'RENEWING THE AGENDA FOR LIFELONG LEARNING'

– *FOLLOW-UP OF ASEM FORUM ON LIFELONG LEARNING, BALI, INDONESIA: RECOMMENDATIONS FROM ASEM LLL HUB*

The ASEM Forum on Lifelong Learning gave a fresh impetus for renewing the agenda for lifelong learning. On the basis of this Forum, the ASEM LLL Hub Secretariat has made the following recommendations: states that want to get on the developmental ladder must invest in education, while maintaining a healthy scepticism with regard to the hype surrounding ICT-driven educational strategies and focusing instead on creating a resilient culture of lifelong learning by having a clear focus on formative and more process-oriented assessment.

By Claus Holm, Chair of ASEM LLL HUB, and Anders Martinsen, Head of ASEM LLL Hub Secretariat

The ASEM countries are faced with the challenge that education is actually becoming lifelong, spanning from early education in the kindergarten to almost the end of life. This creates a demand for a society populated by learners with the ability 'to learn how to learn' and possessing other meta-cognitive or thinking skills, the ability to learn on the job and in teams, and the ability to cope with ambiguous situations and unpredictable problems. In this situation it would probably be wise for ASEM countries to renew and shape a social contract with citizens, businesses, education including the universities, and the public sector. Together they must decide how to change the education sector, make the financing available and distribute the benefits.

From 9–11 March 2015, the ASEM LLL Hub held the biennial ASEM Forum on Lifelong Learning with the title *Renewing the Agenda for Lifelong Learning* in the beautiful surroundings of Bali, Indonesia. This contributed to the following research-informed recommendations in three main areas:

1. Recommendations for new state strategies for investing in education
2. Recommendations for new strategies for assessment for learning
3. Recommendations for strategies for investing in ICT and a changing educational landscape

1. WHAT ARE THE NEW STRATEGIES FOR STATES INVESTING IN EDUCATION?

What do we know from research about beneficial strategies for states investing in education? Which strategies make a strong knowledge society oriented towards lifelong learning? Against the background of historical studies of education and state formation in Europe and Asia, we can identify strong states in both Europe and East Asia as those states that have had the competence and the political will to intervene extensively and effectively in economic development. Education has been at the heart of these processes throughout East Asia in the 20th century – as was the case for the 19th-century European states. Moreover, among post-developmental states, there seems to be a need to change the narrative of vulnerability to resilience, and hence a culture of lifelong learning. So what can we, with this knowledge in mind, recommend in relation to the question about which strategies are leading to, or developing states into, strong states?

1. First of all, we know that central control and government manpower planning of investment in education seems to be a good developmental strategy both in Europe and Asia. We know that East Asian states have become strong states because they have had the competence and the political will to invest in education and to exercise a highly centralised control of these investments, which has led to higher growth rates than in other countries. If other states want to get on the developmental ladder they can hardly afford to ignore the lesson that strong states using, among other things, investment in education tend to get there first. And they can hardly afford to ignore the lesson that to stay there you need to sustain high levels of human capital over a long period.

2. Secondly, we also know that another similarity between these states is that they emphasise social values and core skills. For example, the East Asian states have placed a heavy emphasis on the core skills areas of literacy, maths and numeracy and have made adaptations in accordance with what the country needs to develop. This explains why these countries are doing so well in international comparisons like PISA, and it also explains why so many young people have gone on to excel in these areas in high school and university.

3. Thirdly, we also note that for strong states in both Europe and East Asia there is at the moment a challenge in relation to staying successful. We see a tendency, for example in Denmark and Singapore, to think carefully about how to change from a traditional exam-

focused approach to learning with emphasis on knowledge to a system driven by the ideal of an independent-minded, resilient and risk-minded lifelong learner who puts emphasis on skills related to employability. On the other hand, we also see an emphasis on the importance of literacy for innovation and entrepreneurship – a focus that with language sensitivity also must continue to shape the implementation of workplace learning strategies and policies.

2. NEW STRATEGIES FOR ASSESSMENT FOR LEARNING?

If the foundation is that there is a movement towards a learning society, then the ability to learn from and cope with ambiguous situations and unpredictable problems becomes a key competence. This means that schools should be expected to develop human resources for an uncertain future and uncertain demands. Schools should, in addition to securing a scholastic and practical knowledge, learn to make us future-oriented. Issues around schooling for tomorrow, learning for tomorrow, or what you could also call sustainable competitiveness, should become the concerns of policy-makers, school leaders and teachers. As a consequence, we need to further explore the implications for students, who are challenged to become effective lifelong learners. There seems to be a consensus among researchers that lifelong assessment will be a necessary feature for a learning society: so what can we, with this knowledge in mind, recommend in relation to the question about which strategies are leading to or developing individuals with competences and capacities to be effective lifelong learners?

