclusion and equal access to quality distance learning opportunities – because many students, especially those from disadvantaged backgrounds, lack digital skills and/or access to technology or the Internet. A fear shared by the EU Member States is that the wide scale shift to digital teaching and learning may reinforce pre-existing structural, social-economic and gender inequalities. In summary, the perceived effect of the pandemic is that it further accelerated the already ongoing digital transformation of higher education systems across the EU, and that it brings challenges and opportunities – both to assuring the quality of higher education, as well as to inclusion in higher education systems across Europe.

5. Institutional Adjustments: Good Practices for Digital Learning and Teaching

The Asian Context

During the COVID-19 pandemic, impromptu measures were launched as part of campus management. Many universities and education institutions had already adopted long-term measures for the "new normal" campus operations. In general, before COVID-19, China and most of East Asian countries followed national policy guidelines for introducing digital teaching and learning as part of the education plan. However, for the other Asian countries, government policies and the implementation at the institutional level only became concrete after the start of the pandemic. Education institutions are typically focusing on investment for IT infrastructure especially the campus IT networks and coverage, the training of staff on online and virtual teaching and learning, and impromptu situational-based provisions such as free sim cards and financial supports. Each country achieved a different degree of successful preparation, with some contextual reservations. Japan, for example, has been struggling with the transition from traditional paper-based educational system. The reluctance to adopt digital learning and teaching has been associated with concerns about inappropriate content and equal access to the digital modes of learning.

Apart from Chinese-speaking countries, where the investment in IT infrastructure appeared to be in place long before the COVID-19 pandemic, others are struggling with the abrupt transition. As
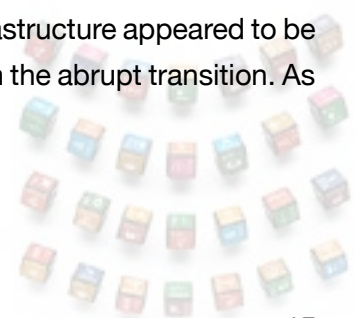
mentioned in the previous section, the national policy announced by the Chinese government on 'disrupted classrooms, uninterrupted learning' has been well accepted by education institutions with the focus on contextualised alternatives to online education, specifically students from under-privileged individual groups and/or communities (Liu, 2020). This is an example of how both governments and education institutions are addressing the 'digital divide', especially when examining the long-term issue of access to digital learning and teaching platforms and activities.

Turning to Southeast Asia, major universities in Thailand, for example, have provided instructors/ educators with special training on online course design, teaching tools and online evaluation methods and have developed institutional policies towards a future of hybrid digital learning and teaching. As seen in some institutions, budgets have been dedicated to the support for academic staff, to develop online teaching and learning skills and materials. Ad hoc reactions can also be seen in many universities in Thailand, Indonesia and other countries. Many have reacted to the COVID-19 situation based on their respective contexts by providing free SIM cards, tablets or other mobile units for students, to enable them to access from home the online teaching seamlessly during the lockdowns. As mentioned, one of the most important dimensions is the investment in IT infrastructure, including IT bandwidth and coverage, as well as online teaching platforms and solutions, such as Webex, Microsoft Teams, Zoom and so on. Not only the investment in IT infrastructure which is deemed necessary for the successful implementation of digital teaching and learning, but the co-utilisation of resources is also as important. Many existing online courses and platforms developed by respective education institutions need to be shared. The ASEAN University Network for Technology-Enhanced Personalised Learning (AUN-TEPL) is one such example where leading universities under the ASEAN University Network (AUN) are working together to explore the possibilities of sharing online resources, headed by universities in Singapore, Thailand and Malaysia. These teaching and learning resources which have been established based on the initial response of the institutional needs from surveys from 51 members of the ASEAN +3 University Network in 2018. The network aims to become a platform on which further collaboration could be pursued and shared through technology-enhanced personalised learning (AUN-TEPL, 2021).

The European Context

The most recent Survey on 'Digitally enhanced learning and teaching in European HEIs' (Gaebel et al., 2021), involving 368 HEIs from 48 countries of the European Higher Education Area (EHEA) was conducted by the European University Association (EUA) and published in January 2021. It brought some important findings on the digital dimension of teaching and learning in higher education, distinguishing between before and since the start of the COVID-19 crisis, and compared with a similar survey conducted in 2014. According to the report, with the outbreak of COVID-19, all institutions managed to pivot to blended and online learning. However, resources were in many regards insufficient. For example, while 90% of HEIs had online library services in place before the pandemic, 65% reported that they wanted to enhance them as an immediate reaction to the crisis.

Moreover, three-quarters of the respondents indicated that they had concrete plans to boost digital capacity beyond the crisis. The majority of institutions (88%) reported having a strategy for digitally enhanced learning and teaching (DELT), usually integrated into a wider institutional strategy. Finally, the HEIs reported that the urgent switch to distance teaching and learning did not assure sufficiently developed pedagogical approaches, which sometimes affected the quality of the teaching and learning. Before the pandemic, blended learning (which they define as "combining face-to-face classroom teaching and the innovative use of ICT technologies") was the most popular delivery mode, used in 75% of institutions across the EHEA. In response to COVID-19, some institutions also started to provide hybrid learning and teaching ("physical classroom learning in combination with online attendance: some students attend in the classroom, others attend at the same time remotely online"). Also, before the pandemic, online degree programmes were provided by one-third of institutions (36%), while the number of HEIs that offer MOOCs increased since the survey conducted in 2014. In addition, short online non-degree courses (such as micro credentials) were offered by 50% of institutions. Digital assessments slightly increased before the pandemic, in both conventional and online learning, again compared to 2014.

The number of HEIs using digital credentials is still relatively low. A quarter of the institutions (25%) offers virtual mobility for its students. Meanwhile, the majority of institutions include training for generic and sector-specific digital skills, as well as ethical and data literacy and safety skills as part of their curricula. However, digital skills are often only included in some study programmes or as a voluntary offer. The survey concluded that Virtual Learning Environments (VLE) and online

labs could be strengthened as could online services for prospective students. Finally, over 60% of institutions indicated that they include staff and students in the governance of digitally enhanced teaching and learning, had a dedicated budget to support digital transformation, and established clear policies and processes for deciding on new technologies. However, about every second institution also recognised the need to enhance or develop horizontal policies on data protection, cyber security, prevention of plagiarism, ethics, intellectual property and examinations and testing.

6. Individual Adjustments: Students' and Educators' Inputs and Readiness for Digital Learning and Teaching

The Asian Context

Four major determinants on digital teaching and learning in Asia mirror those in Europe, as elaborated in the following section. These determinants include attitudes towards digital teaching and learning, technical capacity of digital mode of delivery, knowledge of use on both instructors' and students' side and effectiveness of digital teaching and learning methods.

First, **the attitudes of** students towards digital teaching and learning affects the outputs and outcomes of the platform inclusiveness. According to the PISA survey in December 2020, less than 20 percent of students in some East Asian countries including Japan supported the use of digital technology as part of their classroom experiences (Obe & Okutsu, 2020). On the other hand, a country like Singapore has started to address the issue of 'digital natives', the young generation of students who have grown up around technology both in breadth and depth (however, 'digital natives' as a useful term has long been disputed in academia, Helsper and Eynon, 2010). Their experiences in learning and teaching embedded in the use of digital technology are much wider and deeper than before, which changes the interaction between them and educators. Students in Thailand have expressed their disappointments with full digital teaching and learning methods as a campus life is considered important for their teaching and learning experience. The data, which was elicited from approximately 1,300 students through

the Mahidol University Student Council in April 2020, also demonstrates that around 50% of students reported 'ready' while 49% reported 'not ready' for the full online teaching and learning due to the COVID-19 outbreak. Among those who were not ready, the unfavourable learning environment and the coverage of the Wi-Fi/internet signals were reported as the highest obstacles at 70% and 52% respectively (Mahidol University Student Council Survey, 2020).

With respect to the **ability to use the digital technology**, educators need to be given professional training to enable them to be able to use digital tools effectively. Hence, digital technologies which are being integrated into post-COVID-19 teaching and learning contexts begs questions of the readiness of teachers and educators to be effective facilitators. Meanwhile, students need to be ready to optimise their own blended learning journeys, made available by the technologies (Natarajan, 2020). Correlated with the ability to use digital technology is the opportunity to access the technology itself. The digital divide is still a major problem in countries in Southeast Asia, considering both geographical and economic factors. In Thailand, for example, only 25% of students are reported to have computers for accessing online learning, while the majority of students, 66% use their mobile phones to study online (NXPO, 2020).

In terms of the **effectiveness of the digital teaching and learning**, more studies will be needed in the future to evaluate the inputs, process and outcomes. As of now, the phenomenon in Singapore of active engagement of major stakeholders coincides with a new paradigm of co-production of public services, education included, in which the end users or those who once were recipients of public services are becoming more involved in formulating and implementing the policies from the start. Education is one such public policy area, in which policymakers both at the national and institutional level need to adjust their mindsets to provide opportunities for students to participate more, especially through digital technologies. However, for some other countries in East Asia, major national policy directions are the key determinant for the success and effectiveness of the transition from traditional teaching and learning to a new approaches using digital technologies. A huge investment by the governments and clear policy directions set apart countries like China from relatively slow responders like Japan. However, with the economic leverage, countries in East Asia will soon be able to adapt at a quicker pace towards introducing digital technology in teaching and learning as their long-term strategies at the national and institutional level. Finally, for Southeast Asian countries in particular, the role of institutional leadership will play a major part in preparing educators and students to transition to the 'new normal' of digital teaching and learning.
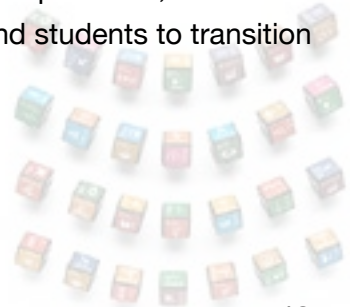
The European Context

According to 'Learning and teaching paper #7: Digital skills - Where universities matter' (Jørgensen, 2019) published by the EUA in 2019, in the discussion on digital skills developments, it is suggested that universities have a key role for all three groups of digital skills needs. The needs of three different groups of learners are distinguished:

1 | ICT specialists who need training in ethics (including privacy and bias) and where universities need to ensure diversity,

2 | learners who will enter fields where the professional practice is already disrupted by digital technologies, for example medicine and law,

3 | learners who face unpredictability in how digital technologies will impact their careers, but who still require knowledge about them.

As for students more generally, the results of the Survey (Doolan et al., 2020) conducted by the European Students Union (ESU) and the University of Zadar, Croatia, identified that students felt a lack of stability due to the COVID-19 outbreak, while a significant number reported mental health problems and fears about losing work and about the future. Therefore, governments and institutions are expected to cater for the wellbeing of their students and teachers. Plans to further digitalise higher education also needs to address the fact that students revealed a clear preference for face-to-face teacher-student interaction.

Finally, the results of the discussions on the first reactions to implications of COVID-19 for the Bologna Process, held at the Split BFUG Meeting in June 2020, included two main findings in relation to digitalisation in higher education:

1 | There is a need to improve the quality of online learning and teaching, in particular in relation to teacher skills development and practical elements of curricula and appropriate assessment methods.

2 | There is a challenge of an adequate infrastructure for accessibility of a good quality of teaching and learning resources. There is a need to provide appropriate devices to all students, in order to overcome digital gaps between institutions and students. Meanwhile, the digital skills of teachers need to be improved, and teachers and students need to have access to a good quality learning material.

7. Key Issues and Recommendations: Improving Inclusion in Digital Learning and Teaching

Following the review of the status quo and good practice examples across Asia and Europe, the authors identified various risks and opportunities for an inclusive digital learning and teaching environment in the next decade and summarised them in 4 'spotlight areas'. Policymakers and higher education leaders are encouraged to turn their attention to these 'spotlight areas' that conclude with recommendations for policymaking and institutional planning.

Spotlight 1: Diversifying the Learning Process by Digital Tools

System Level Opportunities & Risks for Policymakers to Consider

New technologies are opening HE to a more diverse range of students

New generation online learning platforms, that enable anytime/anywhere access and blended learning possibilities, have increased the number and types of people who are able to engage in learning in HE, from traditional post-formal education HE students to lifelong learners at any stage of their career, who can interleave the learning with their work or family responsibilities (Lock et al., 2021).

In turn, this has led to a massive increase in the variety of available courses and micro credentials, which is beginning to influence a reconceptualisation of Higher Education's very purpose (from prioritising preparing young people for their future lives, to enabling all citizens to constantly grow their skills and expertise) (Kohler et al., 2021).

Finally, higher education is increasingly collaborating with external private-sector partners, which brings both opportunities (for example, innovative approaches that existing HE structures either preclude or impede) and risks (for example, HE both becoming more dependent on and losing expertise to the private-sector). In particular, it is important to guard against both technology becoming the master rather than the servant of HE, causing institutions to lose sight of their educational objectives, and the privatisation of HE by inattention, accident or stealth.

Other risks include the variability and flexibility made possible by new generation learning management systems that bring complexity and a potential lack of focus. These are speculative
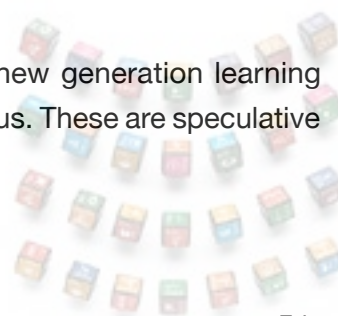
but still need to be carefully considered. Complexity, in addition to opening choices, can mean more people making wrong choices, for their personal development and thus for national outcomes. Meanwhile, a lack of focus can mean a lack of strategic direction, leading to the 'wrong' subjects being offered, studied and valued, thus compromising a country's skills development.

New technologies are enhancing communication

A new generation of communication technologies (such as Zoom, Teams, VooV and Google Hangouts) are facilitating a massive increase in collaborative research and teaching, both within and between countries, bringing new opportunities for institutions, educators and students to share and cooperate across national boundaries and time zones, benefiting all participants and their regions/countries (Wu et al., 2020).

However, a real risk is that these might lead to dependencies on proprietary and/or monopoly systems, and to compromising quality and/or reputation. In particular, undermining quality and reputation might compromise a country's aim to establish its position in the global context, and its ability to attract investment and international students.

The net result is that this increasing dependence on communication technologies might lead to a thinning out of a country's stable of HEIs, with offerings being consolidated and/or effectively replaced by some global brands (such as MIT in the USA and the University of Oxford in the UK, or one of the MOOC platforms such as Coursera). "In 50 years there will be only ten institutions in the world delivering higher education" as quoted by Sebastian Thrun, co-founder of the MOOC platform UDACITY (Leckhart & Cheshire, 2012).

Inclusive Learning and Teaching in a Digital World

Recommendations for Policymakers - 1
• Use available technology and COVID-19 momentum to reconceptualise part of higher education's very purpose, from prioritising preparing young people for their future lives, to enabling all citizens to constantly grow their skills and expertise.

• Invest in HEIs digital capacities (to develop digital teaching and content) in order to avoid their overdependence on private sector/international providers.
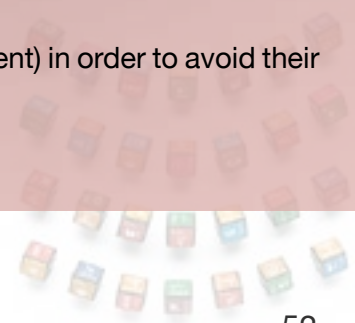
Opportunities & Risks for Leaders of Higher Education Institutions to Consider

New technologies can enable better ways to manage, teach and engage in learning

Institutions can leverage the potential of new technologies at several sub-levels. At the institutional sub-level, new technologies offer ways to better manage the learning process, from recruitment to assessment. For example, automatic systems have been developed to undertake an initial sifting of applications, to quickly identify those that need more detailed attention and those that do not meet minimum requirements. In addition, there has been a massive growth of automatic online assessments proctoring technologies that aim to facilitate trustworthy examinations at a distance.

At an educator sub-level, new technologies can save teachers time, as they delegate tasks to machines (such as marking assessments). Data-driven technologies can sometimes make it easier to monitor student progress, identifying those who are at risk of failure in order to prioritise pro-active support ahead of remediation. Hybrid or blended approaches to teaching also become possible, combining the benefits of both off-line and on-line teaching and learning. In addition, the capabilities of communication technologies mentioned earlier also provide HE educators with much simplified opportunities to share and collaborate across research and teaching.

Finally, at the student sub-level, an increasing range of new technologies, such as those driven by Artificial Intelligence, are providing opportunities for adaptive learning. They enabling each student to follow their own pathways through the learning material to the prescribed learning outcomes, making, it is argued, their learning increasingly 'efficient'. New technologies can also improve access to extracurricular activities and student governments, as well as foster cross-campus and cross-border student representation and collaboration activities.

For each opportunity, however, there is an associated risk. For example, at the institutional sub-level, applications sifting software has been criticised for being inaccurate and non-inclusive (Burke, 2020). Similarly, exam proctoring technologies are extremely controversial. It has been argued that they are intrusive, non-inclusive, massively add to student anxiety, and often inaccurate (preventing some legitimate students from even sitting their examinations) (Young, 2020). Even if the technology is improved to address these concerns, the question remains whether it is fair or sensible to delegate such life-changing decisions to machines.

At the educator sub-level, while data-driven technologies might provide additional information that teachers can use to enhance their teaching, we also have to remember that the data are proxies for only a small fraction of student learning. In particular, the data does not reflect offline learning opportunities such as reading books, field trips or collaboration, nor complex constructs such as student engagement. Furthermore, teachers should move away from the resurgent focus on educational content. New technologies make content easily available (especially in the form of Open Educational Resources). HEIs and teachers should, instead, focus on the teaching and learning. Teachers in HEIs need to ensure that the technologies that they employ do not adopt a mode of teaching that they have themselves rejected. Technologies should be chosen that complement the teacher's approach, not that constrain or redirect it.

Accordingly, we have to guard against too much trust being placed in data-driven analyses, outcomes can be informative but rarely definitive, and against 'what can be measured' becoming the overriding target of teaching. In addition, we have to recognise that student monitoring, although undertaken with the best of intentions, can all too often be little more than student surveillance, which many would suggest has no place in education (Stokel-Walker, 2020). HEIs and teachers need to be ever-vigilant for the unintended consequences of some technologies. For example, while data-driven monitoring of student ethnicity might aim to address discrimination, poor implementation might end up exacerbating rather than mitigating the problems.

Finally, at the student sub-level, adaptive technologies may well increase efficiencies (the time taken to progress towards prescribed learning outcomes), but contemporary examples tend simply to automate superficial understandings of poor and outmoded pedagogic practices, often attempting to replicate face-to-face classroom practices online rather than leveraging the possibilities of the new technologies. In so doing, they compromise the student experience, ignore the social dimensions of learning, and deny student agency and representation. In addition, data-based technologies raise substantial data-based issues such as data privacy, fairness, accountability, transparency and ownership, each of which needs to be unpacked in the particular context in question.

