

Alliance for a Responsible, Plural and United World

World Citizens Assembly

Lille - December 2 to 10, 2001

Socioprofesional Group

ACADEMICS

1.

The day took place with the introduction of each of the participants and the definition of the challenges that everybody considered as the most important (What has to be changed?).

2.

The cartography showed the major challenges resulting from considerations in the four predetermined areas: Representation, Biosphere, Governance, Economy/Society.

3.

Integration of the issues into the main themes selected for the mapping highlighted the ones that were important, i.e.:

Change the technological gap between the rich and the poor countries.

Change a market economy that generates poverty and exclusion.

Change a form of education that produces exclusion.

Change the exclusively one-way globalization process from the North to the South.

Change the technical science that is governed by the market laws.

Change the forms of development that ruin the environment and destroy life.

4.

It was even possible to include a few major ideas that came up several times during the discussion:

Cross-cultural awareness

Education to complexity

Solidarity and peace as essential values

The demand that what is local be taken into account in the present globalization context

Remarks:

The Proposal Paper was not yet available in Spanish and English. Furthermore, it had not been read, so there were some comprehension problems during the discussion.

To take into account and appreciate the diversity of academic disciplines.

To turn students into responsible citizens, respectful of others and of the environment. Education guarantees

citizenship.

To fight for the independence from WTO jurisdiction of services and intellectual property, because this also refers to education and endangers the right to education for all.

The right to “education for all” means access to primary education for all in many countries.

Spiritual values and the importance of the environment must be stressed.

Universities must commit themselves to the transmission of knowledge and to social promotion. Even if this sometimes only means action in the process of renewing the elite.

The independence of universities from political power is not a permanent feature everywhere.

It is necessary that teachers, students, and curricula be involved in social debates (and thus take an interest in the problems of society).

Contributions by Academics to the Charter of Responsibilities

The different points presented below represent demands that Academics wish to contribute to the Charter of Responsibilities.

We reassert that the right to education is a basic element of human rights. Therefore, basic and primary education should be accessible to all the children in the world whatever their gender, race, nationality, or religion. Moreover, it is crucial for any social change that education should provide the keys to develop global citizenship. Permanent and ongoing education must therefore be accessible to all the adults of the world.

Several strategies can be implemented to fulfill this objective: exerting pressure on governments, promoting actions conducted by civil society in the sector of education, or creating a global fund to eradicate illiteracy.

In this perspective, a committee or a small global group should be set up to define how these strategies could be carried out.

To counter the growing trend to submit teaching and research activities to a mercantile approach and to subject knowledge to the laws of the market economy, the Socioprofessional Network of Academics proposes that the Alliance for a Responsible, Plural and United World should oppose the integration of education into the General Agreement on Trade in Services (GATS) currently being negotiated by the World Trade Organization (WTO).

Because we wish to protect the common good of the biosphere and of the living world, and the elements essential to creation and to the circulation of knowledge, we propose that

the environment

irreplaceable natural resources, such as water

all living things

be excluded from the General Agreement on Trade in Services (GATS) and the WTO.

Teachers:

A) We propose that, if education is to transmit certain values and have an impact on society:

1.

Universities must provide competent and qualified teachers, by ensuring that receive proper initial training as well as ongoing training all along their professional career

2.

Public authorities must support and establish an initial and ongoing training for teachers, both in schools and in universities.

3.

Educational authorities and governments must recognize the significance and meaning of the work accomplished by teachers, invest in education and ensure adequate wages and working conditions.

4.

Accreditation systems defining standards of professional expertise would be useful

B/ In order to promote the concept of global citizenship:

1. Teachers must be exposed to this idea
2. Cross-cultural programs for teachers and students should be encouraged

Universities and academic authorities must understand that human associative networks are complementary to academic institutions and ought to be encouraged. Thus, it will be possible to promote their potentially institutional nature and to develop effective communication, as well as public and open debates. Discussions should take place with other social actors concerned by concrete problems, in particular on the issue of initial and ongoing training.

The university is the depository of the knowledge acquired through scientific research. It must therefore also be an institution at the core of intellectual property, in order to avoid becoming a mere producer of expertise and training for the global market.

We must promote and develop effective cross-sector (and even trans-sector) combined research, to take into account the global and complex nature of real life by establishing vocational and training units, by implementing research surveys that deal concretely and in a responsible way with problems related to vital sectors: health, nutrition, environment, communication, promotion of a peace culture and of a sustainable development.

Universities have a decisive function: they must anticipate the necessary changes in societies and, in this perspective, their role is to offer training, teaching and explore new paths of research, in order to prepare human beings to live together.

Many teachers and academics are involved in a work process with partners from a very wide diversity of sectors and environments; they take part in the ongoing public debate on the issues faced by society, or they organize continuous and extensive exchanges between different branches to deal with these issues. But these tasks are rarely included in the assignment of teachers and academics, in their professional career, and in their missions in universities and teaching establishments. We advocate a genuine "renaissance," a rebirth process both personal and institutional and we propose that these missions be included in the evaluation criteria.

In a world marked by war, it is urgent that we all participate in building peace and in recognizing others. Teachers, academics and educational institutions have a crucial contribution to lend in this process by promoting a peace culture and by developing research on these issues.

Concerning the budget allocated to the payment of the external debt, a factor that affects potential human growth, the Assembly in Lille and the Socioprofessional Network of Academics propose that the lending countries stop requesting their due so that these resources can be invested in education and health budgets.

The events of September 11, 2001, in the United States have shown, beyond any possible doubt, that peaceful coexistence within humanity is a global, worldwide issue that does not only concern the countries of the South. The universities of the Twenty-first Century cannot turn their back on this reality.

We, the Alliance for a Responsible, Plural and United World, propose to the academic communities all around the world to consider the following process as a priority: reinforcing and creating scientific branches that train human beings capable of building societies based on solidarity concerned with the common good, respectful of human diversities, and responsible for the environment.