6th ASEF Rectors' Conference & Students' Forum (ARC6)
12-13 October 2017, Singapore

Future-ready Universities and Graduates: Quality Education Beyond the Horizon

Students' Forum
9-12 October 2017, Singapore

ARC6 Students' Forum Policy Recommendations for the
6th ASEM Education Ministers' Meeting (ASEM ME6)
21-22 November 2017, Seoul, Korea

The ARC6 Students' Forum on *"Future Universities and Graduates: Quality Education Beyond the Horizon"* took place on 9-12 October 2017 at Singapore Management University in the Republic of Singapore. On this occasion, 51 student representatives from all ASEM partner countries developed Policy Recommendations on how governments, higher education institutions, businesses and the third sector can prioritise interdisciplinary education and research, collectively promote lifelong learning and ensure inclusive access to quality education. Two student representatives personally handed over these Policy Recommendations to Mr Liviu Pop, Minister of National Education of Romania, and Dr Janil Puthucheary, Senior Minister of State, Ministry of Education of Singapore at the Closing Ceremony of the 6th ASEF Rectors' Conference (ARC6) in Singapore. ARC6 students will also convey the following recommendations for consideration to the ASEM Ministers of Education during the upcoming 6th ASEM Education Ministers' Meeting (ASEM ME6) on 21-22 November 2017 in Seoul, Korea and stakeholders in ASEM partner countries.

We, the participants, call upon the ASEM partners to take into account the future needs of society and learners in the fields of access to quality education, lifelong learning and interdisciplinarity in education and research. These areas are considered the key aspects in ensuring a sustainable, future-ready education system. The ASEM students are cognisant that the following policy recommendations will allow ASEM partners to leap beyond future horizons.

Access to Quality Education

Access to quality higher education is essential for shaping sustainable societies. Education empowers people and functions as a great social equaliser. As students, we call upon the ASEM partners to:

1. Implement a student-centred learning paradigm that involves students in curriculum design and assessment of courses and programmes.
2. Support the UNESCO initiative aiming to establish a global recognition convention for education.
3. Promote the use of open educational resources and offer support to make all research publications freely available.
4. Provide easily and readily accessible one-stop student guidance and career services before, during, and after studies.
5. Ensure that quality education is accessible to all, regardless of disadvantages or background.
   a) Use evidence-based policymaking to identify barriers and disadvantaged groups, and to effectively combat discrimination and inequality.
   b) Empower these groups by removing financial barriers, prioritising funding allocation, implementing subsidies and/or non-financial schemes such as technology training, mentoring networks, and vocational training.
6. Gather large-scale student, institutional, and governmental data concerning access, persistence, graduation, and transition to the labour market. Support and evaluate innovative and evidence-based policies that feed into future policy development.

7. Create safe and universally accessible educational environments. Enforce legislation that bans discrimination on all grounds.

Lifelong Learning

Recognising that lifelong learning is an ongoing process of creating opportunities and engaging in formal, informal and non-formal learning for all, for the purpose of personal and societal development, we urge for the following recommendations to be implemented:

1. Create a national strategy for Lifelong Learning to provide a single approach to all educational processes, connecting general, higher and adult education, as well as technical and vocational education and training (TVET), to streamline the implementation of policy programmes associated with education.
2. Increase funding for individuals, educators and institutions to participate in and/or provide quality lifelong learning programmes at any level and any form, through contributions from the business sector, NGOs, education institutions and governments.
3. Encourage education institutions to increase access and equity to lifelong learning opportunities by exploiting new technologies thus enabling open access and online learning
4. Ensure that curricula throughout the formal educational pathway comprise a programme which goes beyond the traditional subjects (e.g. mathematics and sciences) and demonstrates the value of, and contributes to, lifelong learning
5. Empower participation in adult education by defining recognition mechanisms for non-formal learning opportunities and provide support (e.g. financial incentives, mentorship) to both employed and unemployed individuals to increase job-readiness and performance, as well as encourage community building.
6. Implement minimum standards for employers for education leave as well as offer employers early adoption incentives (such as tax breaks and training subsidies) to ensure that employees remain future ready.

Interdisciplinarity in Education and Research

To enhance interdisciplinarity in higher education and research and to respond to current needs of academia and the workforce, we urge for the following recommendations to be implemented:

1. Encourage leaders in higher education and in research to prioritise interdisciplinarity by emphasising it in institutional strategy and budgetary allocations.
2. Develop mechanisms to support cross-collaboration and to encourage interdisciplinary courses and programs among academic stakeholders. This can be achieved by creating collaborative spaces, including but not limited to online platforms and providing continuous training to educators and researchers to enhance interdisciplinarity.
3. Incentivise higher education institutions to establish knowledge transfer through cross-discipline mobility programmes, and to create interdisciplinary centres to foster interdisciplinary education, knowledge and research.
4. Implement more interdisciplinary modules that address real-world issues by using phenomenon-based teaching methods. These modules and interdisciplinary research should be integrated into the academic curriculum.
5. Encourage and support student involvement in the field of interdisciplinary education and research by strengthening channels of communication.

Singapore, 11 October 2017.

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