Recommendations for HEI Leaders - 1

- Recognise that technology is a tool with many possibilities, while ensuring that these multiple possibilities do not obscure, dilute, cloud or complicate the institution's core purpose.
- Ensure that institutional goals always come first, for which technology should always be the servant.
- Explore the unique possibilities of practices and purposes which technology offers instead of simply automating traditional practices (for example, instead of automating examinations, use technology to devise new methods of assessment and accreditation).

Spotlight 2: The Social Dimension of Digital Learning

System Level Opportunities & Risks for Policymakers to Consider

Communication technologies are increasing human connections

New technologies are rapidly introducing new opportunities for human connections for HE at a system level. Enabling people to cooperate across boundaries inevitably helps nurture better understanding between disparate groups, both within and between countries: addressing and mitigating fears of the 'other', normalising intercultural sharing of ideas and values, reducing cultural tensions, making student democracy more accessible, and thus improving overall social well-being.

However, there are again simultaneously risks (Tomprou et al., 2021), with contemporary communication technologies all too often being purposed for nefarious reasons. Scandals such as that centred on Cambridge Analytica (Lapowsky, 2019) show how the data hoovered up by social media can be abused to promote so-called populist agendas thus undermining progressive calls for equity and inclusion. Similarly, social media itself has a tendency to develop echo-chambers (Barberá, 2020), by sharing only posts that both complement and exaggerate an individual's existing biases, while providing an unstoppable platform for fake-news, unsubstantiated slurs, and abuse.
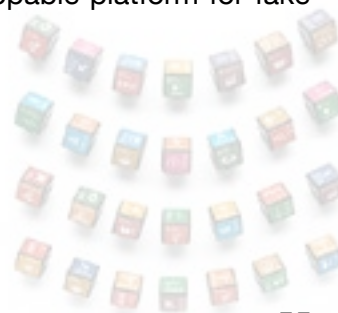
Tools to promote human values

New technologies also offer ways in which human values can be promoted and facilitated. For example, tools supported by Artificial Intelligence are being developed to enable people with disabilities. These include technologies, albeit still immature, that are able to automatically describe the content of images, to enable those with vision difficulties; and other technologies that convert between speech and sign language, to enable those with hearing difficulties. Such technologies are designed to, and have the potential to, make social interaction, including education, more inclusive for people with disabilities.

However, other new technologies, especially those that automate processes and decision making, can undermine human values and equity. For example, they can increase rather than reduce gaps in access and inclusion, as the requisite technologies are not easily available to all, leading to a Mathew Effect of the already-privileged benefitting more than those who are currently excluded. Although they might appear ubiquitous, mobile phones, tablets and laptop computers are not available to all, within higher-income as well as lower-income countries, meaning that all too many people around the world are by definition excluded from the promising developments. If you are unable to access the Internet, because of lack of infrastructure or lack of device, you will be unable to access the benefits that the technologies have been designed to bring. Forgetting this self-evident but all too often unnoticed reality can only make things worse.

Recommendations for Policymakers - 2

• Provide space and technical support to ensure that the potential of communication technologies for inter- and intra-national collaborations can be leveraged, without excluding any stakeholders (including teachers and students), and without causing mental-health issues.

Opportunities & Risks for Leaders of Higher Education Institutions to Consider

The global shift to online teaching and its consequences

It was thanks to the affordances of communication technologies (such as Zoom, Teams, VooV and Google Hangouts), that during the COVID-19 pandemic HEIs were able to continue offering education to its students, albeit in limited form. Around the world, classes shifted to online delivery – even if for many, including those studying practical subjects such as medicine or mechanical engineering, the online version was rarely adequate. Indeed, the shift to online teaching led many institutions to make structural changes to their programmes and to offer new opportunities for their students. Similarly, these technologies helped enable more cross-border advocacy collaborations between student governments, such as the Global Student Government initiative.

However, the risks of online teaching and learning are increasingly becoming clear. Most importantly, the replacement of human face-to-face learning and personal interactions with online virtual engagement has been shown to impact negatively and seriously on the mental health of many students. Again, this highlights that participating in HE involves far more than narrow conceptions of academic achievement. It might sound trivial, but students also need access to non-academic human interactions (from sports to arts, social events, and student representation and advocacy), if the full potential of their time in HE is to be realised. In short, using online as a ‚better-than-nothing' option, in the face of a global crisis, is one thing; using it as a permanent approach requires much research and careful consideration.

Finally, communication technologies also need to be fully accessible to students, their governments and organisations, so that the student voice is heard and not left behind. The risk is that, with poor access, students might be put at more of a disadvantage in education policy making processes and negotiations with other education stakeholders.

Unrecognised possibilities and hidden risks of over-emphasis on technology

The development of a range of new technologies from adaptive tutoring to learning analytics opens up hitherto unrecognised possibilities. For example, adaptive tutoring promises to enable every individual student to experience a personalised learning journey throughout their
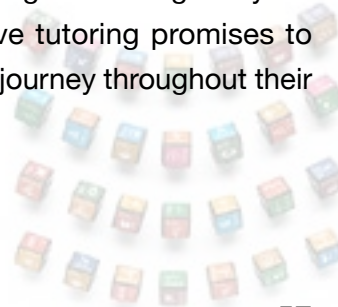
time in HE; while learning analytics helps identify those students who are at risk of failing, so that their teachers can intervene before the event horizon is crossed. The argument is that these technologies will enable more students to succeed in HE, while teaching is made more efficient and teachers are saved time. However, despite these economic and arguably laudable aspirations, the key risk is that of unintended consequences. Without doubt, the ambition of the developers is to enhance the learners' experience of HE. However, using such technologies inevitably means handing over decision making to automatic systems, increasing student surveillance, and homogenising learning outputs rather than enabling student self-actualisation, thus undermining human values.

An over-emphasis on the technology can mean adopting an instrumentalist and techno-solutionist approach, assuming that the technology helps solve social problems (such as those centred on access to and success within HE, which remains highly correlated with family income, gender and ethnicity). For example, learning analytics that includes ethnicity data aims to help address structural inequalities, and may well help many individual marginalised students. However, it does nothing to address the underlying structural inequities, and instead might unintentionally help sustain them. Further, these technologies that collate data on students' presence and behaviour on campus are by another name Big Brother-like surveillance tools, with unintended consequences for human values that are yet to be fully worked out. Similarly, it is important that student advocacy and representation not be replaced by automatic feedback mechanisms that isolate student voices and hinder collective student action.

Technologies which are going to be used should not tend to take over decision-making responsibility from teachers and institutions. While some technologies offer to save teacher time and to personalise student experience, they could end up as simple surveillance systems that require students to engage with individual screen-based activities for hours at a time, thus ignoring the importance and value of social or collaborative learning. Instead, technologies should be chosen to complement a teacher's approach, not to constrain or redirect it.

HEIs should identify and consider carefully what technologies will improve access (in terms of socioeconomic status, geography, age, migrant status and so on), and what technologies might reduce access – to avoid benefiting the already privileged at the expense of those who are all too often excluded.

Inclusive Learning and Teaching in a Digital World

Recommendations for HEI Leaders - 2

- Do not assume that the online learning approach will be suitable in non-critical times as it has been during the COVID-19 pandemic. Face-to-face teaching and learning and engagement have repeatedly been shown to be better for learning and for students' more general well-being.
- Include a broad range of social and cultural experiences so as to not reduce student life in HE to a narrow range of academic activities

Spotlight 3: Multidimensional Collaboration through Digital Education

System Level Opportunities & Risks for Policymakers to Consider

The development of newly emerging inequality

Advancement of technology has enabled online education and lifted off various physical distance hurdles, yet this also has created heavy dependence on access to technology (more specifically, Internet infrastructure) for education. There is a risk that accessibility to such digital environments will result in a wider divide among those with access and those without.

Research (DiMaggio & Hargittai, 2001) pointed out that as Internet penetration increases, the stakeholders should shift their attention from the 'digital divide' that is to highlight inequality between 'haves' and 'have-nots' differentiated by binary measures of access to or use of the new technologies, to 'digital inequality', by which they refer not just to differences in access, but also to inequality among persons with formal access to the Internet. Although some 20 years later, the COVID-19 impact on the education sector has revealed such inequalities in both developed and developing countries and regions.

Access to technology is a multidimensional concept. It is not only the accessibility of technology and access to information, but it also refers to further requirements that are necessary to appreciate digitally enhanced education, such as technical or cognitive skills, the rights to use
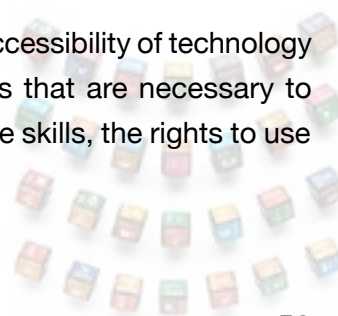
specific sources of information, and access to hardware all of which have to be considered. These further requirements may often be considered as unrelated individual constraints, yet these skills must be taken into consideration when we need to come up with remedies to bridge the gaps.

Digital inequality is a very real challenge, but not insurmountable. Digitally enhanced education remains a realm of great possibility. Policymakers must understand this new kind of inequality and use the great potential of digitally enhanced education to mitigate it. They need to ensure that digital learning is equitable, securing all learners' rights to education, and their rights within and through education to realise their potential and aspirations. They also need to ensure that it is inclusive, creates a 'culture of belonging' by responding to the diversity of needs among all learners, through increasing participation and reducing exclusion from and within education. The most critical and urgent first step to realise such an equitable and inclusive vision of digitally enhanced education is to improve online infrastructure at a national and regional scale.

Investment in digital education availability as a step forward to build civic and democratic inclusivity.

When digital penetration and skills have increased, one can expect greater potential for digital technologies to contribute to strengthen democratic processes by different groups in society. By effectively connecting the civic sector and education sector, future community development can aim for better changes. Engagement in student government democracy can also be improved.

One important awareness to be addressed here is that there are underrepresented populations in the digital sphere. Many people have been left out of the benefits of digital technology. Digital dividends co-exist with digital divides. In many cases, we observe that digital technologies have expanded opportunities in various domains. However, their aggregate impact has fallen short and is unevenly distributed (World Bank, 2016). The further consequences from this uneven distribution is obvious. Digital technologies are transforming the worlds of business, work, and service delivery at a very rapid speed. Those who are left behind will be even more detached from the changes, resulting in neglect of basic human rights in the digital age (United Nations, 2019). What we need to prevent now is the potential risk of engendering a winner-take-all society (and economy) because of this uneven distribution.

A good digital education stands upon one's well-established digital literacy. Investing in digital literacy through education will benefit not only older generations and those with disabilities, but also students and youth, those disadvantaged by their lower income level, or those who are located in rural regions with less established infrastructure.

Recommendations for Policymakers - 3

- Lay the foundations of an inclusive digital society, in which people use technology to build better lives in a more sustaining, trusting world, as a lesson learnt from the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic.

- Improve online infrastructure, providing a basic lifeline for education, to educate each member of society. Individuals should be given an opportunity to cultivate sufficient digital literacy skills through publicly provided training.

Opportunities & Risks for Leaders of Higher Education Institutions to Consider

Teaching is no longer an independent activity

HEIs have to accept that learning is no longer a silo activity (in fact, it never has been). Moving away from the idea that learning is a one-way process is the new mindset required because the collaborative nature of education is growing. Learners in digitally enhanced context are enabled to become active contributors rather than passive consumers. It is also important that the organisations foster supportive mindsets, adopt necessary digital tools, provide skills training, and support collective representation that help learners become empowered.

This dramatic transition triggered by the COVID-19 pandemic, for the education sector to pivot to digital platforms, has revealed multiple gaps and shortcomings in how online learning has been adopted in educational institutions. Some forms of emergency online learning are being criticised for failing to adhere to sound pedagogical principles (Hodges et al., 2020). Accordingly,
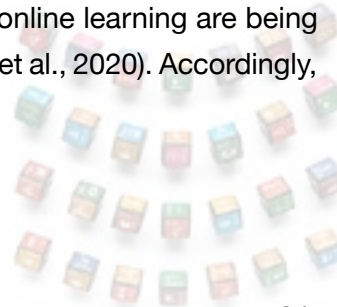
there is a need to put on a critical set of lenses to be wary about the (mis)conception that digital educational technologies offer quick fixes to every possible problem without further investigation into their intertwining pedagogical, political, social, and individual consequences.

In order to avoid the risk that ed-tech businesses sell untested solutions into the education sector, individual institutions should further cultivate their own expertise in digital education.

The private sector as a potential, useful partner in the paradigm shift to digitally enhanced education for greater inclusion

Many universities, both globally and locally are starting to expand their capacity for offering online programmes at both undergraduate and postgraduate levels, as well as to develop online and blended courses into qualifications. With the impact of COVID-19, the trend to adopt digital tools for education at HEIs has increased.

HEIs could work in partnership with private industry to re-design the skill learning process. Currently a considerable portion of learning is done informally, through 'osmosis' or by experience. However, private industry should not be allowed a controlling interest in education decision making or otherwise undermine publicly funded education and student representation within education systems. However, while collaboration can be useful, there are also various potential risks. While private company tools may enable universities to provide digital education at scale, such a collaboration can also generate an inflexible business model based on 'one size approach' due to the service design in package. This may lead to only 'privileged' students being supported, who are deemed marketable for the private company, going against becoming more inclusive. There can also be a reputational risk of close association with a particular private partner, and HEIs should be wary in cases where negative news on the company's service develops (Czerniewicz & Walji, 2019).

Before buying into a new technology, particularly if that technology is proprietary or possibly controversial (such as e-proctoring or student monitoring technologies), HEIs should also undertake in-depth and comprehensive risk analyses, from the perspective of institutions, teachers and students (especially in terms of data privacy and student health). They should also adopt a critical attitude, questioning robustly the claims of the vendors. HEIs also need to avoid becoming dependent on proprietary and/or monopoly technologies. Free technologies
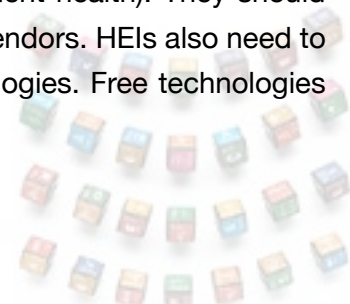
can be seductive, but HEIs should not assume that the technology will always be free or will always be accessible, or that its future development (especially if it is free) will be in sync with the needs of the institution.

Inclusive opportunities to provide higher level education to wider population

Technology is now being increasingly used as an assistive equipment for students with special needs. There are many tools that can provide support for those with visual disabilities, hearing impairments or mobility issues. People with visual impairments, for example, can greatly benefit from technologies in education (for example, Visolve, the software tool that transforms colours of the computer display into the discriminable colours for various people including people with colour vision deficiency).

A wider deployment of assisting technology could also build confidence of pre-HEI students to seek tertiary and continuing education. Universal design of learning platforms will also enable individual learning speeds for any students with or without disabilities.

Learning goes beyond the classroom in novel and potentially challenging ways, which makes it important to manage access to sensitive information and potentially harmful content. For K-12 education in particular, parents and carers now have additional responsibilities due to the increased use of digital applications for schoolwork. When parents and other carers don't have the required digital skills, it can be challenging for them to be fully involved in their child's learning. This can result in yet further social exclusion.

Limitations of the technology by universities may hinder opportunities

In a time when measures for public health have severely strained education, digital teaching and learning has become the 'new normal'. However, identifying the right instruments and learning how to use them can be overwhelming for many educators. Teachers noted limited opportunities for engagement afforded by some technologies that they used, and others noted that there was often limited access to certain technologies by faculty and students. The limitations of the technology provided by universities may have contributed to the limited delivery options available to faculty. Coupled with limitations of foundational knowledge of online learning pedagogy
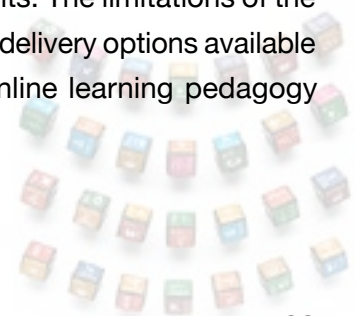
(Kilpatrick et al., 2021), access to technology compounds an already challenging scenario in which faculty were not fully prepared to leverage advanced technologies to support learning.

To remedy this risk, administration should look for ways to support faculty with learning designers and graduate assistants, as well as providing appropriate professional development opportunities. Faculty should develop digital literacy, if only to help them determine which technologies can support which types of engagement and teaching. HE teachers and others need high quality professional development; which depends on high quality appropriate pedagogy. Exchanging good practices with other institutions, peer support and mentoring groups are all useful strategies to help educators make the best use of technology to support teaching and learning.

Recommendations for HEI Leaders - 3
• Create institutional guidelines on how to select appropriate digital instruments, which should be produced in collaboration by institutions, different sectors, and different stakeholders including teachers, students and even parents. Structured conversations and building a community around the use of digital technology can help reframe the institutions' strategies (Volungeviciene et al., 2021) and support the selection of appropriate technologies, reflecting on regionally-specific agendas and available synergies.

Spotlight 4: Quality of Digital Opportunities

System Level Opportunities & Risks for Policymakers to Consider

New technologies require the development of new skills

The technological progress generated by exponential technologies (for example, Artificial Intelligence) (Sherpa.ai, 2020) has become key to the business sector and the global economy. However, it has been difficult for HEIs to keep up with the fast pace of technological advancement. In addition, the COVID-19 pandemic has increased the growing mismatch between society's skills
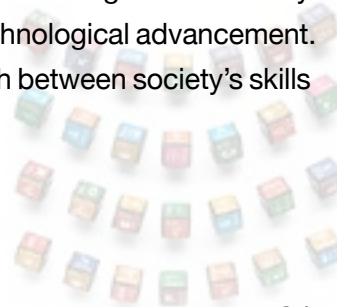
and the jobs needed (WEF, 2021). According to the Future of Jobs Report 2020, "companies estimate that, by 2024, around 40% of workers will require reskilling of up to six months, and 94% of business leaders report that they expect employees to pick up new skills on the job – a sharp uptick from 65% in 2018" (WEF, 2020).

As a result, competency-based education demand is increasing steadily. According to Bechtel et al.'s analysis (2021), the 'gig working' economy is linked to the 'gig learning' economy. Employers now are requiring highly specialised skills that HEIs are not providing. Since people need to be employed, they are often opting for on-demand nano learning offerings that correspond to a niched skills-based educational credential that is obtained faster than traditional degrees (WEF, Bechtel et al, 2021). That is why some students are opting for getting this knowledge from non-formal institutions (for example, technology companies that offer certifications).

