

Destination: Asia

Towards goal-oriented educational, research and cultural cooperation with Asian countries

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Summary

A REVIEW OF THE PRESENT SITUATION AND DEVELOPMENT NEEDS

The following assessment of the current situation and development needs is based on the information gathered in the course of the review *Destination: Asia*, a number of reports concerning Asian countries and fact-finding trips made to China, India, the Republic of Korea and Japan.

Growing significance of Asian countries

Asian countries are gaining more and more importance in educational, research and cultural cooperation. As a result, Finnish universities and polytechnics have established new relations with partners in Asian countries. Cultural exchanges and cultural exportation are also deemed to have grown. The Ministry of Trade and Industry and organisations under it have made input into relations with Asian countries. The same trend is visible in all the other Nordic countries, which have activated their relations with Asian countries even more effectively than Finland.

In many cases, the key to cooperation with Asian countries in different fields, and to international

cooperation in general, is to make Finland and Finnish culture, in its widest sense, known in these countries. This creates an atmosphere conducive to commercial and industrial cooperation and helps to establish cooperation networks. Culture as such will constitute part of international cooperation in commerce to a growing extent. Student and researcher exchanges contribute to the emergence of networks that can subsequently be put to use in scientific, economic and other cooperation.

Finland has long traditions in research into the cultures of certain Asian countries. At present, Finland has a good reputation among Asian countries. It is known for its excellent education and competitiveness and as a country that will do what it promises. This is an excellent starting point for further developing relations.

Aims and coordination

In education, research and culture, Finland has a wide range of relations with Japanese, Chinese, India and Korean organisations. However, seen as a whole they are fairly dispersed. Relations with Asian countries seems to be lacking in coordination both at home and among units operating in Asian countries.

As the countries in question are extremely large

in comparison with Finland, the presence and contacts of one single Finnish organisation there will not achieve the desired effect. Indeed, the effect may sometimes be opposite to what was intended, if for instance representatives of different higher education institutions go to a given university to offer cooperation unbeknown to one another.

In many cases, it would be more expedient to set up a co-Nordic proposal, since the Nordic countries are known in Asia as an entity in which single countries do not always stand out. Likewise, EU programmes relating to Asia appear not to have been used to the full.

Thus, there seems to be particular need for those cooperating with Asian countries to form more effective networks both at home and in the target countries. It is necessary to enhance coordination at all levels and across administrative boundaries.

Perhaps the most critical shortcoming is, however, that the aims of different organisations with regard to cooperation with Asian countries often seem to be rather unfocused. They seem to have concluded various cooperation agreements without reflecting in depth on their objectives, let alone, finding out if other Finnish organisations have corresponding agreements. In some cases it has transpired that the no cooperation has been initiated on the basis of an agreement and in others the cooperation in place is inconsequential. Frequently organisations in Asian countries have been approached with fairly general offers for cooperation without concrete aims and proposals, and without a follow-up system in place.

For full exploitation of Asia cooperation, it is in fact necessary for both higher education institutions and cultural organisations clarify their own aims for cooperation with Asian countries.

It is vital that higher education institutions and cultural organisations have better chances of obtaining current information about developments in Asian countries and about the potential for educational, research and cultural cooperation in them.

Student and expert exchanges

International student and expert exchanges enable Finns to learn about the societies and cultures of the

target countries and people in these countries to get to know Finnish society and culture. Exchanges help create important friendship and cooperation contacts, which can later be used to the benefit of both countries.

In the next few decades Finland will increasingly need foreign labour, which is not always available in Finland. The best way to assimilate foreign labour into Finnish society is to increase the number of foreign students in Finnish higher education and vocational institutions. At least some of these students will stay in the Finnish labour market after graduation. Even students who return home after graduation have knowledge about Finnish society and culture and have networked here, so that student exchanges always benefit both the receiving and the sending country. Student exchanges are also needed to improve the international proficiency of Finns.

Student, researcher and expert exchanges are being carried out with China, India, Korea and Japan, but the volume is still fairly modest. One reason for this seems to be that the question of charging tuition fees to students coming from countries outside the European Economic Area is still unresolved in Finland, although progress is being made in it. It is clear that there are all too few scholarships and other financing for student, researcher, expert and cultural exchanges.

It is detrimental for higher education cooperation that the English title of polytechnics seems to cause uncertainty about their status.

Internationalisation is a clear priority in all the countries under review. Consequently the importance of student, researcher and expert exchanges was stressed.

