

EXCHANGE PROGRAMS IN BIO-EDUCATION: A PERSPECTIVE FOR YOUTH

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Introduction

The purpose of this presentation is to investigate potential activities involving youth in the field of the bio-environment, science and education, as well as international relations, in the framework of the resolutions of the Fourth B.I.O. International Conference on the International University for the Bio-Environment. The following recommendations will focus on the topics of action group formulation, scientific exchange programs and bio-diplomacy.

One of the primary directions of the International University for the Bio-Environment is the development of international youth exchange activities¹. There are imposing reasons for the implementation of the above goal. Communication between young people will lead to the gradual formulation of a 'front of action' for the preservation of the bio-environment. Cooperation may also include scientific and educational dimensions. Enhancing student mobility would facilitate the exchange of valuable information among educational institutions worldwide. Last, but not least, there is a need for a rapprochement and mutual understanding between youth with diverse cultural backgrounds.

Action Groups

Action groups may be established to deal with specific problems:

- public awareness campaigns: information groups could be organized to be active in increasing the awareness of public opinion, especially of other students in high schools and universities. This feedback procedure will be a source of continuously flowing new blood into the action groups;
- environmental projects, such as recycling, tree planting, and cleaning of coasts;
- cultural events, serving as a means for youth expression; similar projects on cultural exchanges are growing in many countries. They include participation of youth in works of architectural restoration and improvement of the local environment;
- publications, allowing for the expression of views and the creation of an international youth forum.

Scientific and Educational Exchanges

The concept of student exchanges for scientific purposes has become very popular in many educational institutions in Europe and in the United States. The European Communities have supported student mobility on both organizational and financial levels, through various European projects. The European Commission has stressed, on many occasions, the key role of such projects in raising a European consciousness among students from different E.C. countries.

Students in the field of the bio-environment could cooperate in the following ways:

- research projects requesting multi-national data selection. For example, students from the Mediterranean countries could cooperate in common projects for measuring sea pollution;
- comparative studies on social, economic and demographic topics;
- organization of seminars, lectures, sabbaticals, etc;
- "collection of audio-visual material and documents to be used for educational purposes."¹

Exchange Programs and Bio-Diplomacy

Bio-diplomacy is one of the most profound concepts of biopolitics. The essence of bio-diplomacy is to establish international cooperation on the basis of the bio-environment, a concern uniting all people.² However, once initiated in the above dimensions, such an international approach would create a favorable climate of mutual understanding, thus preparing the field for the extension of dialogue on other issues of

multinational or even bilateral interest.

Bio-diplomacy represents a unique challenge for the youth of our days. Widening the routes of communication between young people on the basis of the biopolitics ideals may have a tremendous impact upon the attitude of future leaders. The overcoming of past prejudices is an indispensable condition for the survival of humanity. Modern youth may be pioneers in turning the above ideals into common practice.

Conclusion

In a rapidly changing world, young people should be encouraged to adopt an ecumenical perspective in their thought. In many countries, the educational system is highly concentrated on traditional values and ideals. Providing young generations with a strong background of national ideology is indeed essential for the survival of the identity of a nation. However, in the course of the twentieth century, local cultural differentiation needs to acquire a unifying dimension.³ The main reason for this is the appearance of global threats such as the risk of nuclear catastrophe and the destruction of the bio-environment.

The above considerations imply that the future educational system has to promote universal values together with elements of local ideology. An intensive effort has to be made in order to prepare the field for rendering young people throughout our planet familiar with the concept of co-existence, with full respect for tradition and with an enlarged vision for the future.

References

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