Now more than ever, HEIs need to bridge the skills gap between the job market needs and Higher Education degrees, develop competencies in exponential technologies (including AI) for teachers and students and adopt an agile approach for incorporating new topics into the curriculum.

Recommendations for Policymakers - 4
• Foster upskilling initiatives among government, HEI and Entrepreneurs by generating opportunities for exchanging information regarding the skills needed in the job market.

• Allocate funding for universities to develop competency-based training and incentivise HEI to incorporate exponential technologies to their curricula.


Photo taken at ARC7, May 2019, Bucharest

Opportunities & Risks for Leaders of Higher Education Institutions to Consider

In an era of abundant content, HEIs need to be affordable and change their business models.

The cost of higher education in many countries is very high. With the outbreak of COVID-19 and the shift to online forms of distance learning, students are wondering if it's worth paying the same for their education, given their perception regarding the quality of online programs and their economic difficulties. For example, in Japan, universities reported a drop in students' enrolment to higher education degrees due to financial difficulties and students' mental health (Kakuchi, 2021). In the UK, students think that their higher education programme presented poor value for money (Hall, 2021a), many students refused to pay their fees and some demanded tuition fee compensation (Fazackerley, 2021). As a result, HEIs might consider that the rising prices can make education unattainable for students. They now have an abundance of choices and the possibility to study virtually anywhere in the world.

Both universities and students have limited resources and they are trying to adapt to new ways of learning. In contrast, according to (Govindarajan et al., 2021) "...while traditional universities are facing budget cuts and financial pressures, the valuations of EdTech disruptors have skyrocketed, and they're awash with funds." To help students and professors, some institutions published digital learning solutions with online resources as MOOCs (such as Coursera, EdX, FutureLearn, etc.) and self-directed learning content (such as YouTube, Khan Academy, etc.). Now, students wonder if it is fair to continue paying high tuition costs (Hall, 2021b).

As a result, universities need to start changing their business models as digital technologies advance, which is starting to cause disruptive changes to the education model. Govindarajan, Srivastava, and Enache (2021) analysed how Harvard and MIT already started doing that by keeping a residential model for a few students but also providing high-quality education to the masses at affordable prices. In addition, the authors recommend that universities stop having their entire value chain in house and start thinking about unbundling the value chain and outsourcing areas where others have more competencies (Govindarajan et al., 2021). With the increasing demand for competency-based education, as well as students opting for free or subscription-based, informal education, additional pressures are put on HEI business models.
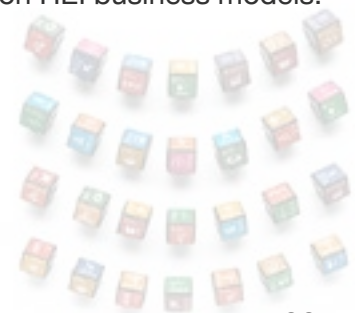
Students' engagement in online learning programmes encompasses meeting high-quality standards in media production, user experience, and social interaction

HEIs now compete with the creative industries in terms of students' expectations when they consume videos/films/series on streaming platforms, podcasts, or video games. Since students are spending more time online and are becoming content creators themselves, they are becoming sensitive to the quality of online productions. For example, interfaces with a seamless user experience, excellent audio quality, and professional video production are expected from any HEI programme.

In addition, platforms need to develop more effective ways for students to connect with teachers and their peers, given that social interaction plays a key role in the effectiveness of online learning (Baber, 2021). The creation of online communities to support online programs is crucial to build trust among students and eliminate the sense of isolation (McInnerney & Roberts, 2004).

Increasing quality of digital learning programmes by increasing their inclusivity.

According to the World Health Organization, about 15% of the world's population lives with some form of disability. Digital technologies bring online education the possibility of removing barriers and generate inclusion through the implementation of international digital accessibility standards (such as EN 301 549, WCAG) in all public websites, software, eCourses, MOOCs and apps. In addition, assistive technology that uses AI and Machine Learning (ML) can be used to develop, identify, and remediate accessibility violations in an institution's digital offer. The standards comprise recommendations that help people with a wide variety of disabilities. HEIs can contribute to make their online offer more inclusive by making any content that is displayed online (text, images, sounds, code, or markup that defines structure, presentation, etc.) accessible to people with disabilities. Simple accommodations that have long been recommended but rarely implemented include:

- **Text:** providing a screen reader and enabling functions that allow the user to modify text size, spacing, line height.
- **Video, sound, and images**: providing descriptions, closed captioning, and pre-recorded sign language (when applicable).
- **Readability:** allowing users to modify the contrast of pages and have tools that will help the user read better (for example: a page mask or adding an index with the page structure).
- Maximising the compatibility with other assistive technologies.
- Not using content that causes seizures or physical reactions (W3C 2021).

Inclusive Learning and Teaching in a Digital World

Recommendations for HEI Leaders - 4

- Ensure that the quality of digital content in terms of the platform's user experience, learning design, audio and video quality is high and respects shorter attention spans and gig learning economy.

- Prioritise learning platforms that have a good user experience, are customisable and allow integration in a wider ecosystem.

- Consider latency (the time it takes for data to travel from one point to another) when doing live virtual or hybrid events and invest in good internet connection.

- Design concise and actionable content that adapts to shorter attention spans.

- Understand the dynamics of the self-education industry and the gig learning economy, given that young people are less eager to invest a long time on developing a competency.

Photo taken at ARC7, May 2019, Bucharest

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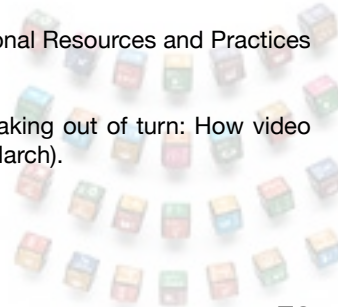
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Chapter 3.
Inclusive International Mobility of People and Knowledge

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1. Introduction

If there has been one unifying theme in the higher education contexts of Asia and Europe over the past 50 years, it is that of massification. On closer inspection however, this phenomenon is subject to significantly differentiated approaches across both regions. While massification of higher education has resulted in provision of access to a university-level education for millions more than would have pursued further study in previous generations, the question of inclusion, alongside that of access, has persisted for many groups within Asian and European societies. Massification is, in effect, a double-edged sword and when addressed within what has traditionally been a more exclusive context of higher education and internationalisation, the question of inclusion becomes all the more subjective.

Even those who do secure a place at a university of their choice may find their access to what is termed an 'internationalised university experience', either through a mobility programme or other modality, be mitigated by geographical, political, structural, and/or social factors beyond their control. While the number of students who do study abroad has more than doubled over the past 20 years (OECD, 2020) the prevailing norm of exclusivity rather than inclusivity of such an 'internationalised university experience' is evident. Previous research on participation patterns in short-term credit mobility also undeniably shows that short studies or placements abroad are in particular taken up by students with a higher socio-economic background. Therefore,

international higher education activities can unwittingly broaden inequalities between different groups of students (Eurostudent VI, 2018).

Comparing approaches to widening access to higher education in general, and to inclusion in international higher education in particular between the Asian and European regions, we notice a number of similarities in the growing interest in these issues in recent years. There are also some important differences in the scope of related actions and the extent of cross-country harmonisation of approaches. In the European context, the inclusion-related agenda has been driven by decades-long developments in the Bologna Process (European Higher Education Area), in which the social dimension of higher education has been one of the more prominent topics on the policy agenda since the 2007 London Ministerial Conference on the policy framework of the European Union in the area of higher education. While country differences remain in the scope and approach to inclusion related work, these two frameworks largely provide European countries with a unifying frame of reference, against which progress was and will be further monitored.

A mapping survey carried out by the Academic Cooperation Association (ACA) amongst European HEIs in 2019 showed that a staggering 74% of responding higher education professionals had not attended any inclusion related training in the previous three years, despite this being an essential aspect of their jobs (ACA, 2019). Professional associations such as the European Association for International Education (EAIE) and the Southeast Asian Ministers of Education Organization (SEAMEO) have already been supporting the professionalisation of educators and practitioners also in the area of inclusion. However, these activities can be further enhanced through national-level support and action, and that a cross-regional approach, through the creation of communities of practice in specific service areas could be highly beneficial to both regions.

The disruption and fragmentation that the COVID-19 pandemic has wrought on education systems globally has raised renewed questions of access and inclusion in international education, particularly as new digital modalities of delivery come to the fore and as new divides emerge. As societies in Asia and Europe begin to emerge from the grip of the pandemic, the likelihood that international higher education mobility and the wider internationalisation agenda will return to a pre-2020 approach is improbable. At the same time, the call to make international higher education activities more inclusive, and thus beneficial and impactful for all, rather than only
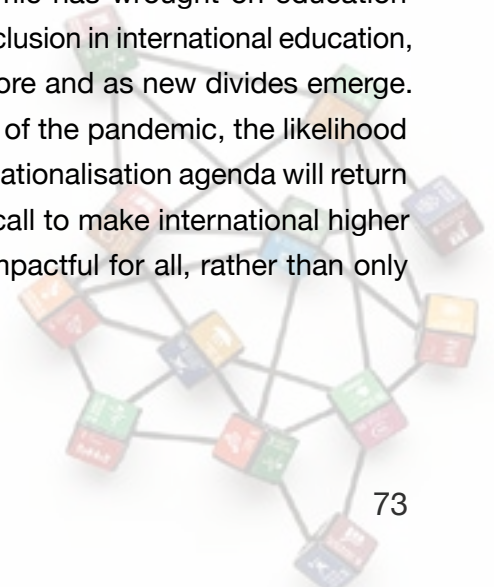
for a minority of students, becomes ever more forceful. Consequently, it can be expected that the inclusion related agenda in both regions will account for many of the transformations the sector will undergo post-pandemic. We therefore stand at a critical inflection point in the context of international higher education which allows us to examine the status quo and to highlight the need for a more inclusive approach to the international mobility of people and knowledge in Asia and Europe.

2. Dimensions of Inclusion in Internationalisation between Asia & Europe

Within the context of inclusion in internationalisation the following dimensions are unpacked and given further consideration in the succeeding Spotlight Areas:

International Education Quality Assurance, Recognition and Inclusion
- What is the opportunity for creating more cohesive qualifications recognition and credit transfer systems within and between Asia and Europe?
- Is widespread adoption of UNESCO's Global Convention on the Recognition of Qualifications a route to achieving a 'zone of trust' between and within Asian and European Higher Education Systems?
- How can Asian and European institutions contribute to augmented quality assurance, recognition and inclusion between Asia and Europe?

Digitalisation and Online Alternatives for Internationalisation
- How can Asian and European countries and universities work together on digital transformation of internationalisation initiatives?
- What are the opportunities for more inclusion in digital internationalisation activities by Asian and European students?
- What are the potential impacts on inclusion due to the proliferation of digital modalities of international education?

Universal Design for Inclusion in Internationalisation
- How can the recognition of different Asian and European approaches to internationalisation inclusion be leveraged as a development opportunity?

- How can we ensure inclusion efforts move away from a 'one size fits all' approach to a more contextual universal design inclusion policy?
- What is the potential for promoting greater 'reverse mobility' with and between Asia and Europe?

Diversify the Learning Process in International Activities

- What are the opportunities for novel programme structure and outcome-based education approaches to augment international education programmes?
- How can global issues such as climate change and its effects be integrated more cohesively in international education curricula?
- What are the opportunities for designing pre-departure programmes for Asia and Europe international mobility?

Internationalisation Support Services

- What are the opportunities to ensure more inclusive internationalisation support services for students and staff?
- What are the policy dimensions that foster more inclusive internationalisation support services for students and staff?
- How can Asian and European countries work together to foster more cohesive support services for greater inclusion?

3. Defining Inclusion in Internationalisation

Within a wider conceptualisation of internationalisation in higher education as "the intentional process of integrating an international, intercultural or global dimension into the purpose, functions and delivery of post-secondary education, in order to enhance the quality of education and research for all students and staff, and to make a meaningful contribution to society" (de Wit et al. 2015), inclusive internationalisation can be seen as "a comprehensive process of strategically planning, concretely designing and taking targeted measures to ensure that all actors in higher education can have access, can concretely take part and also enjoy the full benefits of internationalisation activities" (Delap & Ferencz, 2021). In a nutshell, inclusive internationalisation touches all students, enabling not only equal access to international higher education modalities, but also fair participation and support, and full benefits of this participation for all students.
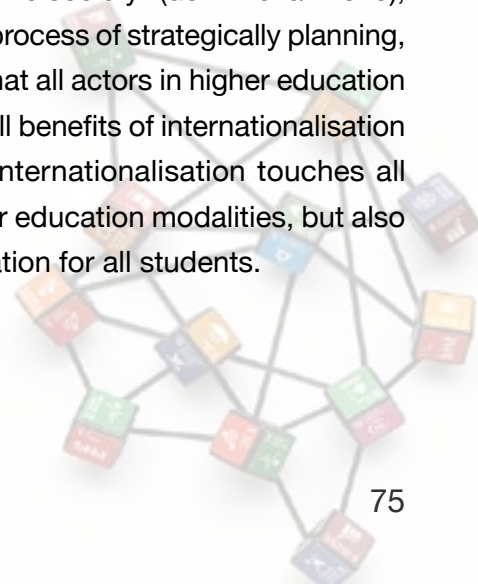
4. Inclusion in Internationalisation in Asia & Europe: The Status Quo

As a starting point, it is important to understand the status quo of internationalisation, as well as inclusion in internationalisation, in the multiple and diverse contexts of Asia and Europe. This requires unpacking the breadth and depth of internationalisation inclusion policy and strategy initiatives being pursued by Asian and European governments, regional entities, organisations, and HEIs. The authors approach this along three vertical levels:

1 | The Regional Higher Education Context
2 | National Higher Education Contexts
3 | The Context of HEIs and their International Students

4.1. The Regional Higher Education Context

The Asian Context

When we consider Asia is the largest and most populous continent on earth, it is very difficult to draw generalised conclusions about it as a single region. It is perhaps even more difficult to generalise about the socio-cultural experience and the diversity of education systems in a region that is itself home to five distinct regions, namely Central Asia, East Asia, South Asia, Southeast Asia, and Western Asia.

As internationalisation and inclusion are systemic approaches to education development, it is valuable to determine the locus of activity in the field in any given geography and indeed multiple geographies when considering a region as large as Asia. This can provide a sense of where developments and innovation in the field are concentrated but also where provision is lacking. Establishing this can enable steps to be taken for more equitable and inclusive distribution of provision.

The ten member states comprising the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN) have become a nexus of the most cohesive regional policy development on internationalisation and inclusion in Asia, in particular since the proclamation of the ASEAN Community by ASEAN Leaders at their 27th Summit in Kuala Lumpur on 22 November 2015. Despite its motto 'One Vision, One Identity, One Community', ASEAN is one of the most culturally diverse regions in the world with a staggering array of different ethnic groups, each with their own distinct culture, language and traditions.

There is a growing need for awareness of the importance of inclusion to the regional education agenda in ASEAN. On 2 November 2019, the 'Bangkok Declaration on Advancing Partnership in Education for the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development in ASEAN' was adopted by ASEAN Heads of State at the 35th ASEAN Summit in Bangkok, Thailand. The Declaration agreed on the following three actions:

1 | Awareness Raising on the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development
2 | Promotion of Education for the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development
3 | Advancing Partnership to Achieve the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development

It emphasised "the crucial role of inclusive, equitable and quality education as well as the promotion of lifelong learning opportunities for all in realizing the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development' and stressed "the strategic value of partnership by bringing together national governments, international communities, civil societies, the private sectors and other actors in achieving the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development".

These actions will be carried forward by the new ASEAN Work Plan on Education 2021-2025 under Outcome 3 and specifically Output 3.1 which mandates ASEAN to:

"Establish policy forum to coordinate initiatives, monitor the regional achievements, barriers, and provide direction on the provision of access to higher education, including through digital transformation means."

There are significant inter- and intra-regional higher education internationalisation initiatives being pursued with the ASEAN Secretariat's Education, Youth and Sports Division (EYSD) by the ASEAN +3 (APT) (China, Japan, Republic of Korea) and the ASEAN +6 countries, incorporating ASEAN +3 and Australia, New Zealand and India. Europe is another significant partner for ASEAN in this sector through its multi-year programmes, and this is underpinned by the elevation of the EU to the status of a Strategic Partner of ASEAN in December 2020.

The ASEAN Plus Three (APT) Working Group on Mobility of Higher Education is an intergovernmental meeting under the ASEAN Plus Three Education Ministers Meeting (APTEMM). It was set up on Japan's initiative to enhance the quality-assured mobility of higher education within the ATP region. The APT Cooperation Work Plan 2018 - 2022 is the guiding document of this cooperation
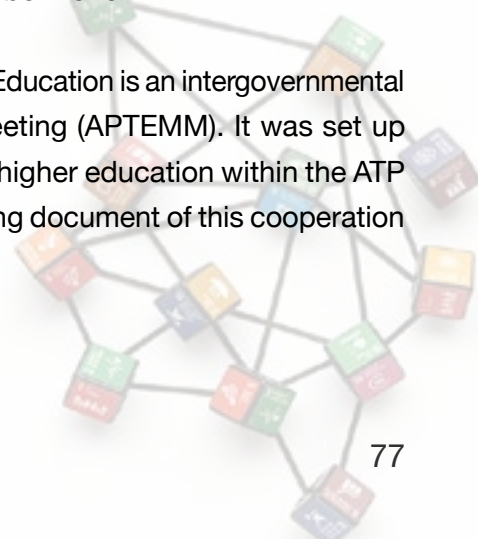
and it outlines the key objectives to "Strengthen education systems and improve access to education" (3.12 p13). The overarching aim of the APTWG is to establish a higher education area for East Asia alongside precursor initiatives such as University Mobility for Asia and the Pacific (UMAP), the AIMS Programme (Asian International Mobility for Students) 2009 the CAMPUS Asia Programme (Collective Action for Mobility Program of University Students in Asia) 2011.

The ASEAN higher education community is a significant component of this vision. It is perhaps not a coincidence that China, Japan, the Republic of Korea, Australia and New Zealand have ratified the Asia-Pacific Regional Convention on the Recognition of Qualifications in Higher Education, better known as the Tokyo Convention, which came into force on 1 February 2018. It is interesting to note however that no ASEAN Member State has signed up to the Asia-Pacific Regional Convention framework as of yet. It remains to be seen what approach ASEAN will take on this and other initiatives with its Dialogue Partner neighbours to the north and south particularly against the backdrop of increased international education cooperation.