Research cooperation

As the overview above shows, both the Academy of Finland and universities have cooperation agreements with organisations and universities in China, India, Korea and Japan. The agreements concluded by the Academy seem to work fairly well in practice, even if they are still on a small scale. Similarly some university agreements have led to practical research cooperation.

The Ministry of Education has concluded a cultural agreement with a number of Asian countries, which also covers matters relating to educational and research cooperation. The Ministry of Trade and Industry has similarly concluded science and technology agreements with many Asian countries. Research is thus included in the agreements of both ministries, but cooperation and coordination between them has not always been sufficient.

There is still room for improvement in research cooperation, and Asian countries seem to have genuine interest in cooperating with Finland. Many organisations in India, Japan and China expressed their interest in increasing cooperation and expected initiative from the Finnish side. Nordic and EU cooperation also offers channels for increasing contacts in research cooperation.

Higher education institutions and other research organisations in the countries under review stressed that it is important to progress from mere visits to concrete research cooperation.

Cultural cooperation and exportation

Culture is an essential activity in the Ministry of Education and in the Ministry for Foreign Affairs, and for the latter also an important component of diplomacy. Cultural activity supports political and economic aims, promotes cultural exportation and consolidates the reputation of Finland as a country of high-standard culture.

As regards cultural exportation, the roles of the key ministries have been defined in the proposal for a cultural exportation programme 2007-2011 "Do Finnish Exports have Staying Power? - Yes"¹. According to it, the Ministry of Education will provide financing for the culture and arts infrastructure, the Foreign Office will maintain a network of experts on cultural relations and exportation, and the Ministry of Trade and Industry will be responsible for developing the export know-how of the cultural business sector. Cooperation among organisations is important here, too. In measures to improve cultural exportation, it is crucial also to consider importation and potential

joint production.

The Ministry of Education has had the aim to downgrade the importance of bilateral cultural agreements or at least to streamline contractual arrangements. Instead of contracts, the Ministry wants to stress the role of direct contacts between organisations and individuals. In the pursuit of this, as such judicious aim, it is important also to take on board the needs of the partner countries concerning such agreements. Thus, if cooperation entails an agreement, Finland should not fail to use this option. Based on the current review, such an official intergovernmental agreement is useful in the case of China, India and Korea.

A significant fact is that our Embassies have been active in presenting Finnish culture in Asian countries. By means of exhibitions, concerts and artist visits, they have done the ground work for making Finnish culture and the Finnish way of life known in Asian countries. This is a solid foundation on which to carry on the effort.

The potential of Finnish friendship societies has been rarely used, perhaps with the exception of the Finland-China Friendship Society. Likewise, the potential of the friendship societies in the target countries, societies founded by Finns and other structures, such as Nordic consortia, could be put better use. Another useful network is the Finnish honorary consuls in Asian countries.

A case in point is the Finland-China Friendship Society, which during its 55 years of existence has comprehensively cooperated with the Ministry of Education in managing cultural exchanges between the countries. The principle is this activity, too, has been to create a basis for cultural exchanges conducted on a commercial basis, on the one hand, and to contribute to more profound content in intergovernmental exchanges, on the other.

Presence in Asia

The presence of the Finnish education, science and cultural sectors in Asia is negligible. There is a Finnish Institute in Japan, but no such structure exists in other Asian countries, where Finland has mainly

¹ At the moment only available in Finnish: *Onko kulttuurilla vientiä? ON!* Opetusministeriön julkaisuja 2007:9

been represented through the embassies. However, only the Finnish Embassies in Tokyo and Beijing have officials primarily concentrating on culture, education and research.

Six Finnish universities are members in the Nordic Centre in Delhi and seven in the Centre located at Fudan University in Shanghai. Their activities have so far been fairly modest and the opportunities inherent in them have not been fully used in the profilisation of Finland. The Delhi Centre has concluded agreements with some Indian universities on behalf of its member universities. This opens new opportunities for cooperating with them. The presence based on agreements concluded by the Academy of Finland and higher education institutions in Asian countries is mostly in the form of short-term visits, which makes it difficult to realise more permanent networks.

The review in hand shows that it is necessary to take measures to properly enhance the presence of the Finnish education, science and cultural sectors in some Asian countries. A stronger presence and more effective cooperation will naturally entail that financing for them is increased.