1. First of all, assessment should move from the exclusive domain of the teachers into the hands of the learners. The consequence will be a focus of the learners' attention on the processes of assessment and to permit them to create these processes on their own, rather than ones they are subject to.

2. Secondly, it means a shift from summative assessments to formative assessments. That is, a shift from summative assessment as an act performed on the learner by the teacher making judgements of students' performance to formative assessment as an act by the learner who should know how to learn what they wish to learn and also know how to tell themselves and others how well they are doing in the process. In other words, the

students' formative assessment activities are a complementary force of yin and yang to teacher instructions.

3. Thirdly, it means different challenges for different learning cultures. In other words, it is recommended to pay attention to how specific European and Asian learning cultures are actually able to meet this challenge. In relation to this question you could say that the Confucian learner has a long-held reverence for the teacher, text and transmission of knowledge, whereas the Western, Socratic, learner has an equally long-held reverence for self-directed and individualised learning. There is, of course, a risk of exaggerating the differences between education in East Asian countries and in Western, and in particular Anglophone, countries. But differences are present – and these differences have an impact on what kind of learning communities are able to create and how quickly. So the challenge is to answer the question: what do the differences between Asian and European learning cultures mean for the methods and real options for changing lifelong learning strategies?

3. STRATEGIES FOR INVESTING IN ICT AND A CHANGING EDUCATIONAL LANDSCAPE

For many years we have heard the claim that online learning can revolutionise teaching and learning. This vision has been a driver for heavily investing in getting ICT systems in place. Despite this, there is still no clear evidence for the change that online learning is said to bring. And right now it is important to distinguish between having ICT systems in place and the effective use of these in the context of government, business, education and community development. Otherwise, the claim that online learning can revolutionise teaching and students' learning will be, to put it mildly, just that, merely a claim. So what can we, with this knowledge in mind, recommend in relation to strategies for investing in ICT and a changing educational landscape?

1. First of all, we need to realise that not everything needs to be digitalised, simply because it can. Having said that, it is clear that the expected change is sometimes met by over-optimism. An example is in relation to the Global Information Technology Report 2014 issued by the World Economic Forum. It says that South Korea is well known for both the

density of its broadband penetration and the strength of its digital vision. According to the United Nations E-Government Survey of member states, the country leads the world in e-government. Despite this, this country's wired citizens do not take full advantage of more than 150 service portals offered by the government. A survey conducted by the government's Board of Audit and Inspection found that although awareness of e-government portals was high, less than one-half of the citizens surveyed actually used them. So the report indeed concludes that utility is the main issue, but that governments should take heed.

2. Secondly, the expected change, on the other hand, is sometimes met with over-pessimism. An example comes from Microsoft founder Bill Gates, who once said that computing cannot benefit the world's 2 million poorest people. Rather, the first need is a schoolroom, the second is a teacher who shows up, the third is electricity, and only then may it be appropriate to consider ICT. But this may be too pessimistic a view of ICT. The fact is that currently 600 million adults and adolescents and 60 million out-of-school children in Asia are incapable of reading and writing the simplest statement relevant to their daily lives. Here it needs to be considered and investigated thoroughly if the use of open distance learning and ICT can make a contribution.

3. Thirdly, the fact is that many countries have high aspirations on the use of, for example, MOOCs in improving access to education, but for many countries it is not working as expected. Despite this, MOOCs can still, with the proper implementation, become a successful reality. This needs to take the importance of technological literacy among teachers into account, as it will support their pedagogical choices. Moreover, and not least, in light of the increasing access to digitalised higher education it is of crucial importance to develop a quality assurance mechanism.

THREE MAIN RECOMMENDATIONS!

All things considered, the present tendency is that lifelong learning research offers new knowledge for devising solutions suited to different contexts in order to renew the agenda. This brings along three main recommendations:

1. From historical studies of state strategies we know that states that want to get on the developmental ladder can hardly afford to ignore the lessons that strong states using heavy investment in education tend to get there first.

2. Secondly, we know that the populations of successful states are right now challenged to become effective lifelong learners by changing assessment systems from summative test-oriented assessment to formative and more process-oriented assessment. A specific challenge for the Confucian learner is here probably to make use of these formative assessment methods since you do not just jump directly from a culture where the assessors are the teachers to a culture where the learners are the assessors.

3. Thirdly, we are on the one hand seeing a great deal of hype around ICT systems, but on the other hand we need to balance this hype by educational strategies that address the relevance and efficiency of the use of these systems in relation to specific contexts.