The EU remains the single largest Dialogue Partner contributor to ASEAN's higher education internationalisation initiatives, and this is spearheaded by the Support to Higher Education in the ASEAN Region (SHARE) Programme which has been in operation since 2015 and has just been extended to the end of 2022. The €15 million SHARE Programme is the EU's flagship higher education cooperation initiative with ASEAN and is delivered by a consortium comprised of the British Council, the, the German Academic Exchange Service (DAAD), the Netherland's international education agency (Nuffic), and the European Association for Quality Assurance in Higher Education (ENQA).

SHARE's overarching objective is to strengthen regional cooperation, and enhance the quality, competitiveness, and internationalisation of ASEAN higher education, contributing to the development of an ASEAN mobility scholarship programme and an ASEAN Higher Education Space.

The SHARE Programme has disbursed over 500 scholarships for ASEAN students to study abroad since its launch in 2015. SHARE's approach to supporting regional higher education is inclusive; the programme engages with ASEAN and relevant non-ASEAN entities to build on existing initiatives and to serve as a platform for engagement with the wider Higher Education community of practice in the region.
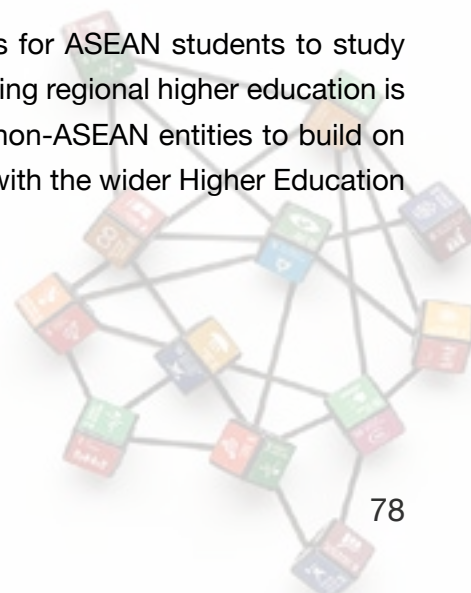
Through the SHARE Programme collaboration is strengthened between international educational organisations in ASEAN Member States and the EU to enhance the quality of education in areas in line with the new ASEAN Work Plan on Education 2021-2025. The SHARE Programme is a key partner for ASEAN in the delivery of Outcome 3 of the Work Plan:

"Enhanced regional capacity in higher education as part of lifelong learning provision, including the harmonisation of ASEAN higher education."

The SHARE Programme continues to be a good example of an inclusive, multi-stakeholder, regional approach to education policy development through its ability to engage ASEAN Member States, non-ASEAN entities, and regional and international organisations towards the achievement of common aims and agendas.

For example, during the 12th SHARE Policy Dialogue on 'Creating a Resilient & Sustainable ASEAN Higher Education Space' a new high-level ASEAN Working Group on Higher Education Mobility (AWGHEM) was launched, including higher education stakeholder organisations from across ASEAN, the wider Asian region and Europe. A panel centred on the topic of 'Equity, Diversity, and Inclusion in ASEAN's Internationalisation' had panellists highlighting the importance of international cooperation as well as the voice of youth stakeholders in moving forward towards Agenda 2030 for Equitable, Diverse and Inclusive Higher Education. As part of its overall and specific objectives the SHARE Programme will conduct a study on Equity, Diversity and Inclusion in the intra-ASEAN internationalisation of higher education context.

There is indeed work to be done across the wider Asian region when it comes to greater equity, diversity and inclusion within international mobility of people and knowledge, but it is evident that there is a renewed interest and appreciation of its importance. Some of the key points for further and more detailed exploration are as follows:

- The need to establish a well-managed regional repository for data on Internationalisation Inclusion in Asia
- The need to establish key criteria and metrics by which to measure progress on Internationalisation Inclusion
- Maximising policy cohesion through entities such as ASEAN and Asia-Europe Dialogue Partners to raise the agenda of internationalisation inclusion with national governments and their HE systems

- Exploring best practice cases from Asian institutions to serve as exemplars of policy and strategy for other institutions in the region

The European Context

The focus on increasing participation rates and widening access to higher education in general in Europe has been a constant policy and action concern for the last few decades with the 'social dimension' being set as a policy goal in the Bologna Process at the London Ministerial Conference in 2007. However, the focus on inclusion in the internationalisation of higher education is a more recent concern, and until very recently it centred on one specific type of international activity – outgoing credit mobility – and one particular group of underrepresented students – students with disabilities (and from 2017 onwards – 'students with special needs').

The Bologna Process, the 2018 Paris Ministerial Communiqué and the 2020 Rome Ministerial Communiqué reaffirm in much stronger language the inclusion agenda in higher education, and the latter's 'Principles and Guidelines to Strengthen the Social Dimension of Higher Education in the EHEA' expressly spell out. Under point 8, the key priorities for inclusive international mobility for the European Higher Education Area provide the broadest and clearest policy guidance produced to date within the Bologna Process on inclusive mobility and internationalisation. As stated in the document, "international mobility programs in higher education should be structured and implemented in a way that foster diversity, equity, and inclusion and should particularly foster participation of students and staff from vulnerable, disadvantaged or underrepresented backgrounds" (Annex II, 2020:7).

In the EU context, and particularly in the policy space linked to the implementation of EU's programme on education and training – Erasmus+, there has been a strengthening of the social inclusion objectives of the programme since 2017 onwards. This has been in response to both a wave of terrorist attacks in Europe and to growing nationalism (globally, and in specific EU member states), which revealed the importance of intercultural dialogue to preventing radicalisation, through more inclusive international education.

Consequently, there has been a growing focus on inclusion in key European level policy documents. In the '2017 Renewed EU Agenda for Higher Education' the European Commission committed to directing Erasmus+ support to help HEIs develop and implement integrated
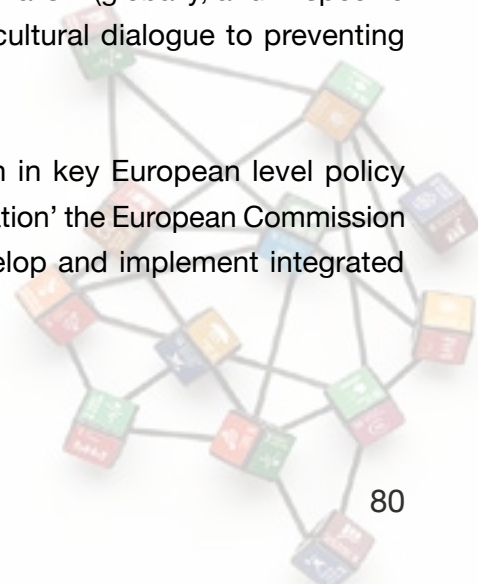
institutional strategies for inclusion. Additionally, the Commission's proposal for the Erasmus+ 2021-2027 programme, published in 2018 aimed to triple the beneficiaries of the programme, outlining inclusion as one of the programme's horizontal priorities.

In the EU framework, the inclusion agenda was pushed significantly further by the European Parliament, which during inter-institutional negotiations in the early stages of the programme's preparation insisted on the integration of a completely new chapter on Inclusion in the Erasmus+ programme regulations, calling, inter alia, for national level inclusion strategies and for indicators to monitor progress.

The recently launched new generation of the Erasmus+ (2021-2027) programme has inclusion as one of its cross-cutting priorities. This extends across all fields and levels of education, as well as all international education activities funded by the programme, from student and staff mobility (in physical and blended forms), to joint programme development and different forms of partnerships and international collaboration. The most comprehensive current policy guidance for Erasmus+ programme countries is provided by 'Erasmus+ and European Solidarity Corps Inclusion and Diversity Strategy' (European Commission, 2021) which puts forward a shared understanding of target groups – namely 'people with fewer opportunities' – which foresees an increase in commitment, defines roles and lists support organisations for advancing the inclusion work in this context.

A number of further developments are expected in the coming period, from the operationalisation, at national level, of the central European concept of "people with fewer opportunities", to the related development and launch of national level strategies supporting the EU-level strategy. Each programme country will be expected to set specific national priorities and to give precedence to particular groups of people with fewer opportunities, within this broader, supranational framework. What follows will be the harmonised operationalisation of these definitions and related data collection systems. The latter task will be particularly challenging due to the existence of different traditions and barriers to data collection in European countries, that will make the identification of the target groups for different countries and HEIs more difficult.

## 4.2. National Higher Education Contexts

The Asian Context

National contexts of higher education access and inclusion in Asia are invariably influenced by larger historical, ethnographic, and socio-economic conditions. These in turn have a direct effect on the national approach to inclusion in higher education and concomitantly on internationalisation policy. While supranational, intergovernmental, and regional initiatives can influence policy in national contexts, the prevailing political and social norms of the country will hold far greater sway over policy decisions as regional integration is considerably looser in Asia than in Europe. What follows are some examples of national strategies inclusion and internationalisation in three of the largest higher education systems in Asia.

India's National Education Policy (NEP, 2020) approved in August 2020 after 12 months of public consultation, sets out a 20-year blueprint to nearly double its higher education capacity. Within the introduction to the NEP reference is made to India's adoption of the Sustainable Development Goals in 2015 and particularly to SDG4 to "ensure inclusive and equitable quality education and promote lifelong learning opportunities for all" by 2030. The report goes on to say that, "Such a lofty goal will require the entire education system to be reconfigured to support and foster learning, so that all of the critical targets and goals (SDGs) of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development can be achieved".

India's aspirations for internationalisation are asserted as "having larger numbers of international students studying in India and provide greater mobility to students in India who may wish to visit, study at, transfer credits to, or carry out research at institutions abroad, and vice versa." (p. 39) and this considered in the context of "making quality higher education opportunities available to all individuals' and 'ensuring equitable access to quality education to all students…' (p. 41) particularly from Socio-Economically Disadvantaged Groups (SEDGs).

Some of the key Indian Government initiatives to ensure equity and inclusion in higher education are as follows:

- Earmark suitable Government funds for the education of SEDGs
- Set clear targets for higher Gross Enrolment Ratios (GER) for SEDGs
- Enhance gender balance in admissions to HEIs
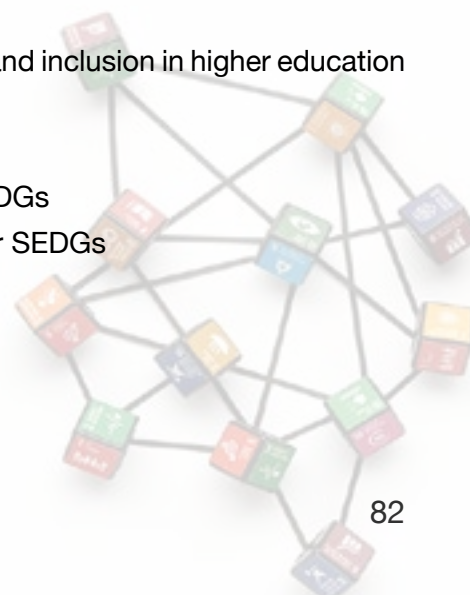
China's National Plan for Medium and Long-term Education Reform and Development 2010-2020 (UNESCO, 2010) set as a Strategic Goal the aim of "Delivering equal education to everyone. Education should remain public welfare-oriented in nature, and equal access to it shall be safeguarded. All citizens should have access to fine education according to the law".

Since then, further efforts have been made by the Chinese authorities to develop inclusive education. In 2016, policymakers in China began developing a medium- to long-term plan for education development. As part of this process, "ensuring inclusive and equitable high-quality education and promoting lifelong learning opportunities for all" were integrated into the goals of China's education modernisation.

In 2018, China simultaneously became the world's largest source of foreign students and the largest destination for studying abroad in Asia. In 2019, the Central Committee of the Communist Party of China and the State Council issued 'China's Education Modernisation 2035' (PRC, 2019), which proposed the strategy of "creating a new pattern of education opening-up". This heralded a new form of internationalisation of Chinese higher education with a greater emphasis on quality and competitiveness. It is clear that the policies that China enacts vis-à-vis internationalisation will have ramifications for the wider Asia and indeed Europe.

Australia's Department of Education and Training's Higher Education Support Act 2003 (HESA, 2003) is the most recent official document defining the country's national higher education priorities in its approach to ensuring equity and inclusion in Australian higher education system. The objects of this Act are to support a higher education system that "is characterised by quality, diversity and equity of access".

Produced in 2009 'Transforming Australia's Higher Education System' (Australian Department of Education, Employment and Workplace Relations, 2009) sets out the country's national higher education strategy in response to the 2008 Bradley Review of Australian Higher Education (DEEWR, 2008), which proposed funding strategies to provide equitable higher education. Within these policy documents the following target groups were identified:

- Low-income students
- Gender groups
- Minority groups: indigenous population, people living in remote regions, holdersof humanitarian visas
- Students with disability
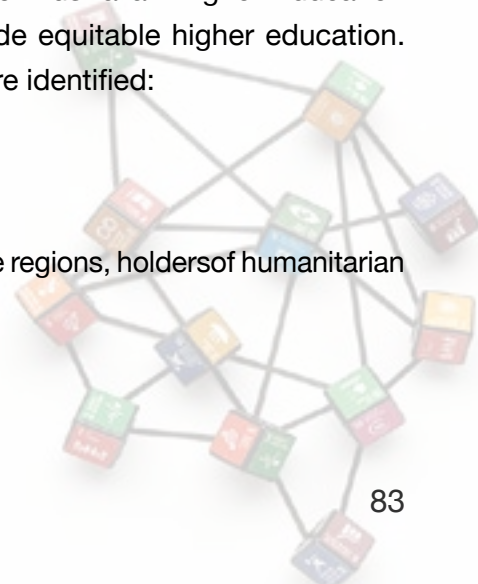
In 2016 Australia published its National Strategy for International Education 2025 (Australian Department of Education, Skills and Employment, 2019), the first such document for the sector. The National Strategy was set out based on three pillars:

1 | Strengthening the fundamentals of Australia's education, training and research system and our regulatory, quality assurance and consumer protection arrangements

2 | Transformative partnerships between people, institutions and governments, at home and abroad

3 | Competing globally by responding to global education and skills needs and taking advantage of emerging opportunities

The sole reference to inclusion in the strategy is evidenced in 'Goal 9: Embracing opportunities to grow international education' which states, "Australia will embrace opportunities to grow international education by being more innovative, inclusive and responsive to the needs of students and employers". It can be surmised that the approach to international education in Australia has been considerably more commercial in nature. This is borne out by how lucrative an export it has been for the country. Prior to the COVID-19 pandemic, international education was amongst Australia's third largest export and most valuable service industry. It generated $28 billion for Australia's economy in 2016-2017. Australia held roughly 6% of the global study abroad market with over 800,000 overseas students, studying at 169 different education institutes of which 43 are universities (Australian Government Department of Education and Training, 2017).

The European Context

European countries are at different stages and have varying levels of experience with strategies in widening participation in higher education in general, and with widening participation in international higher education activities (mobility included) in particular. Whereas some countries are highly experienced in the identification, monitoring and take up of targeted measures towards target groups and their participation, others are only now starting to address these issues centrally and strategically.

In the EU context, under the framework provided by the Inclusion and Diversity Strategy, national-level agencies are actively exchanging information on their processes of national strategy articulation. Of particular concern in this context is the issue of how to define the
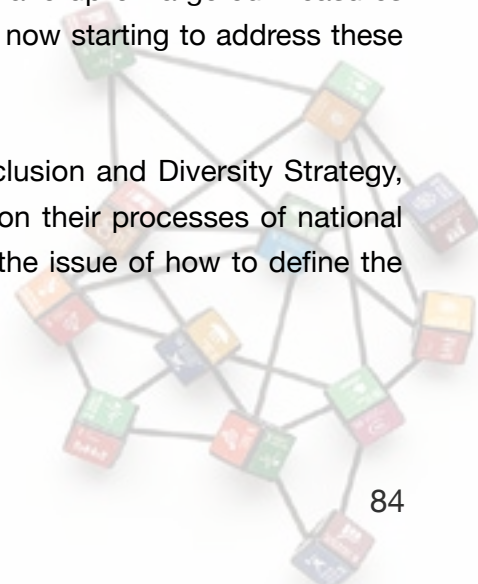
groups of people with fewer opportunities in a manner that makes the definitions comparable across countries, while also accounting for national histories and data collection traditions to be accommodated.

To date, good examples of national level strategies in the European context come from Austria, Croatia and Ireland – three countries with stand-alone, dedicated strategies for advancing the social dimension in higher education, and including elements of internationalisation – particularly in student mobility.

For example, Austria's National strategy on the social dimension of higher education - Towards more inclusive access and wider participation (Austrian Federal Ministry of Science, Research and Economy, 2017) takes stock of measures already in place to support students from underrepresented groups and groups with specific needs, and outlines target areas and quantitative goals for the period up to 2025. The strategy encompasses measures for improving access and participation of underrepresented groups in international student mobility and the improvement of related support services. Similarly, the Irish National Plan for Equity of Access to Higher Education 2015-2021 (Department of Further and Higher Education, Research, Innovation and Science, 2015) and the Croatian National Plan for the enhancement of Social Dimension of Higher Education 2019-2021 (Ministry of Education, 2019), set key goals, priorities, and actions in the specific national contexts.

Another interesting example comes from the Flemish Community of Belgium, where a specific body – the Support Centre Inclusive Higher Education (SIHO) – was created and acts as a liaison office between government and policymakers, other public authorities, and Flemish HEIs, supporting the development and implementation of equity measures for inclusive higher education. The centre advises the government and HEIs in inclusion-related work, translating policy advice into practice.

At the level of mobility funding agencies and programmes, agencies in different countries have put specific action plans in place and launched campaigns to address the low participation of students from underrepresented groups. Beyond the Erasmus+ programme, national level programmes increasingly address specific groups with fewer opportunities. For example, in Germany, under the DAAD – German Academic Exchange Service's campaign 'Studieren Weltweit – ERLEBE ES!', which was designed to promote study abroad, specific attention is
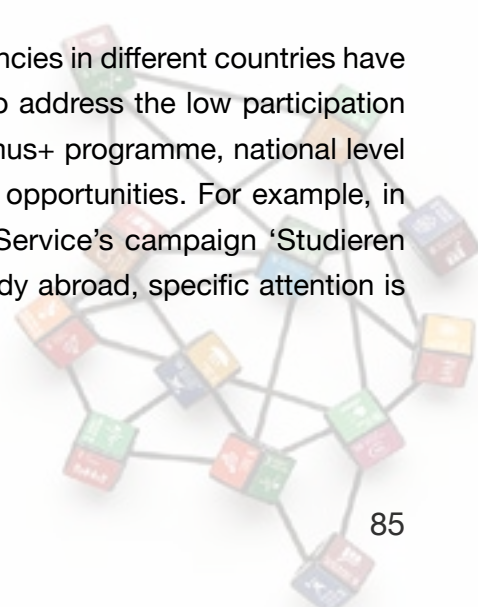
given to students without a higher education background ('first time academics'), including students with migratory background. This is in response to the statistic of 48% of all German students coming from non-academic backgrounds, for example, being the first generation to pursue higher education in their family and 20% having a migration background. Specific tools and support measures have been developed for this group of students, to increase participation (ACA Reflection Paper, 2019).