Proposals

The purpose of this fact-finding and report is to put forward proposals for measures improving the presence of the Finnish education, research and cultural sectors in Asia and for the financing shares of the different parties concerned. A key aim in the these proposals is to clarify the objectives of cooperation; improve coordination; increase student, researcher and expert exchanges; arrange permanent presence of the Finnish education, research and cultural sectors in certain Asian countries; and increase funding for cooperation with Asian countries.

Clarification of aims and enhancement of coordination

With a view to clarifying the aims and improving coordination, it is proposed that the Ministry of Education, the Ministry of Trade and Industry and the Ministry for Foreign Affairs organise regular colla-

laboration to coordinate Asia cooperation in the education, research and cultural sectors at the national level. This coordination group will determine joint aims for cooperation with Asian countries in these sectors, review the development of and development needs in cooperation, and put forward proposals and development plans to this end. The Ministries will consult organisations in their sectors and representatives of business and industry as experts in this work. It is particularly important to draw on the expertise of business and industry. The Ministry of Education will take initiative for starting the work of the coordination group.

The Finnish Council of University Rectors and the Rectors' Conference of Finnish Universities of Applied Sciences, together with the Ministry of Education, will prepare a plan determining clear joint objectives for cooperation with Asian institutions of higher education. This is a difficult but crucial task. This programme, based on clear objective-setting on the part of each university and polytechnic, must determine a feasible distribution of work between different higher education institutions and identify key cooperation partners.

At the same time, preparations will be initiated for substantially enlarging the opportunities for Finnish students to study in Asian higher education institutions as part of a Finnish degree. In this context, it is also necessary to assess the operation of universities' and polytechnics' Asia networks and put forward necessary proposals for development. The Ministry of Education will allocate the funds needed for the preparation. It is also necessary to reconsider the English term used for polytechnics in order to clarify their status.

In order to launch the preparation of the target programme between the universities, polytechnics and networks, it is proposed that the Ministry of Education invite the parties to discuss and decide how the preparation of the target programme should be organised. In the preparation of the programme, it is necessary to make sure that it caters for the needs of other ministries and those of business and industry.

As recommended by a committee looking into the support network and service structure for cultural

exportation (*Opetusministeriön työryhmämuistioita ja selvityksiä 2007:5*), the cultural policy stakeholders must step up their cooperation. To this end, it is proposed that they set up an Asia cooperation network, which will review the situation in the cultural sector and draw up a clear target programme for the sector. The programme should determine the distribution of work between the parties concerned and identify the key cooperation partners. This network will also act as expert to the coordination group proposed above.

The Department for Cultural, Sport and Youth Policy of the Ministry of Education will convene the parties with a view to putting the network in place.

The Ministry of Education, the Ministry of Trade and Industry and the Ministry for Foreign Affairs will step up their cooperation in the drafting of international contracts. The role of their projected coordination group will be to deal with all the documents on research, technology, education and culture under preparation.

Student, researcher and expert exchanges and research cooperation

Finland has a good reputation in Asian countries, and interest in Finland is growing there. The factors contributing to this seem to be the widely known OECD PISA results and Finland's success in international competitiveness surveys. This asset must now be put to effective use.

The operating sector and prerequisites of the Centre for International Mobility CIMO will be expanded. Scholarships needed for student, researcher and expert exchanges will be substantially increased and CIMO will be granted the resources needed to take care of the growing exchanges.

The Ministry of Education will review all the existing cultural agreements with Asian countries and their effectiveness and prepare measures for their better utilisation. A cooperation protocol with India will be prepared and signed without delay.

The India Programme of the Finnish Innovation Fund SITRA will end in 2007. After this, the results obtained within the programme will be evaluated and decisions will be taken on further action. The

scholarship programme initiated by SITRA will be continued in some form.

In research cooperation, universities should focus on the best universities in accordance with the projected target programme and coordinate their action with the Academy of Finland. The Academy must continue its systematic, goal-oriented cooperation in financing with the key science countries in Asia in order to improve Finnish researchers' opportunities for cooperation. It is essential to support planned, long-term research cooperation. More attention must also be paid to monitoring and assessing the results obtained in the cooperation.

There are clearly markets for Finnish expertise in education. The Ministry of Education and the National Board of Education must prepare measures for marketing Finnish educational knowledge in Asian countries. The fees to be charged on a trial basis to students coming from countries outside the European Economic Area will also create new opportunities. In teachers' continuing professional education and school manager training there appear to be important opportunities for commercial use of education.

