

Alliance for a Responsible, Plural and United World

World Citizens Assembly

Lille – December 2-10, 2001

Thematic Group

EDUCATION

AN EDUCATION FOR ALL PREPARING PEOPLE AND SOCIETIES TO MEET THE CHALLENGES OF THE TWENTY-FIRST CENTURY

Context

The workshop comprised 32 persons, with an equal number of women and men, and geographic origins distributed as follows:

- an Asian group, with mainly Chinese nationals, including one from Taiwan, but also a Japanese woman, a Filipino woman and a Bangladeshi man,
- an African group, mainly from the French-speaking countries (Togo, Benin, Cameroon, Madagascar, Morocco) and with a small group of women from Somalia,
- an American group, mainly Latin American, but also with a "Green" activist from the United States,
- a European group, with a majority of French nationals

The initial introduction allowed everyone to specify his/her personal approach. The majority were teachers, the others were involved in the education issue, such as, for example: an agricultural unionist, a researcher in religious science, a painter, a political activist, a former human resources manager of a large company, someone representing an organization of physically disabled persons, an environmentalist activist, etc. These introductions took up a lot of time—more of the half of the first day!—but made it possible for us then to move directly into the discussion on the how the education system works.

Interpretation requirement made us organize into four main groups, of which it is interesting to note that they also corresponded to fairly distinctive sensitivities and geocultural realities, which can be summarized as following:

- the English-language group, which comprised mainly Anglo-Saxons, Scandinavians and nationals from former British colonies or from countries under Anglo-American influence, manifested a rather pragmatic point of view, happy to underscore the role of "non-formal" institutions and on the importance of the gender issue and of the position granted to women,
- the Spanish-language group comprising Latino Americans, who especially and mainly stressed identity issues, the respect of human rights, and development needs,
- the French-speaking group mainly familiar with the French education model including, in particular, representatives from African countries that are former French colonies, "fiercely" defending Cartesianism,
- the Chinese-language group, although obviously sociologically and professionally heterogeneous, appeared more concerned with the cultural, or even "spiritual" dimensions of the education topic.

A first summary effort on the nature and the role of education actors led to the distinction of three groups: classic or traditional, formal or informal institutions, such as the state, the churches, and the family

"new" actors such as the street, the media, nature, the environment, etc.

"peer group" partners (age, culture, social category, etc.), political organizations (parties, unions) and organizations (NGOs and social "clubs")

Two visions reflect the discussion on the public involved and the challenges of education:

the first, relying on historic experience and evolution, on the two dimensions—individual and collective—of education, and on purposes that would consist, through the development of a critical mind, in transmitting human values, both social and technical, through all of life, present education as "the" great social project, the objective of which is the promotion of the most authentic, most democratic values, to transform the future,

the second takes a position against globalization in order to preserve the education system; the object is to put science and technology at the service of the development of feelings and cultures, to transmit the values that ensure peace, and to put information at the service of the development of human beings.

Strategy

The priorities assigned to education are:

peace

- . develop education to peace
 - . respect different cultures
 - . encourage understanding and dialogue
 - . reduce inequalities
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wisdom

- . defend values and ethics
 - . enhance and respect the environment
 - . learn to manage one's own resources
 - . refuse dogmas and ideologies
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citizenship

- . form citizens who are involved locally and aware of the global challenges
 - . reduce the gap between school and life
 - . give back to teaching a sense of citizenship and ethics
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Education must be considered as a learning process; the object is to learn to learn

- . develop the capacity to reflect
- . develop human responsibilities and resources
- . develop a form of teaching based on practical and personal experience
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The organization of education needs to be democratized:

- . allow the state to support education system rather than to control it

- . decentralize education systems
 - . put the NICT (new information and communication technology) at the service of education
 - . give greater importance to educational experiences and innovations
 - . make the media more responsible to citizens
 - . associate other social organizations to education: companies, organizations and NGOs, professional associations (of farmers, for example)
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