In the Flemish Community of Belgium, the Ministry of Education & Training, internationalisation organisations, and HEIs cooperate to ensure that students from 'underrepresented groups' account for at 25% of ministry funded scholarships for study abroad. The implication of the 25% rule is that, to use the full budget, HEIs have to make an effort to identify these students and encourage them to apply for a mobility grant. Furthermore, the grant amount for students from underrepresented groups is 200 euros per month higher than the regular grant amount. The Flemish Ministry of Education and Training aims for 33% of mobile students to come from underrepresented groups by 2020 (Brains on the Move, 2013).

4.3. The Context of Higher Education Organisations, Institutions, and Students

The Asian Context

In addition to decades of intra- and inter-regional student and staff mobility within and between Asia and Europe, there has been a proliferation of campuses established as a result of partnerships between Asian universities and institutions of higher education from other parts of the region and the world. This transnational approach to higher education internationalisation can have a positive effect in bringing broader based, quality education provision and inculcating a global mindset amongst students. However, this has also been criticised for being divorced from the local context and imposing 'Western' curricula taught by foreign-educated academics. While this does not negate the value of a global perspective, institutions operating in such environments should be mindful and inclusive of the local education context.

Perhaps to ensure that those regional and local contexts of education are emphasised and strengthened, a number of notable alliances and networks have been established between Asian
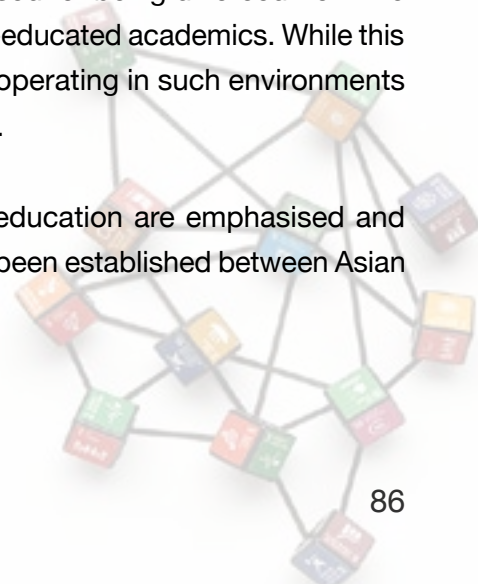
universities. These groups of institutions often convene to discuss contexts of common interest and cooperation. They act as platforms for policy and strategy formulation on internationalisation and other initiatives of collective strategic importance.

Covering the broader geography and context of higher education in Southeast Asia is SEAMEO, the Southeast Asian Ministers of Education Organisation (SEAMEO), a regional intergovernmental organisation established in 1965 to promote regional cooperation in education, science and culture in the region. Within this structure is SEAMEO RIHED, the Regional Centre for Higher Education and Development. SEAMEO RIHED's main objectives are fostering access, excellence and synergies in higher education aiming to contribute to the development of the region. SEAMEO RIHED implements the Asian International Mobility for Students (AIMS) Programme which promotes intra-regional student mobility between 78 participating universities across 7 Southeast Asian countries, Japan and Korea.

Another grouping of HEIs is the ASEAN University Network (AUN). Established in 1995 following the signing of its Charter by six ASEAN member state ministers responsible for higher education, the AUN began with a membership of 11 universities from 6 ASEAN countries. It now comprises of 30 universities from the ten member states of the ASEAN Community. The AUN facilitates policy dialogue, regional cooperation and collaboration amongst universities, academics and scholars in ASEAN and further afield. It is a key delivery partner for ASEAN on the higher education components of the ASEAN Work Plan on Education 2021-2025.

One of the newest of these groups is the Asian University Alliance (AUA) which was formed in April 2017 with 15 founding member institutions from across Asia. The mission of the AUA is "to jointly address regional and global challenges, specifically related to higher education and economic, scientific and technological development, by strengthening collaboration among member institutions." In addition, the "AUA acknowledges and promotes shared identity and values in working towards this mission" (AUA, 2021). The AUA also affirms its commitment to the UN's Sustainable Development Goals throughout Asia, specifically in the areas of inclusive quality education and lifelong learning.

Home to one of the youngest populations in the world, Southeast Asia's youth are increasingly engaged in the regional conversation on the future of the region. One such organisation which provides a platform is the ASEAN Youth Organization (AYO) which was established as a Foundation

in Jakarta on 15 August 2013. It received official recognition from the ASEAN Secretariat in 2018 and has since grown to over 16 chapters and 200 team members (AYO, 2021). The AYO is an active contributor to regional policy forums on ASEAN higher education integration, youth employment, and equity diversity and inclusion.

The European Context

In Europe, the evolving inclusion-enhancing practices of individual HEIs, are complemented by more strategic endeavours of the European Universities Alliances. These are EU-funded strategic collaborations of HEIs that aim to develop and test new innovative approaches to teaching and learning, integrating all university missions, with a view to generating ground-breaking transformations. Several alliances are piloting new international education activities that are designed to be more inclusive and more sustainable. For example, the Young Universities for the Future of Europe (YUFE) alliance – bringing together 12 HEIs and 4 associates – aims to bring a radical change and become "the lead¬ing model of a young, student-centred, non-elitist, open and inclusive European University based on the cooperation between HEIs, public and private sector, and citizens". The network relies on 'inclusive governance', placing students at the centre of the decision-making process and involving the whole YUFE quadruple-helix ecosystem (universities, government, citizens and enterprises).

The Aurora European University centres its vision on the principle of "matching academic excellence with societal relevance", countering the popular assumption that academic excellence equals exclusivity. The nine members of the alliance and 12 associate partners strive to make education, research and innovation as responsible and beneficial as possible to society.

The ENLIGHT Network, another European University Network which seeks to promote equitable quality of life, sustainability & global engagement through higher education transformation is set, inter alia, to develop a structural and technical framework for inclusive, seamless and green mobility, and provide the tools for flexible learning.

While in 2021 these strategic alliances are in the early stages of their development, and will need time to test the feasibility of their visions and the impact of foreseen innovations, they have a clear potential of changing the status quo of inclusiveness in international higher education activities. However, this will depend on their capacity to change institutional enabling structures, secure university leadership and academic support.
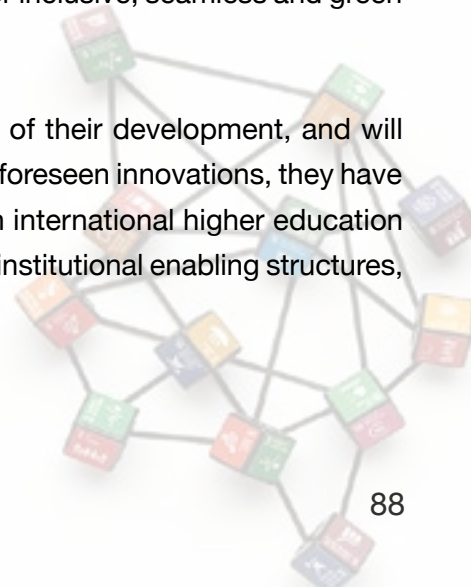
In Europe, representative student organisations at supranational level, such as the Erasmus Student Network (ESN) or the European Student Union (ESU) have been particularly vocal and effective in advancing the inclusion agenda. Their work was channelled through initiatives like the Inclusive Mobility Alliance (IMA) – gathering 21 organisations with high expertise in higher education and youth mobility and disability. This grouping put forward 17 recommendations targeting EU, national and local level stakeholders and sought to make the Erasmus+ programme more inclusive for all. Projects like Social Inclusion and Engagement in Mobility (SIEM) looked into the barriers for students from disadvantaged backgrounds to take part in international student mobility and developed training material to be used by ESN Sections across Europe. This has enabled greater engagement with the target group and ensured more people have augmented access to mobility opportunities.

For Asian and European HEIs and related national organisations to comprehensively address inclusion and equity in the sector, political commitment and the definition of clear goals are an imperative. But beyond this, resources must be earmarked for the design and delivery of systems which fully support the nuanced intersectional experiences of staff and students who may have found it difficult to access and take full advantage of international learning opportunities in the past.

Photo taken at ARC7, May 2019, Bucharest

5. Key Issues and Recommendations: Improving Inclusion in Higher Education Internationalisation

Following the review of state-of-the art inclusion initiatives in higher education at the regional, national and institutional level, the authors identified various risks and opportunities for enhancing inclusion in internationalisation in the next decade and summarised them in 5 'spotlight areas'. Policymakers and higher education leaders are encouraged to turn their attention to these 'spotlight areas' that conclude with recommendations for policymaking and institutional planning.

Spotlight 1: International Education Quality Assurance, Recognition and Inclusion

The period between the late 1990s up to the beginning of 2020 saw a proliferation of cooperation, exchange, partnershaips, and inclusion which facilitated an explosion in student mobility across borders and higher education systems. According to the OECD's Education at a Glance 2020 (OECD, 2020), the number of internationally mobile higher education students as a percentage of total tertiary enrolment grew from 2.2% in 1998 to 5.6% in 2018. That equates to an average annual growth rate of 4.8% per year over the two decades to 2018.

This is now seen a 'golden age' of international education and student mobility which has witnessed a sharp reversal in growth in the space of 18 months since the World Health Organisation's declaration of the COVID-19 Pandemic. As the world's HEIs and wider communities continue to adapt to the shock of the new context it is important to remember the inter/intra-regional initiatives and components, largely within Asia and Europe which have made such widespread international student mobility possible.

System Level Opportunities & Risks for Policymakers to Consider

Issues of inclusion in Quality Assurance and Recognition are by their very nature large system level concerns. The critical mass of student mobility generated by the Erasmus Programme and other regional student mobility programmes necessitated quality assurance systems and qualifications frameworks architecture to support the process. In Europe this led to the Bologna Process and the creation of the European Higher Education Area (EHEA) which stretches
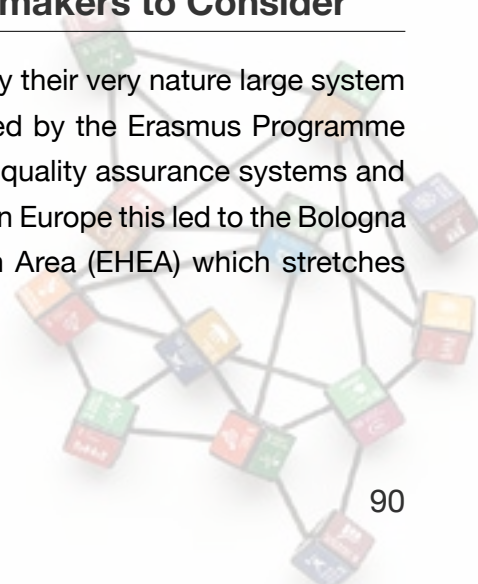
from Greenland's Baffin Bay (GMT -2) to Russia's Bering Sea (GMT +12). Systems supporting student mobility programmes and institution to institution partnerships such as Qualifications Frameworks, Quality Assurance Frameworks, and Credit Recognition and Transfer Systems have created the opportunity and economy of scale of higher education 'zones of trust' within Asia and Europe. This architecture, still being built and refined over decades, will support the next phase of higher education cooperation and partnerships between Asia and Europe, thus enabling the augmentation of learning pathways between both regions which are more relevant and responsive to the needs of students, employers, and both Asian and European communities

Following its piloting on the Erasmus Programme from 1989 the European Credit Transfer System (ECTS) became the standard for comparing attainment and performance of higher education students across the European Union and EHEA. It is considered to be the most widely used credit transfer system in the world and has been looked to in the development of similar schemes in other countries/regions. The ECTS enabled greater ease recognition, transparency and trust across the EHEA, and this has become even more seamless since the launch of the Europass Digital Credentials Infrastructure on 1 July 2020. In Asia there have been similar initiatives on the development of architecture to facilitate recognition and ease of credit-bearing student mobility. The ASEAN Credit Transfer System (ACTS) was initiated by the ASEAN University Network (AUN) to facilitate student and academic mobility in the ASEAN region. SEAMEO RIHED has engaged with the Asian Development Bank on a joint project on Academic Credit Transfer for Asia (ACTFA) Project with members of the Greater Mekong Sub-region University Consortium (GMS-UC). Since 2015, the SHARE Programme has worked alongside regional stakeholders on a credit bearing student mobility scholarship facilitated by the ASEAN-European Union Credit Transfer System (AECTS). A core benefit of the AECTS allows for credit transfer between participating ASEAN and EU institutions. This work continues apace, including a digital transformation of the AECTS for the purpose of developing greater cohesion of student mobility architecture between a nascent ASEAN Higher Education Space and the European Higher Education Area.

The Asia-Pacific Regional Convention on the Recognition of Qualifications in Higher Education came into effect in 2018 under the framework of UNESCO, and, in 2019, UNESCO's Global Convention on the Recognition of Qualifications concerning Higher Education (UNGCRQH) was adopted by the 40th session of the UNESCO General Conference in 2019 (UNESCO, 2019). This Global Convention is the first United Nations treaty on higher education, which aims to
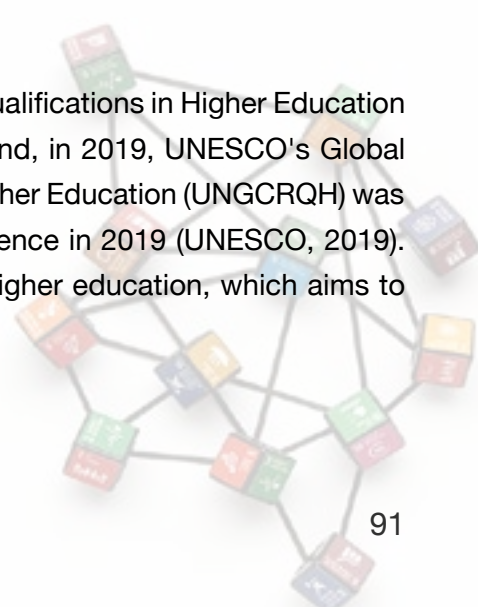
expand access to higher education around the world by facilitating international exchanges of students, teachers, researchers and job-seekers, and to strengthen international cooperation in higher education contributing to raising its quality worldwide (UNESCO, 2019).

The broader adoption of UNGCRQH by ASEM Member States can accelerate further alignment and cooperation of Asian and European Higher Education Systems. The current reciprocal initiatives being pursued within and between both regions can be further scaled and leveraged for this purpose.

The risk of not pursuing further alignment of Asian and European architectures of recognition and quality assurance risks leaving these regions' systems of higher education in silos, fragmented, and less equipped to meet the connectivity needs of modern learners and their future employers. Zones of trust depend on network effects and the larger the network the more positive the effect will be for Asian and European HEIs and their communities.

Inclusive International Mobility of People and Knowledge

Recommendations for Policymakers - 1
- Pursue the expansion and coalescence of their respective zones of trust to facilitate greater transparency, readability, reciprocity, and transfer of credentials to strengthen inter-regional cooperation, exchange, and student and staff mobility.

Opportunities & Risks for Leaders of Higher Education Institutions to Consider

When it comes to participation in international education programmes and partnerships, universities must consider their institutional missions and contexts, but equally the aspirations of their students. Narrow offerings of international programmes mitigate the opportunities available to students and risk depriving students of an all-important internationalised curriculum.

While many institutions in Asia and Europe continue to pursue and maintain bi-lateral partnership and student exchange agreements with individual universities in other regions, this undoubtedly risks being a less scalable and potentially less inclusive form of internationalisation than that of larger multi-lateral systems of student exchange. Also, universities benefit their home countries and wider regions when they participate in regional harmonisation, exchange and mobility programmes. This fosters a stronger regional identity as well as contributing to the efficacy and scale of regional systems.

Institutions participating in larger scale regional or international student exchange programmes can offer more internationalisation opportunities to their students to participate at potentially lower costs to them and their host institutions. In addition, the existence of well-established mechanisms of quality assurance, recognition and credit transfer ensures a high-quality internationalisation experience for students, staff, and their institutions.

Inclusive International Mobility of People and Knowledge

Recommendations for HEI Leaders - 1
- Endeavour to be active contributors of institutional expertise and student participants to regional harmonisation, recognition, and mobility initiatives.

Spotlight 2: Digital Transformation of International Education

System Level Opportunities & Risks for Policymakers to Consider

While digital forms of higher education and international education have been with us for some time, the advent of the COVID-19 pandemic saw an exponential rise in their utilisation across higher education systems. Education Ministries and HEIs in Asia and Europe scrambled online

to maintain the continuity and integrity of their education provision in the face of protracted lockdowns.

Initially this was a less than smooth transition of methodologies and modalities, the renewed interest in teaching and learning innovations has been considered favourable. However, as with any seismic shift, some things are lost and are not easily replaced. Students miss out on the tangible and intangible benefits of international mobility such as cultural exposure, access to the labour market, and lifelong friendships. This is particularly true of the context of international education in Asia and Europe. This remains a risk for a generation of students.

Many higher education systems had been engaged in offering online components prior to the pandemic, they were never, and still aren't, viewed as an alternative to in person learning and physical mobility. Virtual Exchange (VE) and Collaborative Online International Learning (COIL) had largely resided within the domain of Internationalisation at Home which has been defined as "…the purposeful integration of international and intercultural dimensions into the formal and informal curriculum for all students within domestic learning environments" (Beelen & Jones, 2015).

With physical student mobility hampered to the greatest extent in peacetime, there was a sudden rush to integrate VE and COIL into internationalisation strategies and initiatives. Pre-pandemic one such programme was already demonstrating the value of regional system level Virtual Exchange between Europe and another region. Between 2018 and 2020 the European Commission's Erasmus+ Virtual Exchange (EVE) initiative engaged more than 28,000 young people (18 – 30) from Europe and Southern Mediterranean countries in virtual exchange and training. The E+Ve, 2021 is Europe's largest Virtual Exchange initiative to date. The approach to this virtual exchange was balanced with 49% of participants coming from outside Europe. This is in contrast to the invariable imbalances of physical mobility. Virtual Exchange is by its very nature reciprocal, sustainable, equitable and inclusive.

Just as with the systemic nature of Quality Assurance, Qualifications Frameworks Recognition and Credit Transfer, higher education internationalisation through Virtual Exchange is subject to network effects and its inclusiveness is all the more evident when delivered at scale. However, it also requires many of those supporting components of physical mobility, particularly Quality Assurance and Credit Transfer. The case for credit recognition for Virtual Exchange/COIL programmes is all the more salient considering the rise of digital credential recognition such as the development of the Europass Digital Credentials Infrastructure and other such initiatives.

Inclusive International Mobility of People and Knowledge

Recommendations for Policymakers - 2

• Formulate a roadmap on the development of interoperable systems of virtual exchange and
  digital credentials for augmented international education between Asia and Europe.