Cultural cooperation and cultural exportation

Cultural exportation has recently been addressed in several reports (English abstracts available): *Staying Power to Finnish Cultural Exports* by Hannele Koivuinen (Ministry of Education, 2004); *A proposal for the strategic lines of the Ministry of Education for supporting Finnish cultural and scientific institutions abroad 2005-2015* (Ministry of Education, 2005); *Development of a support network and service structure for cultural exportation, a committee report* (Ministry of Education, 2007); *Do Finnish Cultural Exports Have Staying Power? YES! - a proposal for Finland's Cultural Exports Promotion Programme* (Ministry of Education, 2007); *A study of the business models of Finnish cultural exports* by M. Leikola & Leroux, P., *Delicate Services*, Finnish Funding Agency for Technology and Innovation TEKES, 2006; and *Strengthening cultural exportation through closer cooperation between Finnish diplomatic missions and Finnish institutes abroad* commissioned by the Ministry of Education and the

Ministry for Foreign Affairs of Education from NET Effect (no English abstract available).

These reports put forward excellent proposals for promoting cultural exportation. They naturally also concern cooperation with Asian countries, and need not be reiterated here.

All the reports make similar recommendations for clarifying aims, stepping up cooperation and improving coordination. The important thing is to make sure of the continuation of and follow-up to the cultural exportation project as proposed by the committee.

The main role of the Ministry of Education in this is to promote and support the creation of high-quality culture which has interest internationally. Commercial exportation of culture should be primarily carried out by businesses and organisations that export other Finnish products. To this the Ministry of Education can contribute by its measures and cooperation.

Demarcation between commercial and other cultural exportation is by no means always clear, so that in this, too, cooperation between public authorities and business is crucial.

The aim of proposals made in this and earlier reports and similar proposals geared to increase exchanges, improve coordination and enhance Finland's presence is to enhance the visibility of Finnish culture and to provide better prerequisites for cultural exportation in Asian countries.

Although it is not for this report to make recommend the fields of culture in which exportation and cooperation should especially carried out, it would appear in the light of talks conducted in India, Japan, China and Korea that potential exists for music, modern dance, design, architecture and film in particular, but there is also interest in other forms of art and culture.

With a view to promoting cultural exportation, it is important to invest in training existing human resources (commercial affairs attachés, export agents, institutes abroad) in questions relating to cultural exportation. In addition, resources should be allocated to support extensive, professionally managed joint ventures in different fields, and measures should be taken to encourage co-Nordic projects. The best way to exploit the special features of each market is to use

local consultants, and resources should be reserved for the purpose. In addition, it is necessary to consider using local consultants in some fields on a longer term in order to develop cooperation based on local knowledge.

Friendship societies with Asian countries in Finland and friendship societies with Finland in the target countries should be used in practical implementation as far as possible.

Nordic cooperation and EU cooperation

The joint presence of the Nordic countries in Asia would add weight to our efforts and our visibility. At least in China has been necessary to find a Nordic partner. This is why it is proposed that possibilities to increase Nordic cooperation in Asia relations be explored. For example in research, Nordforsk is a possible cooperation partner. This survey could be launched by the International Relations of the Ministry of Education.

The Nordic university centres in Delhi and in Shanghai should be used more effectively by Finnish universities. There are plans for the renovation and expansion of the centre at Fudan University in Shanghai, which would enable the centre to be put to more active use. Proposals for more efficient use of these centres will be included in the target programme.

The joint coordination group of the Ministry of Education, the Ministry of Trade and Industry and the Ministry for Foreign Affairs will look into the possibilities available within the EU for cooperation with Asia and take the necessary measures to ensure their full use.

Presence of education, research and cultural sectors in Asian countries

The point of departure in the proposals made below is that no new organisations will be established in Asian countries for the Ministry of Education sector, but the existing structures will be strengthened and cooperation and coordination between them will be enhanced.

One reason for this is that Finland's scarce resources in Asia must not be further dispersed; they should rather be pooled. Another reason is that it would not be administratively easy to establish a separate organisation in China or India, which are the obvious sites for such a body.

In Japan, cooperation will be continued with the Embassy in Tokyo, the Finnish Institute in Japan, TEKES and Finpro. In terms of the Ministry of Education sector it is important to see to the resources and prerequisites of the Finnish Institute in Japan. Plans are currently being devised for putting in place an innovation centre as a joint venture between the Embassy, the Finnish Institute in Japan, TEKES and Finpro. Since the Finnish Institute in practice takes care of the relations of the Finnish universities and the Academy of Finland in Japan, it is a vital partner in this innovation centre. The centre would give Finland more visibility in Japan and improve cooperation between the participating organisations in Japan and in Finland. The Academy of Finland and the Ministry of Education must actively contribute to the preparations carried out in Finland.

