

Mutual learning: a systemic increase in learning efficiency to prepare for the challenges of the twenty-first century

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Abstract One of the few certainties we have about our collective future is that it will require a massive amount of learning, by just about everybody, everywhere. The time for generating as many creative and collaborative knowledge builders has come. Therefore, improving the efficiency of learning could very well become a key leverage point for successfully meeting the challenges of the twenty-first century. This paper explores the possibilities of using mutual learning as a systemic means to improve learning efficiencies. This is measured through three different metrics: (1) the time required to learn, (2) the quantity of learning that is retained over time, and (3) the leveraging of the cost of scholarships through the use of a complementary currency designed to track and encourage mutual learning. In all three metrics, mutual learning is shown as an important approach to increase the effectiveness of learning and, at the very least, can be an adjunct to the conventional educational methods. Mutual learning could apply not only to learning among peers, but also to social, intergenerational, or intercultural mutual learning.

Keywords Economic development · Learning efficiency · Mutual learning

1 Why a new educational model is needed?

The Knowledge Society, the Knowledge Economy, the Learning Society, and the Learning Organization have become household terms. This means that learning has become a crucial process for development in many countries. For instance, the importance of knowledge was first pointed out by the European Commission in the White Paper entitled *Growth, Competitiveness, and Employment. The challenges and ways forward into the 21st century* (1994), followed one year later by a second White Paper, “Teaching and learning. Toward a cognitive society” (1995) and then by an OECD public report, “The Knowledge-based Economy” (1996), trying to identify best practices of education. Since then, many strategic papers from international organizations have endorsed such a priority, and now, 15 years later, learning appears as the central tenant in the EU education and training policies, as well as, in many countries in and outside Europe.

But what has been done in practice during the past 15 years? The Lisbon Strategy, initiated by the Lisbon Special European Council held in March 2000 aimed at gearing the European Union “towards a Europe of Innovation and Knowledge,” and affirmed that Europe would become “the most dynamic and competitive knowledge-based economy in the world” by 2010. Today, in spite of a “new start” launched at the mid-term of the plan in 2005, it appears that this strategy did not allow Europe to reach its initial objectives in 2010, partially because of events beyond the control of policy makers, but also because the EU and the member states have not been able to implement

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