Opportunities & Risks for Leaders of Higher Education Institutions to Consider

In recent years, there has been a steady drumbeat of commentary aimed at university leadership worldwide of the need for digital transformation initiatives to be adopted as a priority. Long before the COVID-19 pandemic was a concern, there was speculation that the rise of digital modalities of higher education such as MOOCs would make the concept of the local university obsolete and be effectively replaced by elite institutions in partnership with private sector providers (Leckhart & Cheshire, 2012). This has not and remains unlikely to come to pass due to the continued context specific nature of national and regional higher education systems.

That said, digital transformation is not simply an incentive to be explored or a nice to have, but rather an imperative to be grasped by HEIs in Asia and Europe. Digital transformation is not only a technological revolution but an institutional revolution and a clear and present opportunity for universities in Asia and Europe to facilitate greater mobility and exchange of students at scale between regions, countries and institutions. Digital modalities of education have been hailed as being more inclusive, however, this does not take cognisance of the significant percentage of university students in both regions who do not have the necessary resources to benefit fully from this option outside the classroom. The so called 'digital divide' remains a risk.

While Europe is generally considered to be leading on this agenda, in higher education at least, according to a European University Association report entitled 'Digitally enhanced learning and
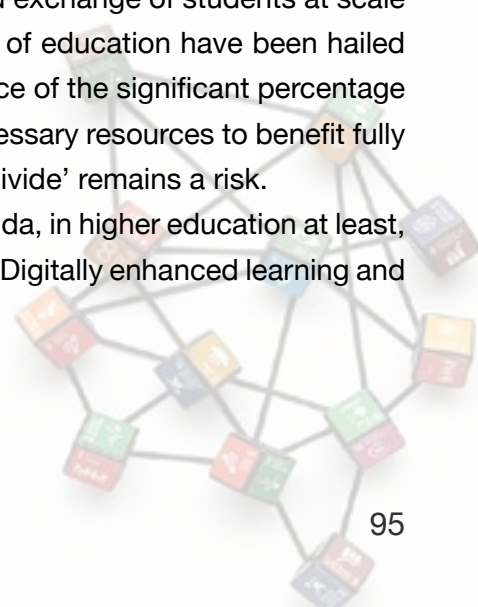
teaching in European higher education institutions' (Gaebel et al, 2021) only 25% of European universities offer any form of Virtual Mobility within their institution. In the same report it is observed that one-third of respondent institutions use digitally signed credentials, whereas 67% reported not using them or being uncertain as to their usage. Due to the key initiatives being pursued by the European Commission's Digital Education Action Plan (European Commission, 2021), European universities will likely see significant demand for such offerings over the course of the coming decade.

For example, in Japan, significant work on Collaborative Online International Learning (COIL) initiatives is being led by the Institute for Innovative Global Education (IIGE) at Kansai University. IIGE acts as a platform for COIL initiatives in Japan under projects supported by Japan's Ministry of Education, Culture, Sports, Science and Technology (MEXT). The Institute is currently engaged in research on the extent of and opportunities for implementing VE/COIL in the ASEAN region through a SHARE Programme funded project led by the Institute's Vice-Director and an academic from Universiti Kebangsaan Malaysia (UKM). On another SHARE funded project, experts from Malta and Indonesia are leading a project on 'Mapping and Identification of Digital Credentials in ASEAN' to pursue digital transformation of the ASEAN–EU Credit Transfer System (AECTS) mechanism.

It remains to be seen whether regional initiatives on the implementation of mechanisms of Virtual Exchange / COIL and digital credential systems will be multipliers of Asia – Europe institution-to-institution cooperation but it is valuable for the institutions of both regions to explore and promote this further through joint research and project based initiatives.

Photo taken at ARC7, May 2019, Bucharest

Recommendations for HEI Leaders - 2
- Develop representative and targeted Communities of Practice of Asian and European universities to explore enhanced cooperation through digital transformation to inform policy development.

Spotlight 3: Universal Design for Inclusion in Internationalisation

While implementing further measures for inclusion is favourable, true inclusion is not achieved by implementing such measures through an ad-hoc approach. Instead, inclusion measures need to be incorporated into the structure of programmes prior to their inception in the form of 'universal design'. In their publication 'Guideline Universal Design: from policy to practice' the Support Centre Inclusive Higher Education (SIHO, 2019) of the Flemish Community in Belgium outlines the context of Universal Design in education as follows:

"Universal design sees diversity as a general basis and emphasises the use of flexible goals, methods, materials and forms of evaluation to provide effective education for all students. Instead of approaching accessibility as a side issue or only on a case-by-case basis, universal design focuses on designing education, products, environments and services that meet the needs of different students from the outset so that all students can participate and receive learning opportunities." (SIHO, Pg. 2)

Moving towards universal design is an opportunity on both a system and institutional level. Inclusion efforts need to turn away from a 'one size fits all' approach and develop comprehensive context-specific measures. A mindset shift is required to help create education and internationalisation policy that supports universal accessibility for everyone.

System Level Opportunities & Risks for Policymakers to Consider

When looking the prevalence of system wide inclusion efforts across Asia and Europe it is evident that initiatives in Europe are funded more generously and perhaps therefore more established. However, this divide can be transformed from risk into an opportunity by acknowledging and appreciating the regional scope and the diversity of the concept "inclusion" itself. The Recognition of different Asian and European approaches to inclusion in internationalisation can be leveraged as a development opportunity for actors from both regions to assess and collaborate on.

This can be achieved through consistent dialogue, reflection on good practices, and determining areas for improvement in the contexts of both regions. This will in turn aid in the identification of suitable policies and initiatives that respect regional traditions and approaches while moving the inclusion agenda forward. Augmented inter-regional collaboration and knowledge sharing through coordination of student and expert communities has the potential for more cohesive and aligned policy development which ultimately benefits both regions through an economy of scale.

A first step in this process is increasing the awareness of Universal Design for Learning and the need for greater inclusion in international education opportunities. Currently, there is a dearth of awareness of the need for inclusion-related measures in internationalisation programmes and expectations regarding optimal levels of inclusion vary greatly between and within regions. This can lead to different priorities and, thereupon, varying quality of measures facilitating inclusion. For a phenomenon such as inter-regional internationalisation this can lead to an asymmetry of access that creates destructive imbalances in opportunities for an internationalised education. Part of the required rethinking of the concept of inclusion is to move away from considering diversity and inclusion exclusively as a 'bottom-up' approach. Unless addressed collectively at systemic level these imbalances can widen to a point that inter-regional cooperation is severely mitigated.

Recommendations for Policymakers - 3
• Identify, align, and promote policies and good practices on inclusive mobility and exchange.

Opportunities & Risks for Leaders of Higher Education Institutions to Consider

HEIs' interpretation of inclusion issues in international education are essentially determined by the regional, national and local contexts they operate in. Their considerations on the necessity of implementing certain measures or identification of 'underrepresented groups' within their societal contexts can diverge greatly. Yet within their spheres of operation HEIs are often acutely aware of the most pressing issues of inclusion in their internationalisation activities.

However, it is often the case, and particularly in Europe where funding for improving inclusion is ample, that those who are closest to these issues in HEI's are not directly consulted on policy and strategy measures that will ultimately be cascaded to their institutions. If we persist with such top-down generalisations of internationalisation without having the benefit of the lived-experience and needs of the institutional context, little meaningful progress will be made.

Optimisation of the drive towards greater inclusion means being more inclusive of HEIs and their views on policy and strategy. On this basis, sustained and systematic collaboration by Asian and European HEIs in the policymaking process is an imperative for ensuring awareness, outcomes, and impact for inclusion in international higher education.

Engaging with the real inclusion contexts of HEIs in Asia and Europe counteracts the 'luring power of assumptions' and misconceptions about the status quo of inclusion at different levels across both regions, as well as the nature of specific measures and their implementation.

Greater inter-regional and inter-institutional engagement between the higher education communities of Asia and Europe among both faculty, staff and students can further contribute to the suitability and efficacy of the policy development process.

Asian and European HEIs will significantly benefit from greater knowledge transfer between their institutions, because only through sharing experiences will they be able to offer support for disadvantaged students on greater scale. This is an initiative which needs to be taken and comprehensively supported by the senior leadership of HEIs.

Specifically in the context of international mobility of students between Asia and Europe, there is a significant imbalance in the numbers from Asia pursuing their studies in Europe as opposed to those from Europe taking up study in Asia. In this context, an opportunity that is often not utilised sufficiently is the promotion of reverse internationalisation and mobility.

Concerted engagement on this between institutions in both regions could address these imbalances and further strengthen people-to-people connectivity. This would be a win-win for both regions.

Recommendations for HEI Leaders - 3
• Support policy development by initiating dedicated policy dialogues between Asian and European universities and organisations on inclusive mobility practices and policies

Spotlight 4: Diversifying the Learning Process in International Education Activities

System Level Opportunities & Risks for Policymakers to Consider

Adapting new approaches and dimensions in the curriculum and learning methodologies is an opportunity which necessitates higher education policymakers look beyond the subject specific aspects of the higher education curriculum and embrace outcome-based education and transversal skills in international education.

The European Parliament has called for a greater focus on inclusion and learning outcomes within internationalisation since its study on 'Internationalisation of Higher Education' (EP 2015), wherein it stated:

"…internationalisation has to become more inclusive and less elitist by not focusing predominantly on mobility but more on the curriculum and learning outcomes. The 'abroad' component (mobility) needs to become an integral part of the internationalised curriculum to ensure internationalisation for all, not only the mobile minority." (p. 29)
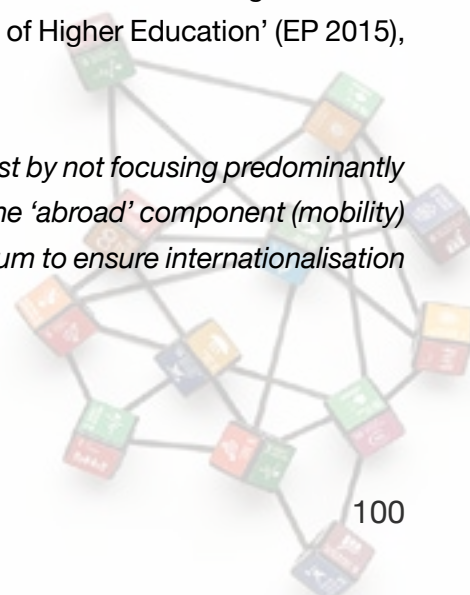
This idea of the 'internationalised curriculum' has since been incorporated into Internationalisation at Home (IaH), a significant body of practical approaches to ensure all university students receive global perspectives whether they study abroad or not.

Ensuring that the internationalisation experience, be it physical mobility or IaH/Virtual Exchange, is captured in student's learning outcomes is a common denominator of learner centredness, outcome based education, and quality assurance of international education activities.

Recommendations fo Policymakers - 4

- Raise awareness on the importance of outcome-based education and transversal skills in internationalisation initiatives between Asia & Europe.

Opportunities & Risks for Leaders of Higher Education Institutions to Consider

As has been a longstanding assertion of the well-known internationalisation of education theorist, Prof. Hans de Wit, that "You cannot define the what, how and outcome of internationalisation strategies without first having answered the 'why?'" (De Wit, 2015)

Failure to answer that singular question in terms of university students' learning outcomes on their international programmes, may suggest the universities should reconsider the content or the methodology. Otherwise, there is a risk of internationalisation for the sake of internationalisation which neither benefits the institution nor the student.

Universities in Asia and Europe increasingly have the opportunity, and indeed the responsibility, to integrate social and global issues into their curricula as meaningful internationalisation
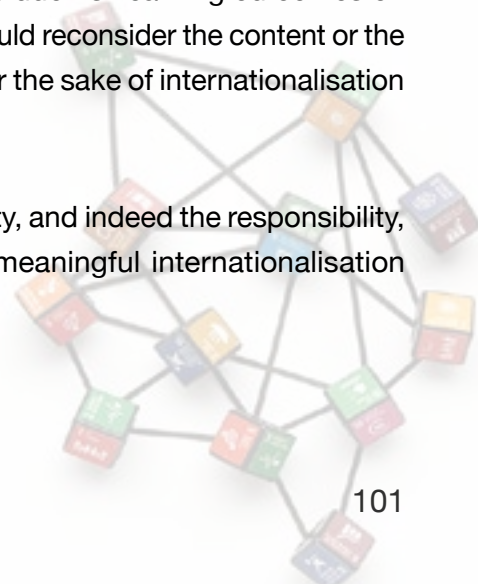
components. The shared contexts of the SDGs and particularly climate change as part of Education for Sustainable Development (ESD) are common to Asia and Europe and therefore present valuable learning and engagement opportunities for students from both regions whether via virtual exchange programme or a flipped classroom methodology. There are also good opportunities to design pre-departure blended virtual mobility programmes for Asia and Europe international mobility programmes to maximise learning prior to mobility windows.

Recommendations for HEI Leaders - 4
• Incorporate Education for Sustainable Development (ESD) within their international education programmes.

Spotlight 5: Internationalisation Support Services

There is heightened political ambition in both Asia and Europe to widen participation and inclusion in international education activities, and in particular in student mobility. There is also a necessity to reflect on the concrete practices and existing support services, both at system (regional and national) and at institutional levels.

System Level Opportunities & Risks for Policymakers to Consider

Both national level bodies (agencies) and authorities have been shown to have important and complementary roles to play in the provision of appropriate support services, both for incoming (be they degree-seeking or credit-mobile) or outgoing students, as well as for mobile staff and academics (Kelo et al., 2010).
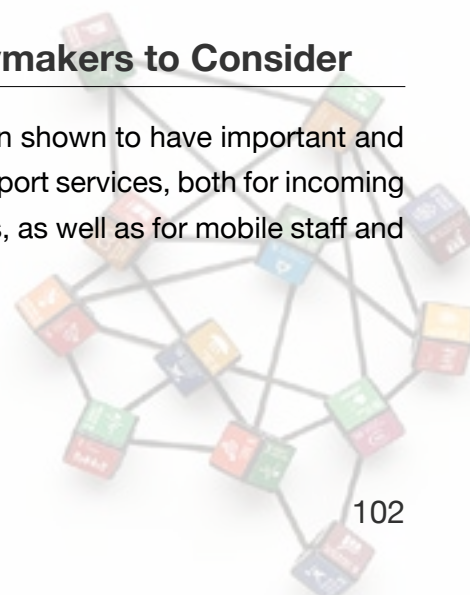
The provision of services to mobile students is typically divided along the four main stages of an international mobility experience: pre-arrival/pre-departure, on arrival, during the period of study/stay, and post-mobility. The support services provided by national level bodies and authorities typically concern, with some exceptions, the pre-arrival/pre-departure stage, and have two important categories of recipients – the to-be-mobile students and the HEIs in the respective country.

Among the standard services offered by national level bodies to mobile students in both Asia and Europe, though with some great variety between and within the regions, are as follows: (Kelo et al., 2010):

- **General information:** typically provided online, through fully branded national websites ('Study in…') and through specific promotion events (higher education fairs, road shows, promotional campaigns, etc.).
- **Funding information:** covering tuition fees information (if applicable), cost of living details, scholarships and other funding opportunities related to study in the host country.
- **Visa information:** information for incoming students, in particular, to navigate the visa and immigration processes.

Whereas the greatest opportunity is provided at present by the increased political interest in widening participation in mobility and internationalisation activities in the two regions, the main risk comes from a potential gap between this level of policy ambition and existing practices. The further adaptation and professionalisation of support services to support wider participation must become a measurable objective as well, and be backed by systemic and systematic actions. In this process, two considerations seem particularly important:

- Broader and deeper collaboration at national level, between the different authorities involved in promoting international mobility, as well as in supporting students with fewer opportunities through financial and other supports (IMA, 2019; ACA, 2019).
- The portability across jurisdictions of the additional support that students from disadvantaged groups receive also during their mobility experience (for example,. disability aid, financial aid for students from lower socio-economic background, etc.).

**Inclusive International Mobility of People and Knowledge**
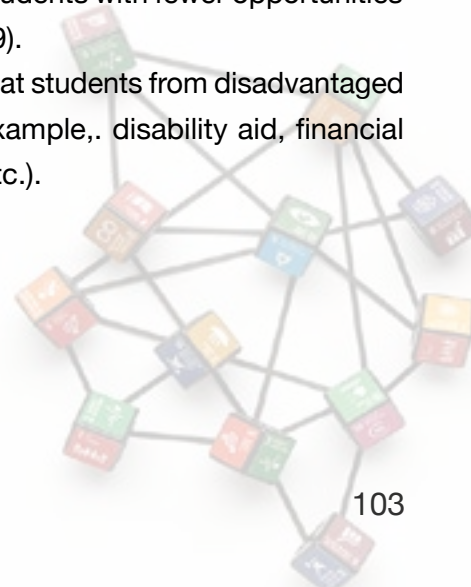
Recommendations for Policymakers - 5
• Further policy development on the formulation and adaptation of good practice internationalisation support services through the lens of inclusion across Asia and Europe

Opportunities & Risks for Leaders of Higher Education Institutions to Consider

The provision of appropriate support services, that are carefully designed to help overcome some of the typical barriers, has been proven to positively correlate with greater participation in internationalisation activities, and with better outcomes, in academic, personal development, and career progress terms (Kelo et al, 2010). The services offered at institutional level depend on multiple factors, from the organisational culture, the staff readiness, to the resources available, inclusive of financial aid solutions. HEIs themselves typically offer the full array of support services for international student mobility, covering all four stages from:

- **Pre-arrival/pre-departure:** for example, information on housing and accommodation, visa application support, pre-departure briefings, information on local work regulations, etc.
- **On arrival:** finding housing, orientation (general and programme), arrival pick-up, local administrative procedures
- **During study/stay:** support with academic problems, language support, library and research support, academic tutoring set-up, faith facilities provision, etc.
- **Post-mobility period:** for example, re-integration, articulation of learning outcomes for the mobility period, career advice, etc. (Kelo et al, 2010).
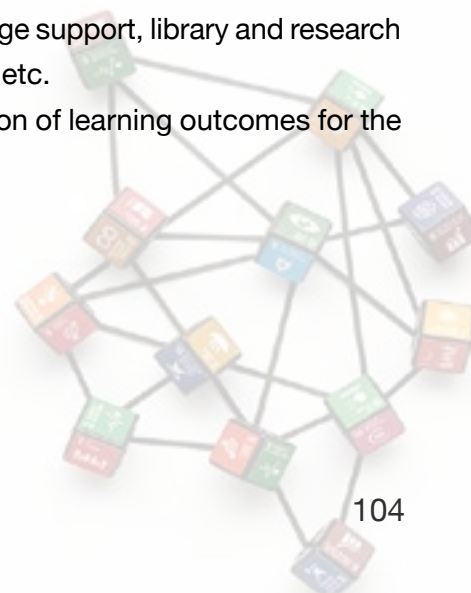
With inclusion in the spotlight in both Asia and Europe, there is a great opportunity to further adjust both general services (available to all students) as well as specialised services for international mobility, to better address the needs of students from disadvantaged backgrounds and increase their participation. The challenge for HEIs in both regions stems from the complexity of integrating these adaptations into:

• Existing organisational culture, as most institutions have yet to shape a fully-fledged culture of inclusion, shared by the entire academic community, and
• Institutional fabric, specifically in the functioning of offices and departments that are involved in the delivery of the general, as well as specialised services.