In the light of this review, it is not feasible to establish a separate culture and science institute in China. Instead, it is recommended that, with Ministry of Education financing, a post of science and culture counsellor be established in the Embassy, who would also be charged with arranging cooperation with the FinChi innovation centre in Shanghai and the Nordic centre at the Fudan University. It is necessary to have a Chinese employee at FinChi to assist the projected science and culture counsellor in the management of student, researcher and cultural exchanges in the Shanghai area.

The science and culture counsellor would be charged with (1) creating and maintaining a cooperation network in China; (2) keeping in contact with Finnish operators and suggesting cooperation partners for them, (3) disseminating information about Finland and to Finland and enhancing the visibility of Finnish culture, research and education, (4) promoting the mobility of students, researchers, experts and artists, (5) advancing cooperation between different partners, (6) assisting Finnish organisations in prioritising projects and cooperation partners,

and (7) reporting regularly on topical trends in the education, research and cultural fields in China.

In India, a science and culture counsellor will similarly be added to the Embassy staff with Ministry of Education financing. In addition to being charged with arranging cooperation with the Nordic university centre in Delhi, this official would have the same kind of duties as the counsellor at the Embassy in Beijing. Input should especially be made into stepping up teacher, researcher and student exchanges based on the experience gained from the second phase of SITRA's India project. Since cultural exchanges should also be enhanced, it is necessary to conclude the new protocol on cultural exchanges between Finland and India without delay. It appears that without such a protocol it would be difficult even to suggest substantial increases in cultural exchanges.

As regards the Republic of Korea, it is proposed that the Academy of Finland and higher education institutions and, where needed, the Ministry of Education place an official in Seoul for fixed periods, e.g. 3–6 months to develop cooperation relations and assist Finnish operators there.

It is further recommended that a review be undertaken to explore possibilities to place an official at the Embassy in Singapore, with joint financing of the Ministry of Education and the Ministry of Trade and Industry, to take care of cooperation with countries in South-East Asia. In view of the importance of Singapore as one of the foremost engines of scientific and technological development in South-East Asia, it is advisable that such an official is placed there.

In addition to the proposals put forward above, it is important to consider hiring local persons in order to make full use of local knowledge in the priority countries.

Description

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DESTINATION: ASIA. Towards goal-oriented educational, research and cultural cooperation with Asian countries			
Parts			
Abstract			
<p>Based on its action programme "Finland, Asia and international cooperation" (2006: 9), the Ministry of Education invited Mr Markku Linna to review the present situation in cooperation and propose measures for enhancing the presence of the Finnish educational, scientific and cultural sectors in partner countries in Asia. The Ministry invited Mari Suvanto, PhD, to act as expert secretary to the review. A consultative group was set up in support of the review, with representation from the Ministry of Education; universities and polytechnics; the Academy of Finland; the Centre for International Mobility CIMO; the Ministry of Trade and Industry; the Ministry for Foreign Affairs; the National Board of Antiquities; SITRA, the Finnish Innovation Fund; and Music Export Finland. The support group was chaired by Director-General Riitta Kaivosoja, Ministry of Education.</p> <p>The assignment was to conduct a holistic review to find out measures needed (1) to improve the prerequisites for the internationalisation of Finnish research, educational and cultural actors; (2) to survey, as part of the entity, the capacity of the Nordic university networks in Fudan and New Delhi and the cooperation partners in Beijing for developing support needed by Finnish universities, the Academy of Finland and CIMO; (3) to assess the need for upgrading the prerequisites of the Finnish Institute in Japan and explore the possibility of establishing a Finnish institute in China and India; (4) to ascertain how the FinChi Centre in Shanghai could be used in support higher education activities and cultural exportation; (5) to explore the possibility of collaborating with SITRA's India Programme and other activities in Asia; (6) to explore the possibility to upgrade cooperation with Finland's diplomatic missions abroad; and (7) to put forward proposals for and assess the cost of measures needed to improve Finland's presence and make a recommendation as to how the costs could be shared between different parties involved.</p> <p>In geographical terms, the survey was delimited to China, India, the Republic of Korea and Japan. In the course of the review Mr Linna heard experts from universities and polytechnics, CIMO, embassies in Helsinki and several other organisations and made study visits to China, India, the Republic of Korea and Japan.</p>			
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