To overcome these obstacles, a number of factors seem important:

• **Leadership commitment:** Leadership plays a central role in building the capacity of own staff (both academic and administrative) and services in these new areas of responsibility, through in-house or external training and professional development.
• **Breaking institutional silos:** Different offices must share responsibility and actively collaborate to provide a 360° type of support to the mobile students (Christina Bohle, 2021).
• **Closer collaboration between home and host institutions:** Closer and more open dialogue between the home and the host institutions, avoiding labelling or stigmatisation of disadvantaged students, but aiming to set up needs-based, tailor-made support services is a must for widening participation (Van Hees & Montagnese, 2021).
• **Systematic capacity building:** Opportunities for staff of HEIs in the practice of fostering wider inclusion.

These overarching transformations should enable a closer accompaniment of students from disadvantaged backgrounds, through the collaboration of above mentioned services, and throughout their international experience journey, to ensure they can actively participate and well as take advantage of the full benefits of this experience.

Recommendations for HEI Leaders - 5
• Explore best practice cases of internationalisation support services from Asian and European institutions to serve as exemplars of policy and strategy for other institutions in the region.

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Chapter 4.
Inclusive and Flexible Lifelong Learning Pathways

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1. Introduction

Lifelong Learning (LLL) has acquired considerable prominence in educational policy in the last 25 years and is a core concept of the educational and training policies of the United Nations, the OECD, the European Commission, and the World Bank. The United Nations' 2030 Agenda, with the Sustainable Development Goal 4 (SDG 4), aims to "ensure inclusive and equitable quality education and promote lifelong learning opportunities for all" by 2030. The first principle of the European Pillar of Social Rights assert that European citizens have "the right to quality and inclusive education, training and life-long learning in order to maintain and acquire skills that enable them to participate fully in society and manage successfully transitions in the labour market".

LLL highlights the importance of learning during the life course, especially in adult life, and promotes a broad understanding of learning as a life-wide process. Lifelong learning is more than K-12, higher education, vocational education and training, and professional training; it includes a broad spectrum of learning provisions including basic, liberal, health and civic adult education through a variety of modalities within and beyond educational institutions (formal, non-formal and informal learning).

Significant drivers of policy reform in this field emerge at the international level. The influence of inter-, trans- and supranational actors (UNESCO, OECD, EU and World Bank) is evident in their publications, reports, and recommendations While education policies fall under national

jurisdiction, lifelong learning policies and practices vary considerably across countries. They are influenced by each country's education and training system, labour market institutions, the type of economy, and welfare state arrangements, and they intertwine with other policy areas (economic, social, labour market policies).

Country-specific institutional arrangements (for example, legislation, financial regulations, governance model and the involvement of non-state actors) impact on how inclusive and flexible a country's LLL policies and practices are. These differences lead to different outcomes in terms of inclusion and participation in LLL, and also in terms of national policies. Many countries in Asia, and all countries in the EU, have national programmes in place to promote LLL. For an overview in ASEAN region. The publication 'Lifelong Learning in Transformation: Promising Practices in Southeast Asia', published by the UNESCO Institute of Lifelong Learning in 2017 provides and overview for ASEAN (Yorozu, 2017), as well as the SEAMEO Education Agenda 2015-2035 (SEAMEO, 2018). For an overview in the [European Union, see European Parliament | Lifelong learning (europa.eu).](europa.eu)

2. Inclusive and Flexible Lifelong Learning Pathways

To identify inclusive and flexible lifelong learning pathways, we must first define them.

Inclusivity addresses **accessibility, availability, and affordability** of learning provision over the life span (Boyadjieva & Ilieva-Trichkova, 2019). This would include affordability, geographical proximity, cultural inclusion, digital infrastructure and digital learning opportunities. Inclusivity in LLL has many layers of complexity, including:

- **Inclusion for All (No One is Left Behind):** LLL provision for all regardless of their background, age, gender, socioeconomic status, location, disability etc., whilst also considering the intersectionality of these types of factors (e.g., a female learner with disability from a rural area);
- **Context Coherence:** recognition, both in terms of validation and value, but also by ensuring that validation is equally adept at engaging with learning and ensuring seamless transitions between formal, non-formal and informal learning;
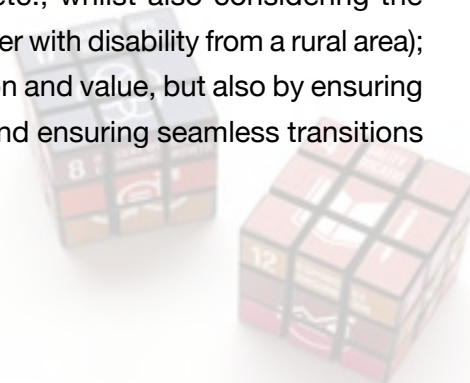
- **Learning needs and interests:** lifelong and life-wide learning must be understood in the context of the learner's interests, wishes or needs for personal development and growth, and not solely by external factors. LLL should ultimately aim at allowing individuals to be active, well-rounded citizens.

For some additional discussion see also position papers by LLL Platform '21st Century Learning Environments' 2019 and 'Lifelong Learning for Sustainable Societies' 2020.

Affordability is impacted by factors such as the level of course fees, any mitigating impacts of public funding schemes (for example, subsidies), the availability of paid leave, training or study leave, and instruments like individual learning accounts.

Flexibility refers to open and navigable systems and the degree of permeability between different educational sectors that enable personal progression over the life span. This includes, amongst others, the existence of multiple entry, exit and re-entry points or the availability of admission systems that enable transition from one educational sector to another (e.g., from vocational education and training to higher education and vice versa, from adult education to higher education etc.)

3. What Do We already Know?

Research has shown that legislation, (public) funding arrangements, and the involvement of different stakeholders (state and non-state actors) have a decisive impact on how inclusive and flexible LLL systems are (Desjardins, 2017). By assessing country-specific legislation, governance, and financial regulations, we can identify how much emphasis has been put on providing inclusive and flexible LLL opportunities and if concrete measures have been implemented (a) to widen participation and reduce inequalities in, and barriers to access in LLL and (b) to create open and permeable education systems.

These are important aspects and questions regarding inclusiveness and flexibility:

- Is there national/regional legislation promoting a holistic and integrated LLL system, which also ensures adequate LLL opportunities for all?
- Is there a countrywide LLL structure that is flexible, diverse, and accessible to all learners?
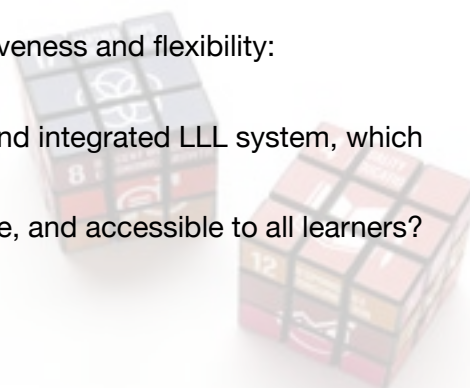
- Is LLL considered a policy field of shared responsibility and collective endeavour between state and non-state actors?
- Are there financial incentives (e.g., subsidies) and other supports (e.g., recognition systems) that encourage participation in LLL, particularly for the most vulnerable and excluded groups?
- Are there tailored social policies to enable individuals, and groups to overcome situational and institutional constraints to participation in LLL (e.g., subsidies, paid education leave, family assistance, childcare)?
- Are there systems of validation and recognition of prior learning in place thereby enabling alternative learning routes?
- Are there quality assurance mechanisms in place guaranteeing high standards of LLL offerings? Are there supports and processes aimed at tackling 'the digital divide', which represents both a societal divide and a barrier to access to LLL. This includes connectivity- especially for vulnerable and excluded groups-, digital literacy, access to internet and IT, and space and time to engage online.
- Are there policy measures in place to increase the skill levels of the population, to support employment, career progression, career change and the achievement of societal goals like the SDGs?
- Are there policies in place to promote LLL for all the adult population, across all age ranges, including older adults?

The following case studies from ASEM countries illustrate policies and good practices in some of the areas and questions raised above.

Germany

In Germany the Weimar Constitution of 1919 laid the foundations for understanding adult learning and education (ALE) as a common good to be promoted and publicly funded by state authorities at the federal, regional, and local level. Germany's specific institutional arrangements enable the implementation of measures aimed at reducing barriers and inequality in access in ALE and the realisation of ALE as a common good. The legal provisions and the funding arrangements connected to them guarantee a substantial availability of adult learning opportunities throughout the country that are accessible to all people, cover a broad range of topics, and serve a plurality of purposes. ALE in Germany is a policy field of shared responsibility between state and non-state actors. Since 2019, a National Skills Strategy is in force that aims to address the challenges posed by the digital transformation of the world of work and to establish a new culture of lifelong

learning. For more information see National Skills Strategy (bmas.de), OECD iLibrary | Continuing Education and Training in Germany , DVV_International_Analysis_Financing_Popular_ALE_Web2. pdf (dvv-international.de)

Norway

Norway has a LLL policy framed by the EU, OECD, and other international policies. The central plank of the policy is that LLL should enhance the quality of life of citizens, and the citizens should have access to education and skills development throughout their lives. It supports a comprehensive LLL encompassing formal, non-formal and informal education, responding both to labour market and wider societal needs. Norway is a leader in PIAAC scores on proficiency in literacy, numeracy and problem-solving in a technology-rich environment, but still has significant levels of poor foundational skills, especially among young people and migrants. The government issued a white paper in 2016 aimed at developing a whole-of-government approach to address these issues. Responding to an OECD Skills Strategy Diagnostic Report, the government hopes to reduce complexity in the system, develop a better balance and effective skills agenda, and directly address education and training for lower skilled adults. It has set out a five point strategy that includes a whole-of-government approach on skills, closer alignment between skills and the economy, addresses skills shortages, a national action plan on continuous education and training, and the creation of a comprehensive career guidance structure. This has led to several new policy initiatives and the generation of a white paper in 2020 for a comprehensive LLL policy. Norway has a long tradition in adult education which promotes a culture of cooperation between both governmental and non-governmental players including adult learning associations, Folk High Schools, Flexible Education Norway, universities, and university colleges. For more information on Norway's LLL policies visit the Eurydice National Education Systems Platform.

Malaysia

Malaysia is committed to a long-term programme to enhance the quality of life of its older population and to create a 'value-based knowledge society'. In purasuit of this mission, it runs an extensive programme to address digital literacy of older people, especially in rural communities. Other notable activities include the Malaysian Chinese Association (MCA) lifelong learning campaign, which commenced in 2004, under the Community Education Development

Bureau. It conducts various activities and programmes solely for older adults. These include the acquisition of skills for everyday living, like English language classes, basic computer skills classes, Mandarin language classes, and health classes. They also provide short courses, with high levels of participation, such as typing Chinese characters correctly for text messaging, and English courses for taxi drivers. To increase participation and promote such activities and programmes, it conducts 'talks' and activities in community learning centres and in shopping malls in order to reach people from all walks of life:

- Blueprint on Enculturation of Lifelong Learning for Malaysia 2011-2020: Lifelong Learning is the Third Pillar of Human Capital Development.
- Blueprint on Lifelong Learning for Islamic Education 2017-2025.

Singapore

In Singapore, Lifelong Learning is delivered through an initiative called SkillsFuture. SkillsFuture is a national movement that makes lifelong learning the central vehicle to reframe all pre-employment and continuing education and training activities such that irrespective of the life stage of the citizens, they can develop their careers as well as attaining skills mastery in their chosen fields.

In 2020, Singapore introduced 'The Next Bound of SkillsFuture' to further support Singaporeans in developing to their fullest potential throughout life with five key initiatives:

1 | Strengthen the enterprise pillar of the skills ecosystem

2 | Enhance workplace learning capabilities

3 | Scale up SkillsFuture work-study pathways

4 | Encourage and facilitate lifelong learning

5 | Scale up career transition programmes for mid-career workers

The Future Economy Council reiterated the aims of the Next Bound of SkillsFuture in preparing workers and businesses for the future:

"As technology advances and our companies build new capabilities, jobs will be reshaped in significant ways. Jobs will need to be re-designed, and our workers will need to learn new skills. Workers who are more skilled can contribute more to their companies – the fortunes of
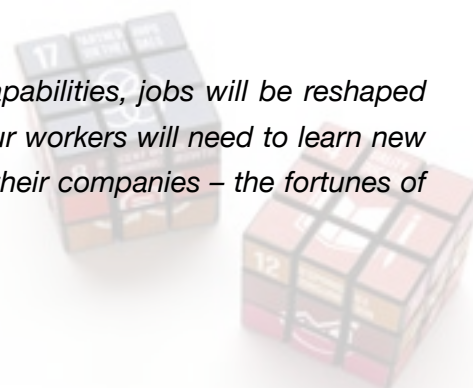
our workers and our companies are therefore deeply intertwined. We will need to enable our workers to learn the right skills to work more effectively with technology. And as the economy transforms, we must help displaced workers move to other good jobs, and enable our senior workers to continue working if they wish to. We should build on the strengths of our people. They have a strong foundation in their school years and can look forward to the Next Bound of SkillsFuture." — *Deputy Prime Minister Heng Swee Keat*

SkillsFuture can be seen in the context of a longer policy trajectory in Singapore going back to 'Thinking Schools, Learning Nation' (TSLN) which was launched in 1997. It was envisaged as a paradigm in which education was seen as a life-long process that supports creative thinking, was aligned to economic development, a knowledge-based economy and developing a workforce that was creative, inquisitive and equipped with critical thinking skills. It aimed at engaging all key stakeholders including students, parents, companies, community organisations and the government. This in turn was preceded by the even older Skills Development Fund (SDF) which was established in 1979 (Sung, 2011)

Several Asian countries have a constitutional and/or legislative framework to support LLL. Among these are:

Cambodia

- Constitution, Articles 65: "The State shall protect and upgrade citizens' rights to quality education at all levels and shall take the necessary steps for quality education to reach all citizens."
- Constitution, Article 66 „The State shall develop a complete and uniform education system throughout the State so that citizens have an equal chance of improving their livelihoods."
- National Policy on Lifelong Learning (issued in 2019): aims to enhance learning opportunities and skills development for all individuals.

Indonesia

- Constitution 1945: Every citizen has the right to access education (Article No. 31, P.1).
- National Education System Act No. 20 (2003): Every citizen has the opportunity to improve their education throughout their life (lifelong learning) (Article No. 5, P.5).
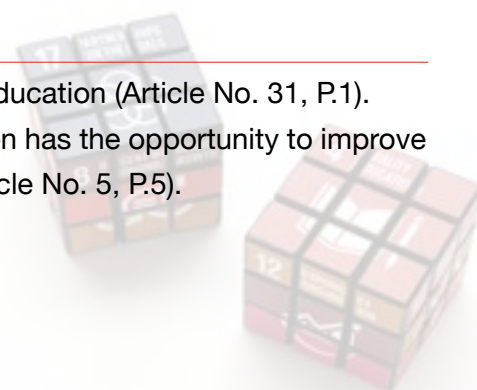
Lao PDR

- Education Law No. 03/AN (enacted on 8 April 2000 and amended in 2007): all Lao citizens have the right to education without discrimination based on their ethnicity, origin, religion, gender, or social status.
- Decree on Lifelong Learning No.208/GOV, dated 23 March 2020.

Philippines

- Republic Act. No. 11510 (enacted in 2019): Section 13 – Provision of an ALS CLC (In the Philippines, continuing education is called alternative learning, a parallel learning system to provide a viable alternative to existing formal education instruction, thus providing learning opportunities to those who are out of school

Thailand

- Promotion of Non-Formal and Informal Education Act, B.E. 2551 (2008).
- National Education Act (1999): „Educational provision will be based on […] lifelong learning for all." (Chapter 1).
- National Education Guideline

Viet Nam

- Law on Education 2019: Continuing education enables people to learn while in-service, to learn continuously and for lifelong (Section 2).
- Framework for Building a Learning Society of Viet Nam: "State agencies, economic and social organizations, armed forces units, communities and families are responsible for creating learning opportunities and providing favourable conditions for everyone to pursue lifelong learning."

Photo taken at ARC7, May 2019, Bucharest

4. Where Do We Stand?

Legal and financial regulations provide the policy framework to enhance inclusiveness and flexibility in the provision and take-up of learning opportunities. Actual participation rates in LLL illustrate whether the policy measures implemented have an impact. LLL refers to formal, non-formal and informal learning opportunities throughout life, but Adult Learning and Education (ALE) makes up the biggest part of LLL in terms of participation, financing, programmes offered, and teachers and trainers involved. Making ALE provision inclusive, available and flexible is important, as it is a voluntary activity (as opposed to school/higher education) and as ALE often conflicts with other activities in an individual's life course (work, children and elderly care etc.)

In framing **inclusivity**, we can use three 'A's' as indicators of success, namely **accessibility, availability and affordability.** Some examples of these 'A's' are:
- Participation rates in ALE (accessibility)
- Profiles of participants and non-participants (accessibility)
- Costs, public funding, and private spending in ALE (affordability)
- Availability of relevant and accessible programmes

Regarding **flexibility** we may look at qualitative indicators, for example:
- Existence of recognition and accreditation system of prior learning
- Existence of a National Qualification Framework
- Wide-range of delivery modes (face-to-face, in the community/workplace, online, hybrid/blended, etc.)

We can gauge Inclusivity through international and national databases on students' enrolments, as well as surveys like the Programme for International Assessment of Adult Competences (PIAAC), the EU-Adult Education Survey, and National Adult Education Surveys. These provide evidence on access by measuring participation rates in ALE. International surveys show that participation rates in ALE vary widely across countries and identify high participation and low participation countries.

Participation rates in ALE tend to be distributed unevenly across and within countries. Research shows that initial educational inequalities persist over the life span. In terms of participation, initial education attainment has the highest predictive power, followed by employment status. The highly educated are more likely to participate in LLL, whereas marginalised groups (often older adults, minority groups and adults with disabilities) show very low participation rates. In
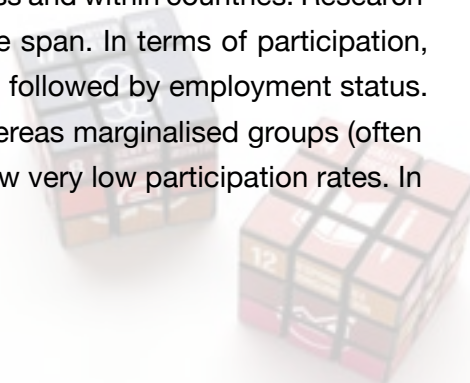
a range of countries, ALE provision has decreased for vulnerable groups such as adults with disabilities and residents living in rural areas (GRALE IV, p.20).

Reasons for non-participation in LLL can be broadly classified as constraints on supply side and availability (providers) and the demand side (learners). Following Cross (1981), barriers to participation in adult education and training can be **situational, dispositional and institutional. Situational barriers** are related to a person's life situation at a given point in the family life cycle and working life. **Dispositional barriers** refer to personality traits or personal qualities acquired through early school experiences. **Institutional barriers** include institutional practices and procedures that discourage or prevent participation.

Dispositional barriers can be intractable, but are not insurmountable, requiring nuanced responses that mitigate impacts of previous educational experiences. Targeted policies can help to overcome situational and institutional barriers and enhance inclusive and flexible learning pathways. These policies are not limited to education and training, but intertwine with other policy areas. LLL policies act as a multifunctional instrument to achieve personal and societal goals such as employability, personal development, democratic citizenship, social cohesion, innovation, and economic growth.

There is insufficient data on private and public spending on LLL. The 4th Global Report on Adult Learning (GRALE) reported that 33% of the 107 countries that provided information on public spending in ALE spend less than 1% of their educational budget on ALE. However, 19% reported spending more than 4% of their educational budget on LLL, among them are six ASEM countries: Finland, Germany, Lao PDR, Bhutan, Malaysia, New Zealand, and Thailand (GRALE, p. 53).

Crucial policies to foster the development of inclusive and flexible LLL pathways include: public spending on open and flexible education and training; recognition, validation and accreditation systems; targeted investments and programmes for those who are hardest to reach; active labour market measures; and welfare policies to enable individuals to overcome structural constraints (e.g., family assistance, childcare, subsidies). Specific institutional features that enable the provision and take up of adult learning and education can play a role in fostering higher and more evenly distributed levels of participation (Desjardins & Ioannidou, 2020).

# 5. Key Issues and Recommendations: Improving Inclusion in LLL

Following the overview of access to and affordability of lifelong learning in both regions, the authors identified various risks and opportunities for enhancing inclusion in LLL in the next decade and summarised them in 4 'spotlight areas'. Policy makers and higher education leaders are encouraged to turn their attention to these 'spotlight areas' that conclude with recommendations for policymaking and institutional planning.

Spotlight 1: Digitalisation in Lifelong Learning

System Level Opportunities & Risks for Policymakers to Consider

Digitalisation can enhance access to lifelong learning, but there are significant challenges and barriers as well as design and delivery opportunities and risks. Extensive new digital resources are being developed in LLL, with a significant acceleration and expansion arising through agile responses to the COVID-19 pandemic. The availability and continuous advancement of assistive technologies in ICT will expand opportunities. This should act as an incentive for further investment as it indicates a high probability for ROI (Return on Investment) success. Investment in digital technologies, infrastructures and connectivity can enable a more inclusive LLL framework, provided it is matched by measures to tackle the 'digital divide'.

Lower-skilled and poorly qualified people tend to be captured in a vicious circle of limited opportunities to advance due to their social origins, economic status, poor pay and conditions of employment, and insufficient training and learning. These challenges are exacerbated through the 'digital divide'. Here we refer to low digital competencies that hamper active engagement by a significant proportion of the population. However, we must also include poor and substandard infrastructure as well as access to available infrastructure which are significant components of the digital divide. Moreover, the creation of more flexible, available and affordable opportunities for learners is needed, as are support mechanisms for educational institutions to keep pace with the change. The pace of change demanded by digital and green transitions is challenging the ability of educational providers to respond in an agile and flexible way. Providers at all levels need supports to reduce bureaucracy, and national systems need to have a renewed focus on flexibility and quality assurance.

Inclusive and Flexible Lifelong Learning Pathways
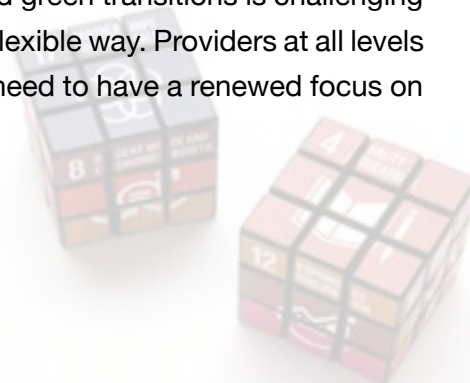
Recommendations for Policymakers - 1
- Ensure that no one is left behind in the digitally enhanced learning environment through coherent and joined-up policy approaches that address the digital divide.

- Invest in infrastructure that is fit-for-purpose, future proofed and accessible to all citizens regardless of economic status, identity or place of domicile.

Opportunities & Risks for Leaders of Higher Education Institutions to Consider

Collaboration across all ASEM countries is essential to share knowledge and to deliver best practice in digital LLL in higher education. The proliferation of new modes and means of technology assisted learning offer HEIs an unprecedented opportunity to expand their engagement with all learners. The confluence of agile responses to the COVID-19 pandemic, maturation of long-established LLL approaches (open sources, open education, MOOCs), and the emergence of new technologies and methods offer an unprecedented opportunity in the digital LLL space that all HEIs should seize with vision and commitment. However, the 'digital divide' is a real challenge and unless HEIs actively address this there is a risk of creating new forms of exclusion and inequality. Addressing the 'digital divide' must be a high priority to ensure the inclusion of the most vulnerable and excluded groups and learners of all ages. For some this will require a shift in culture and the adoption of more inclusive teaching methods. In this context, HEIs should have the courage to adopt unconventional VLEs in order to reach and engage LLL learners across the whole of community. Some good examples of using messaging apps, social media, podcasts and traditional media like television, radio and print indicate the scale of innovate potential that exists. Additionally, when introducing new digital technologies for either administration or learning, HEIs must ensure they are accessible across all ages and identities, not least learners with special needs and different abilities.

While a digitally enhanced, post-COVID-19 education and learning landscape offers unprecedented opportunities for HEIs to envision future possibilities, there is a significant risk that they may not have the agility to capitalise on these opportunities. HEIs must engage with educational providers in other sectors to create access routes, credit accumulation and award-building opportunities for holders of micro-credentials gained in other sectors including via non-formal education. Digitally delivered micro-credentials offer an important means for Lifelong learners to upskill and reskill. In this field, it is crucial that HEIs create mechanisms to allow learners build major awards through the accumulation of micro-credentials.

Furtermore, HEIs must pay attention to digital skills deficits in their own staff, to ensure that they can avail of digital opportunities and support learners in using digital platforms.

Recommendations for HEI Leaders - 1

• Develop strategies that leverage the full opportunities offered by the enhanced digital education and learning landscape, based on
  • agile and flexible responses that harness opportunities by availing of the full range of technical possibilities,
  • flexible modes of delivery and credit accumulation,
  • collaboration with relevant stakeholders, and
  • inclusion of all learners and staff in terms of digital skills and knowledge development.

Spotlight 2: Robust, Flexible and Forward Looking Lifelong Learning

System Level Opportunities & Risks for Policymakers to Consider

National and Regional Qualification Frameworks must keep pace with the changing landscape where non-formal and informal LLL play an increasingly important role. Mobility for learners and workers can be supported by Mutual Recognition Agreements regionally and/or across all ASEM countries that include RVA (Recognition, Validation & Accreditation) and QA (Quality
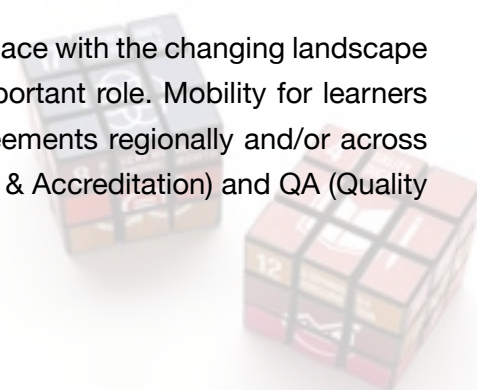
Assurance) mechanisms. To ensure that all lifelong learners are included, the role of RPL and VNIL (Validation of Non-Formal and Informal Learning) needs to be formally recognised as part of the national qualification's framework and occupational skills standards. This agenda can be promoted within ASEM, SEAMEO, EU, ASEAN etc. Quality Assurance has to remain a key focus in LLL. While increased participation is critically important, a strong balance has to be maintained so that this does not dilute the quality of the programmes offered.

Recommendations for Policymakers - 2

- Recognise the value of all domains of learning including non-formal, informal and formal, as well as the full range of citizen learning needs throughout their lives (including older adults) and across their entire lives (including work, leisure, citizenship and social responsibilities).

- Build a robust future oriented LLL approach that contributes to societal resilience for the global grand challenges like climate change, migration, security, health and wellbeing and which is sufficiently inclusive that no one is left behind.

Opportunities & Risks for Leaders of Higher Education Institutions to Consider

In helping countries in the ASEM region benefit from the opportunities inherent in good LLL policies HEIs need to be stronger advocates of LLL in the policy domain regionally, nationally, and internationally, including within the ASEM framework. At institutional level HEIs must show more leadership in availing of LLL opportunities by developing a much wider range of university level LLL programmes, and by introducing more open and flexible access, delivery models, study periods, and award type to accommodate as broad a range of learner as possible. HEIs are uniquely positioned to advocate an equity agenda in LLL that addresses the different starting points of individuals and groups and has sufficient flexibility to recognise prior learning and respond with programmes that respect diversity in content and delivery.
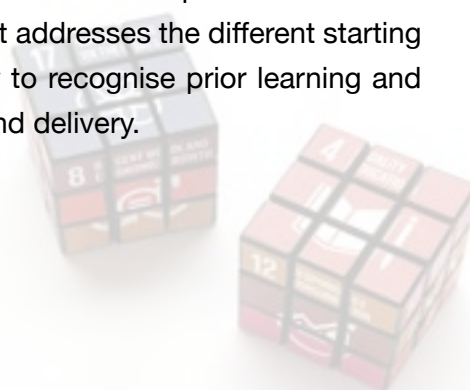
Collaboration, networking and partnership building in LLL offer society huge opportunities to re-calibrate in the face of the massive challenges faced by climate change and related regional and global risks. Also here, HEIs have the opportunity to demonstrate leadership and be more proactive in engaging with stakeholders in the design of LLL programmes that meet the needs of learners throughout their life course (including older learners) and that respond to green, economic and social agendas. HEIs need to be cognisant of, and build cooperative synergies with, other LLL sectors such as TVET, professional associations, industry, civil society, which are also orienting themselves towards regional, national and/or international standards.

**Inclusive and Flexible
Lifelong Learning Pathways**

Recommendations for HEI Leaders - 2

• Address "questions that affect profoundly the destiny of all" (Boyer 1990, 77) through a set of LLL policies and instruments that enable all of society to be actively engaged in the learning needed to navigate a perilous future defined by climate change and an existential threat to humanity.

Spotlight 3: Enabling a Universal Entitlement to Lifelong Learning

"A universal entitlement to lifelong learning that enables people to acquire skills and to reskill and upskill. Lifelong learning encompasses formal and informal learning from early childhood and basic education through to adult learning. Governments, workers, and employers, as well as educational institutions, have complementary responsibilities in building an effective and appropriately financed lifelong learning ecosystem".
—Work for a Brighter Future: Global Commission on the Future of Work
International Labour Organization (2019)
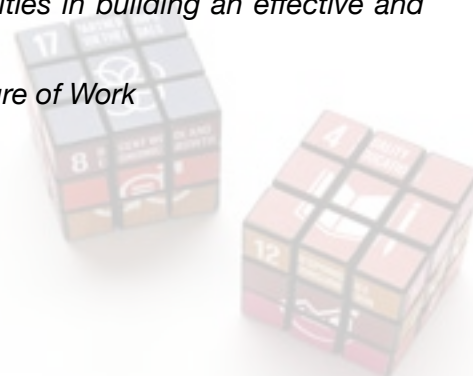
System Level Opportunities & Risks for Policymakers to Consider

ASEM countries should endeavour to develop national LLL strategies that encompass the full lifelong and life-wide dimensions of learning. Many countries have partial policies that only address sectors of a specific field, for example labour market skills or digital skills. LLL policies need to have a stronger focus on societal sustainability and better balance priorities like work-based skills and employability with a broader skills and knowledge agenda, that includes climate change, SDGs, democratic citizenship, equality, active ageing, and inclusiveness. Only if LLL policies are linked together in a whole-of-government approach, they will successfully address both shorter and longer term societal goals that encompass social, ecological, and economic targets. LLL policies need to address some age-based discrimination that militates against offering support to older adults. This is also often reflected in official statistics that don't count learning among older adults.

Policy-makers should consider mechanisms towards recognising lifelong learning entitlements and extending the public offering for more public investment in education throughout life, rather than just focussing on compulsory or core education. Tools like individual learning accounts (ILAs), which consist of individual budgets for every citizen to continue learning from the 'cradle to the grave' are being trialled in a number of ASEM countries to deliver a universal LLL entitlement.

LLL policy should be driven by evidence of society wide benefits that, while very important, extend significantly beyond economic and labour-market gains. Therefore, LLL policies need to acknowledge that human capital is not the only outcome, learners also gain identity capital, social capital, and cultural capital, which enable them to participate and contribute more to all areas of society (Ó Tuama, 2016). One of LLL's greatest potential is that it delivers individual and societal dividends in areas like health, well-being, civic engagement, and active ageing (Schuller et al., 2017; Schrader et al., 2020). This potential can only be fulfilled if more resources are channelled into research on all aspects of LLL.

In general LLL policies should be actively informed by evidence that indicate positive outcomes from financial and non-financial incentives, active labour market measures, open and flexible education and training systems, skills recognition system, programmes targeting the most vulnerable groups, childcare, and family assistance (Blossfeld et al., 2014, Desjardins and Ioannidou, 2020). Policies to create lifelong learning guidance services would enhance returns for public investment as well as greatly enhancing both individual and societal benefits in terms of knowledge of career options, skilling, up-skilling, re-skilling as well wider life choices and community engagement.

Recommendations for Policymakers - 3

• Develop national LLL policies that are cognisant of and respond to the entire lifelong learning agenda which
  • encompass not only those related to work, but also
  • recognise the significant impact it can have in all domains of society, not least in building resilience, reflexivity, knowledge and skills to meet global challenges.

Opportunities & Risks for Leaders of Higher Education Institutions to Consider

HEIs have the opportunity to lead in public engagement as elite learning and research institutions with a key role in LLL, but also one that is complementary to the contributions of all other educational sectors. HEIs should continue to develop strategies to support societal commitments to universal entitlements to LLL. HEIs should play a leading role in LLL research

Recommendations for HEI Leaders - 3

• As highly influential institutions, be proactive influencers in the creation of regional, national and international policies that support universal access to lifelong learning.

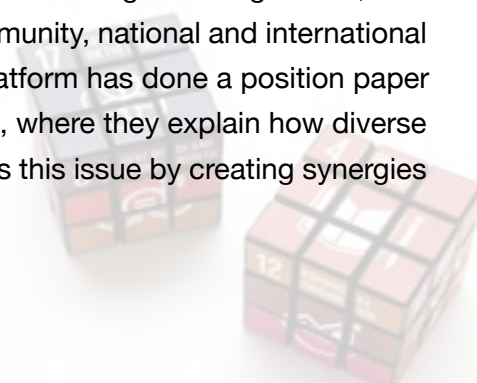# Spotlight 4: Multi-Sectoral Partnerships and Collaboration in LLL

System Level Opportunities & Risks for Policymakers to Consider

ASEM cooperation can play a key role in facilitating international conversations that can assist countries in benchmarking themselves against and learning from best practice, assist with rankings (institutional/national) and achieve better LLL outcomes for their citizens and their national systems. Additionally there needs to be a more visible role for international civil society cooperation, like the LLL Platform, as this can help articulate common understandings of LLL, help break down silos, promote a more holistic and inclusive agenda, and introduce innovation and flexibility into the LLL system.

Applying a whole-of-country approach to LLL, as for example established in Brunei Darussalam, can facilitate cross-sectoral cooperation and partnership and benefit from strong political drive. These whole-of-country approaches need to accommodate diversity, dialogue, multi-stakeholder engagement, flexibility, reflexivity, inclusivity, and learner autonomy. Generating policies that facilitate cross-sectoral cooperation among all actors in LLL education and training systems avoid duplication of effort, enable seamless transitions for learners and help create a more holistic and integrated LLL sector There is a need for more progressive policies that create flexible pathways for learners to move from one system or level to another. This is required even within the Bologna Process in European. LLL policies need to include sufficient flexibility to enable greater learner autonomy, such that individuals can contribute to the creation of bespoke pathways towards better career prospects and wellbeing. Best results can be achieved through the inclusion of all key stakeholders.

LLL policies need to address contemporary complexity, change and uncertainty, and help equip people to be resilient, reflexive, and responsive to challenges posed by climate change, migration, health, security, and other major regional and global risks. This is best achieved in cross-sectoral partnership.

Policy-makers need to acknowledge the role of all domains of learning including formal, non-formal and informal learning and harness the individual, community, national and international benefits from a more holistic and inclusive approach. LLL Platform has done a position paper on 21st Century Learning Environments (LLL Platform, 2019), where they explain how diverse the learning environments are and how Europe could address this issue by creating synergies among these environments.

Recommendations for Policymakers - 4

- Promote, support and incentivise multi-sectoral partnerships and collaboration in LLL, which drive greater engagement between all stakeholders such as HEIs, TVET, other educational providers, industry, the third sector, professional associations, governmental agencies, regional development agencies, social partners, community groups and citizens.

- Emphasise building mutually beneficial networks for better outcomes for adult learners and the wider society.

Opportunities & Risks for Leaders of Higher Education Institutions to Consider

HEIs are uniquely placed to animate and lead collaborations at local, national, and global levels to help realise unrivalled community benefits in LLL, economic development, social cohesion and addressing grand challenges like climate change, migration, security, health, knowledge creation and dissemination and resilience building.

This is only made possible by cooperating with other educational sectors and creating a more holistic approach to education and training and to increase access for underrepresented groups. HEIs need to play a more proactive role, in partnership with other educational sectors, to provide a range of flexible learning pathways, to give opportunities to as broad a range of learners as possible to realise their educational, career and personal life goals.

Recommendations for HEI Leaders - 4

- Be proactive partners, respectful of the role of other stakeholders, in building mutually beneficial partnerships and networks to ensure the delivery of universal lifelong learning for the mutual benefit of all of society.

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